

**Gateway to Crisis:  
Discourse Coalitions, Extractivist Politics, and  
the Northern Gateway Conflict**

by  
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## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores the political and social conflict over the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline and tanker project designed to diversify Canadian bitumen exports by linking the Alberta tar sands to international markets via British Columbia's North Coast. It examines this conflict in the context of long-term processes of capitalist growth, Neoliberal Extractivist development, settler colonial expansion, and transnational economic integration. It explains how both the project itself and the political response to it emerged from and helped constitute a series of interrelated national and global economic, political, and ecological crises. In doing so, it identifies extractivist development in Canada as an extension of the broader Neoliberal class project. The analysis combines Gramscian theory, political economy and ecology, field theory, ideology critique, and power structure research to examine how various state, civil society, and industry actors coalesced into pro- and anti-Gateway discourse coalitions loosely aligned in service of common political goals. It explores how these coalitions themselves were integrated into and/or emerged from broader coalitions oriented around Neoliberal extractivism, ecoskepticism and transnational 'market fundamentalist' epistemic communities on the one hand and environmental, decolonial and left-wing politics on the other.

The project examines the capacity of discourse coalitions to coordinate inter-field political projects by analysing 17 prominent civil society, First Nations, state and industry organizations supporting or opposing Gateway's approval in the Canadian press between 2011 and 2014. To do so, it conducts an in depth discourse and frame analysis of communications materials produced by these actors as well as stories from four Canadian daily newspapers. It explores the ways actors from both coalitions generated and circulated opposing narratives combining elements of populism, nationalism, regionalism, environmentalism, and decolonialism to develop alternative concepts of interest and subjectivity which themselves facilitated differing interpretations of the distribution of ecological and economic risk and benefit. It supplements this discourse analysis with a social network analysis of the 17 organizations' directorate boards, executives, and key staff to explore how the interpersonal and institutional networks of discourse coalitions allowed for the coordination of political projects and movements across social fields.

**Keywords:** Environmental Politics; Political Communications; Ideology; Social  
Network Analysis; Discourse Analysis; Oil and Gas; Political Economy

## **Dedication**

To Anne and Paul. For whom I've done everything.

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## List of Acronyms

BC	British Columbia
BC NDP	New Democratic Party of British Columbia
CAPP	Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
CEPA	Canadian Energy Pipeline Association
CERI	Canadian Energy Research Institute
CFN	Coastal First Nations
DI	Dogwood Initiative
EPII	Elite Policy and Information Infrastructure
EO	Ethical Oil
GHG	Greenhouse Gas Emissions
IPCC	International Panel on Climate Change
MLI	Macdonald Laurier Institute
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NDP	New Democratic Party
NG	Northern Gateway
OS	Oil Sands
SCBC	Sierra Club BC
WTO	World Trade Organization
YDA	Yinka Dene Alliance

# Chapter 1. Introduction to the Northern Gateway Crisis

Since a time when Canada was little more than a combination of First Nations Communities, and French and British settler colonies, its economy has been dominated by resource extraction industries whose rise were inextricably intertwined with dual processes of capitalist development (Fast, 2014) and colonial encroachment (Coulthard, 2014). In its earliest forms, extraction was focused on furs fish, and the trade in timber. With the advent of industrial capitalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, these earlier resource 'staples' were joined by a rising trade in energy products, especially following the Second World War (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011). Much of this was oriented around oil and natural gas production in Alberta, which grew quickly following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the subsequent oil price shocks of the early 1970s (73-110).

Yet by the 1990s, conventional oil production was in steady decline as Alberta's major oil fields became largely depleted (Boychuck, 2010). As a result, corporate and state planners increasingly looked to the development of unconventional energy supplies as a source of future sector growth. Most notable among these were the vast bitumen deposits from Alberta's Athabasca tar sands. Though the resource was discovered in the 1930s, the notoriously difficult to extract, refine and transport substance had long proved difficult to develop profitably (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 69-110). Yet by the mid-1990s historically high oil prices, decades of heavy government investment in research, development and infrastructure, and generous royalty and taxation regimes had combined to finally make the tar sands a profitable concern. The result was a massive influx of foreign capital and the beginning of a decade and a half bitumen boom.

Still, there were tensions. Bitumen, a highly toxic substance that was difficult to extract, refine, and transport, required significantly more energy and water to extract than conventional crude, and caused large amounts of upstream water, land, and air pollution (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 111-141; Nikiforuk, 2010, 60-111, 127-145). Perhaps most worryingly, its extraction and refining were extremely carbon intensive, a growing concern as the scientific evidence for anthropogenic climate change continued to mount. Another set of economic tensions threatened to combine with these ecological

ones. The tar sands boom of the 1990s had coincided with the Canadian economy's transition from a Keynesian-Fordist regime to a globalized neoliberal one. As a result, the tar sands increasingly became developed along what Travis Fast (2014) has called "neoliberal extractivist" lines oriented around the servicing of international markets, the attraction of foreign capital, and the increasingly unequal distribution of economic benefits and ecological and economic risk (Barney, 2013; Boychuk, 2010; Campanella, 2012). Regardless, the boom's generation of large *absolute* gains in economic activity meant that tar sands development remained a fairly popular proposition – especially among Albertan workers and those from other provinces who travelled to the region for work.

Yet all this was occurring at the same time that an increasingly active global environmental movement began targeting Alberta bitumen for its contribution to global climate change (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 111-141). In this regard, multinational ENGOs were joined by vocal regional First Nations and settler<sup>1</sup> critics recoiling from the effects of heightened upstream and downstream water, soil, and air pollution and ecosystem degradation. As a response, in the early 1990s industry actors and wealthy elites began funding one of the most elaborate and well organized climate denial and eco skeptic campaigns on the planet (Gutstein, 2009, 227-259; Hoggan with Littlemore, 2009). This money was used to support a highly networked cadre of industry-supported think tanks and advocacy groups, many of whom had been previously associated with the promotion of neoliberal reform since the 1980s. The groups soon became leading actors in an interfield discourse coalition dedicated to promoting the oil and gas industry's economic benefits, attacking environmentalists as out of touch, radical elites, and undermining climate and environmental science in the public sphere. Though led by

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<sup>1</sup> This dissertation follows the lead of indigenous activists and scholars in using the term 'settler' to refer to non-indigenous actors and organizations. There are two interconnected reasons for this. First, the term 'settler' makes visible the continuing reality of settler colonialism, which is normatively and analytically relevant in a project chronicling the political controversy concerning the construction of a pipeline through the unceded territories of dozens of First Nations. As explained in the third chapter, settler colonialism is a fundamental driver of projects like Gateway. Second, it provides analytical clarity concerning the social and political makeup of various organizations and actors explored in this dissertation. This is particularly important when exploring the political alliance between indigenous and non-indigenous civil society actors featured in this dissertation, which have both made indigenous issues a core aspect of their respective communications strategies. Since both sets of groups discuss these issues to varying degrees and in different ways, it is useful to keep in mind precisely who is talking when discussing indigenous issues, interests, and political preferences.

these industry funded civil society groups, the ecoskeptic coalition brought together an array of influential actors from across multiple social fields, including politicians, industry leaders, conservative media figures, and market fundamentalist academics (though, notably, relatively few climate or environmental scientists). Partially as a result of this campaign, industry was able to hold back any meaningful environmentalist challenge, largely dragging tar sands expansion back into what Hallin (1986) has termed the “sphere of consensus”.

Yet by 2010, things were shifting. For one, it was becoming clear that future US demand would soon be unable to absorb upcoming growth in Albertan bitumen production, as a rapid rise in US unconventional energy production – both carbon-based and renewable – intersected with intensified environmentalist opposition to tar sands imports (Hoberg, 2013). As such, Canadian state and industry planners began advocating for the construction of new pipeline capacity to Canadian tidewater so as to diversify the country’s energy exports, most notably to rapidly growing East Asian markets. Yet this strategy was meeting with significant resistance, especially in British Columbia where two major planned pipeline and tanker projects were being fiercely contested by an emergent coalition of regional and global environmental organizations, First Nations, citizens’ groups, local communities, local governments and Federal and Provincial opposition parties. Arguably the most contentious of these was Enbridge’s Northern Gateway project, which would link the tar sands to East Asian markets via BC’s North Coast, helping absorb planned increases in upstream production (Brown et al, 2009, 3).

In this dissertation I examine the political conflict over Northern Gateway, focusing on the years between 2010 and 2014. I situate this project and a broader history of the oil sands within the context of successive stages of ‘extractivist’ development in Canada and those stages’ relationship to global shifts in capitalist regimes of accumulation and governance. In doing so, I explore the discursive strategies and institutional networks of key civil society, state and industry actors that supported or opposed the Gateway project. My major research goal was to better understand how these actors formed interfield discourse coalitions whose members leveraged their unique cultural and social capitals to develop emergent network responses to the Northern Gateway crisis.

I took this focus because of the crucial political importance of these coalitions in the Northern Gateway conflict, with each coalition drawing together unique constellations of politically aligned actors from across the civil society, state, industry, academic, and media fields. For instance, Northern Gateway was publically supported by the major industry associations, Bay Street financial firms, much of the media, the ruling Federal Conservative party, and the Alberta Government. Joining them were Canada's usual staple of industry-backed neoliberal think tanks like the Fraser Institute, as well as a new crop of recently founded civil society groups like the Ottawa-based MacDonald Laurier Institute and the bombastic advocacy group Ethical Oil.

Looking back now in 2017 it is strange to think that Northern Gateway's completion was once considered by many to be a *fait accompli*. But it wasn't. Local ENGOs like Dogwood Initiative signed up record numbers of concerned citizens to speak at the project's federal review panel, pushing back the panel's prospective timeline by over a year. They soon allied with numerous First Nations communities located along the project route, who had their own reasons to oppose the project. Eventually, both were joined by various regional municipalities, the major provincial and federal opposition parties, and even, somewhat ambiguously, the ruling, resource development-friendly BC Liberal party, which saw which way the political winds were blowing and tacked their sails accordingly.

Together, coalition actors generated, deployed, recirculated and amplified various arguments, claims and narratives they hoped would help secure or block the project's approval. While proponents claimed that export market diversification<sup>2</sup> was in the national economic interest, opponents railed against the *regional* maldistribution of risk and benefit inherent to the Northern Gateway project. Not only would Gateway, which would facilitate a significant increase in upstream production, make Canada's climate change commitments difficult to achieve (Brown et al, 2009). But British Columbian settlers and First Nations living and working along the project route would absorb the vast majority of ecological and economic risk from a potential pipeline and

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<sup>2</sup> While the diversification of exports is often discussed in relation to the diversification of *products* a nation exports or *industries* in a nation engaging in exports, the economic debate concerning Northern Gateway – and proponents' arguments in favor of the project – largely discussed the diversification of energy export *markets*, such as the diversification of bitumen exports to Asian markets such as China. While I attempt to make this clear in the text, readers should be aware that discussion of export diversification in this dissertation almost exclusively refers to this form of export *market* diversification, unless otherwise noted.

bitumen spill (Hoberg, 2013; Province of British Columbia, 2013). Anger at these regional inequities was only heightened by the lack of BC representatives on the project's federally appointed Joint Review Panel, as well as a joint equivalency agreement signed between the BC Liberals and the Federal Conservatives in which the province had waived its constitutional right to hold an independent environmental assessment (Hume, 2016, Jan 13). This left Gateway's fate in the hands of a Federal Government that had publically and forcefully advocated for the project's completion. The result was that the nationalist claims of Gateway's state, industry, civil society and media proponents were countered by an emergent regional anti-Gateway discourse coalition that framed the conflict in regional populist terms. Gateway's critics railed at a shadowy cabal of out-of-province elites – the Alberta and Federal Governments, multinational oil companies, Bay Street financiers, and Chinese state planners – who stood to benefit from the project and who were perceived as attempting to push it through the approval process against the wishes of British Columbians.

For Northern Gateway's First Nation's opponents, such concerns fed into more fundamental ones related to aboriginal rights and title. Unlike in most of Canada, indigenous lands in BC had been seized by colonial occupiers without signing treaties, meaning that much of the prospective project route ran through the unceded territory of dozens of nations (Stendie, 2013). Many members of these nations were outraged not only by the risk to their traditional lands and local economies posed by a potential spill or leak, but by what was perceived as the Federal Government's and Enbridge's wholly inadequate approach to indigenous consultation. In ignoring rights and title, the project and its paternalistic review process seemed an illegal manifestation of longstanding territorial encroachment – a 21<sup>st</sup> century colonial land grab. As such, indigenous opposition to Gateway quickly became associated with a rising Canada-wide decolonization movement (Coulthard, 2014, 151-180). By 2012 two major inter-nation alliances representing dozens of Nations along the prospective project route – the Yinka Dene Alliance and Coastal First Nations – had initiated territorial bans on Gateway using indigenous law (Hoberg, 2013).

With Northern Gateway in crisis, its proponents responded. Think tanks like Macdonald Laurier Institute and the Canadian Energy Research Institute produced technocratic studies, presentations, op-eds and media interviews arguing for the national economic benefits of export market diversification and promoting new policy innovations

hoped to secure regional indigenous collaboration. The Conservative Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver (2012, Jan 27) took a different tack in January 2012 when he issued a public letter condemning Gateway's opponents and pledging to reform Canada's review process. Oliver's letter built on recent work by Vancouver blogger Vivian Krause that had outlined the funding received by some anti-Gateway groups from American charitable foundations. Since those groups had signed up record numbers of Canadian citizens to speak against Gateway at the JRP's public hearings, Oliver attacked them as "foreign funded radicals". According to Oliver, these "radicals" had "hijacked" the Canadian regulatory and project approval regime to appease both their foreign billionaire backers and their own radical anti-growth ideology, killing Canadian jobs in the process. This conservative populist discourse was quickly reproduced and amplified by numerous media figures and the advocacy group Ethical Oil, who enthusiastically backed the government's stated intent to reform the country's project review and regulatory regime in a heroic attempt to thwart the foreign environmentalist hordes.

These calls for patriotic heroism were soon answered in the form of two new pieces of Conservative legislation - C-38 and C-45 - passed later in 2012 as resistance to Gateway was intensifying (Coulthard, 2014; Hoberg, 2013; Nikiforuk, 2013). Buried within each of the hundred page-plus omnibus bills was a raft of legislative changes that critics alleged were designed to gut Canada's environmental regulation and project assessment regime. Together the two bills removed a host of environmental protections for various aquatic and land based ecosystems; raised new barriers to entry for public involvement in environmental project reviews; raised the regulatory and review threshold for future projects; and moved final regulatory approval from the nominally independent National Energy Board and Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency to Cabinet. This last change arguably rendered the widespread public involvement in Northern Gateway's review process politically irrelevant.

Yet if the goal was to undermine regional resistance, the plan backfired spectacularly. The new legislation, along with Oliver's 'foreign funded radicals' statements, led to intensified resistance from ENGOs and local citizens who bristled at being labeled foreign-backed dupes and ideologues. It also angered First Nations who saw in the legislation stealth attacks on indigenous rights and title, constitutionally-mandated consultations for developments on unceded territory, and the capacity of First Nations to enforce environmental safeguards on their own lands. This anger was a

decisive factor in launching the 2012 'Idle No More' movement, a Canada-wide series of protests and direct actions against the settler colonial state which made the immediate repeal of C-45 one of its central demands (Coulthard, 2014, 151-180).

Today, the Northern Gateway project is dead. In the 2015 Federal election, the Gateway-backing Conservatives lost to the Federal Liberals led by Justin Trudeau (Hume et al, 2015, Oct 29). Within a year the new government had formally rejected the Gateway project, although only after successful First Nations legal challenges had rendered it effectively dead (Tasker, 2016, Nov 29). Trudeau's campaign had been predicated on overturning the heavy handed, extractivist legacy of the Harper years, vowing to work towards improved consultations and project reviews for major resource projects, a coherent climate change strategy, and improved relations with Canada's first peoples (Do, 2015, June 29). Yet today national support for tar sands expansion remains high, and in some ways the Liberals have emerged as the industry' new best friend. As of writing, the Liberals have approved several contentious bitumen transport and export market diversification projects, including the Kinder Morgan Transmountain extension in BC (Tasker, 2016, Nov 29). They have also welcomed the incoming Trump administration's approval of the Keystone XL project meant to connect Alberta bitumen with refineries in the Gulf. These new projects will likely allow for significant increases in upstream bitumen production, potentially undermining any new climate change legislation under the Liberals. In short, while the anti-Gateway coalition certainly won the regional battle, the pro-extractivist coalition may be winning the larger war.

## **1.1. The Specter of Crisis Again**

The conflict over Northern Gateway that unfolded in 2010 has made for good news copy. At times, the highly publicized battle between Gateway's proponents and opponents could appear larger than life, a high-stakes melodrama of diametrically opposed forces battling for the economic and environmental future of the province, nation, and global climate. The conflict between environmentalists, First Nations, and various local stakeholders on the one hand, and the Canadian oil industry, the province of Alberta, the Federal Government, much of the media, and a significant portion of the nation's business elite on the other, was often articulated as a heroic battle between good and evil. Yet which actors were good and which were evil depended largely on one's position on the project, which in turn often depended on one's geographic and

social location, as well as one's overall worldview. Ideological combat was central here. Emotionally charged language was used by both sides to draw stark lines in the Sands, with opponents *and* proponents of Gateway variously labelled traitors, radicals, and foreign invaders. Such conflicts demonstrate the relationship between ideology, subjectivity, and place – whether local, regional, global.

The ways in which Gateway's opponents identified themselves as British Columbians or First Nations gestured to a specific set of identities and interests oriented around very specific relations to regional and local places. Similarly, proponents unwaveringly portrayed Gateway as in the Canadian *national* interest. Yet this national interest was predicated on very specific relations between the national and the global, with Canada's 'true' identity defined by its potential role supplying burgeoning globalized markets with abundant Canadian energy. At the same time, proponents described the Canadian nation as under attack from foreign-funded environmentalists who were coded as symbolically and sometimes literally outside the national space. Opponents also related their regional and local interests to 'external' places, whether by decrying the role of Northern Gateway in speeding up global climate change, or attacking Gateway's proponents as 'foreign elites' attacking British Columbia from the 'outside'.

All these conflicts gestured to the way that cultural identity and ideological phenomena are related to place. This fact is particularly salient due to the nature of Canadian oil sands development, which has proceeded according to a paradigm that Travis Fast (2014) terms 'neoliberal extractivism'. This paradigm can be understood as 'neoliberal' not just because it privileges private profit over the public good, but also because it is structurally oriented towards profoundly unequal distributions of risk and benefit across jurisdictional, geographical, and sociological space (Fast, 2014; Davidson and Gismondi, 2011; Barney, 2015). Jurisdictional, because tar sands development disproportionately benefits certain governments like Alberta (Hoberg, 2013) – where oil sands revenue is used to prop up regressive taxation and royalty regimes which benefit industry and economic elites (Boychuck, 2010) – at the expense of manufacturing regions like Ontario (Brown et al., 2009) or areas which absorb excess environmental risk like British Columbia. Sociological because the majority of economic gains go to investors, firms, and various economic elites (Barney, 2013; Boychuck, 2010; Campanella, 2012; Fast, 2014). And geographical because the development of the tar

sands at that time increasingly enriched international firms and investors at the expense of Canadian workers and taxpayers.

Understanding the battle over Northern Gateway, and the identities which ground political discourse, necessitates an accounting for the maldistribution of risk and benefit within and across these places. If benefits accrue mostly to multinational firms and investors, on what basis do we speak of Gateway as in the 'Canadian national interest'? The same question must be asked if the most benefits within Canada accrue to Alberta tax collectors or economic elites, or if the majority of environmental risk is absorbed by British Columbian settlers or First Nations: *why the Canadian nation?* Why not the British Columbian province, the northern coastal region, the Ontario working class, the Haida first peoples? Why not the global climate, and those most at risk from its ongoing destabilization?

But identities – even those anchored by something as seemingly stable as place – are not static or unchanging. Not always. Throughout the ideological jockeying for place-based special pleading, there was a palpable sense of urgency, even crisis. This became most clear as proponents' worries of a rapidly narrowing window of opportunity to diversify energy exports ran up against increasingly dire scientific findings concerning climate change and the fear of British Columbian settlers and First Nations of a catastrophic bitumen spill or leak.

I believe that crisis is a useful frame for exploring the Northern Gateway controversy, precisely because during crisis people's perceived identities – and the broader world views and conceptions of place that they are articulated with – become unstable and more open to contestation or change. Understanding this conflict therefore requires an analysis of different types of crises and the ways in which they interact. First, opposition to Gateway represented a potential economic crisis, as the project fed into a bitumen export market diversification strategy that increasingly anchored the broader economic planning of Canada's leading corporate and state elites. These related to a broader national economic crisis signaled by the collapse or decline of various major industries since the neoliberal shift: the fisheries of Eastern Canada, the forestry industry of BC, central Canadian manufacturing, and the knowledge sector (remember Nortel? Exactly). It also related to an uncomfortable economic reality of neoliberal development; that of stagnating incomes for most of the population and a corresponding increase in

economic inequality since the 1980s (Broadbent Institute, 2014; Carrick, 2017, Jan 15; Gutstein, 2014, 119-218; Heisz, 2015). Both phenomena are linked to the broader global economic crisis, with proponents positioning projects like Gateway as Canada's means to escape the economic stagnation plaguing the US and Europe. And of course, in the context of softening US demand for Canadian bitumen, Gateway's main rationale – linking Alberta bitumen with an energy-hungry China – took on increased economic saliency. In retrospect even the price crash of 2014 contextualizes the urgent tone of pipeline proponents: 'better build now, before the whole thing goes down!'

These economic crises cannot be separated from the nation's looming political crisis. The rejection of Gateway by both Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (ENGO's), BC First Nations, and local settler communities along the proposed route represented a crisis for the Conservative Party of Canada and other actors which have championed the tar sands as a driving force of 21st century Canadian prosperity. This crisis manifested regionally, as the rejection of Northern Gateway by the BC Liberals reignited longstanding jurisdictional conflicts concerning resource extraction and environmental regulation in Canada (Hoberg, 2013). Both these crises have been inherited by the newly elected Federal Liberal government, whose Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is expected by various constituents to secure pipeline projects, combat climate change, and protect the interests of local settlers and First Nations along project routes. It's probably not possible. But in a way that is the definition of crisis: the reality and necessity of proceeding under impossible conditions, conjuring new possibilities in the process.

These political conflicts linked to a deeper constitutional crisis concerning Canada's indigenous decolonization movement and questions concerning Aboriginal rights and title (Coulthard, 2014). Many First Nations along the proposed route had rejected Gateway, citing irreparable economic, ecological and cultural harm in case of a pipeline or tanker spill (Hoberg, 2013). Following 40 years of hard-won legal victories concerning aboriginal rights and title, BC First Nations are strategically placed to sideline not just Gateway, but the broader possibilities for energy export market diversification. In 2017, as Gateway fades into memory, Prime Minister Trudeau deals with this legacy of indigenous resistance and constitutional ambiguity, as First Nations emerge as powerful opponents of the various bitumen and natural gas projects his own government seeks to secure.

Finally, these political and economic crises relate back to the looming ecological crisis. At the same moment that Canada's elites promote tar sands expansion as the guarantor of future Canadian prosperity, environmental science illuminates this strategy's potentially catastrophic ecological implications. Not only must residents along the pipeline route absorb the risk of a potential pipeline or tanker spill (Hoberg, 2013), but Albertan bitumen remains one of the most carbon-intensive sources of energy on the planet (Nikiforuk, 2009; 2010). The completion of Northern Gateway and other projects meant to boost bitumen production in the coming decades will potentially undermine any national response to anthropogenic climate change, a real and present threat to the future viability of human civilization – or at least anything we would recognize as such (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 115-220). As documented in a 2012 report by the Pembina Institute, the oil sands are Canada's fastest growing source of greenhouse gases, with emissions almost tripling between 1990 and 2010 (Huot and Grant, 2012). As future emissions were (prior to the 2014 price collapse) projected to double between 2010 and 2020, further expansion of the industry threatens to nullify any decrease in emissions from other sectors of the economy.

Yet both the climate and capitalism are global systems. Understanding Gateway necessitates an understanding of both national *and* global socio-ecological formations and the systemic crises which link them.

Today crisis is the specter which haunts the global imagination. The United States and Europe face interminable economic crises which have undermined growth, employment, what remains of the welfare state, and in the case of the European Union, the viability of Europe as a transnational political economic project. In response, both regions have witnessed an explosion of rightist xenophobic extremism, from the Tea Party, the alt-right and the election of Donald Trump in the United States to Brexit in the UK to the ascendant of far right and neo-fascist parties throughout Europe. Radical leftist politics have made a similar, if more modest, comeback, with the short-lived yet ideologically-potent Occupy movement in North America, the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign in the United States, and the anti-austerity movements of Europe being the most obvious recent examples. The ecological crisis has also emerged on a global scale, with anthropogenic climate change manifesting through a macabre spectrum of phenomena – record ice melt in the arctic; forest fires and droughts

throughout the North American west; severe storms and flooding; and so on. Global civilization is running, hurtling over the cliff of the Anthropocene.

Some readers may experience a strong sense of *Déjà vu*, as the turbulent years of the 1970s and 1980s invoked a similar unmaking of their world: persistent economic stagflation; the financialisation of the global economy; the decline of western manufacturing and the rise of Asia; the collapse of labor and the hollowing out of the welfare state; the downfall of Keynesian economics and the ascendance of neo classical market fundamentalism (Harvey, 2005); and disco. Older readers may point to a yet *earlier* set of crises and the “great transformations” which followed: the Great Depression, the Second World War; the rise of the welfare state, the beginning of the cold war; decolonization; the ascendancy of third world nationalism, and so on (Arrighi, 1994). “Ah hah!” they might exclaim, “Today’s doomsayers are the latest in a long line of crisis-obsessed Cassandras!”

Previous structural changes have often signified epochal shifts to novel modes of political, economic, and ideological organization. When Keynesian-Fordism disintegrated during the 1970s, it was replaced by a social order based on new modes of political and economic organization; new ideological rationales; and new forms of transnational integration. The world did not end, but the world *system* of Keynesian-Fordism did. Perhaps today we witness the end of another world, and crises, as per usual, are its horsemen. “The old is dying” wrote Gramsci (1996), “and the new can not yet be born. In the interregnum there appear a great many morbid symptoms” (275).

Yet today’s ecological crisis threatens to undermine the basic metabolic relationship between human civilization and the biosphere upon which all prior world systems silently depended (Foster, et al., 2011). Our *world* – in the sociological sense – is not coterminous with “our” *planet*. The planet will survive. Our world may not be so lucky.

## **1.2. Gramsci, Hegemony, and Crisis Theory**

Crises are rarely the sole outcome of natural laws and transhistorical processes, and neither are the identities which they potentially destabilize. The institutions and ideas which constitute a given social order must be developed, maintained, defended,

and (eventually) challenged by concrete social actors and movements. I believe these phenomena are usefully grasped through a Gramscian perspective. While Gramsci (1996) recognized the foundational role of economic production in any social formation, he also stressed the importance of *political hegemony over society*. For Gramsci, this hegemony was materially manifested in blocs, or the constellation of dominant institutions, social groups, and ideas around which an economic and political system was organized (263). The concept of bloc foregrounds the question of which social actors elites seek to integrate into their political projects to give them coherence and stability, as well as the importance of civil society institutions in building, defending, and coordinating such projects (244). For example, a Gramscian might point out that some of the major civil society groups which have promoted Gateway, such as Ottawa's MacDonald Laurier Institute, have numerous links to the same organizations that have provided the ideological justification for neoliberal reforms in Canada since the 1980s. This point is crucial, as a key aspect of hegemonic rule is the capacity of a bloc's civil society actors to ideologically rationalize and justify its governance. Gramsci identified such actors as 'organic intellectuals' (3). In our case these might include various think tank scholars, legislators and even journalists which provide and circulate the various rationales for Northern Gateway's approval and tar sands expansion more generally.

Though Gramsci is best known as a theorist of hegemony and ideology, crisis was fundamental to his understanding of both phenomena. For Gramsci (1996), a hegemonic crisis occurred when the normal operation of a social system broke down – for instance during a destructive war or a prolonged economic depression. Under such circumstances, the perceived legitimacy of the bloc may be undermined, and the alliance of social groups which help constitute it may even break apart. For instance, an arrangement in which some workers support the ruling bloc in exchange for jobs may break down if the economy cannot generate sufficient growth and employment. In such times, the bloc's ideological underpinnings may become open to challenge, creating opportunities for new actors to gain political support and create new blocs oriented around novel forms of economic, political, and ideological organization. For instance, the crisis of the 1970s opened the door for neoliberal think tanks to promote new economic and political theories that undermined the hegemony of Keynesian economics while offering a new blueprint for reorganizing the entire political economy (Harvey, 2005).

Similarly, today's ecological, political and economic crises have opened a space within which opponents to the current regime can maneuver.

### **1.3. Natural Causes: Political Ecology and Crisis**

Gramsci alone may be insufficient for understanding crisis in the Anthropocene. The Gramscian dialectic between political-economic and cultural-ideational forces has often ignored the extent to which *both* phenomena are mutually constituted with and structured by the planet's ecological systems and processes. I hope to rectify this shortcoming by integrating Gramscian analysis with that of *political ecology*, a theoretical framework which focuses on "the ways in which the social, ecological and political articulate and rearticulate" each other throughout time and space (Panofsky, 2011, 52-53).

Scholars such as John Bellamy Foster join a growing number of ecological socialists who foreground ecological barriers to accumulation as drivers of capitalist crisis, noting the 'metabolic' relation between economic systems and the planet's ecological processes (Foster et al., 2011). Pre-capitalist societies have certainly ruptured this metabolic relationship in the past, at times leading to societal destabilization and collapse (Diamond, 2005). Yet it was only under capitalism that these "metabolic rifts" between human civilization and the natural world began manifesting globally, whether through the overexploitation of an economy's resource base or the production of unmanageable volumes of waste pollution (Meadows et al., 1972). If left unchecked, such processes may ultimately undermine the reproduction of earth's ecological systems. Such an outcome was predicted as early as 1972, when a team of researchers commissioned by the Club of Rome published *The Limits to Growth*, a report predicting widespread depletion of resources, ecological degradation, and societal collapse if economic growth was to continue unchecked over the next century.

Such outcomes are possible because capitalism is organized around the maximization of exchange value realized through the production and sale of commodities. Yet a commodity's exchange value – its price – need not take into account the 'use value' of the ecological systems and processes upon which all commodity production depends (Foster et al., 2011). Capitalism thereby tends to undermine its own 'conditions of production': the unpriced social, political and ecological 'goods and

services' which are the hidden foundations of economic life, and yet which appear to commodity producers as 'free' production inputs simply because they are not priced into the costs of production (O'Connor, 1998). Economists call the unpriced effects of an economic transaction on the broader social or ecological environment market 'externalities', because their effects occur outside capital's valorization and realization processes. If left unchecked, these ecological 'rifts' may eventually lead to crisis (Foster et al., 2011), whether by destroying the ecological systems upon which production depends or by generating opposition from those suffering the 'externalities' of market activity (O'Connor, 1998).

Since its inception, industrial capitalism has been inextricably linked to the massive increase of energy throughputs over time, with a corresponding increase in the burning of fossil fuels (Foster et al., 2011; Malm, 2016; O'Connor; 1998). Today this has generated the ultimate planetary rift: anthropogenic climate change (ACC). This rift now threatens to undermine both capitalist production and the basic metabolic relation between humans and the planet upon which all previous civilizations depended. And it is this ecological crisis which partially structures the economic and political crises facing Canada and the larger global system today.

## **1.4. Research Program and Chapter Organization**

The research undertaken in this dissertation consists of three main overlapping components. The first involves a historical and theoretical account of several interrelated phenomena, including the role of oil in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century capitalism; the rise of the oil sands in the context of neoliberal extractivism; and the establishment of the Harper Conservatives as the political leadership of an emergent Canadian petrobloc dedicated to the expansion and defense of neoliberal extractivism in the face of interlocking economic, political and ecological crisis. These accounts set the stage for an analysis and history of the Northern Gateway project and the subsequent resistance to that project by BC First Nations, environmentalists, and other regional, national and global stakeholders.

Following this, I examine the discursive and institutional strategies of 17 prominent civil society, state and industry actors in the pro- and anti-Gateway discourse coalitions. This analysis proceeds from the understanding that the political strategies of

these coalitions depended on their ability to circulate alternative interpretations of the Northern Gateway project and various actors' relations to it so as to align potential constituents with their own movement goals. Given the capacity of language to generate particular understandings of the world around us, our own identity, and our conceptions of self-interest (Fairclough, 2013), I performed a discourse analysis on the political communications of these project opponents and supporters. These materials were collected from a variety of online sources, including organization websites. A second round of discourse analysis was conducted on a sample of newspaper articles and opinion pieces published in four major Canadian daily papers from December 2011 to February 2012 and December 2013.

It is not just the shared discourse of coalition members that allows them to pursue interfield political projects, but also the capacity of networked institutions to draw together ideologically or politically aligned coalition members from across multiple fields. As such, this dissertation supplements the discourse analysis with a parallel social network analysis (SNA) of the boards, staff, and executives of the sampled pro- and anti-Gateway coalition members. Biographical and professional information on these individuals was once again collected from a variety of online sources, and entered into social network mapping software used to map out the affiliation networks linking these actors to various organizations within the fields of civil society, government, industry, academia, and media. This was done to explore the relative thickness of network ties binding the anti- and pro-Gateway coalitions, and to ascertain the extent to which coalition members were embedded in common political and institutional networks. By relating the social network analysis to the discourse analysis, I was able to better contextualise the emergent coordination of the pro- and anti-Gateway coalitions. By examining the extent to which broader coalition narratives were generated by organizations embedded in similar political, economic, and social networks, I gained insights into how coalitions enable discursive coordination across organizations and fields.

My discussion begins in the next chapter with an analysis of the changing role of oil resources in global capitalism as the world system shifted from Keynesian-Fordist to globalised neoliberal regimes of accumulation. It also explores the emergent resistance to neoliberalism by environmentalists and other actors, and charts the response of neoliberal discourse coalitions to stave off the environmentalist threat through a series of

coordinated ecoskeptic communications campaigns. In chapter 3, I move on to a discussion of the Alberta Tar sands, mapping the bitumen boom onto the ascendance of Canada's neoliberal project, the Harper Conservatives, and extractivist economic regimes dependent on ongoing processes of settler colonial encroachment. I position these regimes as extensions of the neoliberal class project, exploring how contemporary resource development is organized so as to disproportionately benefit various regional and national elites whose interests are increasingly synched up with global investors and transnational capitalist fractions. Finally, I examine Northern Gateway as an extension of this project in the context of crisis, and describe the intensifying political conflict between proponents and an increasingly mobilised opposition between 2010 and 2016.

In chapter 4 I outline my methods, data collection, and research design, explaining why social network and discourse analysis are valuable tools for exploring the Northern Gateway conflict. Rather than present the findings of the social network and discourse analysis chronologically, I decided to organize the results according to institutional field so as to better illustrate the extent to which coalition members were embedded in broader discourse coalitions and blocs. This helped me develop a more targeted analysis of the discursive strategies deployed by particular *types* of organizations in both coalitions. As such, Chapter 5 explores the discursive strategies and institutional networks of Northern Gateway's state and industry supporters and opponents. Chapter 6 moves from this state- and capital- centric approach to a more holistic analysis of discourse coalitions and political blocs, focusing on the environmental and First Nations advocacy groups opposing Gateway. Chapter 7 does the same for the think tanks and advocacy groups in the pro-Gateway sample. Chapter 8 then presents the results from the discourse analysis of newspaper coverage.

In chapter 9, I make brief concluding comments on the study's findings. I offer some final thoughts concerning the institutional and discursive strategies of coalition members; the relationship between the pro- and anti-Gateway coalition members and larger hegemonic and counterhegemonic projects; the relation of coalition strategies to broader economic, political and ecological crises; and what all this may tell us about the future of neoliberal extractivism in Canada. These conclusions are presented in the context of the Federal Conservatives' defeat in the 2015 Federal Election and the subsequent Liberal government's 2016 rejection of Northern Gateway. Finally, I offer

some thoughts on the relation between the Northern Gateway conflict, the advent of the Trudeau Liberals, and the future of neoliberal extractivism in Canada.

## **Chapter 2. Carbon Copies: Oil and the Capitalist World Systems**

Many of the changes associated with Canada's neoliberal shift – during which the most recent tar sands booms occurred – have an irrevocably global dimension. The move from Keynesian-Fordist and Import Substitution Industrialization regimes of economic governance to neoliberal ones since the 1970s occurred not just in Canada, but throughout much of the developed and developing world (Harvey, 2004; Robinson, 2004). In the subsequent decades, the increase in income inequality and wealth stagnation under these regimes has occurred not just in Canada (Broadbent Institute, 2014; Carrick, Jan 15, 2017; Gutstein, 2014, 119-218; Heisz, 2015) but throughout much of the globe (Harvey, 2005; Robinson, 2004), predicated on the international integration of policy regimes and markets.

Despite the nationalist rhetoric of Gateway's supporters, Canada's tar sands is also a global enterprise. Bitumen production in Alberta is dominated by the international firms and investors who bankroll the operation and acquire the lion's share of revenue, while the majority of Alberta's production is shipped to and refined in the United States (Boychuck, 2010; Clarke et al., 2013). The most serious ecological rift associated with the tar sands – climate change – is also global in scope, as is the environmental movement which has mobilized to halt further expansion of carbon-intensive bitumen production and consumption (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011). Many of the factors structuring tar sands booms and busts have also been global in nature. It was the beginning of historically high world energy prices in the late 1990s which made the tar sands boom economically viable in the first place (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011). And it was the global oil price crash in 2014 that cratered both the Alberta bitumen industry and the re-election chances of the Harper Conservatives and Alberta Progressive Conservatives (Markusoff, 2016). In fact, it is between these two global demand shocks that much of the Northern Gateway controversy unfolded. As such, this chapter attempts to chart out the global context of oil exploitation, trade, and consumption, so as to better understand the transnational dimension of the oil sands and the crisis of Northern Gateway.

## **2.1. World Liquidity: Oil and Growth in the Keynesian-Fordist System**

The rise of industrial capitalism was inextricably tied to the rise of fossil fuels (Malm, 2016). “Until 200 years ago,” notes Mitchell (2009), “the energy needed to sustain human existence came almost entirely from renewable sources” (401). These mostly derived from solar energy, which was “converted into grain and other crops to provide fuel for humans, into grasslands to raise animals for labour and further human fuel, into woodlands to provide firewood and into wind and water power to drive transportation and machinery” (401). Yet the increase in production associated with industrial capitalism required new forms of energy, which were found in newly discovered deposits of coal and oil. These new energy sources were much more concentrated than those that powered agricultural civilization, and could be more easily transported. This allowed for the geographical decoupling of sites of energy extraction and consumption, facilitating the rapid urban migration and rising productivity levels associated with early industrial capitalism.

Capitalism’s dependency on fossil fuel consumption only intensified under the US-led Keynesian-Fordist system that emerged from the ashes of the Great Depression, and which was tasked with mitigating the contradictions that had unmade the previous regime. By the early twentieth century, the previous British-led system of ‘free trade’ had produced immense income inequality and wage stagnation throughout much of the capitalist world (McNally, 2011). More than 90 percent of Americans experienced falling incomes during 1920s, a fact papered over with rising household and business debt (64). Though this debt helped fuel a stock market bubble that was hoped to alleviate weak effective demand, widespread overinvestment in the material economy soon put downward pressure on corporate profits and dividends, divorcing rising stock prices from their underlying asset values. The house of cards came tumbling down with the crash of 1929, and the ensuing Great Depression tore the world system apart (Arrighi, 1994).

It was not until the Second World War that growth resumed following a systematic reorganization of the political economy under the auspices of the New Deal and wartime planning (McNally, 2011, 61-84). Under the emerging Keynesian-Fordist order, both growth and political stability were hitched to a so-called “class compromise” oriented around unprecedented degrees of state intervention in the economy (Robinson,

2004, 17, 42). The newly ascendant field of Keynesian economics was used to justify policies encouraging high rates of labor unionization, rising salaries, progressive taxation, and state provision of welfare services. Together, these policy shifts undermined labor militancy while stimulating domestic demand (Harvey, 2005; 2011). Many members of the US business elite were founding members of the new bloc. Corporate executives helped set up networks of influential Keynesian think tanks like the Brookings Institute and the Council for Foreign Relations, which together developed some of the major policy reforms and institutions of the New Deal and the broader US-led global order (Domhoff, 1971; 1978).

Fossil fuels were fundamental to this new era, even structuring its currency regime. The disintegration of Europe's gold-backed currency system following the crash of 1929 foregrounded the need for a stable monetary regime to facilitate international trade and circulate world liquidity (Arrighi, 1994; McNally, 2011, 88-92; Mitchell, 2009, 413-415;). With this goal in mind, US planners established the Bretton Woods system, which pegged the US dollar to gold whilst pegging other currencies to the US dollar (Hung, Ho-Fung, 2013, 1342). Yet it was not gold but *oil* which underpinned Bretton Woods (Mitchell, 2009). By the end of the war, oil had emerged as the most traded commodity in both value and volume, with "the United States produc[ing] two-thirds" of global supply by 1945 (414). American control of the world oil market only increased over subsequent decades as US oil companies, aided by American military agreements with post-colonial Middle Eastern governments, came to dominate the production and sale of oil around the world (Ho-Fung, 2013; Mitchell 2009). The result was that virtually all global oil trade came to be priced in US dollars, necessitating "large-scale governmental purchases of dollar instruments" (Ho Fung, 2013, 1345). This motivated "private enterprises and other countries... to use dollars in their reserves and invoices", helping establish the US dollar as the new world reserve currency.

If the US currency was effectively a petrodollar, this was only because oil had become the lynchpin of the world economy. Global growth of the post-war era was predicated on significant geographic expansions of the capitalist world economy as new nations – including many ex-colonies – entered the system (Arrighi, 1994). Over the same period, energy demand in the west was spiking alongside the rapid development of the new energy-intensive technologies, industries, lifestyles, and consumer markets which fueled the Keynesian-Fordist economy (Mitchell, 2009, 409). Oil was the primary

fuel stock for this new period of capitalist expansion for two main reasons. First, fossil fuels have a remarkably high Energy Return on Energy Input (EROEI), allowing for productivity increases far exceeding the solar-income budgets of pre-capitalist economies (Altvater, 2009; Mitchell, 2009). Second, the “relative lightness and fluidity” of oil allowed it to be shipped across the world in large quantities (Mitchell, 2009, 407). This allowed for the construction of an international trade system that decoupled sites of energy production and consumption (Altvater, 2009). Finally, oil production’s low labor intensity, high levels of automation, and geographic dispersal made it significantly less vulnerable to disruption by organized labor (Mitchell, 2009). All this made petroleum so crucial to the internationalizing regime that “by 1970, 60 per cent of world seaborne cargo consisted of oil” (Mitchell, 2009, 407).

The rise of oil had political effects, such as the tendency of many oil producing nations to develop into authoritarian petrostates. Scholars have long noted how states that depended on petroleum for a large share of their export earnings – such as the major oil producers in the Middle East – often utilized oil income to relieve social pressures, buy political support or repress dissent (Karl, 2008; Mitchell, 2009). This process was facilitated by America’s need to maintain stable and growing oil supply to secure global hegemony, compelling it to intervene in any nation where democratic or nationalist forces threatened the flow of cheap energy throughout the US-led world economy (Mitchell, 2009). The result was a Middle East dominated by US-backed, authoritarian petrostates.

The central role of oil in the global economy also had profound ideological effects. Keynesian economic theory claimed that class conflict could be overcome through constantly rising living standards generated through ever increasing wages, technological development, and state welfare provision (Harvey, 2004). All of this was to be paid for with never-ending productivity increases (Mitchell, 2009, 417). Previous theories of wealth had been based upon “spatial and material” processes that implied biophysical limits to growth: “the expansion of cities and factories, the colonial enlargement of territory, the accumulation of gold reserves, the growth of population and absorption of migrants, the exploitation of new mineral reserves, [and] increasing volumes of trade in commodities” (Mitchell, 2009, 417-418). However, under Keynesian – and indeed all neoclassical – conceptions of the economy, growth was measured not through any increase in material or energy throughputs, but rather as the sum total of all

monetary transactions in the economy. So long as the volume of money increased, the 'economy' could grow indefinitely!

Such a "conception of the economy depended upon abundant and low-cost energy supplies, making post-war Keynesian economics a form of 'petroknowledge'".

Notes Mitchell:

"Oil contributed to the new conception of the economy as an object that could grow without limit in two ways. First, oil declined continuously in price.... Adjusting for inflation, the price of a barrel of oil in 1970 was one-third of what it sold for in 1920. So, although increasing quantities of energy were consumed, the cost of energy did not appear to represent a limit to growth. Second, thanks to its relative abundance and the ease of shipping it across oceans, oil could be treated as something inexhaustible[, as its]... cost included no calculation for the exhaustion of reserves.... Moreover, the costs of air pollution, environmental disaster, climate change and other negative consequences of using fossil fuels were not deducted from the measurement of GNP... In all these ways, the availability and supply of oil contributed to the shaping of the economy and its growth as the new object of mid-twentieth-century politics" (2009, 418).

## **2.2. Building Blocs: Crisis, Civil Society, and Neoliberalism**

Despite securing 30 years of stable growth in the Capitalist West, the US-led Keynesian-Fordist regime began to unravel during the 1970s. Growing international competition, escalating costs of the Vietnam war, and the transition of the US from being an oil exporting nation to an oil importing nation combined to produce large US deficits (Ho-Fung, 2014, 1343; McNally 2011, 90-92; Mitchell, 2009). The result was a significant outflow of US dollars into overseas accounts beyond the reach of US regulation. When these eclipsed the value of US gold reserves, ensuing speculative pressures forced US President Richard Nixon to abandon the gold standard in 1974, opening up the dollar to the vicissitudes of global finance. Although this shift bestowed new privileges to US planners in the emerging global economy – such as an increased ability to finance budget and trade deficits without risk of inflation – the Bretton Woods system which had underpinned 40 years of stable international growth was at an end.

Over the same period, profit rates in the United States and Canada were tumbling as rising working class wages and benefits combined with growing regulatory and tax burdens, generating persistent stagflation (Dyer-Witherford, 1999, 133; McNally,

2011; Smith, 2007, 52). The death knell came with the OPEC-driven oil embargo of 1973, which generated a severe supply shock that Keynesian economics was unable to explain or mitigate (Bakan, 2004, 21). The resulting recession compelled capital to go on the offensive. As David Harvey (2005) has explained, this involved not simply the pursuit of economic efficiency, but the initiation of a systemic class war. The perceived role of wealth redistribution, democratic intervention in 'market forces', and economic regulation in generating stagflation had compelled many economic elites to view economic crisis as a symptom of the erosion of their economic privilege. As such, many capitalists saw any successful political economic reform as dependent upon the political defeat of both labor and democratic publics.

Yet any attempt at political economic reorganization would require the delegitimization of Keynesian-Fordist ideology, which saw state intervention as a necessary component of sustainable growth and political stability. And so in the 1970s many North American business leaders – including various oil industry executives bristling at the rapid growth of environmental regulation (Beder, 2012) – began funding the development of what I have previously termed Elite Policy and Information Infrastructures (EPII) (Neubauer, 2011) : sprawling networks of lobbying organizations, foundations, advocacy groups, and industry-backed policy institutes (or think tanks) which tirelessly promoted free market economics and philosophy in the public sphere (Bakan, 2004, 103; Beder, 2012, 73; McCright and Dunlap, 2010; Neubauer, 2011).

### **2.2.1. Growing Organic: EPII Groups, Discourse Coalitions and Neoliberal Ideology**

The success of market fundamentalist EPII groups could not be explained by their elite support alone. The perceived policy expertise of industry-funded think tanks, for instance, derived significantly from their cultivation of epistemic communities of free market intellectuals (Stone, 1996, 86). Members of these communities largely emerged from two distinct yet overlapping philosophical schools. The first were the neoliberals, a community of radical free market intellectuals oriented around Austrian economists like Friedrich von Hayek and Ludwig von Mises (Desai 1994, 27). Neoliberals drew on a synthesis of neoclassical economics and liberal metaphysics to argue that liberty and prosperity could only be ensured by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, while minimizing state and societal interventions in 'market forces' (Bakan,

2004, 156; Brown, 2006; Harvey, 2011, 130). The second epistemic community was the neoconservatives, whose members eschewed neoliberal preoccupations with market 'freedoms' in favor of maintaining social order (Gutstein, 2014, 27). This led them to support a strong state which could enforce traditional divisions of wealth, undermine dissent, and stabilise market relations (Brown, 2006). The state's authority was to be partially safeguarded by way of the ideological unification of a disparate populace under the banners of nationalism and militarism, as well as various attempts to ensure the political passivity of subjects/consumers.

The lavish funding of these 'New Right' think tank scholars, policy entrepreneurs, and public intellectuals allowed them to develop into networked 'discourse coalitions' of like-minded activist-intellectuals dedicated to a common political project of neoliberal reform (Smith, 2007, 90; Stone, 1996, 94). As Bourdieu argued, an actor's capacity to dominate a social field stems from their possession of the relevant cultural capital – the intangible cultural markers designating an actor as a legitimate member of a field (Benson and Neveu, 2005; Bourdieu, 1991; 2005; Eagleton 1991, 157). To this end, EPII groups bestowed upon discourse coalition members the *cultural capital of perceived expertise*, sometimes acquired merely by being identified as a 'scholar' of a prestigious-sounding Foundation or Institute (Neubauer, 2011). EPII groups also deployed a variety of strategies to help members generate the *social capital of interpersonal and professional networks*: collaboration on joint publications, conferences, and research projects; the sharing of resources such as personnel, office space, and funding benefactors; and significant overlap among the staff and boards of allied organizations (Gutstein, 2009; 2014; Stefancic and Delgado, 1996, 11; Stone 1996, 96).

In some ways Neoliberal think tanks have followed the path of their Keynesian forbearers in influencing state actors through the provision of seemingly-objective expertise and advice (Fischer, 1991; Stone, 1996, 113). Yet EPII groups are distinguished from their predecessors in their heightened focus on media visibility, with much of their work consisting of the repackaging of neoliberal principles as newsworthy research findings, presented in the form of research reports, interviews, op-eds, and policy briefings (Gutstein, 2009, 2014; Rich, 2004, 4; Rich and Weaver, 2000, 81; Smith, 2007, 87-89). EPII groups have thereby become a means for economic elites to translate their economic capital into cultural and social capital which can be invested in the media and government fields (Neubauer, 2011). They thereby provide the

institutional mechanisms to coordinate an *interfield* neoliberal class project financed by economic elites and executed by the organic intellectuals of neoliberal discourse coalitions. This work has been aided by recent shifts in media organization, as decades of media consolidation and staff downsizing have heightened the demand for the cheap content which civil society organizations provide (Champagne, 2005, 53; Gutstein, 2009). The reports, interviews, and op-eds produced by EPII groups thereby represent 'information subsidies' to overworked journalists who increasingly lack both the time and technical expertise to vet the legitimacy of think tank research or the interests of a group's board members, staff, or funders (Gandy, 1982; Gutstein, 2009; 2014).

### **2.2.2. Brave New World: Rise of the Global Neoliberal System**

Since the 1970s, EPII-linked neoliberal and neoconservative discourse coalitions have operated out of think tanks, academic departments, state planning agencies, and other institutions to develop the key reforms of the neoliberal shift (Gutstein, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Mato, 2007; Robinson, 2004, 113-130). Generally speaking, these included privatization of public assets; financial deregulation; dismantling of capital controls; rollback of labor protections; significant cuts to welfare and social services; and regressive taxation regimes (Bakan, 2004; Dyer-Witherford, 1999; Gutstein 2014, 193-195; Robinson, 2004; Yudice, 2003, 83-94.) These nascent national regimes were harmonized with an emergent "global policy regime that [sought to break] down all national barriers to the free movement of transnational capital" (Robinson 2004, 78). These were exemplified by the signing of numerous so-called 'free trade' agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the United States, Mexico, and Canada in 1994 (Gutstein 2014, 193-195; Robinson 2004), and the establishment of the World Trade Organization in 1995 (Robinson, 2004, 24). Together, these transnational policy apparatuses operated in conjunction with national neoliberal regimes to undermine the capacity of national actors to implement any political program which presented global capital with barriers to accumulation.

As a result, many states shifted from economic strategies based on cultivating robust national markets to export-based strategies in which firms leveraged organizational innovations in outsourcing, subcontracting and offshoring to integrate their operations into globalized investment, production, and consumption chains (Harrison and Bluestone, 1990, 29; Harvey, 2011, 15-30; Robinson, 2004). These strategies were

enabled by the rise of deregulated, globally-integrated financial networks – facilitated by new information, communications and transportation technologies – coordinating the “international flow of liquid money capital to wherever it could be used most profitably” (Harvey, 2011, 16). The speed and flexibility of these globalizing technologies gave capital the capacity to shift production to low cost regions, or inflate and devalue local assets and currencies in real time, increasing capital's power to discipline unruly workers or democratic publics (Dyer-Witherford 1999, 13).

The shift in national production towards international exports in many nations has also entailed a sociological shift in class composition, as dominant sections of national capitalist classes become increasingly transnationally oriented (Robinson, 2004; 2009). As national business elites become less reliant on sustaining robust domestic purchasing power to maintain profitability and growth, some have prioritized intensified linkages with global markets and international investors. The focus on serving global markets and attracting international capital to maintain their own class privilege has often come at the economic or political expense of their own national working and middle classes, whose purchasing power and democratic consent have become less important for the maintenance of corporate profitability, rising elite incomes, and political stability. To a great extent, this has ruptured the national ‘class compromises’ upon which Keynesian-Fordist regimes were based.

Neoliberalism’s global turn has also entailed shifts in the world division of labor, with the most dramatic change being the meteoric rise of East Asian manufacturing since the 1970s and Chinese production since the mid-1990s (Li, 2009, 69-92). Globalizing firms sourcing through China have increased profitability by taking advantage of China’s low wages, regressive taxation regime, light regulatory burden, and massive reserve army of precarious labor. This, coupled with the inflation of US purchasing power through China’s mass buying of US dollar instruments, lowered the costs of Asian imports in Western markets, helping sustain consumption rates despite stagnating incomes (Hung, 2013, 1350-1351; Li, 2009). As a result, the Chinese economy became an important driver for global growth (Li, 2009, 69-87), and by 2005 China was the world’s fourth largest trading nation (Jakobson and Daojiong, 2006, 64).

Finally, the neoliberal shift has only intensified the ecological rifts associated with industrial capitalism that were foreshadowed in the Limits To Growth report of 1972.

Many of these rifts are built into the basic structure of neoliberal governance and economics. Many of the major environmental regulations of the west date back to the late Keynesian-Fordist era, exemplified by Nixon's creation of the Environmental Protection Agency in 1972 (Jacques et al., 2008). To an extent, neoliberal reform has undermined these protections, in particular by weakening the state's fiscal capacity to staff regulatory agencies and enforce regulation (Harvey, 2005). Yet particularly impactful have been the basic structure of neoliberal trade and investment regimes and the real time financial markets which facilitate them. These regimes – as epitomized by the WTO and trade agreements like NAFTA – have facilitated a massive relocation of global production to low-cost regions like China with poor environmental regulation, even while competitive pressures lead to the further erosion of western environmental regulatory regimes in the name of 'global competitiveness'. What's more, by enforcing so-called 'national treatment' in trade, these regimes often make national policy responses to unsustainable production and consumption legally tenuous (Dressel and Suzuki, 2004; Klein, 2015, 64-95). Under such regimes, many state interventions in the name of sustainability – such as subsidies for fledgling green industries or more stringent environmental regulations on consumer goods – can be opposed as 'discriminatory' against trade parties in common markets. Furthermore, while the international legal architecture for trade and investment is strictly enforced, corresponding international environmental regimes have remained toothless and largely unenforceable.

The result has been a huge increase in global production since the 1970s and a dramatic increase in both energy throughout and pollution. With the rise of globally integrated investment, production, and consumption chains dependent on vast global transportation and shipping networks, fossil fuel use has skyrocketed (Klein, 2009), with much of this associated with the economic rise of China (Hung, 2013; Jakobson and Daojiong, 2006; Lai, 2007; Li, 2009). While GHG emissions growth had been slowing prior to the neoliberal era – falling to 1% a year during the 1990s – emissions shot up dramatically during the early 2000's, reaching 5.9% a year by 2010 (Klein, 2015, 80).

The results have been devastating. The excessive burning of fossil fuels coupled with other greenhouse gas-producing activities has culminated in a process of human-induced climate change which has been well underway now for decades. According to the International Panel on Climate Change, the planet has already experienced about .75 degrees temperature increase since 1900, with the rate of warming increasing

significantly over the last 25 years (Pachauri and Reisinger, 2007). Under “plausible emission scenarios”, notes NASA, “average surface temperatures could rise between 2°C and 6°C by the end of the 21st century” (Riebeek, 2010). While 2-3 degrees would be an unmitigated economic, political, and social disaster, an increase between 5-6 could potentially uproot human civilization (Foster et al, 2012). Further confirmation of global warming comes from a variety of worrying trends, including the warming of the oceans, rising sea levels, melting glaciers, and the rapid retreat of arctic sea ice and diminished snow cover in northern and arctic regions (Pachauri and Reisinger, 2014). Finally, there is growing evidence that human induced climate change has already led to severe changes in weather patterns, with an increase in severe droughts and extreme storms in many various regions.

Yet as “bad as the climate crisis is”, note John Bellamy-Foster and Brett Clark (2012), “it is important to understand that it is *only a part of the larger global ecological crisis* – since climate change is merely one among a number of dangerous rifts in planetary boundaries arising from human transformations of the earth”:

Ocean acidification, destruction of the ozone layer, species extinction, the disruption of the nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, growing fresh water shortages, land-cover change, and chemical pollution all represent global ecological transformations/crises. Already we have crossed the planetary boundaries (designated by scientists based on departure from Holocene conditions) not only in relation to climate change, but also with respect to species extinction and the nitrogen cycle. Species extinction is occurring at about a thousand times the “background rate,” a phenomenon known as the “sixth extinction” (referring back to the five previous periods of mass extinctions in earth history—the most recent of which, 65 million years ago, resulted in the extinction of the dinosaurs). Nitrogen pollution now constitutes a major cause of dead zones in oceans. Other developing planetary rifts, such as ocean acidification (known as the “evil twin” of climate change since it is also caused by carbon emissions), and chronic loss of freshwater supplies, which is driving the global privatization of water, are of growing concern. All of this raises basic questions of survival: the ultimate crisis confronting humanity. (Bellamy-Foster and Clark, 2012).

### **2.3. Green Tide: Environmentalism and the Neoliberal Project**

Yet neoliberalism’s tendency to intensify planetary ecological rifts has not gone unchallenged. In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the emergence of scientific research

exploring the ecological externalities of economic activity helped galvanize a nascent environmental movement which began launching strong critiques of corporate capitalism (Mcright and Dunlap, 2010). By the 1990s, the environmental movement had developed into a powerful global force, its growth spurred on by increasing scientific evidence of ecological devastation (Jacques et al., 2008, 352). The result was an increasingly mobilised environmental movement that often demanded stringent environmental regulations – exactly the type of barriers to accumulation the neoliberal project was meant to eliminate (Neubauer, 2011; Oreskes and Conway, 2010, 237).

Since the late-1990s much of this organizing has targeted fossil fuels, mobilised in part by growing scientific evidence of anthropogenic climate change (Foster et al., 2011; Mitchell, 2009). In 1995, the findings of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that human-induced warming was a real and dangerous phenomenon, and these findings were only reaffirmed and strengthened by subsequent IPCC reports (Oreskes and Conway, 2010). These discoveries led to a flurry of international attempts to stave off ecological collapse, such as the 1996 Kyoto Protocol which established binding national targets for the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases. They also helped normalize the concept of ecological limits to economic growth, which was anathema to both neoliberal ideology and capitalist practice.

Yet over the same period, the relationship between global environmentalism and the neoliberal project was becoming increasingly ambivalent. Much of the societal response to the ecological crisis had begun developing along what Marcuse (2013) might label 'one dimensional' pathways, in which reified 'solutions' to problems were integrated into the functioning of the same status quo which had produced those problems in the first place. For decades, corporate and state elites had pushed a variety of one dimensional environmental solutions: green consumerism and sustainable purchasing; the creation of green markets (such as carbon cap and trade schemes); development of so-called 'green technologies'; and all manner of efficiency gains (Bakan, 2004, 144-146; Foster 2011; Foster et al. 2011; Maniates, 2001; O'Connor, 1998;).

These one dimensional approaches were increasingly incorporated into the practices of major ENGOs, many of which had developed into large, multinational bureaucracies with strong connections to globalising state and corporate elites (Klein,

2015, 64-95). In some ways this was surprising. The environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s had a strong grassroots element and had often formulated an anti-corporate, pro-regulation stance. Yet by the 1990's many of the movement's most prominent actors had embraced free market principles, traditional lobbying, changes in individual consumption habits, and partnerships with major corporations as the means of pursuing a 'soft' form of ecological modernization that left intact the unsustainable structures of globalising neoliberal capitalism. In fact, some major ENGOs such as World Wildlife Fund and the Environmental Defence Fund had become so bullish on neoliberal globalisation that they were instrumental allies in helping the Clinton administration secure the passage of NAFTA in the early 1990s.

Yet despite the one-dimensional integration of much of the environmental movement into global neoliberal governance, there were still militant currents within the movement which had begun articulating the link between neoliberal globalization and ecological degradation (Dressel and Suzuki, 2004). Perhaps most terrifying to neoliberals, some of these actors had become leaders in the 1990s anti-globalization movement. While much of 'Big Green' had supported the passage of NAFTA, major multinational ENGOs like Greenpeace and Sierra Club had strenuously opposed the treaty (Klein, 2015, 84). Similarly, in Canada prominent environmentalist David Suzuki had become a vocal critic of neoliberal trade and investment architecture since the early 2000s, critiquing its facilitation of global ecological degradation (Dressel and Suzuki, 2004). Hence, even as much of 'Big Green' pursued lobbying, corporate partnerships and 'soft' ecological modernization, there was still a segment of the environmental movement constituting an embryonic challenge to corporate capital and global neoliberal governance. Increasingly, it was this segment of the environmental movement which drew the ire of neoliberal activists and their corporate backers, who began viewing the environmental movement as an existential threat to the neoliberal regime itself (Jacques et al., 2008; Neubauer, 2011).

Partially, the hostility of neoliberals to contemporary environmentalism can be explained by the general weaknesses of 'one dimensional' approaches to sustainability, which for various reasons *cannot and will not ever* solve climate change or the broader planetary ecological crisis. As a growth-oriented system, capitalism *requires* higher levels of consumption over time, even while the system's profit drive incentivizes the offloading of ecological costs onto fragile ecosystems and vulnerable populations

(Foster, 2011; Maniates, 2001; O'Connor, 1998). Meanwhile, competitive pressures turn every efficiency gain into a source of competitive advantage, so that innovations in efficiency often lead to *increased* total material and energy throughputs (the so-called 'Jevons Paradox'). Finally, not only does rising inequality under neoliberalism reveal widespread sustainable purchasing to be a naïve (and elitist) pipedream (Bakan, 2004, 146), but as an externality of much contemporary economic activity, most fossil fuel consumption occurs at sites far removed from the purchasing decisions of individual consumers (Maniates, 2001; Mitchell, 2009).

In many respects, neoliberal hostility to environmentalism is rooted in the basic ontological assumptions of neoclassical economics, which measures growth through increases in *exchange value* divorced from any accounting of material/energy throughputs (Foster et al., 2011; Mitchell, 2009). As such, it is epistemologically incapable of accounting for ecological limits to growth. As the basic ontological assumptions of neoliberal governance –the efficiency of markets in delivering the public good, the possibility of infinite economic growth, and the necessity of minimizing public interventions in market forces – have become challenged by environmentalists and the basic findings of environmental science, neoliberals have increasingly targeted the environmental movement *writ large* as an enemy of the neoliberal project (Gutstein, 2009, 227-259; Jacques et al., 2008). This has been most obvious with climate change, in which the basic findings of climate science make clear the need for rapid cuts in the production of greenhouse gases and a hard cap on future emissions if changes to the global climate are to be kept to manageable levels (Foster et al., 2011; Klein, 2015). Yet to the extent that growth under neoliberal globalization has been driven by rapid increases in fossil fuel consumption, even the most milquetoast, one-dimensional environmentalists find themselves in the crosshairs of the neoliberal movement simply for advocating that government policy align with the basic science.

### **2.3.1. Skeptic Tanks: Policy Institutes, Conservative Populism, and Subjectivity**

Beginning in the 1980s, industry-supported EPII groups such as America's Cato Foundation and Canada's Fraser Institute launched coordinated 'eco-skeptic' communication campaigns challenging the perceived seriousness of environmental problems in the public sphere (Boykoff, 2009, 438; McCright and Dunlap, 2010, 108;

Oreskes and Conway, 2010, 125). The most sustained, well-funded, and coordinated of these has been the climate change denial movement. Over the past 25 years, market fundamentalist think tanks and 'AstroTurf' groups have used a variety of tactics to combat their environmental opponents: attacking the credibility of environmentalists and environmental scientists; denying or misrepresenting the nature of the growing scientific consensus on anthropogenic climate change; deemphasizing the human contribution to climate change; highlighting (and often exaggerating) the economic costs of transitioning from fossil fuels; and, increasingly, arguing for the 'inevitability' of growing energy demand in a global economy (Gutstein, 2009, 245; Jacques et al, 2008, 351).

Yet the deployment of factually inaccurate claims and misleading technocratic arguments can only partially explain the power of EPII groups' ecoskeptical activities. Much of their success lies not in the factual presentation of their ideological claims, but in the ideological articulation of their factual arguments. Research has demonstrated that retention and acceptance of scientific information is mediated by a subject's values, belief systems, and ideological disposition (Kahan et al, 2010; Lakoff, 2010, 74; Nisbet and Schedufele, 2009). Ecoskeptical activities illustrate this point well, with EPII groups consistently framing ecoskeptical arguments in the context of their broader ideological strategies (Lakoff, 2010, 71-74).

For ideological identification to be effective, notes Eagleton (1991), it "must make at least a minimal sense of people's experiences" (14). This often involves the encoding of "genuine needs and desires" in "a mystified way" (12) so as to "communicate a vision of social reality which is recognizable enough not to be simply rejected" (14). This can be clearly seen in the way EPII groups have leveraged people's experience of crises – both that of the 70s and those resulting from the neoliberal transition itself (Smith, 2007).

Laclau (1977) argued that the broad (though by no means universal) acceptance of hegemonic ideologies in periods of stability can be fatally undermined during "a period of generalized ideological crisis", when public confidence in the "natural' or ' automatic' reproduction of the system" is shaken (90). The way is then opened for different social actors to promote ideological alternatives which can both explain the crisis and identify the means to overcome it. This was the strategy of the New Right EPII groups of the 1970s and 1980s. As crisis generated real anxieties in many actors concerning their

economic and political security, it increased the ideological saliency of neoliberal policies which claimed to guarantee prosperity and stability.

From the 1970s onward, EPII coalitions deployed various related discourses which attempted to account for the heightened economic insecurity brought about by neoliberal regimes themselves (Smith, 2007, 104-107). In Canada as in the United States, neoliberal reform has led to significant increases in inequality, with large income gains for wealthy elites and stagnating or declining income for members of the middle and lower classes (Broadbent Institute, 2014; Carrick, 2017; Gutstein, 2014, 195; Harvey, 2011, 10-20; Heisz, 2015). With this shift has come heightened levels of economic insecurity for many: precarious employment; mass layoffs and stagnating wages; higher levels of household debt; decreased scale and scope of public service provision; increased reliance on mutual funds and other financial instruments for long term financial security; and increasing financial market volatility (Harvey, 2005; Smith, 2007, 16, 60, 205-206). The anxieties generated by these experiences have opened up new opportunities for market fundamentalist discourse coalitions to reinforce fears of government intervention in 'market forces'. Progressive taxation, environmental regulation, and other potential barriers to accumulation are thereby articulated as a threat to working peoples increasingly subject to the vicissitudes of globalised market forces and neoliberal policy regimes.

Critical scholars have noted how ideological power often rests in the capacity to constitute individuals as particular types of subjects from whose position a corresponding ideological articulation appears intelligible (Althusser, 2006; Coulthard, 2014, 32; Hall, 1994, 45, 48; Laclau, 1977). Stuart Hall's work on Thatcherism illustrated how neoliberal think tanks and Tory politicians rearticulated longstanding cultural values – 'Englishness', patriarchy, nationalism – alongside free market discourses into a novel ideological system (Hall 1988, 39). Key to these manoeuvres was the articulation of subject positions from which Thatcherite discourse could appear convincing: the loyal patriot, the traditional family, the beleaguered taxpayer, and so on (49).

Similarly, the bleeding edge of eco-skeptic activity has been the deployment of conservative populist discourses directed towards subject positions from whose vantage point economic insecurity can be understood. Traditional left populism articulated the frustrations of working people into a conceptual model of a society made up of

oppressive economic and state elites on one hand, and a beleaguered 'populace' of 'ordinary people' on the other. Conservative populism similarly speaks to the lived experiences of the interpellated, playing on fears of economic insecurity as well as "deeper fears of personal, cultural, political, or even national decline and moral disorientation" (Fraser and Freeman, 2010, 81).

Like left populism, conservative populism rearticulates people's experiences into visions of a social order symbolically split between elites and 'the people'. However, this populist worldview is rearticulated alongside neoliberal and neoconservative discourses which reify the populace as market agents – consumers, workers, taxpayers – whose prosperity and liberty is secured by the free market and 'traditional' ways of life (Frank 2012; Fraser and Freeman, 2010; Sawyer and Laycock, 2009). Symbolically opposed to the populace are the 'Liberal Elites', the bureaucrats, activists, unions, environmentalists, left wing academics, socialist intellectuals, and meddling celebrities that wish to intervene in market forces (Frank 2012; Fraser and Freeman, 2010; Lakoff, 2010, 74; Sawyer and Laycock, 2009). The threat of market intervention is often articulated alongside contempt for 'cultural elites' with so-called 'non-traditional' or 'inauthentic' lifestyles – the drinking of Lattes, the consumption of 'exotic' or 'ethnic' foods, the practice of Yoga, and so on (Jamieson and Capella, 2008, 64; Lakoff, 2010, 74).

Frustration at unequal social relations is deflected from economic and political elites, and towards a reified 'liberal elite' subject which can be blamed for various frustrations. This mystifying discourse is dependent on the successful interpellation of its adherents into a particular subject – that of a member of the conservative-market populace.

By and large, eco-skeptic activity has reproduced this Conservative Populist strategy. Since the 1990s, free market think tanks have consistently portrayed environmental politics as an inexcusable interference in a smoothly functioning market system, often rejecting environmental science as a socialist plot to undermine market prosperity (Lakoff, 2010, 74; Oreskes and Conway, 2010, 237). These arguments have been articulated alongside broader conservative populist discourse, with environmental politics and science portrayed as the ideological fetish of a cabal of liberal elites bent on dominating and impoverishing the market populace: corrupt scientists enriching

themselves through climate research grant money; celebrity activists hypocritically ignoring their own carbon footprints; power hungry government regulators and politicians eager to impose their will on taxpayers; radical environmental activists with anti-capitalist agendas and sweetheart funding arrangements with liberal charitable foundations; and so on (Neubauer, 2011; Shwom et al., 2010, 473). The ideological payoff has been outstanding: today a sizeable minority of Americans remain skeptical of the scientific consensus on climate change (Oreskes and Conway 2010), with self-proclaimed conservatives and Republicans significantly more likely to doubt its scientific legitimacy (Nisbet and Schedufele, 2009, 1771; Kahan et al., 2009, 3).

## **2.4. Canadian Bitumen, Chinese Demand, and the Crisis of 2008**

In North America, the elite response to environmental opposition to continued fossil fuel extraction has generally followed the same playbook as responses to other challengers of the neoliberal regime. For the most part, this has involved technocratic, and often misleading, arguments that public intervention in the economy will destroy jobs and growth, coupled with populist denunciations of the various intervenors at play – activists, climate scientists, and so on. These two strategies go hand in hand: stoking fears that market interventions will kill jobs at the same moment that many members of the public are experiencing worsening economic insecurity. Broadly speaking, this has been the basic strategy of many Canadian elites promoting the expansion of tar sands exports: gesturing to the potential of the oil sands to ensure growth in an increasingly growth-shy world economy, while lambasting opponents of tar sands expansion as out-of-touch elite ideologues willing to sacrifice the average-Canadians' prosperity. As an extension of this manoeuvre, many corporate and state planners have looked to the rapidly growing East Asian economies – China in particular – as a source of perpetually growing demand to justify the continued prioritization of the tar sands as the engine of national economic growth.

In some respects this was an obvious solution. The rise in world oil prices during the 2000s that fueled the tar sands boom was “largely attributable to the accelerating appetite for oil in China and in the economies that supply China with machines, components and natural resources” (Hung, 2013, 1348). Since its economic takeoff in the 1990s, China's “booming domestic economy, rapid urbanization, increased export

processing, and the Chinese people's voracious appetite for cars" has dramatically increased Chinese demand for oil and natural gas (Zweig and Jianhai, 2005, 26). By 2005 China was the world's second largest consumer of crude oil, (Lai, 2007, 519; Zweig and Jianhai, 2005, 26), with consumption growing "from a low 88 million tons in 1980 to... 293 million tons in 2004 (Lai, 2007, 521). Of the 9 billion barrels that world oil consumption grew between 2001 and 2007, "nearly 3 million... came from China - three times the increase of that of the US" (Hung, 2013, 1348).

As China's oil consumption outgrew its domestic energy supply, "Beijing's access to foreign resources" became "necessary... for continued economic growth" (Zweig and Jianhai, 2005, 26). As a result, Chinese planners have searched out new foreign suppliers, with China increasing its number of oil supplying nations from five in 1989 to thirty-two in 2005 (Jakobson and Zha, 2006, 63). Increasingly, Canada's oil sands have been looked to as an attractive potential supplier, with the Northern Gateway pipeline – in which Sinopec, the Chinese state oil company, was an investor – the most notable attempt yet to link Alberta bitumen to Chinese refineries. Yet pinning their hopes on steadily rising oil prices buoyed by ever-growing East-Asian demand has proven to be a dangerous gambit for tar sands proponents, as this strategy has become a victim of neoliberalism's own successes in two, interrelated senses.

First, the inequality and insecurity generated by neoliberalism has undermined the global economic growth which makes high oil prices possible. Neoliberal reform and new technologies have together provided capital with the temporal speed and planetary scope to discipline workers, democratic publics, and national governments in an attempt to drive down wages, taxation levels and regulatory burdens (Dyer-Witherford, 1999; Harvey, 2011; Hope, 2010; Robinson, 2004). Yet this same process tends to undermine national effective demand, a problem which came to a head with the financial crisis of 2008 (Harvey, 2011).

By the close of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, forty years of wage repression and disciplinary capital flight had resulted in income stagnation and rising inequality throughout much of the developed west (Harvey, 2011, 149-154). These trends have been especially pronounced in the United States (Foster and Magdoff, 2010, 85; Harvey, 2011), with "the nation's top 1 percent of holders of financial wealth" owning "more than

four times as much as the bottom 80 percent of the population” by 2001 (Foster and Magdoff, 2010, 85).

No matter how low their production costs, commodities must be purchased to generate a profit. And as Harvey (2011) notes, “there is still a physical limit to the number of yachts, McMansions or pairs of shoes that the billionaire class can consume” (110). This makes “[c]apitalist personal consumption... a very weak source of effective demand”(110). This is partially because lower income people tend to spend more of their wealth on consumption than economic elites, who devote a larger share of their wealth to speculative investments (Foster and Magdoff, 2009, 27). Neoliberalism’s tendency towards wage stagnation and rising inequality has thereby only worsened capitalism’s long standing realization problem (Robinson, 2004, 148).

Yet in the United States, personal and household consumption as a share of GDP has only *grown* throughout the neoliberal era, reaching unprecedented heights by the mid-2000s (Foster and Magdoff, 2009, 28). What’s more, despite inequality and stagnating wages, America continues to be the single largest source of global demand, fueling the Chinese boom which has buoyed global growth rates and corporate profitability since the late 1990s (Li, 2009). To an extent, US demand has been bolstered by the so-called ‘Walmart effect’, with cheap Asian imports and the mass purchase of US treasury bonds by China boosting the purchasing power of American consumers (Hung, 2013). Yet US purchasing power has also been driven by huge increases in consumer debt and home-secured borrowing (Foster and Magdoff, 2009, 25; Harvey, 2011), with US household debt increasing from 40% to 100% of GDP between 1960 and 2007 (Foster and Magdoff, 2009, 28).

By the late 1990s, these same dynamics had facilitated the growth of financialized debt markets as vital new sites of capital accumulation. Increasingly unable to pursue profitable investment opportunities in the sphere of material production (Foster and Magdoff, 2009, 96), finance capital leveraged rising debt levels, new financial technologies, economic deregulation, and record low interest rates to fuel speculative bubbles in novel debt-based financial instruments (Hope, 2011). The most infamous of these was the subprime mortgage bubble, in which low-income consumers were targeted with high risk loans that were then consolidated and repackaged as various debt-based securities and derivatives (Chakravarty and Schiller, 2010, 680-681; Hope,

2011, 658). Yet the underlying value of these assets was predicated on the eventual servicing of the debt, an untenable situation given widespread wage stagnation and economic insecurity. Such a strategy was only sustainable given infinitely rising housing prices, an economic impossibility. When the bubble burst in 2008, global financial markets collapsed, with many leading financial institutions across the west going bankrupt or requiring significant state bailouts to remain solvent. The resulting contagion quickly spread across the globe, leading to a collapse not just in globally integrated financial markets, but also worldwide investment, employment and trade (Harvey, 2011, Hope, 2010). By Spring 2009, over \$50 trillion in global assets had been destroyed (Harvey, 2011, 10).

The rapid and devastating effects of the 2008 financial crisis illustrate the second way global neoliberalism has become a victim of its own success. While neoliberal regimes have undermined the robust domestic demand on which the previous Keynesian-Fordist system was based, the vulnerabilities associated with deregulated, ICT-enabled financial markets illustrates the extent to which contemporary financial activity undermines national economic planning. As Hope explains, the 2008 crisis illustrated a fundamental contradiction of global neoliberal capitalism:

“On one hand, converging digital technologies enable major capitalist enterprises to exploit the capacities of real-time communication networks. [With profit]... a function of the drive toward inter-networked simultaneity... [capitalism faces]... a contraction in the temporal horizons of profit and a general acceleration of economic activity. On the other hand, capitalism must reproduce itself over time. All capitalist economies, capitalist sectors, and business organizations must acknowledge the temporalities of duration, sequence, planning, and chronological ordering.... [In 2008, t]he financialized acceleration of profit-making clashed with [these] longer-term processes of capital accumulation” (652-653).

The heightened market volatility associated with neoliberalism creates difficulties for Canadian elites who seek to link bitumen export market diversification schemes to medium-term Chinese growth rates. China’s export-led growth strategy has depended on decades of extreme wage repression and rising income inequality (Hung, 2013, 1351; Li, 2009). As a result, private consumption as a percentage of total Chinese GDP has steadily declined, with a corresponding rise in exports as a proportion of total growth (Hung, 2013, 1356). Following the 2008 crisis, sputtering western demand has made this export-led strategy untenable, and Chinese planners have responded with a program of

deficit-funded stimulus measures meant to generate sufficient domestic demand to sustain robust growth. Yet such measures have been stymied by 30 years of wage repression, and it is by no means clear that rapid growth rates can be maintained using this strategy.

Since oil is traded globally in real-time like any other financialized commodity, a Chinese slowdown would crash the world price of oil overnight and burst the tar sands bubble (Nikiforuk, 2009). What's worse, by 2010 world demand for oil was already slowing, owing to the deflationary effects of record high prices as well as sluggish global demand following the financial crisis (Kemp, 2015). These downward pressures on global demand were rapidly coming to a head with a glut of global supply, as high oil prices during the boom led to overinvestment in unconventional oil and gas production, as exemplified by the 'shale revolution' in the United States. As such, a rapid crash in the world oil price was becoming increasingly likely at the same time Canadian corporate and state planners were arguing for expanded bitumen exports *on the sole basis of stable high prices and steadily rising global demand!* Yet major tar sands projects often take years to plan, approve and build, and once completed they can take up to a decade to turn a profit (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011). The real-time market volatility of commodities trading thereby presents significant difficulties for state and corporate planners, who must 'sell' expansion projects to the public (and investors) by projecting stable demand decades into the future. The buffoonish results of this futurological projection were made painfully clear in 2015, when OPEC's refusal to cut oil production in the face of rising US shale gas production combined with stagnating global growth to crash the price of oil (Kemp, 2015). The result for the Tar Sands has been a severe slump the sector has yet to recover from.

In the next chapter, I explore how the tar sands was seized on by Canadian corporate and state planners as the national engine of 21<sup>st</sup> century economic growth. I trace the development of Alberta's oil sands from a state-corporatist program of the Keynesian-Fordist era to a globally integrated enterprise oriented around 'neoliberal extractivist' principles. I examine Northern Gateway as an extension of neoliberal extractivist development, while explaining how the project became a focal point for political resistance from British Columbians, First Nations, and environmentalists who saw it as the ultimate ecological and economic externality. Finally, I demonstrate how the conflict between Northern Gateway's elite backers and its opponents brought to a

head the various ecological, political and economic crises of the nation in a way which has shaken the foundations of the current extractivist regime.

## **Chapter 3. Gateway to Crisis**

### **3.1. The Neoliberalisation of Alberta's Tar Sands**

It is sometimes forgotten that the rise of Canada's oil industry dates back to the corporatist development strategies of the Keynesian-Fordist era (Berry, 1971, 605). The conventional Canadian oil industry, concentrated in the province of Alberta, grew rapidly during the post war era as booming US demand created a large and growing market for Canadian crude (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011). Yet it was not until the 1990s that rapidly rising oil prices, the depletion of conventional oil reserves, technological innovation, and decades of state corporatist support converged to position the tar sands as a profitable enterprise (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 69)

Today, the estimated 1.7 trillion barrels of oil contained in the tar sands constitute the largest single crude deposit in the world, representing about 12 percent of global reserves (McCreary and Milligan, 2014, 128; Remillard, 2011, 130). Although contemporary neoliberal discourse often frames the tar sands as a marvel of free enterprise, its development was from the very start a state corporatist project whose eventual profitability depended on billions of dollars of government spending and decades of state planning (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 39).

Unlike 'traditional' crude, bitumen "was dense, heavy, and mixed with sand, water, other chemicals, and clays", making it "much more expensive and difficult" to refine and transport (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 49). "Large investments in science" over "an extensive period of time" were therefore required before bitumen production could become profitable. With private industry unwilling to absorb such long term risk, it was the Alberta government which made the necessary long-term investments in research and infrastructure, establishing the first bitumen plant in Fort McMurray in 1929. This early state investment set the tone for subsequent decades of industrial policy, with the Alberta government spending billions to turn bitumen extraction into a going concern (39, 53). As a result, some of the most crucial technological developments that made the tar sands boom possible were publicly funded (Boychuk, 2010). When the first private sector bitumen plant opened in 1975, it too enjoyed numerous state supports. These included "a guaranteed rate of return..., royalty-free

holidays, commitments to provide strike-free labor at work sites, provincial support in... negotiations with Ottawa, [and] expensive publicly financed ‘roads to resources’ infrastructure” (Pratt, 1977:133–147, in Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 75 ).

This corporatist policy had an ideological dimension, as decades of government spending “required politicians to justify... extraordinary expenditure[s] to taxpaying citizens” (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 39). This was accomplished through numerous provincial communications campaigns which sought to assure taxpayers of the long march of scientific progress, frame the tar sands as a synecdoche of Canadian national development, and promote the industry as a means of national energy security.

Yet by the late 1980s tar sands corporatism had taken on a decidedly neoliberal turn, partially in response to the same oil supply shocks which had destabilized Bretton Woods. In some ways the origins of the 2000s tar sands boom can be traced back to the OPEC oil embargo of 1973, when a tripling of world oil prices led to a regional influx of US capital (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 72). Yet when a second oil shock decimated the Canadian economy in 1979, Ottawa created the National Energy Program, a “deeply interventionist and centralizing package of price controls, production targets, export taxes, exploration incentives, and public investment”. A reaction to the economic hardship brought on by rapidly rising domestic oil prices, the NEP sought to ‘Canadianize’ (which is to say federalize) Alberta’s most valuable resource so as to ensure low energy prices to Canadian consumers and industry (56).

The NEP’s heavy handed intervention and deflationary effects on Alberta’s resource economy outraged many Albertans, and the political fallout led to the founding of the secessionist, right wing Reform Party in 1987 (Pratt, 2007). It also aided the development of so-called ‘Western Alienation’ as a core organizing principle of Albertan political discourse. A response to Central Canadian hegemony, ‘Western alienation’ positioned prairie provinces such as Alberta as oppressed vassal states of the politically and economically dominant Ontario and Quebec. Critically, these provinces’ populations and industries were the country’s largest consumers of energy, with economies more oriented towards value-added manufacturing and finance than resource extraction (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011).

Fueled by angry memories of the NEP, Western alienation helped unify Alberta's economic and political elite in support of neoliberal deregulation and the signing of various continental free trade agreements throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s. This was due both to the ideological appeal of neoliberalism's anti-state dogma and the practical appeal of reforms and treaties that would limit Ottawa's capacity to intervene in Alberta's resource economy (Pratt, 2007, 56). By 1985, stagflation and Albertan intransigence compelled the Progressive Conservative Mulroney government to dismantle the NEP through a series of deregulatory moves that ended price controls and foreign ownership restrictions. At the same time, energy export provisions in the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement ensured that new oil production would largely service US markets and refineries (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011). This was achieved by banning taxes on exports; prohibiting price floors and ceilings on exports and imports; and restricting most other federal means of guaranteeing the servicing of domestic markets, subsidizing domestic consumers, or orienting development towards domestic energy security (Pratt, 2007, 62).

This policy shift ushered in a new phase of oil corporatism: a neoliberal extractivist regime which prioritized the export of raw bitumen to international markets and the redistribution of resource rents in favor of private industry and investors (Pratt, 2007, 54). These trends were only intensified with the 1992 election of Alberta Premier Ralph Klein (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 82). A neoliberal ideologue, Klein argued that only 'market forces' could develop public resources effectively, and his government quickly moved to privatize much of the province's stake in the oil industry. Yet it also heavily subsidized the emerging oil sands sector through a variety of corporate-friendly policies largely drafted by industry executives (Boychuck, 2010, Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 9). These included significant tax write-offs for new investments and a 1% royalty rate that ranked amongst the lowest in the world.

This generous tax and royalty system combined with new technological breakthroughs in bitumen mining and processing to lower the input costs per barrel of bitumen (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 82-84). At the same time, world oil prices were sharply rising in the face of declining conventional production and rising global demand. This combination of heavy state subsidization, high world oil prices, and publically funded technological innovation sharply increased profit rates, kicking off a new wave of international investment and setting off a provincial oil boom (Nikiforuk, 2010, 27). Since

the 1990s, “the flow of global capital into the region... has been staggering”, with international giants such as Shell, Exxon and others purchasing oil sands leases (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 69). By 2008, “oil sands investment [had] reached a record-high \$19.2 billion” and by 2009 the industry was producing 1.3 million barrels a day.

However, throughout the neoliberal shift previous policies promising national “self-reliance, Canadianization, [and] a national energy strategy” oriented towards serving the public good had been “abandoned in favor of a deregulated energy structure dependent for its growth on the US market” (Pratt, 2007, 55). NAFTA’s energy export provisions now ensured that most new tar sands production served the US, and by 2002 Canada had become the United States’ number one source of oil (Nikiforuk, 2010, 31). US exports grew from 241.7 million barrels in 1990 to 658.6 million barrels in 2007 (Hughes, 2010, 2692), leading to a corresponding demand for increased pipeline capacity linking Albertan bitumen to US refineries (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 114).

### **3.2. Environmental Resistance to the Canadian Tar Sands**

At the same time that tar sands production was rapidly expanding, environmental resistance to the industry was growing as local ENGOs and citizen’s groups became synchronized with a powerful transnational environmental network (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 177-180). The tar sands have attracted the ire of environmentalists on a variety of grounds. Bitumen is incredibly difficult to process and transport. The extraction, transportation, and refining of the toxic, sludge-like substance requires much more energy and water than does conventional crude, and produces higher levels of water, air and soil pollution (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 111-141; Nikiforuk, 2010, 60-111). In some cases, effects on local ecosystems and human health can be disastrous, especially for communities – many of them indigenous – located downstream from extraction sites or tailing ponds (Preston, 2013). One study of the First Nations community of Fort Chipewyan found significant increases in mercury, arsenic, and lead levels in local water sources which were believed to have been generated by nearby tar sands extraction and waste disposal sites (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 116; Nikiforuk, 2009; 2010, 96-100; Preston, 2013;). A subsequent study linked exposure to these contaminants with spiking cancer rates and other deadly diseases in the community (Klinkenburg, 2014, July 8).

While local effects on water, air and soil have fostered a burgeoning environmental justice movement – much of it spearheaded by affected First Nations communities – it is largely the climate implications of tar sands expansion which motivate global environmental opposition. The material properties of Alberta bitumen make it extremely energy intensive to mine, process, and ship, making it one of the most carbon-intensive sources of energy on the planet (Nikiforuk, 127-145).

Importantly, assessing the precise climate implications of bitumen and associated infrastructure has been and continues to be a key battleground. On one hand, industry and even some prominent climate scientists have disputed claims that the oil sands are a particularly emissions-heavy source of energy when compared with other forms of fossil fuels. One recent publication by noted climate scientist Andrew Weaver has argued that global emissions from economically viable bitumen deposits are likely to be negligible when compared with the potential future emissions from proven coal and natural gas reserves (Weaver, 2012, Feb. 19). Yet other ‘wells-to-wheels’ studies have concluded that bitumen extraction and refining produced GHG emissions several times that of conventional crude (Nikiforuk, 2010, 127-145). Though the debate continues, the global environmental movement has for years been targeting tar sands expansion as a potential ‘climate killer’. For instance, in 2012 the renowned climatologist James Hansen wrote in the New York Times that “it [would] be game over for the climate” if Canada were to proceed in developing the oil sands, given that they “contain twice the amount of carbon dioxide emitted by global oil use in [human] history” (Hansen, 2012).

Regardless of the relative carbon-intensity of Alberta bitumen when compared with other fossil fuel sources, there is no doubt that oil sands production is a major and growing share of national CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Clarke et al, 2013, 28-32). Before the 2014 crash, the sector was the nation’s fastest growing source of CO<sub>2</sub>, with emissions predicted to double from 2009 to 2020 (29-30). By 2013, direct CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from bitumen extraction and upgrading represented 6.5% of Canada’s overall GHG emissions (29). While this represents a relatively small portion of *current* global emissions, Davidson and Gismondi point out several reasons that tar sands expansion represents a grim prospect for a sustainable global climate in the *future*:

“Firstly if political advocates on both sides of the border are successful, [Canada]... could experience a fivefold increase in production rates in the coming

decades. Secondly, since... the easiest stuff is removed first, the energy inputs required for extraction and processing will increase over time. ... [There] are [also] multiple hidden sources of emissions associated with tar sands development..., [including those] ... associated with refining, and eventual consumption as gasoline, both of which occur primarily in the United States and tend not to be included in [national] carbon footprint tallies... Operations in remote places also require the movement of materials and people up to the extraction sites... [with] many workers [commuting] on a regular basis to and from [distant locations] like Newfoundland... On the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF)'s climate change report card, released on July 1 2009, Canada ranked at the bottom of the list, and WWF argued that Alberta's tar sands are largely to blame" (118).

### **3.2.1. Unhealthy Skepticism: Neoliberal Think Tanks and the Elite Response to Environmentalism**

The neoliberal response to the environmentalist challenge in Canada has followed a similar pattern to that in the United States. Like in America, Canadian elites reacted to the crisis of the 1970s by funding sprawling networks of neoliberal civil society groups to promote market fundamentalist dogma in the public sphere, and these groups have taken a leading role in fighting the environmental movement.

The birth of these neoliberal discourse coalitions can be traced back to the 1974 founding of Vancouver's Fraser Institute by neoliberal economist and policy entrepreneur Michael Walker (Gutstein, 2009, 120). From the beginning, Fraser was integrated into the transnational neoliberal project, with Walker aided by the British industrialist Anthony Fischer, who had already founded similar groups in the UK (Gutstein, 2014, 50). Yet Fraser quickly gained support from domestic economic elites. By 1975 it was supported by all 5 major Canadian banks, and two years later boasted over 175 corporate members (Gutstein, 2009, 123). Like in the United States, the oil industry was deeply supportive of the emergent neoliberal coalition, with virtually every major player in the oil patch becoming a Fraser member over the subsequent decades.

Similar groups were founded over the same period, such as Calgary's Canada West Foundation and Toronto's CD Howe Institute (Gutstein, 2009, 142). The network

expanded rapidly in the 1990s when the Donner Canadian foundation, one of Canada's largest corporate foundations, began funding new regional institutes modeled after Fraser, such as the Atlantic Institute of Market Studies in Halifax and the Frontier Center For Public Policy in Winnipeg (Gutstein 2014, 51-52). Furthering the network's transnational linkages, these new groups were supported by Anthony Fischer's Atlas Economic Research Foundation, which since its 1981 founding has come to work with over 200 market fundamentalist think tanks across the world (Mato and Juhász-Mininberg, 2008, 427). Today, Atlas boasts 13 member organizations in six Canadian provinces, including the Fraser Institute, the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, the Frontier Center for Public Policy, and the Macdonald Laurier Institute (Global Directory, n.d.).

These and other groups formed what I have previously termed Elite Policy and Information Infrastructures (EPII) (Neubauer, 2011) that have collectively worked for decades to promote neoliberal reform. The intellectual direction for these groups emerged from several overlapping epistemic communities within Canada and the United States. Some actors from Canada's neoliberal think tanks – most notably the Fraser Institute – hail from US academic and think tank networks influenced by the Chicago school of neoliberals, Straussian neoconservatives, and Austrian-influenced communities associated with the Atlas Network (Gutstein, 2009; 2014). Other actors hail from or were influenced by the so-called Calgary School, an epistemic community originally based out of the University of Calgary that worked to fuse neoliberal and neoconservative philosophy into a coherent whole (Gutstein, 2009, 152-159). Members of the Calgary School have often provided Canada's EPII groups with personnel, while some of the School's luminaries, like Political Scientist Tom Flanagan, helped mentor a new wave of conservative politicians associated with the Reform Party of Canada, the Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance, and, eventually, the Conservative Party of Canada.

EPII groups were also aided by the rise of ideologically-aligned media outlets – often associated with the CanwestGlobal (now Postmedia) newspaper chain – that provided new opportunities to promote the work of neoliberal think tanks (Gutstein, 2009; 2014). Many of the columnists, editors, and journalists which today staff major Canadian media outlets possess ties to EPII groups, having worked for them, sat on their boards, attended their conferences, or emerged from their internship and leadership programs

early in their careers (Gutstein, 2009; 2014). In particular, some conservative columnists have been so integrated into EPII activities – both through interlocking professional networks and the promotion of think tank research – they can arguably be considered neoliberal discourse coalition members themselves (Neubauer, 2011).

In Canada it was the Fraser Institute and related industry-funded EPII groups which took the lead in public climate denial and ecoskeptic campaigns (Gustein, 2009, 226-259; Hoggan with Littlemore, 2009, 73-77). These campaigns built on prior EPII work, deploying simplistic and often misleading claims in the form of research reports, interviews, science briefings for journalists, and op-eds in major paper. Much of this material attempted to discredit the growing scientific consensus around anthropogenic climate change and other environmental concerns. These technical claims were often coupled with (and sometimes supplanted by) ecoskeptic denunciations of environmentalists and tar sands opponents as elite ideologues whose radical beliefs and dependence on lavish funding arrangements with charitable foundations and governments had compelled them to promote scientifically dubious environmental claims. In making these claims, EPII groups were aided by conservative media outlets and columnists, most notably The National Post and several affiliated Canwest/PostMedia papers which circulated the skeptic claims of Fraser and other industry-funded groups.

### **3.3. First Nations, Decolonization, and Accumulation by Dispossession**

If environmentalism has constituted one threat to the emergent Canadian extractivist regime, a second has emerged from indigenous resistance in the name of environmental justice and decolonization. Indigenous populations "are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of tar sands development, both because they make up a high proportion of downstream and directly affected residents, and because they rely to a much higher degree than" settler populations "on the services provided by their local watershed for food and livelihood" (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 183). Yet ecological concerns relate to a deeper rationale for contemporary indigenous opposition. While industrial capitalism was associated with rising Canadian oil production, both phenomena have facilitated the ongoing colonization of indigenous territory (Preston, 2013). Though indigenous peoples formed much of the labor force of early colonial

economies, this changed following the waves of colonial migration accompanying industrialization. Instead of indigenous labor, this new phase of economic development required increased access to indigenous *land* (Coulthard, 2014, 12). The result was a brutal process of accumulation by dispossession as the Canadian state orchestrated a systematic assault on indigenous sovereignty in its drive to acquire, govern and exploit indigenous territory.

As Coulthard (2014) notes, much of this state policy was directed at the systematic extermination of:

“indigenous modes of life through institutions such as residential schools; through the imposition of settler-state policies aimed at explicitly undercutting Indigenous political economies and relations to and with land; through the violent dispossession of First Nation women’s rights to land and community membership under sexist provisions of the Indian Act; through the theft of Aboriginal children via racist child welfare policies; and through the near wholesale dispossession of Indigenous peoples’ territories and modes of traditional governance in exchange for delegated administrative powers to be exercised over relatively minuscule reserve lands (4)

These diverse modes of colonial governmentality were in service of a common aim: "ongoing state access to the land and resources that contradictorily provide the material and spiritual sustenance of Indigenous societies on the one hand, and the foundation of colonial state-formation, settlement, and capitalist development on the other" (Coulthard, 2014, 6). As such, Corntassel and Bryce (2011) argue, "[b]eing indigenous today means engaging in a struggle to reclaim and regenerate one’s relational, place-based existence" (152).

Opposition to Northern Gateway can therefore be seen as part of a broader decolonization movement (Panofsky, 2011, 60). In modern times, this movement emerged from indigenous resistance to the Federal Government's' 1969 White Paper that advocated for dismantling collective treaty rights and privatizing reserve lands (Coulthard, 2014, 18, 95). The paper was widely interpreted as a mechanism for a new era of market-based colonial land grabs, and anger towards it fueled a massive wave of indigenous political activism which forced the government to abandon the document in 1971. In the process, it helped inspire a new generation of "Red Power activism" oriented around questions of land and indigenous 'rights and title' (18).

British Columbia has long been central to these struggles. Unlike in most of Canada, where “treaties were signed in which Aboriginal people ‘ceded and surrendered’ their traditional territories”, the vast majority of BC territory was seized without nation-to-nation treaties (Panofsky, 2011, 98). As most BC First Nations never ceded their rights and title, Canada's jurisdiction over much of the Province remains legally tenuous – even according to the admittedly degraded standards of Eurocentric bourgeois legalism. BC First Nations have therefore emerged as central actors in the fight to enshrine aboriginal rights and title in Canadian law. Their first major victory was the 1973 Calder Decision, in which the Supreme Court of Canada recognized that BC's Nisga'a peoples had exercised sovereignty over their territories prior to European arrival (Coulthard, 2014, 22; Panofsky, 2011, 100). Claims to unceded indigenous sovereignty were strengthened with the enshrinement of Aboriginal rights in the Canadian Constitution in 1982 (Coulthard, 2014). Subsequent legal victories followed, and in 1992 the Supreme Court determined that aboriginal rights and title had never been formally extinguished in most of British Columbia (Panofsky, 2011, 102). Finally, in 1995 Ottawa recognized First Nation's “inherent right to self-government” on their traditional territories (Coulthard, 2014, 6).

Meanwhile, indigenous rights were being slowly incorporated into international law, culminating with the signing of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which Canada formally endorsed in 2010 (Corntassle and Bryce, 2011, 155). This document enshrined indigenous rights to means of subsistence, “access to health and traditional medicines...”, and the right to maintain and strengthen distinctive spiritual relationship[s]” with their traditional territories. Perhaps most importantly, the declaration “declares the importance of ‘free, prior and informed consent’ of Indigenous peoples, in regards to development on their lands, to their health, traditions and economic subsistence” (154).

Unlike the overtly hostile campaign of eco skepticism, elite response to the decolonization movement has been largely one of co-optation. Since the rejection of the White Paper, state actors have leveraged land-claims negotiations to bring development-friendly First Nations leaders on board with resource extraction in exchange for recognition of rights and title (Coulthard, 2014) In this regard they have been joined by EPII groups like the Fraser Institute that promote the privatization of reserve lands (Gutstein, 2014, 106).

Such work runs parallel to government “reconciliation” campaigns which symbolically address the ‘historical harms’ done to First Nations by the state (Coulthard, 2014, 107). These include the Federal Government’s 1998 “Statement of Reconciliation” which recognized ‘the mistakes and injustices of the past’ (75), and the 2015 report of the ‘Truth and Reconciliation Commission’ documenting the atrocities of Canada’s infamous residential school system. “The result”, Coulthard argues, “is an approach to reconciliation that goes out of its way to fabricate a sharp divide between Canada’s unscrupulous ‘past’ and the unfortunate ‘legacy’ this past has produced for Indigenous people and communities in the present” (121). Yet Coulthard warns “that genuine reconciliation is impossible without recognizing Indigenous peoples’ right to freedom and self-determination, instituting restitution by returning enough of [their] lands so that [they] can regain economic self-sufficiency, and honoring [Canada’s] treaty relationships”. Without such commitments, reconciliation remains a “pacifying discourse” (121) that services the colonial strategy of facilitating “continued access to Indigenous peoples’ territories” (125).

### **3.4. Morbid Symptoms: The Harper Conservatives and the Canadian Petrobloc**

The fervent and often antidemocratic activities of various Canadian elites in defense of tar sands expansion are not without precedent. Harvard political scientist Terry Karl’s (2008) ‘petrostate thesis’ has long maintained that countries dependent on oil exports for a sizeable proportion of GDP tend to develop authoritarian tendencies. This is largely due to the ways an economic overreliance on oil exports induces rent-seeking behavior by state elites who use control over oil rents to relieve social pressures, buy political support or repress dissent. At the same time, social groups allied with state elites reap the benefits of political favoritism by acquiring a disproportionate degree of resource rent. This tends to generate civil strife between actors positioned to benefit from the resource and others who either do not benefit or absorb the externalized costs of development. This reinforces the petrostate’s authoritarian tendencies as it attempts to mitigate social conflict in such a way that leaves the basic power structure intact.

It is in this context that we can better understand the rise of the Harper Conservatives and their attempt to transform Canada’s neoliberal bloc into a political

project subservient to the needs of a transnationally integrated tar sands industry. Yet this requires moving beyond the state-centric language of the *petrostate* and towards a more holistic descriptor: the Canadian *petrobloc*, an interlocked constellation of state, civil society, corporate and media actors dedicated to tar sands expansion as an extension of the neoliberal project. The Gramscian move from *state* to *bloc* is beneficial for two reasons. First, unlike most so-called petrostates, Canada is a developed western country with a robust civil society, multiparty political system, and independent media. It is therefore unhelpful to utilize a state-centric framework, as the promotion of Alberta's tar sands depends on the political alliance of various pro-industry elites from across the state, civil society, industry, and media fields. Secondly, oil exports in Canada make up a much smaller proportion of national GDP than is the case with Karl's so-called 'petrostates'. With only 4.4% of Canadian GDP deriving from the oil and gas sectors as of 2011 (Fast, 2014), the reorientation of Canadian policy towards maximizing oil exports cannot be understood as the sole result of brute economic imperatives. Instead, the basis for this shift must be located in the *political* activities of those actors which have come to benefit from neoliberal extractivist development and who have correspondingly sought to dominate the Canadian policy apparatus so as to protect their political and economic privilege. However, I argue that the dependence of *these elite actors and their political constituents* on maximizing oil development has compelled them to pursue similar policies to the kind seen in a full blown-petrostate, lending the petrostate thesis a good deal of explanatory power in analyzing the Canadian political scene today.

By definition it is difficult to draw hard lines in terms of whom or what should be included in a given 'bloc'. The term is as much conceptual as it is empirical. Essentially, it is a means of identifying informal yet relatively coherent clusters of institutions and actors oriented around specific – and often diverse – economic and political objectives that they collectively – if unevenly – seek to pursue via particular modes of political, economic, and cultural organization. Identifying the potential components of a petrobloc thereby involves examining the constellation of allied actors and institutions which, despite internal divisions and conflict, together work to discursively develop collective conceptions of self-interest which can unite them in their promotion of neoliberal extractivism in Canada.

This would include leading oil and gas firms, relevant industry associations, and those industry actors that provide secondary and tertiary goods and services to the

sector. It also includes firms from sectors whose growth is increasingly dependent on oil production, like finance. Importantly, actors from the energy and finance sectors were key backers of the Canadian neoliberal project in the 1970s, helping found neoliberal think tanks like Fraser and lobbying heavily for neoliberal reform (Gutstein, 2009). The bloc also includes many of those Canadian economic elites whose personal prosperity is increasingly bound up with the health of the oil industry, whether through direct stock ownership or financial instruments whose value is tied to oil and gas.

The bloc also includes various members of the Calgary school and associated intellectual movements. This includes the network of industry-backed EPII groups and neoliberal policy entrepreneurs oriented around the Fraser Institute and similar organizations which have promoted the industry's expansion and orchestrated various climate denial and ecoskeptical campaigns since the early 1990s. Politically, it included the Harper Conservatives, as well as certain segments of the federal Liberal Party with strong ties to the energy industry. It also includes the political and bureaucratic leadership of provinces like Alberta which are dependent on oil and gas for a sizeable portion of state revenue, as well as those who see future development of unconventional fossil fuels as an attractive source of growth, such as British Columbia's ruling Liberal Party. Perhaps most controversially, the bloc could be said to include portions of Canada's mainstream media that have long supported the oil and gas industry and promoted the work of industry-backed groups like the Fraser Institute.

Arguably, many energy workers and others economically dependent on the industry can be considered 'junior' members of the bloc. 'Junior', because they do not receive a significant proportion of the sector's value in either wages or rent, and despite the influence of organized labor, they are generally not prime drivers of state and industry planning. Yet their dependence on the industry for wages, benefits, and social services paid for out of tax and royalty revenue have at times made them key political allies of the industry, and they comprise a major share of the electoral base for both the Federal Conservatives and the Alberta Progressive Conservatives.

With the possible exception of workers and their dependents, many if not most actors in the bloc are loosely aligned in their acceptance of neoliberalism as the sole legitimate mode of governance, and have generally come to see oil and gas expansion organized under neoliberal auspices as an optimal economic strategy.

The election of the Harper Conservatives can be seen as a watershed moment in the development of the Canadian petrobloc. While Canada's neoliberal transition began during the final decades of Federal Liberal hegemony, it was with the 2006 election of Prime Minister Stephen Harper that the country's seemed to fully embrace its development into a neoliberal extractivist economy. Harper gained power as leader of the newly formed Conservative Party of Canada, which had emerged in 2003 from the unification of Canada's two leading right wing parties (Gutstein, 2014, 9). Following in the footsteps of Reagan and Thatcher, Harper mobilized his electoral base through a combination of neoliberal economic discourse and social conservative values (15). Such tactics bore fruit when Harper won his first majority in the midst of the 2008 financial crisis, with his party presenting further neoliberalization as the means to prevent the sort of economic downturn plaguing Europe.

It was no coincidence that Harper's arguments coincided with those of industry-backed EPII groups. Harper and many of his advisors emerged from the same network of Calgary School-influenced intellectuals, conservative media figures, and right wing think tanks that helped coordinate Canada's neoliberal shift (Gutstein, 2014). As a student in the 1980s, he studied with Calgary School founder Tom Flanagan, a Fraser Institute member who mentored many of the leading figures in the Canadian EPII network (14). In fact, Harper's connections to the neoliberal discourse coalition were so strong that he was a featured speaker at the Fraser Institute's 30th anniversary celebration (12).

The Harper Government playbook was an almost textbook operationalization of the theories and policies promoted by Canada's neoliberal discourse coalitions. The newly ascendant Conservatives quickly moved to enact numerous regressive reforms to Canada's tax regime, generating a revenue crisis that was later used to justify public service cuts (Gutstein, 2014, 9). It further dismantled Canadian labor law (78-105) and pursued new neoliberal trade agreements that would further erode national sovereignty over regulatory, monetary, and fiscal policy (44). It oversaw multiple rounds of cuts to Canada's state broadcaster, and it eliminated the Health Council of Canada, "which once ensured national health standards... across Canada's 13 provinces and territories" (Nikiforuk, 2013).

Yet it is with energy policy that one sees the significance of the oil and gas industry to Canada's neoliberal shift, with the Harper Government prioritizing the growth of the sector in ways which often exhibited the antidemocratic leanings of a petrostate. In July 2006, shortly after securing his first minority government, the Prime Minister announced his party's ambition to turn Canada into a 21st century global "energy superpower" (Taber, 2006). Over the subsequent decade of Conservative rule, Harper pursued this bold vision through a variety of means: attacking environmental activists as "unpatriotic radicals" in the press (Nikiforuk, 2013); banning federal climate and environmental scientists from discussing their work with the public; cutting funding for environmental research (Gutstein, 2014, 136-189; Nikiforuk, 2013); and "systematically dismantle[ing] the country's most significant.... environmental laws" (Nikiforuk, 2013). It also supported industry through a variety of corporatist strategies, including generous tax exemptions and costly subsidies (Cayley-Daoust and Girard, 2012, 2).

This energy corporatism resulted in a marked hostility towards climate change policy that was reminiscent of the denial campaigns of Harper's EPII allies. Though Canada ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 1996, (Doskoch, 2011, Dec. 5), the Conservatives pulled out of the agreement in 2012 (Nikiforuk, 2013). They also refused to publically discuss a carbon tax or any other significant policy response to rising national emissions; cut funding to a variety of climate change research and mitigation programs; and spent hundreds of millions of dollars on pro-tar sands advertising campaigns (Cayley-Daoust and Girard, 2012; Gutstein, 2014; Nikiforuk, 2013).

### **3.4.1. Crisis Management? Canadian Extractivism, Elite Hegemony and Neoliberalism**

To an extent, the export-based strategies of Canadian state and corporate planners can be understood as a one-dimensional response to the contradictions of globalized neoliberalism. The rise of transnationally integrated financial, production and consumption chains has tended to erode national competitive advantage in value-added industries like manufacturing and the knowledge sector, while national economies and political systems are increasingly subject to the threat of disciplinary capital flight (Harvey, 2005; Robinson, 2004). Yet the globalized economy requires staggeringly large energy throughputs in a form flexible enough to fuel its geographically dispersed economic circuits. Fossil fuels remain the most attractive short-term option in this regard,

making the economic flows of global capitalism dependent on ever increasing flows of fossil fuels (Altvater, 2007; Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 21-38).

Yet despite their centrality to economic globalization, fossil fuels do not exist in a “global space of flows” (Castells, 2004, 146). Unlike manufacturing, knowledge industries, or finance, oil extraction is fundamentally *place bound* (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 69). This is a key takeaway from *Challenging Legitimacy at the Precipice of Energy Calamity*, Alberta Professors’ Debra Davidson and Michael Gismondi’s political economic and discursive history of the tar sands. In it they note that the inherent materiality of extraction makes it impossible for capitalists to outsource an oil field; the Alberta tar sands cannot be shipped to China or Mexico to take advantage of lower labor, tax, or regulatory costs. Their fundamental anchorage in geographical space thereby constitutes a competitive advantage for the Canadian economy that is relatively immune to disciplinary capital flight. Unsurprisingly then, the Federal Conservatives overtly framed the oil sands as a means to save the Canadian economy from a fate worse than death (ie. Europe) following the 2008 crisis (Oliver, 2012, Jan. 25).

Yet the nationalist overtones of the sands sales pitch are largely a smokescreen for the contradictions of an industry whose actual structure undermines appeals to a reified national interest (Barney, 2015). This is ably explained by Travis Fast (2014) and his notion of ‘neoliberal extractivism’, in which policy is geared towards the extraction and export of raw resources in such a way that the majority of gains go to domestic and international firms and investors at the expense of Canadian workers, local communities, First Nations, and taxpayers. This helps explain how many Canadian elites come to place an outsized emphasis on the tar sands, overstating the country’s economic dependence on oil and gas. Contrary to common perception, oil and gas accounted for less than 5% of Canadian GDP as of 2011 (36). What’s more, only a handful of provinces – such as Alberta and Saskatchewan – derive a significant proportion of their GDP from fossil fuel extraction.

It is therefore difficult to honestly describe heightened oil and gas extraction as in the ‘national interest’ (Barney, 2015). Under neoliberal extractivist regimes, the oil sands have become a highly asymmetrical industry which produces sharply unequal distributions of risk and benefit between different classes, regions, and nations. In this

sense, the intensified promotion of the oil sands by the Harper regime can be seen as an extension of an ongoing neoliberal class project that less serves the nation than it does the various regional, national, and international actors who have benefited the most from that project.

On a political level, the oil sands clearly benefit certain regional actors over others. Nationalist appeals aside, Alberta enjoys the vast majority of economic benefits from tar sands development, and the province increasingly depends on the industry to generate growth and government revenue (Barney, 2015). The history of ‘western alienation’ as a unifying trope in Albertan politics also feeds into provincial support for the industry. With angry memories of the National Energy Program still prominent in the minds of many voters, maximizing tar sands development – and ensuring most benefits accrue to Alberta – has ideological and political saliency. Simply put, supporting the tar sands wins you votes in Alberta.

With the rise of the Harper Conservatives, these regional political dynamics became a central force in Federal politics. To a certain extent this was a result of industry lobbying. A 2012 report by Cayley-Daoust and Girard (2012) of the Polaris Institute linked Harper’s hardline pro-tar sands policies to increased industry access to and regulatory capture of the Federal Government (2). Following the 2006 victory of the Federal Conservatives, the oil industry became the nation’s most active federal lobbying group, far exceeding the activities (and access) of other resource extraction industries and the environmental lobby (4). Many petroleum lobbyists possessed close links with the Conservatives, and numerous Conservative politicians have gone on to work as oil lobbyists after leaving government.

Another driver of Federal Conservative support for the oil industry is the party’s Albertan electoral base (Bricker and Ibbitson, 2013). This makes them much more politically dependent on the expansion of the oil patch than parties – such as the Federal Liberals – whose traditional base includes Canada’s manufacturing and financial regions in Ontario and Quebec. A related factor is the core leadership role played by Albertan political, economic, and civil-society actors in the newly formed Federal Conservative party, which emerged in 2003 from a merger between the Progressive Conservatives and the Alberta-centric Reform/Alliance parties (Bricker and Ibbitson, 2013; Gutstein, 2009; 2014; Harris, 2014; Sawyer and Laycock, 2009). From its inception, the new party

was dominated not by the old Progressive Conservative faction – which like the Liberals had stronger ties to Ontario and Quebec – but the Reform/Alliance faction, led by Harper. Alberta formed a good portion of the political base of these parties, and their leadership often consisted of Albertan political, economic and intellectual elites (such as Calgary School intellectuals and the personnel of Western Canadian think tanks like the Fraser Institute) with deep ties to the oil patch. This leadership had emerged from a post-NEB Alberta whose dominant political ideology was steeped in western alienation, and they envisioned Western Canada’s resource industries as a means of pursuing regional self-sufficiency and overcoming Eastern Canadian hegemony. In a happy coincidence, many of these actors were already ideologically and politically oriented towards neoliberal extractivist governance, with some having been key actors in promoting Canada’s neoliberal transition since the 1980s and fighting environmental opposition to the oil sands since the 1990s. As such, securing the growth of the oil sands was simply an article of faith for many of the Harper Conservatives, as their political connections to and dependence on Alberta dovetailed perfectly with their support of the neoliberal project and the tar sands.

This helpful coincidence between the political dependence of both the Albertan Progressive Conservatives and the Federal Conservatives on a growing oil sands sector was reinforced by their increasing reliance on the industry as a growing source of state revenue. Despite an abysmally low rate of federal taxation, boom conditions and high prices allowed the absolute value of federal revenue from the tar sands to rise since the late 1990s, with the Federal Government receiving \$5 billion from tar sands firms in corporate income taxes by 2006 (Nikiforuk, 2010, 185). These windfall revenues were soon used to *further* the neoliberal transition. Pushing through neoliberal tax cuts was a major policy plank for the Harper Conservatives, and the oil sands windfall enabled the new regime “to reduce corporate taxes and slash 2 percent off the federal sales tax”. This is reminiscent of Karl’s (2008) petrostate thesis, which notes that oil producing nations often use resource rents to maintain a low tax base and high levels of government spending. In this case, oil rents were ‘spent’ on lowering the tax burdens of the corporate sector and implementing ideologically driven tax cuts which in the long term would further undermine the Canadian state’s service provision capacity.

The petrostate tendency to utilize high resource rents to prop up unsustainable taxation regimes has been even more pronounced in Alberta due to the low royalty and

taxation rates established during the Klein years (Nikiforuk, 2010, 150-170). While the Albertan government captured 35% of oil and gas revenue during the Lougheed era, that figure has declined significantly since the Klein years (Boychuck, 2010, 15). This is particularly true for the oil sands, with Alberta capturing an average of around 8% of sector revenue since 1997 (34). The result is that while Norway has used its oil revenues to amass \$512 billion in savings since 1990, the Alberta Heritage Trust fund established in 1976 reached its peak value of 12.7 billion in 1987, when the government stopped making payments (26). In short, “Alberta’s Progressive Conservative governments have embarrassingly little to show for the staggering amount of oil and gas produced under their watch” (26).

Instead of generating savings, windfall revenues generated under historically high oil prices allowed the Klein government to offset the effects of ideologically-driven personal and corporate tax cuts without necessitating dramatic cuts to services (Nikiforuk, 2010, 175). This is a privilege few other provinces enjoy. While only 4.4% Canadian GDP was generated by the oil and gas in 2011 (Fast, 2014, 47), the sector comprised about 25% of Alberta’s GDP by 2009 (Boyckuck, 2010). Boom conditions thereby allowed for over 30% of total Alberta government revenue to be derived from oil and gas by 2009 despite low royalty and taxation rates. In the early years of the last boom, much of this revenue derived from natural gas. However, by the close of first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, investment in gas was falling along with world prices (Boychuck, 2010, 22). Yet the price of oil continued to climb, making the province’s fiscal health even more dependent on bitumen. In this sense, describing the oil sands as an economic benefit to the Canadian nation *writ large* is a disingenuous argument benefitting the province whose state revenue and economy are most supported by fossil fuel development.

Yet it is difficult to describe the contemporary management of the oil sands as serving even the Albertan public good. As Karl (2008) notes, the volatility of petroleum pricing means that while petrostates gain significant fiscal benefits from oil rents during a boom, busts tend to decimate state revenue. Similarly, with Alberta’s neoliberal royalty regime capturing only a very small proportion of oil sands revenue, ever higher levels of industrial activity have become necessary to maintain state solvency (Nikiforuk, 158). Yet because bitumen extraction is only profitable given historically high oil prices, even a small price shock can eviscerate provincial budgets. This is precisely what occurred in

2010, when a small drop in the price of Canadian crude devastated Albertan state finances, *even while industry profits grew* (Campanella, 2012). According to a 2012 report by the Parkland Institute:

The diverging fortunes of the province and the oil patch are clearly evident from the contrast between the government's ongoing revenue crisis, which has resulted in a \$3 billion deficit, and the growing profits being reported by the oil industry. Suncor, Canada's largest oil and gas company, reported yearly profits of \$4.3 billion, while Imperial Oil, which is 70% owned by U.S.-based ExxonMobil, made profits last fiscal year of \$3.37 billion, the second largest in its record (Campanella, 2012).

In short, while neoliberal taxation regimes may politically benefit free market politicians, those same benefits do *not* accrue to taxpayers, who are left with staggering deficits when the bubble inevitably bursts.

Yet if the oil patch serves even the fiscal health of Alberta only fitfully, than on what basis do Albertan and Canadian economic elites advocate for extractivist development? One answer lies in the understanding of extractivism as a vital component of the contemporary neoliberal class project in Canada (Fast, 2014). While neoliberalism is sometimes described as the retreat of government intervention from the economy, this is an unhelpful definition. More apt is an understanding of neoliberalism as a form of heavy state intervention in the economy meant to maximize private profit and the share of growth accruing to capital and economic elites (Fast, 2014; Harvey, 2005).

The oil sands are a perfect vehicle for such a project. For one thing, the industry is particularly capital intensive and has low levels of employment intensity. Heavy reliance on expensive machinery for productivity increases means that little labor is required per dollar of oil sands investment to generate growth (Barney, 2015; Fast, 2014, 47). For instance, in 2011 "the value of the total economic output of manufacturing" in Canada was "almost equaled by the sector's share of total employment" (Fast, 2014, 47). This gave the sector an employment intensity score near 1, meaning that for each 1% of national GDP created through manufacturing, the industry in turn employed about 1% of the population. Yet while "oil and gas extraction directly account[ed] for 4.4% of total [national] economic output" in 2011, "it only produce[d] around 0.4% of total employment...., giving the sector a[n employment intensity] score of 0.09."

The discrepancy in economic gains going to capital and labor is heightened by the shift from value-added refining during the Lougheed years to an 'extractivist' emphasis on exporting raw bitumen during the Klein years (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011). According to a report by Infometrica, the export of 400,000 barrels per day of raw bitumen represents the loss of 18,000 jobs that would have been generated by refining the same amount of material domestically (Nikiforuk, 2010, 123). Similarly, the export-based oil boom damaged Canada's value-added manufacturing sector through the so-called 'Dutch disease' phenomenon, in which the inflationary effects of high priced oil exports on the dollar undermine the competitiveness of manufacturing (184).

Oil sands expansion is thereby a relatively weak source of job creation or working class incomes compared with more labor intensive industries like manufacturing, services or the hi-tech/knowledge sectors. This is not to say that oil sands workers are not *individually* well paid. Generally speaking, wages and salaries are high, especially during boom times. This has been a major driver of the industry's ability to attract much of its labor force from depressed regions all over the country, and doubtlessly aids the industry's ability to gain the political support of many workers.

Yet *relatively* speaking, low employment *intensity* means that the sector's *rate* of employee compensation – the proportion of sectoral revenue accruing to workers – is quite low (Fast, 2014). Yet this is simply another way of saying that the industry's rate of *corporate* compensation is *quite high*, with a very high percentage of revenue accruing to corporate and investor profits. "In 2008", explains Fast, "owners of capital in Alberta" captured "50 cents for every dollar paid to workers", while the "Canadian national average (excluding the extractive provinces)" was 20 cents of corporate and investor profit "for every dollar of employee compensation (Fast, 2012, 50).

Low labor intensity, high rates of corporate compensation, and generous royalty and taxation regimes all combine to create extraordinary industry profits. So much so that in 2009, during the depths of the global recession, the tar sands recorded their second most profitable year ever (Boychuck, 2010, 7). In short, while tar sands extractivism produces relatively few jobs or tax revenue, boom prices can guarantee quick and easy corporate profits regardless of employment levels, wages, or state fiscal solvency. Much of this is an effect of regulatory capture. By some accounts the industry barely breaks even once one corrects for the generous royalties, tax write offs and other

subsidies initiated during the Klein years (Boychuk, 2010, 30-34). Yet since “the 1997 royalty changes, Alberta’s tar sands have produced between \$97 billion and \$167 billion in pre-tax profits for the largely foreign-owned companies operating there”, while the province’s “share of revenue has averaged only 8.1%” (4). It is in this sense that Boychuck argues that “the tar sands represent the virtually unfettered transfer of public wealth into private hands on a scale that has few, if any, precedents” (34).

Not just oil firms but many Canadian economic elites in general have benefited disproportionately from tar sands development due to the growing financialisation of the industry (Fast, 2014). As scholars like Harvey (2005) and Robinson (2004) explain, financialisation has been a core component of neoliberalism’s global rise, helping to concentrate wealth in the hands of finance capitalists and economic elites. Similar dynamics are at play in the oil sands. While the industry produces few jobs per unit of economic output, oil sands revenue represents a growing share of the balance sheets of major Canadian financial institutions (Fast, 2014). This is due to increasing cross ownership and investment ties between resource firms and the major banks, with the latter increasingly invested in the oil sands as they underwrite everything from new projects to share issues to mergers and acquisitions (44). The oil sands thereby represent a growing share of income for economic elites whose wealth is increasingly bound up in financial equity, *regardless* of whether the industry produces significant growth in employment or employee compensation. What’s more, the banks themselves increasingly find their own fates tied to that of the oil patch, since any prolonged sector downturn finds them risking overexposure to non-performing loans (Alexander and Loder, 2016, March 2; Schechter and Hussein, 2015, August 12).

As Robinson (2004; 2009) notes, neoliberal financialisation has gone hand in hand with economic globalization, as national economic elites increasingly turn away from servicing robust domestic demand in favor of attracting foreign investment and servicing global markets. As such, they have become less dependent on sustaining the purchasing power of national working classes – whether through the provision of redistributionary state services or increasing labor’s share of economic growth through high wages and other forms of remuneration. Such an analysis is particularly apt for the oil sands, which in the process of its financialisation has become an increasingly important source of foreign investment. As Fast (2014) notes, the “resurgence in the staples sectors and the concomitant decline of the manufacturing sector beginning early

in the new century” has been “coupled with a wave of foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into the resource sectors” (38). Nationally, “increases in inward FDI stocks are being driven almost exclusively by the doubling of foreign-held mining and oil and gas extraction assets”, with a “doubling of foreign stocks in the management of companies and enterprise” between 1998 and 2011 “largely attributable to foreign takeovers in the [Natural Resource Extraction] sectors”. The result was the domination of the industry by foreign firms and investors (Boychuck, 2010; Campanella, 2012; Barney, 2015; Pratt, 2009; Fast, 2014). While 20% of the Canadian economy was foreign owned in 2011, that number was 35% for the oil and gas sector, with foreign owners and investors acquiring 50.6% of the sector’s revenue share (Fast, 2014, 40).

There is an obvious irony here. A sector that took billions in government support over decades to become profitable has been structured so that the majority of gains go to private firms, foreign investors, and domestic economic elites. In this sense, the interests of Canadian elites and global capital align; the promotion of neoliberal extractivism at the expense of more value added or labor intensive activities represents less a prudent pursuit of domestic jobs and sustainable growth than the increased dependence of Albertan and Canadian economic elites on the quick and easy profits made attracting foreign capital. It is therefore difficult to explain extractivism as a national strategy to weather the storms of globalization. It is more convincingly understood as a class project facilitated by an alliance of self-interested and ideologically motivated state and economic elites who pursue oil sands expansion in service of their own class interests. At the time of the Gateway conflict, these interests were increasingly aligned with various transnational capital fractions due to the heavy dependence of the sector on foreign investment and the servicing of foreign markets. If neoliberalism as a class project means state intervention to increase the share of growth accruing to capital and economic elites at the expense of labor and lower income people, one would be hard pressed to engineer a more perfectly ‘neoliberal’ industry than the Alberta oil sands.

### **3.5. Running out of Gas: Neoliberal Extractivism Becomes a Victim of its Own Success**

By the close of the first decade of the 21st century, neoliberal extractivism had fallen victim to its own success. The low royalty rates and rubberstamping of new project proposals initiated during the Klein years had led to a rapid increase in bitumen

production absent any consideration of medium-to-long term market demand or transportation capacity (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 80-90). At the same time, NAFTA's export provisions had combined with Canada's geographic location to ensure that nearly all bitumen exports during the boom went to the United States.

The results of this shift are discussed in Political Scientist George Hoberg's 2013 paper, *The battle over oil sands access to tidewater: A political risk analysis of pipeline alternatives*. Hoberg explains that by 2012, oil sands production had reached 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd). Yet it was already clear by 2010 that the US would not be able to absorb future Canadian capacity, as an American boom in unconventional energy production had intersected with growing environmental resistance to tar sands imports to dampen demand for Canadian bitumen (Nikiforuk, 2012). The resulting glut in US refineries generated a significant price differential between the Western Canada Select index – in which most US-bound Canadian bitumen was priced – and the higher-priced West Texas Intermediate index – in which Canadian bitumen *could* be priced if it could only reach international markets (Hoberg, 2013, 370-375). On one hand, the resulting price discount for Canadian bitumen led to industry claims of “billions of dollars per year in foregone revenues” (Hoberg, 2013, 371-372). On the other, the transportation and refining bottleneck constrained future tar sands expansion; why increase production if there was nowhere to sell it?

It should be noted that industry critics have disputed some of these claims. Economist Robyn Allan (2012), in her investigation of Enbridge's economic case for Northern Gateway, has argued that the price differential is of a conjunctural, rather than structural, nature. Further, she argues that the majority of the price differential has resulted from the low quality of Alberta bitumen compared with conventional crude, and that many of the firms crying poor actually recuperate a good share of the differential through vertical integration and equity in downstream refineries.

Regardless of the veracity of industry claims, by 2010 Canadian corporate and state planners had begun advocating for the construction of new pipeline capacity to US and Canadian tidewater in order to reach international markets, with the stated aim of sidestepping the refinery glut, absorbing excess capacity, and mitigating the price differential (Hoberg, 2013, 370-375). By 2012, there were five major pipeline proposals under consideration to link the tar sands to tidewater, including the Keystone XL

extension to the US Gulf Coast; two lines to the St Lawrence Sea Way and the Canadian Atlantic beyond; and two westbound lines to the Pacific Coast of British Columbia: Kinder Morgan's Transmountain expansion and Enbridge's Northern Gateway project (Hoberg, 2013). Together, these and other smaller projects were estimated to add over 4 million barrels per day of new pipeline capacity (Hinte et al., 2012, 123), incentivizing new bitumen production and mitigating the growing WCS-WTI price spread (Hoberg, 2013, 370-275).

Northern Gateway was central to these plans, with industry hoping that energy-hungry Chinese markets could absorb excess Canadian capacity and justify increased upstream production. This was, in some respects, an obvious solution. The rise in world oil prices that fueled the tar sands boom had "been largely attributable to the accelerating appetite for oil in China and in the economies that supply China with machines, components and natural resources" (Hung, 2013, 1348). And as Chinese planners roamed the planet in search of new energy sources (see Chapter 1), they began looking to Alberta as a potential supplier (Zweig and Jianhai, 2005, 30). This was not a new phenomenon; China had made its first overseas investment in the Canadian oil industry in 1992 (Jakobson and Zha, 2006, 65). Yet such ties have grown rapidly in recent years, and since "late 2004...Beijing and Ottawa [had] concluded a series of energy and resource agreements" which provided "for greater Chinese involvement in developing Canada's ... vast oil sands deposits" (Zweig and Jianhai, 2005, 30). Though the Harper Conservatives were notably hostile to China's ruling Chinese Communist Party on human rights grounds following their election in 2006 (Manicom and Oneil, 2012), promoting energy exports to China emerged as a leading Conservative policy plank following the 2008 crisis. In 2012, "Canada quietly signed a controversial trade agreement with the People's Republic", and by 2013, state-owned Chinese oil companies had spent "more than \$20 billion purchasing rights to oil sands in Alberta" by 2013 (Nikiforuk, 2013).

Projects like Northern Gateway can thereby be seen as an extension of broader globalizing trends, as Canadian elites integrate their accumulation strategies with those of global finance capital and Chinese planners. Not only are the major US banks and investment houses heavily invested in Canadian bitumen production, but China's state-owned PetroChina was an early backer of the Northern Gateway project (Nikiforuk 2009), and in March 2012 it was revealed that they had indeed bid on the pipeline's

construction (Cattaneo, 2012, March 28). Meanwhile, in January of that year it was revealed that another Chinese state-owned oil company, Sinopec, was one of Gateway's 10 financial backers (VanderKlippe, 2012).

### **3.5.1. Northern Gateway and the Neoliberal Extractivist House of Cards**

To summarize, the current drive towards bitumen export market diversification is a kind of strategic Hail Mary. By expanding production and exports, industry-supporting political and economic elites can help mitigate the structural vulnerabilities to the Canadian economy presented by global capitalism in such a way that furthers their broad class goals under the neoliberal project. Yet pinning their interests to steadily rising oil prices and long-term East-Asian demand has proven to be a dangerous gambit. The temporal contradictions associated with financial market volatility are reinforced by the economic asymmetries in contemporary tar sands development. The oil sands boom was dependent upon record high oil prices which by 2010 were increasingly being undermined by the convergence of sputtering global demand and rapid increases in global supply (see Chapter 2).

Yet a crash would bring to the fore the economic asymmetries in risk and reward which structure the industry. If the tar sands disproportionately benefited neoliberal Albertan and Federal political elites, domestic and multinational firms and investors, and Canadian economic elites at the expense of large segments of national and regional working classes, First Nations, and taxpayers, only *absolute* economic gains to workers and taxpayers during a boom could justify its expansion. These gains allowed for the symbolic suturing of the perceived interests of energy workers and taxpayers – especially those from Alberta – with those of the tar sands' industry and state supporters. Yet a price crash would eliminate many of these absolute gains, decimating employment and state revenues, even while industry profits remained high (as occurred in 2008-2009) (Boychuck, 2010, 7). In such a situation, the *relative* maldistribution of economic gains may become more apparent, opening up the possibility of political opposition on equity grounds. In such cases, industry supporters may need to seek out scapegoats: "Are your jobs lost, or services cut, because of boom and bust cycles or the inequitable, reckless organization of the industry? No, it's the environmentalists/urban elites/First Nations/etc. who are to blame!"

All this occurred at the moment that the *maldistribution of ecological risks* was generating its own intensified political resistance. And it is in this sense that the anchorage of Albertan bitumen deposits in physical space generates significant political vulnerabilities, as resistance at key nodes in extraction and transportation networks threaten to cut off Alberta producers from global markets (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011). It was these spatial vulnerabilities that were exploited by the local resistance to Northern Gateway from ENGOs, First Nations, and local settler communities.

### **3.6. Enbridge's Northern Gateway: Project Description**

In some ways, Enbridge's Northern Gateway project was the lynchpin of petrobloc export market diversification strategies. The project proposed to move 525,000 barrels of diluted bitumen a day from Edmonton, Alberta to the port of Kitimat, British Columbia via a 1,170 km pipeline, after which it would be transported to Asia-Pacific markets – mostly China – via supertankers (Hoberg, 2013; Panofsky, 2011, 14-15). A parallel eastbound pipeline would move toxic condensate – a petroleum product used to dilute thick, gooey bitumen for transport – back west (Nikiforuk, 2009; Panofsky, 2011, 14-15). The project itself was not entirely unprecedented for Enbridge, a Canadian energy transportation firm which operates the world's longest pipeline network (Panofsky, 2011, 18).

In promoting Northern Gateway, Enbridge and its supporters made much of the projects' supposed economic benefits. Most of this focused on the projects' capacity to diversify export markets, tap into growing Chinese demand, sidestep the WCS-WTI price spread, and mitigate the sector's overreliance on an increasingly uncertain US market (Hoberg, 2013, 365-380; Panofsky, 2011, 16). By accomplishing these objectives, proponents argued, Gateway would generate an estimated \$270 billion in GDP growth over 30 years, billions more in federal and provincial tax revenue, and 15,675 person years of employment throughout the project construction phase (Panofsky, 2011, 16-17).

The economic case for Northern Gateway gained saliency in the face of growing US political resistance to TransCanada's Keystone XL project, which proposed to connect Alberta producers to US refineries in the Gulf (Hoberg, 2013, 378-380). While central to export market diversification plans, Keystone XL came to face significant opposition from US residents concerned about local water pollution, as well as from

climate activists opposed to increasing tar sands imports. In 2012 the US State Department announced a year-long delay of any decision on the project in order to conduct further reviews. With Keystone XL on the backburner, petrobloc actors intensified their calls for Gateway's approval, framed as the last best hope to diversify export markets.

### **3.6.1. From Pipedream to Pipeline: Environmental Assessment and the Joint Review Panel**

Northern Gateway's approval was no sure thing. Numerous regulatory hurdles needed to be cleared before construction could begin. Hinte et al's 2012 study of Canada's environmental assessment regime explains how all pipeline, port, and tanker projects which fell under federal jurisdiction needed to be approved by both the National Energy Board (NEB) and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) (Hinte et al., 2012, 127). This hurdle was partially overcome in 2009 when the NEB and CEAA issued an agreement to conduct a unified Joint Review Panel under the auspices of the NEB, avoiding bureaucratic duplication whilst ostensibly fulfilling both agencies' regulatory mandates (Panofsky, 2011, 25). Another potential obstacle was cleared when the Federal Government signed a harmonization agreement with the BC government, with the province waiving its right to conduct an independent provincial assessment and agreeing to abide by the JRP's recommendation (Hinte et al., 2012, 129). This decision would then be passed on to Federal Cabinet for final approval, though not before the JRP's completion of a multi-year project assessment process, much of which would consist of a series of public hearings held in multiple locations throughout Alberta and BC beginning in January 2012 (Panofsky, 2011, 20-30; Stendie, 2013).

From its inception, Northern Gateway was promoted by key members of the Canadian petrobloc. Obviously, the project was endorsed by Enbridge itself. It was also supported by the major industry associations, including the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. More conspicuously, the project received "strong support from the Federal Conservative party" (Panofsky, 2011, 21). This included Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver, with neither politician bothering to wait for the JRP's final recommendation before publically advocating for Gateway's approval. They were joined in this regard by advocacy groups such as Ethical Oil and

policy institutes such as the Fraser Institute and the Macdonald Laurier Institute. Many commentators in the mainstream Canadian media offered similar endorsements.

Petrobloc legitimization efforts also included regional campaigns meant to generate political support within BC, through which most of the project would be routed. The project received initial support from the business-friendly BC Liberal government and the Northern Gateway Alliance, "an organization sponsored by Enbridge" and chaired by the former mayor of Prince George (Panofsky, 2011, 17). Meanwhile, Enbridge actively courted BC First Nations, offering a 10% ownership stake to communities along the proposed pipeline and tanker route.

### **3.6.2. Diversification and Its Discontents: The Rationale for Gateway's Opposition**

Despite the concerns of critics, tar sands development has retained broad popular support. With one 2012 poll indicating that nearly three quarters of Canadians supported oil sands development (Nikiforuk, 2013), Northern Gateway's completion struck many observers as a *fait accompli*. Instead, the project inspired a coordinated resistance campaign that stopped the proposal in its tracks.

This resistance represented a potential crisis for the Harper-led petrobloc. Heightened economic insecurity under neoliberalism – worsened by the 2008 crisis – had increased the urgency with which political leaders searched out growth opportunities such as the tar sands. Yet the complete failure of the petrobloc to take action on climate change and reign in the political power of the oil industry had undermined the legitimacy of the Harper Conservatives with many Canadian voters. Many of these people supported tar sands development *in the abstract*. Yet they also expected a degree of economic fairness and ecological sustainability that neoliberal extractivism could not ensure (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011). Meanwhile, the uneven distribution of economic and ecological risks and benefits associated with the project generated massive resistance to Gateway from First Nations, ENGOs, and local settler communities. As much of this opposition was located along the project route meant to link tar sands to tidewater, such resistance was a powerful obstacle to the export market diversification plans Conservatives claimed would ensure future economic prosperity.

Organizing against oil can be a tenuous proposition. Oil producing nations may face pressures to generate exports in the face of global capital discipline and economic instability. At the same time, climate change is the ultimate diffuse risk, with effects shared by all nations and persons regardless of their relative contribution to global emissions (Hoberg, 2013, 375). This makes action on climate change a lose-lose for politicians, who are held accountable for local economic growth but are left off the hook for the geographically disparate and long-term effects of rising emissions.

Yet while the risks from climate change are diffuse, "pipeline or tanker spills are location specific, [and] so have concentrated risks" (Hoberg, 2013, 374). These can motivate opposition from those vulnerable local populations that absorb the excess environmental and economic risk of a project while receiving few benefits. At the same time, the place-bound nature of energy transportation creates the potential for local resistance to undermine extractivist plans for energy export market diversification (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011; Mitchell, 2009).

Northern Gateway was an ideal project for uniting the global concerns of climate activists with the local worries animating many regional environmentalists, First Nations and settler communities. Proponents estimated the project would significantly accelerate upstream bitumen production, by some estimates by as much as a third (Nikiforuk, 2010, 123; Panofsky, 2011, 17-18). This generated political opposition from climate activists on both sides of the border – including large multinational ENGOs like Greenpeace and Sierra Club which had targeted the carbon-intensive oil sands as a potential 'climate killer'. These groups have increasingly lobbied against projects like Gateway, as they "recognized early on that the land-locked nature of the [tar sands] made expansion dependent on new pipeline capacity" (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 177).

These multinational groups have increasingly networked with local ENGOs, citizens groups, and First Nations communities. Though often concerned with climate change, these local actors often placed greater emphasis on the industry's local impacts, such as the potentially devastating ecological, economic, and health effects of a pipeline or tanker spill (Hoberg, 2013; Nikiforuk, 2009; 2013). And it was these concentrated risks along the proposed route that motivated many of Northern Gateway's British Columbian and First Nation opponents. As Hinte et al. (2012) explain, "pipeline construction and operation can cause damage to soils, surface and groundwater, air quality, vegetation,

wildlife, and fish populations", a legitimate concern for inland communities (123). Also worrisome was the possibility of a pipeline leak of highly toxic bitumen or condensate that could devastate the ecologies and economies of local communities. This was a serious concern for a pipeline proposed to cross over 1000 rivers and streams, including some of the world's most productive remaining Salmon habitats (Stendie, 2013, 2). Finally, Northern Gateway would bring as many as 300 supertankers a year through the remote port of Kitimat (Nikirofuk, 2010, 123). This "unprecedented tanker traffic" through BC's notoriously difficult to navigate North Coast would pass "through rich marine ecosystems" (Panofsky, 2011, 17-18). A spill in these waters could devastate the recently protected Gwaii Haanas National Marine Conservation Area Reserve as well as the Great Bear Rainforest, the world's last remaining intact temperate rainforest. Previous spills had conclusively demonstrated that contemporary cleanup technologies remained largely ineffective, with only a small percentage of product recovered even in best case scenarios (Panofsky, 2011, 17-18). If there was a spill, there would likely be no 'cure', with local effects as long term as they would be devastating.

Local worries about tanker spills were not unprecedented. Similar worries led Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to enact an informal federal tanker ban on BC's North Coast in the early 1970s (O'Neil, June 21, 2016). Such concerns were heightened by the 1989 Exxon Valdez tanker spill in nearby Alaska which decimated local economies and ecosystems, with effects still being felt today (Stendie, 2013, 68). Tellingly, references to Exxon Valdez became a rallying cry for Gateway's opponents (Panofsky, 2011, 23)

These longstanding concerns became validated by more recent events. The BP Deepwater Horizon blowout in 2010 heightened public attention to the risks of oil spills at the exact moment Northern Gateway was beginning to move through the JRP process, generating significant anxiety about the project's safety and the futility of post-spill cleanup efforts (Panofsky, 2011, 20). Around the same time, Enbridge became the focus of intense public scrutiny over its history of leaks and a supposed culture of corporate unaccountability. On July 26, 2010, an Enbridge pipeline in Michigan suffered a catastrophic leak, spilling 3,785,411 liters of highly toxic Alberta bitumen into the Kalamazoo river (Panofsky, 2011, 21; Preston, 46, 2013). When the US National Transportation Safety Board issued their 2012 incident report in the midst of the JRP hearings, they lambasted Enbridge for "pervasive organizational failure" and a "culture of deviance", explaining how Enbridge had flouted regulatory standards and corporate

protocol in the lead up to the leak (cited in Hoberg, 2014, 382). Then in July 2012, Enbridge's Line 14 suffered another serious leak in Wisconsin (Preston, 2013, 46).

The heightened public visibility of spills and leaks combined with Enbridge's sorry safety record to galvanize Northern Gateway's local opposition. Settler communities, First Nations, and environmentalists rallied around a campaign to ban tanker traffic on BC's North Coast, which would effectively kill the project (Panofsky, 2011, 21). The campaign was wildly effective. Polls conducted between 2010 and 2013 regularly indicated that upwards of 75% of British Columbians opposed increasing tanker traffic along the coast (Hoberg, 381, 2013), while an August 2012 Abacus poll demonstrated that a solid majority of BC residents opposed the Gateway project (Panofsky, 2011, 20).

Yet the most significant opposition came from First Nations along the project route. As Karl (2008) notes, petrostates often generate conflict when the "ethnic, tribal or religious groups" which absorb the externalities of development "are different from those that control the government", who tend to distribute rents to their political base. This was precisely the case with Northern Gateway. Hoberg (2013) explains that many "First Nations have resisted" the project "both because they are concerned about the impact of spills on culturally and economically important resources", and because it presents an opportunity "to force attention to their broader demands for rights and title" (376). The Northern Gateway Pipeline "would cross the traditional territories of at least sixty different First Nations communities, and would potentially impact the lands of many others, the vast majority of whom have not completed a modern land claims agreement" (Panofsky, 2011, 22-23). Given the significant ecological, economic, and cultural impacts of a spill or leak – from a collapse of local salmon runs to the destruction of growing ecotourism industries – the project encountered significant opposition almost immediately (Hoberg, 2013, 381). These concerns aligned with the broader rationales of a resurgent First Nations decolonization movement which began to view projects like Gateway as the most recent in a long line of colonial land grabs (Coulthard, 2014). The anti-Gateway campaign thereby emerged as a core component of a decolonization movement buoyed by 30 years of legal victories for BC First Nations regarding rights and title.

Finally, project opponents – First Nations and settlers – did not only criticize the *environmental* risks associated with spills and leaks. They also critiqued the *economic*

claims of proponents, noting that British Columbia would absorb the majority of risk while receiving few benefits. Exacerbating regional economic divisions has always been a major aspect of national politics due to Canada's strong federalist system. Yet these tensions were more acute with Northern Gateway than with previous environmental conflicts. For instance, in BC's 'War of the Woods' in the 1990s, the forestry industry was able to rally industry-dependent forestry workers and communities against First Nations and environmentalists seeking to protect BC's old growth forests (Wilson, 1998). Yet with Northern Gateway, economic gains would mostly accrue to Alberta and tar sands firms and investors (Lee, 2012). As such there was no local constituency of workers which could be mobilized by Enbridge or its supporters.

While proponents claimed that Northern Gateway would produce significant economic benefits for BC, opponents strenuously challenged such assertions (Goodine, 2012, Aug.11). Research by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives demonstrated in detail how Enbridge had systematically overstated provincial GDP growth and employment gains from the project, explaining that most economic gains would accrue to Enbridge and project investors (Lee, 2012) While the effects of a leak or spill could have long term ecological repercussions, most local economic benefits from pipeline and terminal construction would last only throughout the construction phase and create few long term jobs in the region (Goodine, 2012, Aug. 11; Hinte et al, 2012, 125; Lee, 2012). And because Northern Gateway's bitumen would be extracted in Alberta and processed in Asian refineries, the project would produce few royalties for British Columbia (Nikiforuk, 2009). Meanwhile, a coastal spill could devastate local industries reliant on the maintenance of pristine coastal ecosystems, such as fisheries and tourism (Lee, 2012). For these reasons the *national* articulations of economic benefit promoted by petrobloc actors were often rejected by West Coast stakeholders, who bristled at the unequal *regional* distribution of economic and ecological risk and benefit.

### **3.6.3. Rage Against The Regime: Perceived Illegitimacy of the JRP**

Terry Karl (2008) argues that petrostates tend to suffer from democratic deficits. With governance oriented towards maximizing oil exports – often to enrich rent-seeking elites and mollify their political base – their bureaucracies tend to suffer from regulatory capture, devolving into unaccountable industry cheerleaders eager to rubberstamp projects. This undermines democratic legitimacy, especially among those

disenfranchised publics and/or alienated minorities which tend to absorb the risks of development while receiving relatively few benefits. This description fits neatly with the position of Panofsky (2011), who argues that “environmental assessments are political processes” whose fundamental purpose is to “politically legitimize projects” (70). Whether one agrees, this was the view most regional Northern Gateway opponents took of the JRP, even while many leveraged its public consultations to make their case in the public sphere.

All major components of the nascent anti-Gateway opposition found reasons to be skeptical of the JRP, which they saw as an unaccountable, industry-captured process. Environmental groups bristled at the 2009 agreement between the CEAA and NEB that left the latter agency in charge of the approval process. Given that the NEB was an industry-funded agency mostly staffed by corporate insiders and explicitly tasked with promoting energy projects, there was good reason to suspect that their review would be biased in favor of approval (Stendie, 2013, 86-90). For some, these suspicions received early confirmation during the JRP’s scoping phase, when it was accounted that the panel would not include the project’s upstream and downstream climate change impacts within its purview (87). This was particularly egregious since the US assessment for Keystone XL had included such impacts, factoring into the project’s temporary rejection by the Obama administration (Hoberg, 2013). It therefore appeared that the JRP had *purposefully* refused to include these climate impacts for the simple reason that Northern Gateway would be more difficult to approve were they to be considered.

Representation and equity issues were also a concern. Not one of the three federally-appointed JRP members was British Columbian or a BC First Nation (Rankin, 2012, Sept 6). And by ceding provincial authority to the federal JRP process, the harmonization agreement between BC and Ottawa had practically guaranteed that regional equity would be excluded from the Panel’s decision-making rationale, which was mandated with determining whether the project was in the *national* interest. This abdication of regional accountability inflamed many BC residents, who saw the JRP as an out-of-province threat. For them, the province’s fate now seemed in the hands of a distant, unpopular Federal Government widely viewed as a political puppet of the Alberta oil patch and international investors.

Finally, many First Nations groups were outraged that the project could be decided by a Federal panel *at all*. The proposed route ran through large swaths of unceded territory, and the JRP had no jurisdiction to make decisions regarding rights and title (Panofsky, 2011, 28). In the view of many First Nations, negotiations should have proceeded on a government to government basis between Ottawa and affected nations, instead of First Nations participating as merely another interest group among many (77). Some Nations refused to participate in the JRP process entirely, while some that did engage for pragmatic reasons nevertheless condemned it as illegitimate.

Other problems stemmed from the unequal distribution of resources and expertise inherent in the JRP process itself. Hinte et al. (2011) explain that such power asymmetries are common for Canadian assessment regimes, in which “project proponents, who have a bias in favor of project approval, provide most information” to panel members (133). Northern Gateway’s JRP process was no exception in this regard. For most project opponents, notes Panofsky (2011), “there [was] not adequate funding for full engagement in the process”, which involved the hiring of expensive legal teams and various experts, the lengthy preparation of testimony, and other resource-intensive activities (117). Many First Nations communities in particular lacked the financial resources to engage on an equal footing, quickly burning through their government allotted funding. Enbridge, on the other hand, is Ranked 8 on the Financial Post’s 2015 list of Canada’s largest companies by revenue (FP 500, 2015). It therefore entered the JRP process with “teams of scientists, lawyers and environmental consultants” at their disposal, while engaging in expensive public relations campaigns to garner regional support (Panofsky, 2011, 117).

Concerns were amplified by the democratic deficit inherent to the review process. Expert review panels generally possess no obligation to actually incorporate a given stakeholder’s interest in their final decision (Hinte et al, 2012, 133). Even if the overwhelming majority of participants spoke out against Northern Gateway, the project could still be approved. Which is, ultimately, exactly what happened.

#### **3.6.4. Bloc Party: The United Front Against Gateway**

Karl (2008) notes that in petrostates ‘both boom[s] and busts produce intense social, identity-based and generational tension’, as the inequitable distribution of oil

rents generates “very noticeable extremes of wealth and poverty in what is widely perceived to be a rich country”. Conflict emerges as sectors of the population frozen out of economic benefits clash with rent-seeking elites and their political base, whose support is paid for with a portion of the rent. Often, state elites must facilitate industry-capture of the regulatory apparatus in order to appease a largely foreign industry whose capital must be attracted to maximize production. The result is a decline in democratic accountability in the regulatory bureaucracy, which only enflames the ire of those who benefit the least from oil production. In cases where disenfranchised minorities or alienated regional, indigenous, or religious groups – who by definition tend to have less capacity to influence the state and acquire an equitable portion of rent – bear the brunt of the economic and ecological externalities of development, conflict can spin out of control. This is why while the old ‘oil wars’ tended to be geopolitical conflicts between states fighting for access to the resource, the new generation of oil conflict tends to be civil in nature, occurring between social groups within the same state.

Because of the low proportion of Canadian GDP derived from oil and gas, Canada cannot truly be considered a petrostate (though the case is stronger for Alberta). Yet in the case of Northern Gateway, the political dominance of the petrobloc reproduced similar – if milder – societal conflict. International environmental groups like Sierra Club banded together with local organizations such as Dogwood Initiative to circulate the ecological case against Gateway throughout the province. They repeatedly pointed out not just the ecological risks involved, but also how British Columbians were expected to shoulder the vast majority of that risk while receiving virtually none of the corresponding economic benefits (Hoberg, 2013). These groups successfully turned Northern Gateway into a wedge issue for oppositional political elites. For the BC NDP, opposing the project became a means of restoring their environmental credibility after their opposition to the Liberals’ carbon tax in the 2009 provincial election, which caused numerous prominent environmentalists – traditionally strong NDP supporters – to publically criticize the party (Pembina Institute, David Suzuki Foundation, & ForestEthics, 2009). While it is ultimately unclear what effect the NDP’s anti-carbon tax position had, they did go on to ultimately lose the election. Possibly to ward off a similar route, the NDP came out against Gateway early on, framing the BC Liberals’ perceived support of the project as a betrayal of British Columbians (Hoberg, 2013, 382). Meanwhile the Federal NDP and Liberal parties both saw Gateway as a weapon to be wielded against

the Federal Conservatives. By 2011, both parties had proposed to pass a tanker ban on BC's North Coast - a central demand of Gateway's opponents (Panofsky, 2011, 21)

Perhaps the most serious opposition came from First Nations groups along the proposed route. Though during the JRP process Enbridge consistently claimed progress was being made for equity negotiations with various affected communities, virtually no Nation along the route was willing to publically support the project. Instead, indigenous opposition to Northern Gateway was strong and well organized. "In March 2010", explains Hoberg, "the Coastal First Nations, an alliance of First Nations on BC's North and Central coasts, issued a declaration 'that oil tankers carrying crude oil from the Alberta Tar Sands will not be allowed to transit our lands and waters'" (381). In December of that same year, "the Yinka Dene Alliance, a coalition of six First Nations in the Fraser River watershed, issued the Save the Fraser Declaration, which was then signed by more than 60 other First Nations". The Declaration's rejection of Northern Gateway was unequivocal:

"in upholding our ancestral laws, Title, Rights and responsibilities, we declare: We will not allow the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines, or similar Tar Sands projects, to cross our lands, territories and watersheds, or the ocean migration routes of Fraser River Salmon" (cited in Panofsky, 2011, 23)

While widespread opposition from local settlers, BC voters, and environmental groups represented a significant roadblock for proponents, First Nations opposition was even more devastating. Since the Calder decision of 1973, decades of legal rulings had bestowed increased legal standing for BC First Nations concerning rights and title (Coulthard, 2014). Even if Gateway was eventually approved by the JRP and Federal Cabinet – which did indeed happen in 2013 and 2014, respectively – persistent First Nations resistance would pose a significant barrier to project completion in the form of lengthy legal challenges (Hoberg, 2013). Just as serious, many Nations had made "it clear that they [would] physically resist the pipeline with civil disobedience, creating the potential of more delay..." (381).

By 2012, persistent, widespread resistance to Northern Gateway from First Nations, environmental groups, and settler communities along the route had coalesced into a powerful movement (Stendie, 2013). In this sense, the anti-Gateway alliance could be seen as the potential seeds of an emergent counterhegemonic bloc, with common

interests helping to forge new political coalitions between three groups which had often been at odds throughout the province's history. As such, the new alliance between First Nations, environmental groups, and settler communities was a significant development that could fundamentally reorient the political dynamics of the province. Together, opponents held numerous well-attended rallies and demonstrations, organized community information sessions, circulated petitions, and made full use of alternative, mainstream and social media to make their case and mobilise supporters. And while many critics believed that the JRP process was democratically illegitimate and captured by industry, opponents still signed up to take part in unprecedented numbers, forcing the Panel to extend hearings by over a year. First Nations, ENGOs, citizens' coalitions, and individual residents all registered to speak at panel hearings, with the vast majority of testimony resolutely opposed to approval (Gilchrist, 2013, Feb. 4). Public sentiment had turned against Gateway throughout the province, with poll after poll conclusively demonstrating a majority of BC residents opposed to increased tanker traffic on the North Coast. What had begun as a slam dunk for proponents had somehow become a deadly political street fight, as petrobloc pipedreams of Canadian elites morphed into a counterhegemonic nightmare.

### **3.6.5. Conditional Support: Provincial Politics and the Pipeline Shell Game**

Prior to the summer of 2012, BC's Liberal government had said it would wait until the JRP's final decision before taking a position on Northern Gateway (Hoberg, 2013, 382). Yet growing opposition had left the pro-industry Liberals vulnerable to the anti-Gateway NDP in the upcoming 2013 provincial election. In particular, the NDP lambasted the Liberals for waiving BC's constitutional right to hold an independent provincial assessment. With the unpopular Christy Clark government floundering in the polls, the Liberals reversed their position on Northern Gateway in July 2012.

Known as Clark's "Five Conditions", the new policy stated that provincial support for Gateway would be withheld until the project had satisfied the following conditions:

1. Successful completion of the environmental review process
2. World-leading marine oil spill response, prevention and recovery systems

3. World-leading practices for land oil spill prevention, response and recovery systems
4. Legal requirements regarding Aboriginal and treaty rights are addressed
5. British Columbia receives a fair share of the fiscal and economic benefits of a proposed heavy oil project that reflects the level, degree and nature of the risk borne by the province, the environment and taxpayers (Hoberg, 2013, 382)

Though this about-face fueled a bitter public dispute between Christy Clark and Alberta premier Allison Redford (Hoberg, 2013, 380), it helped assure BC voters that the Liberal government would, at the very least, withhold project approval until the opposition's main objections had been dealt with. With the NDP now struggling to distinguish themselves from their rivals, NDP leader Adrian Dix announced on Earth Day – which fell during the middle of the campaign – that the party would reject not just Gateway but the Kinder Morgan Transmountain Extension. On the face of it, this seemed reasonable given that Kinder Morgan's project was the second major pipeline proposal meant to connect Alberta bitumen with BC tidewater and East Asian markets beyond (Hoberg, 2013, 383-385). Yet the NDP had previously refused to take a position on Kinder Morgan until after its NEB review had been completed. This abrupt policy shift quickly backfired, as “the Clark campaign immediately pounced on the surprise shift in position, accusing Dix of flip-flopping, concealing his true positions on other major issues, and being opposed to resource development” (384). Dix's “Kinder Morgan Surprise” proved a defining moment in the campaign, and “the BC Liberals came storming back and pulled off a shocking majority victory”.

### **3.6.6. The Empire Strikes Back: The Petrobloc's response to the Anti-Gateway Challenge**

A defining feature of petrostates, notes Karl (2008), is their penchant for authoritarian rule. Dominant state actors are often compelled to maximize oil revenues, strategically redistribute rents to their political base, and overcome the political conflict which emerges from the maldistribution of rents and the negative externalities of development. Similarly, numerous scholars (Harvey, 2005; Panitch and Gindin, 2005; Robinson, 2004) have noted how neoliberal governance has generally involved the

construction of an expanded security apparatus and a heightened reliance on state repression to overcome political opposition.

The anti-Gateway resistance called forth just such a response from petrobloc actors. The Liberal's shifting position on Northern Gateway had demonstrated the new political reality on the ground. An organized and allied bloc of indigenous peoples, environmental groups, and local communities had forced a dramatic change in position for one of the most staunchly industry-friendly governments in provincial history. This presented a serious obstacle to the diversification strategies of the Harper-coordinated petrobloc, which rested on the hopes of reaching Asian markets via BC tidewater.

Generally speaking, the anti-Gateway resistance was based on four distinct yet interrelated tactics, each of which were built on previously developed strategies for countering opposition to tar sands expansion and neoliberal extractivism more generally. These included increased securitization and state coercion; the co-optation of indigenous opponents; public communications campaigns promoting the project and denouncing its opponents; and new legislation designed to delimit public participation in the federal review process.

As opposition to the tar sands has grown, various petrobloc actors have openly called for increased state coercion of anti-tar sands activists in the name of national security (Preston, 2013). One example is a 2009 report written for the Canadian Defense & Foreign Affairs Institute, a conservative think tank run out of the University of Calgary and associated with that institution's so-called 'Calgary School'. The report's author Tom Flanagan was Stephen Harper's intellectual mentor at university and is a long-time Fraser Institute scholar. He was also a founder of the Calgary School and a leading figure of the Canadian EPII network which that school had helped found (Gutstein, 2009; 2014). In the report, Flanagan warns policy makers of the dangers posed by a potential alliance between environmentalists and First Nations. Described as "a nightmare scenario from the standpoint of resource industries", such an alliance would have the capacity to offer place-based resistance along the numerous roads, pipeline routes, and other infrastructural nodes that constitute the industry's transportation networks (cited in Preston, 2013, 52).

Under the Harper Government such concerns became integrated into the operating principles of the Canadian security apparatus, as First Nations and environmentalists became increasingly targeted by federal security forces for surveillance and intelligence operations (Preston, 2013). Jen Preston (2013) notes how one “national RCMP surveillance program monitoring First Nations” between 2007 and 2010 shared “intelligence reports about First Nations “with private sector energy companies (52). Such episodes neatly demonstrate the *inter-field* nature of the petrobloc, with prominent civil society actors such as Tom Flanagan and the CDFAI providing ideological cover for open collusion between the Federal Government’s security apparatus and private capital.

The culmination of such activities came in 2015, when the Conservatives passed Bill C-51, providing security agencies with sweeping new powers “to collect information on and disrupt the activities of suspected terrorist groups” (McCarthy, 2015, Feb. 17). Under the new legislation, security agencies were given increased scope to target groups which, in their view, “undermined the security of Canada”. Yet the Bill broadly defined ‘undermining the security of Canada’ “as anything that interferes with the economic or financial stability of Canada or with the country’s critical infrastructure”. While Prime Minister Harper claimed the legislation was targeted at radical Islamists, extractivist opponents noted that C-51 would also “expand the ability of government agencies to infiltrate environmental groups” and First Nations opposing new tar sands infrastructure. Giving credence to such fears, in February 2015 a leaked RCMP assessment report emerged framing “environmental extremists” that were “opposed to society’s reliance on fossil fuels” as a growing threat to national security.

The second tactic used to counter project opposition was the attempted co-optation of First Nations leadership. As resistance to Northern Gateway grew, Enbridge aggressively promoted its attempts to secure equity deals with indigenous communities along the project route, offering them a 10% ownership stake in the project (Panofsky, 2011, 17). Negotiations were often conducted with prominent band council members of individual nations (as opposed to the relevant tribal councils or hereditary Chiefs), making them “divisive by design” (Preston, 2013, 52). These practices were provided ideological cover by petrobloc-linked think tank actors. One prominent group was Ottawa’s MacDonald Laurier Institute, which between 2010 and 2015 produced a flurry of reports, interviews, and op-eds proposing policies hoped to break First Nations

opposition. These included revenue sharing, integration of local communities into environmental monitoring, and other attempts to secure First Nations participation in Gateway as well as future projects.

A third tactic used to counter the anti-Gateway opposition involved a series of communications campaigns launched by the Harper Government and other project supporters that promoted the project's supposed economic benefits while delegitimizing the opposition. Such campaigns were the successors to earlier ecoskeptical campaigns by industry-backed neoliberal think tanks. Groups like the Fraser Institute had conducted such campaigns since at least the early 1990s (Gustein, 2009, 227-259), and by 2010 they had informed a general ideological response to tar sands opponents. This was particularly so in Alberta, where ecoskeptical narratives emerged as defining tropes of much mainstream media coverage concerning the tar sands.

These tropes are outlined in "Storylines in the Sands", a paper by Communications Professors Shane Gunster and Paul Saurette that analyses tar sands coverage in the Calgary Herald between May 1, 2010, and May 31, 2011. Gunster and Saurette explain how coverage in the pro-industry Herald converged around two interrelated themes. The first was a celebration of "the many economic benefits of the resource" (Gunster and Saurette, 2014, 344). Such coverage tended to 'symbolically nationalize' the industry by consistently describing economic benefits "as flowing to all Canadians, positioning oil sands development as an unequivocal public good". This coverage was "heavily 'subsidized' by industry public relations: trade groups such as CAPP, as well as pro-industry think tanks, such as the Canadian Energy Research Institute (CERI), generated an endless flow of reports about investment, employment, and taxation revenue that were widely (and uncritically) reported in opinion and news pieces alike". Importantly, "[b]roader information and analysis of corporate profits, including questions about the proportion of revenues flowing to parent companies and shareholders located outside the province, was largely missing", allowing the Herald's coverage to sidestep concerns about the inequitable structure of the industry.

The second theme dominating media coverage involved the supposed nefariousness of tar sands critics (Gunster and Saurette, 2014). Such denunciations drew on ecoskeptical themes previously developed by industry-backed think tanks and advocacy groups, describing the environmental externalities of tar sands development

as minor problems trumped up by duplicitous green ideologues. These claims generally ignored local critics, including affected First Nations. Instead, they drew on “a storyline supplied by independent researcher and Vancouver blogger Vivian Krause” which drew attention to the funding some tar sands critics received from large US foundations (340). This funding was used to undermine the democratic legitimacy of Canadian opponents by symbolically positioning “oil sands criticism as a foreign import”. Yet “Environmental organizations (and their closet financiers) were not the only characters of ill-repute and intention in the Herald's stories” (340). Environmentalists and their foundation backers were presented as merely one faction in a conspiratorial cabal of liberal elites, including “[f]oreign governments, politicians, celebrities and media” figures. All this helped portray conflict over the oil sands as a melodramatic struggle between the industry’s heroic local defenders and an invading foreign army of elite industry critics.

In early 2012, this regional storyline was repurposed by Gateway’s supporters in an attempt to delegitimize the project’s growing opposition on a national scale. Like earlier Calgary Herald coverage, these activities leveraged research by Vancouver blogger Vivian Krause which pointed out that some anti-Gateway groups such as the Dogwood Initiative had received funding from US-based charitable foundations like Tides Canada (Krause, 2012). In doing so, Krause framed Northern Gateway’s local environmentalist opponents as foreign-backed interlopers, and advocated that such groups be banned from participating in the JRP process altogether. Krause’s posts were quickly picked up by Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver. In January 2012, Oliver issued a public letter describing project opponents as “foreign funded radicals” who had used American funding to “hijack” the approval process in order to further their radical anti-growth agenda, “no matter... the cost to Canadian families in lost jobs and economic growth” (Oliver, 2012, Jan. 9). He then used such claims to justify potential reforms to the environmental assessment regime which could neutralize tar sands opponents by delimiting future public involvement in the approval process.

Like the earlier coverage in the Calgary Herald, the Oliver letter promoted the supposed benefits of Northern Gateway’s approval and extractivist development more generally. These benefits were described as accruing not just to oil companies, Alberta, or even energy sector workers, but rather to the Canadian *nation as a whole*. Such claims only heightened the saliency of the ‘foreign funded radicals’ framework by

positioning environmental opposition as a threat to the prosperity of the nation and working Canadians. It was a conservative populist argument *par excellence*.

Oliver's letter gained significant media coverage, with numerous newspaper columnists supporting both the letter and the Conservative government's stated intent to reform the approval process. The letter was also publically supported by industry-supporting organizations such as the advocacy group Ethical Oil, which enthusiastically adopted the 'foreign funded radicals' narrative.

The 'foreign funded radicals' narrative ultimately helped justify the fourth, legislative tactic of the Harper Government and its petrobloc allies. "Prior to 2012", notes Hoberg (2013), "the regulatory process established by the *National Energy Board Act* contained an important veto point in an independent regulator" (375). However, the focus on 'foreign funded radicals' 'hijacking' the approval process provided cover for the Conservatives to make sweeping changes to the Canadian project assessment regime.

In June 2012 the Conservatives passed Bill C-38, otherwise known as the "Jobs, Growth and Long-term Prosperity Act". A giant omnibus budget implementation bill, C-38 "amended the *National Energy Board Act* to make the NEB decision a *recommendation* to cabinet rather than a final decision", thereby conferring complete discretionary power to a Federal Cabinet that openly supported the project (Hoberg, 375). Later that year the Conservatives passed Bill C-45, also known as the Jobs and Growth Act, which enacted significant changes to multiple pieces of federal legislation including the Indian Act, the Fisheries Act, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, and the Navigable Water Act (Coulthard, 2014, 160). Many of these changes weakened – and in some cases outright demolished – key aspects of the Canadian environmental regulatory regime. Investigative journalist Andrew Nikiforuk (2013) explains how the bill "gutted" the Fisheries Act. Previously, the Act had "directly prohibited the destruction of aquatic-life habitats", but now "stood in the way of... Northern Gateway..., which must cross 1,000 waterways en route to the Pacific Ocean". Other changes "radically [curtailed] environmental protections for lakes and rivers", reduced "the amount of resource development projects that require environmental assessment", and radically limited the degree of public participation in future project reviews. The following year, documents obtained through the Access To Information Act revealed that many of these legislative changes had been specifically requested by Canada's major pipeline lobby group, the

Canadian Energy Pipeline Association, of which Enbridge was a member (Scofield, (2013, Feb. 20). In a 2011 presentation to the Deputy Minister of Trade, CEPA had presented a laundry list of changes it would like to see made to federal legislation. Many of these were later incorporated into C-38 and -45.

The 'foreign funded radicals' argument also paved the way for a bureaucratic attack on project opponents that complemented the legislative one. Groups like Ethical Oil pointed to the supposed democratic illegitimacy of 'foreign funded' Northern Gateway opponents in order to support a series of comprehensive audits by Revenue Canada of Dogwood Initiative and other JRP participants. The investigations were conducted in response to the allegedly 'political' work of those organizations, which as tax-exempt organizations could spend only a small fraction of their resources on partisan activities. Notably, such investigations only targeted Northern Gateway *opponents*, with civil society *proponents* of the project such as Ethical Oil, The Fraser Institute, and Macdonald Laurier Institute receiving no analogous treatment from Revenue Canada (or Minister Oliver, for that matter).

Taken together, the responses to Gateway's opponents were reminiscent of the behavior of a petrostate. By increasing state surveillance and policing of opponents, harassing civil society groups with punitive audits, and insulating the regulatory apparatus from public input, state elites attempted to guarantee the growth of the oil sector and maintain its inequitable structure. However, as in the case of many petrostates, the heavy-handed actions of the Harper Government only fanned the flames of the very conflict they were meant to overcome.

### **3.6.7. Idle No More and the Dialectic of Resistance**

The interventions of the Harper Government were intended to undermine resistance to Northern Gateway. Remarkably, the exact opposite occurred. Gateway's opponents rallied against what appeared to be a blatant assault on environmental regulation and democratic participation. Environmental groups like Dogwood Initiative and Sierra Club BC framed the Harper Government as an enemy of the environment, democracy, and British Columbian sovereignty. They mobilized their outraged supporters for a series of high profile demonstrations, voter outreach campaigns, and donation drives.

Yet the most dramatic response came from the indigenous opposition, who were furious at the passage of C-45 in particular. As Glen Coulthard (2014) explains:

Of concern to Indigenous people and communities in particular are the ways that Bill C-45 unilaterally undermines Aboriginal and treaty rights by making it easier for First Nations' band councils to lease out reserve lands with minimal community input or support, by gutting environmental protection for lakes and rivers, and by reducing the number of resource development projects that would have required environmental assessment under previous legislation. Bill C-45 thus represents the latest installment of Canada's longstanding policy of colonial dispossession (127-128).

These concerns culminated in the Idle No More movement, which quickly developed into the largest wave of decolonial activism in decades. The movement, explains Coulthard (2014), "emerged with force in December 2012 as a result of the initial educational work of four women from the prairies" who opposed Bill C-45 (128). What began as an "education campaign against a repugnant piece of federal legislation" quickly "transformed into a grassroots struggle to transform the colonial relationship itself", as "rallies, railway blockades, and traffic stoppages swept across the country".

The movement demobilized in the spring of 2013, but not before issuing a series of political demands. These included the full implementation of "the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; reform of the Federal Government's comprehensive lands claims policy; the establishment of an implementation framework for First Nations' treaty rights; and, of course, a comprehensive review of Bill C-45, undertaken with meaningful consultation with Aboriginal peoples" (161). Prime Minister Harper was quick to publicly state that Bill C-45 was non-negotiable. Yet "the unrelenting anti-pipeline campaigns mounted by First Nations communities across British Columbia", represented "a clear demonstration of Indigenous peoples' continued resolve to defend their land and sovereignty from further encroachments by state and capital" (165). Most embarrassingly, C-45 achieved the precise opposite effect hoped for by the Harper Conservatives, strengthening the role of First Nations leadership in the nascent anti-Gateway bloc. By instigating Idle No More, C-45 helped suture the indigenous opposition to Gateway to a burgeoning decolonization movement that was highly organized, militant, and national in scope. It also arguably opened the eyes of many environmentalists and local settler communities to the potential strength of First Nations leadership in the fight against tar sands expansion.

### **3.7. The Walking Dead: The Northern Gateway Project in 2017**

Despite the stunning failure of Northern Gateway's proponents to undermine or demobilize project opponents, the project was ultimately approved; first by the JRP in December 2013, and then by the Conservative cabinet that following summer (Lewis, 2013). Even with the project's many controversies – Enbridge's worrisome history of spills and leaks; the complete lack of consent from First Nations along the proposed route; majority disapproval of the project amongst British Columbians; the climate concerns associated with increased bitumen production; the overwhelmingly negative testimony offered by most JRP participants; and the unequal distribution of economic and ecological risks and benefits – the project would simply go ahead. For some cynical observers – including myself – this had been the anticipated outcome from the start.

And yet Northern Gateway will never get built. The project is still opposed by the majority of BC residents. First Nations along the route still reject it. The project still faces bipartisan opposition from both the BC Liberals and their NDP rivals. And in 2015, a collapse in world oil prices eviscerated the economic case for the pipeline practically overnight.

Gateway's death rattle was finally heard in Fall 2015, when the Conservatives' majority government was unseated by the Federal Liberals. Led by Justin Trudeau (son of famed Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau) the Liberals had officially opposed Northern Gateway in the election campaign (Do, 2015, June 29), allowing them to make major electoral gains in BC (Hume et al, 2015, Oct 19). In a stunning upset, the Liberals returned from third place to crush both the Conservatives and the official opposition NDP. Within a week of taking office, Prime Minister Trudeau issued a federal tanker ban on BC's North Coast, cutting Gateway off from BC tidewater (Morton, 2015). In January 2016, Gateway's environmental assessment certificate was declared invalid by the BC Supreme Court on the grounds that the Federal Government had not carried out its legal responsibilities to properly consult First Nations (something opponents had been arguing all along (Hume, 2016, January 13). And on November 9, 2016, Prime Minister Trudeau formally rejected the project (Tasker, 2016, Nov. 9). Despite the best efforts of some of the most powerful economic, state, and civil society elites in the country, Northern Gateway was dead.

## Chapter 4. Studying Discourse Coalitions

The Northern Gateway controversy is an excellent opportunity to explore how discourse coalitions help actors from across different social fields constitute and coordinate interfield political projects. Take two examples: the neoliberal extractivist coalition's attempt to diversify petroleum exports to East Asian markets, and the anti-Gateway coalition's campaign to halt construction of that export market diversification project. In both cases, such coalitions must collectively generate and deploy discursive strategies which can aid the pursuit of coalition goals. In doing so, they are potentially aided by the institutional networks which allow for the emergent coordination of political projects across multiple fields. In some cases, such coordination may result in the formation, challenging, and/or defense of relatively coherent political blocs, such as Canada's emergent petrobloc working to consolidate the neoliberal extractivist agenda. Exploring such phenomena requires methods that align with the complex, interfield nature of these projects.

Any analysis of a discourse coalition must make sense of the shared policy discourses through which ideologically aligned epistemic communities coalesce around particular understandings of reality (Hajer, 1993, 44-46; Stone, 1998). It is through the decentralized circulation of shared discourses that such coalitions affect policy agendas and broader public opinion. This involves not just the promotion of specific policy options, but also the generation and circulation of frames, ideological tropes, and master narratives through which receptive subjects can interpret their lived experiences and the broader social world's relation to them (Eagleton, 1991).

Discourses, notes Hajer (1993), do not simply "float" in the world" (46). Rather, they are "tied to specific institutions and actors". As Stone (1998) explains, civil society organizations like think tanks have emerged as coordinating mechanisms for the coalescence of discursively aligned epistemic communities into decentralized yet relatively coherent discourse coalitions. Yet Stone largely ignores or dismisses the key role of neoliberal think tanks' elite funders and board members in both supporting and directing the neoliberal project since the 1970s. In doing so, she makes a classic post-structural error. In insisting on the 'relative autonomy' of think tank scholars and policy entrepreneurs, she emphasizes 'autonomy' while downplaying the *relative* part of the

equation. Yet the work of Gutstein (2009; 2014), Oreskes and Conway (2010), and others (Jacques et al ,2008; Hoggan with Littlemore, 2009) makes clear that the ecoskeptic campaigns of neoliberal think tanks have been hugely influenced by the corporate actors which fund such groups and sit on their boards.

These findings align with earlier power structure scholarship by Domhoff (1971) and Dye (1978) that demonstrated how the influence of elite-backed post-war groups like the US Council on Foreign Relations depended significantly on their ‘interfield’ nature. The capacity of such groups to attract actors from the fields of business, government, academia and media was fundamental to their ability to generate and promote the adoption of policies and philosophies that aligned with – and to some degree constituted – the interests of their elite backers. This does not mean that discourse coalitions or policy planning networks are monolithic. Elite actors – even those within the same field or industry – are not necessarily unified in their policy preferences or even their conceptions of class or sectoral interest. Yet think tanks and policy discussion groups allow such actors to develop a kind of ‘rolling consensus’, by bringing together intellectuals and policy entrepreneurs that can generate novel strategies to overcome pressing political problems (Fischer, 1991). The diversity of actors and institutions within a coalition actually aids the formation of discursive echo chambers, in which the same arguments or frames get repeated – and thereby amplified – by allied coalition members. At times, coalition members in different organizations and fields may each leverage their unique cultural capital to deploy specialized discourses in service of common arguments and political priorities.

The discursive strategies of these coalitions do not exist in a social vacuum, but must react to novel developments and the shifting balance of social forces. An understanding of Gramscian crisis as moments when dominant ideologies become decentered and open to challenge is therefore paramount. In the case of Northern Gateway, rising economic insecurity, heightened First Nations legal standing and decolonial militancy, and looming ecological collapse all contributed to a situation in which the ‘common sense’ acceptance of the need for new pipeline capacity to the coast was shaken for many members of the public.

A crisis enables discourse coalitions to influence the flow of political events precisely because it decenters the self-evident and taken-for-granted nature of people’s

presumed interests (Laclau, 1977). In the case of Northern Gateway, the stark and inequitable division between the distribution of ecological and economic risk and benefit made the extractivist coalition particularly vulnerable. Yet coalitions played such central roles in the Gateway conflict because these inequities were not *inherently* obvious or self-evident to most actors. The probability of an oil spill or a pipeline's contribution to climate change; corporate profitability and foreign ownership; employee compensation and employment intensity; global financial volatility and commodity index price spreads; the share of resource rent accruing to local governments through taxes and royalties; 'Dutch disease' – these are all complicated subjects. Their holistic understanding depends on context and information far removed from the daily lived experience of most people – even some of those most affected by them! They must be *mediated* to become intelligible. It is here that discourse coalitions are potentially powerful, generating the specific cultural capital through which their symbolic legitimacy mediates the public understanding of such phenomena.

How discourse coalitions frame such phenomena is important. Their capacity to generate and circulate not just facts but also frames, narratives, and emotionally charged rhetoric affects how audiences interpret the social world in the context of their own lived experiences and their conceptions of identity and self-interest. For instance, the success of climate skeptic campaigns rested not just on the ability of industry-backed groups to deploy misleading scientific claims, but also on their capacity to articulate those claims within conservative populist worldviews that mobilized class resentment and feelings of economic insecurity against 'liberal elites' (Neubauer, 2011). Similarly, Northern Gateway's opponents utilized left populist, regionalist, and First Nations sovereignty frames to mobilize diverse regional actors against the project's backers.

#### **4.1. Discourse Analysis and Northern Gateway**

As Fairclough (2013) notes, discourse analysis allows us to explore the way actors deploy language so as to generate particular understandings of the world around us, our own identity, and our perceived self-interest. The discourse analysis in this study builds on previous scholarship concerning political framing (Lakoff, 2008; Taylor, 2000). Frames can be understood as the basic component pieces of larger discourses – the various metaphors, tropes, imageries, and other cognitive heuristics actors use to understand themselves and the world around them. Different frames make possible

particular interpretations by alternately emphasizing and downplaying particular aspects of phenomena. In the case of Northern Gateway, coalition members used frames to articulate the project with mental frameworks already internalized by target audiences. For instance, opponents tended to mobilise constituents by framing Gateway in terms of ecological risk, while proponents often framed the project in terms of economic security.

Discourse and frame analysis allows us to explore the ways these discourses draw on particular *master frames* – such as populism or nationalism – to make their claims more salient. Taylor (2000) notes that “master frames function... tantamount to linguistic codes” which help us organize and connect “experiences and events in the world around us with our own lives” (514). The use of master frames relate to the twin processes of *frame alignment* and *frame bridging*. Frame bridging involves the “linking [of] two ideologically compatible but structurally separate frames that refer to the same issue”. Frame alignment, meanwhile, involves “linking the individual’s interpretive framework with that of the social movement’s” (512). In the case of the anti-Gateway coalition there was a clear attempt by some opponents to bridge ecological injustice or regional populist frames with those related to indigenous sovereignty in an attempt to unite regional settlers and indigenous peoples against the project. Similarly, both opponents and supporters attempted to bridge their constituents understanding of Gateway with populist master frames that could help portray the conflict as a battle between legitimate popular forces and illegitimate elite outsiders – whether foreign funded environmental ideologues or powerful multinational oil companies.

In this way, discourse and frame analysis allows us to understand how discourse coalitions work to align people’s interpretive frameworks with their own movement goals. This often involves the discursive constitution of collective political subjects via the delineation of in groups and out groups, with enemies of ‘the people’ defined in different ways by different actors. Following Laclau (1977) and Hall (1988), this involved the rhetorical amplification of particular subject positions – Canadian, British Columbian, worker, taxpayer, First Nations, and so on – from whose perspective different narratives may appear intelligible. If one considered themselves primarily a British Columbian in the context of the Gateway conflict, appeals to national interest might be less convincing.

Discourse analysis of the materials produced by different organizations is crucial for understanding strategy at the coalition level. Two or more coalition groups from

similar or differing social fields may utilize the same frames or cite each other's statements so as to amplify the echo chamber effect. Yet such groups may also use *different* frames that are specifically tailored to each group's specific cultural capital, but which nonetheless *together* form common metanarratives and arguments. Such complementary framing can be understood as a form of emergent coalition coordination and specialization across different fields and organizations. Finally, discourse analysis allows us to better understand the extent to which coalition members are successful at impacting the public sphere, for instance by analyzing the ways in which their claims and frames are circulated through press coverage.

## **4.2. Social Network Analysis and Northern Gateway**

Yet discourse analysis can only partially help us understand discourse coalitions. It is not just shared discourses that allow coalition members to pursue interfield projects, but also the capacity of networked institutions to draw together ideologically or politically aligned coalition members from across multiple fields. As such this study supplements discourse analysis with social network analysis (SNA). SNA, broadly speaking, is the analysis of social networks via the exploration of institutional and interpersonal ties linking actors and institutions to each other (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). SNA's fundamental premise is that because humans are social creatures, the networks emerging from their associations can inform our understanding of social processes.

SNA has been used extensively to study elite-backed think tanks and civil society organizations. Domhoff (1971) and Dye (1978) mapped the affiliation networks of American post-war policy discussion groups, exploring how their boards and staff brought together elite actors from the academic, industry, media and government fields. In doing so, they demonstrated the capacity of such groups to further the class interests of their wealthy backers and corporate members by developing policy options which could later be adopted by government. In recent years, Donald Gutstein (2009; 2014) has used similar techniques to explore North American neoliberal think tanks. Such analysis explores how elite corporate backers fund and direct think tanks staffed by right wing academics and policy entrepreneurs who in turn translate the economic capital of their funders into cultural capital of expertise which can be invested in the media fields via information subsidies (Neubauer, 2011; Raso and Neubauer, 2016). Similarly, Carroll (2010) and Van der Pijl (2004) have mapped out the affiliation networks of transnational

policy groups and Global Fortune 500 lists to test the theory of an emergent transnational capitalist class oriented towards neoliberal economic integration.

SNA is an excellent method for exploring pro-and anti-Gateway coalitions. For example, the affiliation networks composed of the staff, boards, and members of different organizations offer insights into the functioning of echo chambers. If multiple civil society organizations within the same field make common arguments, deploy common frames, or cite each other's research, then it is useful to know whether or not they are linked through common staff or board members, or by those members' shared ties to common organizations or fields. In some cases, such ties are evidence of common membership in broader coalitions orientated around, for instance, industry-backed climate change deniers or transnational environmental movements. In some cases, the echo chamber effect would partially depend on these groups circulating common claims while *hiding* or *minimizing* their common institutional ties.

SNA also helps us make sense of a coalition's *emergent coordination* or *specialization*. Coalition members' unique forms of cultural capital may allow them to deploy different kinds of arguments and frames which *together* reinforce broader meta-arguments, policy prescriptions, or political philosophies. A think tank's technocratic arguments in favor of Northern Gateway on the grounds it will create working class jobs may *seem* different than an advocacy group's populist denunciation of Gateway's opponents as job-killing elites. Yet the latter populist set of claims depends on the prior technocratic ones for their premise – that Gateway will create jobs. Yet the effectiveness of this emergent coordination resides in the presumed social distance between the technocratic think tank and the populist advocacy group. SNA can illuminate this coordination by demonstrating close ties between two groups' staff or board members, or between their members and common network hubs – policy discussion groups, annual conferences, political parties, etc. – which provide coordinating functions for diverse coalition members. This is particularly useful when coordination cuts across multiple social fields, as when seemingly distinct state, industry, and civil society institutions supporting the same policy share multiple affiliation ties with the same right wing policy discussion group or industry backed think tank. This is important when a group's cultural capital rests on the perception of social distance, independence, and impartiality. A think tank's cultural capital of technocratic expertise may be undermined by SNA results linking its membership to particular industries or political parties.

### 4.3. Selecting the Pro- and Anti-Gateway Samples

To explore these dynamics, I carried out parallel social network and discourse analyses on the membership and communication materials of a sample of prominent pro- and anti-Gateway actors. I identified 17 prominent actors publically speaking in support or opposition to Northern Gateway from the state, industry, and civil society fields (see Table 1). For the state sample, the most jurisdictionally relevant provincial and federal sitting governments and opposition parties were selected. Sitting governments included the BC Liberals, the Alberta Progressive Conservatives, and the Federal Conservatives. Opposition parties included the BC NDP, the Federal NDP, and the Federal Liberals. The industry sample included Enbridge and the two most influential oil and gas industry associations in Canada: the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association.

**Table 1: Pro- and Anti-Gateway Coalition Samples**

	State	Civil Society	Industry
Pro	Federal Cons.	CERI	Enbridge
	Alberta PC	MLI	CAPP
		Ethical Oil	CEPA
		Fras. Inst.	
Anti	Federal Liberals	CFN	
	Federal NDP	Dogwood In.	
	BC NDP	Sierra Club BC	
	BC Liberals	YDA	

Selecting the civil society sample was more involved, as there were numerous civil society organizations organizing either for or against Northern Gateway. For instance, Gateway’s environmental opponents have included large multinational ENGO’s like Greenpeace and the WWF; North American ENGOs like ForestEthics/stand.earth and Sierra Club BC; Canadian environmental and left wing policy institutes like the Pembina Institute and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives; and local grassroots organizations like BC’s Living Ocean Society and Dogwood Initiative. The anti-Gateway coalition also included multiple indigenous groups, including previously-established intergovernmental organizations like the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs and Coastal First Nations (CFN) and recently founded intern-nation alliances like the Yinka Dene Alliance (YDA).

All of these would be excellent candidates for study. Yet the scope of the proposed discourse and social network analyses made looking at a large number of groups unfeasible. I therefore decided to focus on a small sample of civil society groups. I conducted an initial sampling of Canadian Newsstand database stories published in May 2013, the month of BC's provincial election. I selected the 2 most commonly cited First Nations organizations – CFN and the YDA – and settler NGO's – Sierra Club BC (SCBC) and Dogwood Initiative (DI) – opposing Gateway. It was hoped this would result in a relatively representative sample of civil society groups impacting public discourse via the Canadian press, even while acknowledging that choosing another initial sampling frame might produce a slightly different sample – perhaps including Forest Ethics or Living Oceans Society. The 4 most frequently cited pro-Gateway groups were also selected. These included three think tanks – the Canadian Energy Research Institute, the Fraser Institute, and the Macdonald Laurier Institute – and one advocacy group – Ethical Oil.

#### **4.4. Research Design: Social Network Analysis**

To explore the makeup and strategies of the pro- and anti-Gateway coalitions, a social network analysis was conducted on the sampled civil society, state, and industry organizations in 2014. For the civil society groups, social network samples were comprised of board members, executives, and senior staff<sup>3</sup>. In the case of Federal and Provincial Cabinets, samples included executive leaders (the Prime Minister and provincial Premiers), relevant cabinet ministers (such as Natural Resources, Environment, and Aboriginal Affairs) and key staff (such as Chiefs of Staff and communications officers) (See Table 2). Opposition party samples included party leaders, relevant MPs and MLAs (such as energy, environment, or aboriginal affairs critics), and key staff. Eventually, 384 sample actors were identified.

Biographical data on sample actors were collected from a variety of publically available documents, including news stories, online biographies, books, and articles. The purpose of collecting this information was to help identify the various interpersonal and institutional networks in which these groups' members were embedded, allowing me

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<sup>3</sup> The YDA is a formal alliance of indigenous nations, and does not have a publicly listed board of directors or staff. As such, they were not included in the social network analysis.

to explore the extent to which they and their organizations were associated with previously identified or emergent discourse coalitions and ‘blocs’.

**Table 2: Social Network Samples**

	Proponents				Opponents			
Civil Society	Fraser Institute	Macdonald Laurier Institute	Ethical Oil	Can. En. Res. Inst.	Dogwood Initiative	Sierra Club BC	Coastal First Nations	Yinka Dene Alliance
	137	38	6	16	25	19	19	n/a
State and Industry	CAPP	CEPA	Fed Cab.	Alb. Cab	BC Cab.	BC NDP	Fed Libs.	Fed NDP
	35	35	13	4	10	5	11	11

The biographical information was entered into the NodeXL network analysis software as a series of vertices (actors and institutions) and edges (ties linking actors with institutions as well as with each other). This software was used to map out primary and secondary affiliation ties between sample organizations and the different corporate, government and civil society organizations with which those organization’s members have been affiliated with presently or in the past. These ties included a variety of formal affiliations: sitting on a group’s board or executive; having worked for an organization; having been published, funded or hosted by an organization; or (in the case of state groups) having served as an elected official or senior bureaucrat in the organization. In this study, primary ties were defined as the institutional connections between members of a group’s social network sample (for instance, the collective staff and directorates of Dogwood or Sierra) and an external organization. Secondary ties included these primary ties *plus* connections represented by actors from outside an organization’s social network sample. For instance, an actor from the NDP sample with connections to both Sierra Club and Dogwood would represent a *secondary* tie from Sierra to Dogwood, but not a primary tie. For the most part, the findings in this study refer to primary ties. When secondary ties are referred to they are identified as such.

I then calculated a variety of social network metrics on the actors, events, and fields entered into the program, including network degree, betweenness centrality, clustering algorithm results, and so on. These metrics, as well as the larger database of vertices and edges, were used to generate hundreds of actor-event, event-event, and actor-actor subgraphs (network maps) illustrating the various interpersonal and institutional networks in which coalition members and actors were embedded.

The social network metrics and subgraphs were used to explore how different organizations' social network samples intersected with common organizations (the BC NDP, the Assembly of First Nations, etc.) or common fields (civil society, provincial government, and so on). This allowed me to investigate the extent to which different organizations and their members were affiliated with each other and with various other state institutions, civil society organizations, capital fractions, and pre-existing discourse coalitions (neoliberal, environmentalist, ecoskeptic, and so on). Given that organic intellectuals must work through institutions to develop and circulate discourses, and that these institutions must network with each other for intellectuals to coalesce into discourse coalitions, the SNA was used to identify the ties suturing these coalitions together. In conjunction with the discourse analysis, these findings helped me explore the diversity within and between coalitions, as well as the emergent coordination of coalition strategy resulting from its members' unique cultural capital.

## **4.5. Research Design: Discourse Analysis**

Perhaps the most self-evident way to explore a given discourse coalition is through the actual claims, frames, and references which constitute the discursive strategies of its members. With this in mind, I conducted an in depth discourse analysis of the communication materials produced by the 17 sampled organizations<sup>4</sup>. Their websites were searched for materials concerning Northern Gateway produced between 2010 and 2015. In the case of state actors, information was collected from the most contextually relevant government bodies and party members. For instance, the BC Liberal sample included materials issued by the Premier's Office and the Ministries of Energy and Environment, whereas for the Federal Conservatives materials were

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<sup>4</sup> The Canadian Energy Pipeline Association was initially included in the sample, but later removed as their website did not host any promotional material specific to Northern Gateway over the sampling frame.

collected from the Prime Minister’s Office and Natural Resources Canada. For the opposition parties, materials were included from the party blogs, the opposition leaders’ offices, and the blog posts and press releases of party Environment critics. Materials collected from a group’s website were supplemented with newspaper op-eds retrieved from the Canadian Newstream database. Finally, Enbridge’s YouTube channel was used to collect relevant corporate videos and advertisements.

**Table 3: Text Types Collected for Pro- and Anti-Gateway Coalition Actors**

		Backgrounder	Blog Post	CTA	Op-eds	Present.	Pres Release	Reports	Speeches	Video	Total
Pro	Fed Con	0	0	0	0	0	11	3	10	0	24
	Alb PC	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	6
State	BC NDP	1	55	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	60
	BC Lib	1	0	0	0	0	16	0	1	0	18
Anti-	Fed NDP	0	4	0	0	0	4	0	1	0	9
	Fed Lib	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	4
Industry	Pro	Enbridge	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	9	15
	Capp	1	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	6
Pro	MLI	0	6	0	7	0	2	5	0	0	20
	Ethical Oil	0	32	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	33
Civil Society	CERI	0	0	0	0	12	0	8	0	0	20
	Fraser	0	0	0	2	0	0	6	0	0	8
Anti-	CFN	2	9	0	0	0	13	1	0	0	25
	Dogwood	3	101	0	2	0	31	0	0	0	137
Anti-	Sierra Club BC	13	30	0	5	0	17	0	0	0	65
	YDA	0	0	0	1	0	17	0	0	0	18
Total		21	239	2	20	17	125	23	12	9	468

468 texts were collected in total, including blog posts, press releases, issue backgrounders, ‘calls to action’, op-eds, speeches, research reports, and presentations (See Table 3). By far the largest numbers of texts – 137 – were collected for Dogwood Initiative, the British Columbian advocacy group. At the other end of the spectrum, only 4 were collected for the Federal Liberals. Generally speaking, different types of organizations produced varying amounts and types of texts. State and civil society actors produced numerous press releases, indicating a ‘traditional’ public relations strategy oriented around influencing public discourse via the production of information subsidies for news media. Yet with the exception of the BC NDP, only civil society

groups tended to make significant use of blogs and newspaper op-eds. ENGO's were particularly likely to produce blog posts, in keeping with environmental groups' increasing use of online tools for organizing (Hestres, 2015)<sup>5</sup>. State actors, on the other hand, were more likely to produce public speeches which were saved on their websites, while industry associations and think tanks produced more research reports and public presentations.

Materials were converted to .pdf and .doc files and uploaded into NVIVO 11, a qualitative analysis software suite. Materials were coded for various frames, claims, sources cited, author organization, organization type, date of publication, and other attributes identified in an initial coding document which was expanded on an emergent basis (See Tables 4 and 5 for descriptions of common pro- and anti-Gateway claims). Although the discourse analysis was fundamentally qualitative, total counts for some attributes have been included in the following chapters to provide a sense of the general proportionality with which different organizations deployed given frames, claims, and other rhetorical tools. For instance, all groups in the Civil Society opponent sample deployed certain common claims – such as the claim that **BC First Nations opposed Northern Gateway**. Yet some groups tended to briefly make this claim in passing, while others made it over and over again in the same text. As such, frames and claims were coded for the number of 'mentions' they received in a text, so that a continuous set of sentences making the claim that **BC First Nations opposed Northern Gateway** would count as one 'mention' for that claim. This allowed me to assess the relative weight given to certain claims and frames within a given text or a group's larger corpus. Quantitative counts of claims, frames and other attributes presented in the following chapters are generally derived from this tally of total 'mentions'.

Due to the differing number of texts produced by the sampled organizations, a second 'weighted' percentage is sometimes presented in which the total number of texts produced by an organization has been divided by the number of mentions of a given claim, frame, or source within its full corpus of texts. These numbers are referred to as

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<sup>5</sup>The lack of blogs collected from CFN and YDA does not mean that they did not engage in these types of tactics. Both groups had other means to engage in this type of online-offline mobilizing, such as posts made to their Facebook pages which were regularly used to mobilize supporters.

'weighted mentions per sample corpi'. For instance, if an organization produced 50 texts, and within those 50 texts produced a total of 50 mentions of the 'First Nations sovereignty frame', then that frame would be described as having a 'weighted mentions per sample corpi' figure of 100%, or one mention of the frame per text on average.

**Table 4: Claims of State and Industry Proponents**

<b>OS/NG produces economic benefits</b>	Oil Sands and/or Gateway does/will produce significant economic benefits, such as GDP growth, jobs, tax revenue, etc.
<b>We must diversify exports - sell to Asia</b>	Canada must diversify its energy exports to new markets to increase exports and/or secure a better price <b>or</b> Canada should diversify exports to Asian countries to profit from their growing energy demand.
<b>OS/NG supports tax base/state services</b>	Oil Sands and/or Gateway sustains and/or will sustain state revenues from taxes or royalties <b>or</b> Revenues from the Oil Sands and/or Gateway pays and/or will pay for state social services (healthcare, education, etc.)
<b>Neoliberal -Free trade/markets produces benefits</b>	Oil Sands development should be developed according to 'free' market principles <b>or</b> Oil exports should not be hindered as this undermines free trade <b>or</b> Free trade and Free Markets ensure Canadian prosperity, freedom, or ecological sustainability.
<b>OS/NG buoys global economy/geopolitical stability</b>	Oil Sands exports and/or Gateway supports or could support global economic prosperity and/or geopolitical stability.
<b>OS/NG in national interest</b>	Oil Sands development and/or Gateway's approval is in Canada's national interest.
<b>OS/NG in non-Alberta provincial interest</b>	Oil Sands and/or Gateway create economic gains or other benefits for Provinces other than Alberta.
<b>Regulatory Regime broken/hijacked/must be fixed</b>	Canada's environmental assessment and/or regulatory regime is broken and/or has too much 'red tape' and/or and/or has been hijacked by oil sands opponents <b>or</b> The Government must reform the assessment or regulatory regime to ensure economic competitiveness and create economic benefits.
<b>Canada is under attack</b>	Canada and/or the Canadian oil industry is under attack from foreign critics of the oil sands.
<b>Eco-skeptic-con pop</b>	Environmental opponents of Gateway and/or the oil sands are hypocritical, elitist, dishonest, or ideologues. Environmental critiques of Northern Gateway and/or the oil sands are overblown, baseless, or dishonest.
<b>Canada-Canadians exceptional</b>	Canada and/or Canadians are an exceptional culture and/or have exceptional values and/or ensure exceptional technological, economic and/or environmental performance.
<b>Oil demand a reality of life/inevitable</b>	Rising or stable oil demand is a reality of life <b>or</b> The world economy and modern society requires fossil fuels such as oil <b>or</b> Rising and/or stable future oil demand is inevitable.
<b>We must collaborate with FN/locals</b>	Oil Sands industry and/or Northern Gateway and/or their state, civil society, or industry supporters must collaborate with First Nations and/or local residents to ensure development.
<b>OS/NG aids FN Development</b>	Oil sands industry and/or Northern Gateway and/or resource industry supports and/or has the potential to support First Nations' economic development by providing jobs, tax revenue, royalties, and/or other economic benefits to First Nations communities.
<b>OS/NG is safe-well-regulated-sustainable</b>	Oil Sands extraction/transportation/refining is and/or can be safe, sustainable or well-regulated <b>or</b> Gateway will be safe, sustainable and/or well-regulated.
<b>We are improving-due diligence</b>	The Oil Sands industry and/or Canadian environmental regulation is constantly improving <b>or</b> The Oil Sands industry and/or Canadian regulators are doing due diligence to ensure safety and/or sustainability.
<b>Env and econ r compatible</b>	Economic growth and/or Oil Sands development and/or Northern Gateway is compatible with environmental sustainability.
<b>There is a technological fix</b>	Technological and/or scientific innovation is and/or will ensure the sustainability of the Oil Sands and/or Northern Gateway
<b>OS/NG is Ethical/Ethical Oil Thesis</b>	environmental regulation, human rights or democratic governance than its international competitors <b>or</b> To oppose increased production and/or sale and/or consumption of Canada's 'Ethical Oil' is to support increased imports and/or consumption of 'Conflict Oil' from environmentally reckless and/or oppressive regimes.

**Table 5: Claims of State Opponents**

<b>NG/Oil Sands Create Env. risks</b>	Oil Sands and/or Gateway create unacceptable levels of environmental risk.
<b>Spills will have serious coastal-marine env. impacts</b>	A spill from Northern Gateway would have serious or unacceptable environmental impacts on coastal or marine ecosystems.
<b>Leaks will have serious inland env. impacts</b>	Pipeline leaks will have serious or unacceptable environmental impacts on inland ecosystems.
<b>Spills/Leaks inevitable/incurable/residual risk.</b>	A major spill or leak from Northern Gateway is inevitable <b>or</b> its effects would be impossible to mitigate after the fact <b>or</b> there is always residual risk that can never be eliminated, due to human error or other factors
<b>NG is an exceptionally bad project/precious space/dangerous route</b>	Northern Gateway is an exceptionally ill conceived project, due to its threat to unique, fragile, or culturally important ecosystems <b>or</b> its passage through particularly dangerous, difficult to navigate routes which make spills more likely or more difficult to clean up..
<b>Regulatory regime is insufficient</b>	Canada's or BC's regulatory regime and/or spill response plans are insufficient to secure sustainable outcomes.
<b>NG/OS contributes to climate change</b>	Oil Sands and/or Gateway significantly contributes to Climate Change.
<b>NG/Oil Sands Create Econ. Risk</b>	Oil Sands and/or Gateway create unacceptable levels of economic risk.
<b>We need/can have green economy/economy depends on nature</b>	Canada and/or BC needs or can have a Green economy <b>or</b> A Healthy Economy depends on a healthy ecosystem.
<b>Risk-Benefit unfairly distributed between actors</b>	Project risks and benefits are unfairly distributed between different actors or regions.
<b>Risk outweighs benefits for BC</b>	For British Columbia, the risks and/or costs of Northern Gateway outweigh any potential benefits.
<b>NG has no social license</b>	Northern Gateway has no 'social license'. Canadians, British Columbians, or local actors do not support the project. National, Provincial, or regional publics do not have a meaningful say in project approval.
<b>BC Under attack by national forces</b>	BC is under attack by Gateway's Canadian supporters from other provinces.
<b>BC/Canada under attack by international forces</b>	BC and/or Canada is/are under attack by international backers of the project (multinational oil companies, China, etc.).
<b>David vs. Goliath</b>	Northern Gateway conflict is a 'David v. Goliath' struggle between weaker opponents of the project and much more powerful social, political, and economic actors.
<b>Enbridge doesn't act in good faith/pay fair share</b>	Enbridge doesn't act in good faith <b>or</b> the company purposefully misleads the public and/or the JRP on the project's environmental benefits and/or ecological risks <b>or</b> the company does not pay it's fair share in royalties or spill response and restoration.
<b>JRP/ gov't broken-corrupt-antidemocratic</b>	The JRP and/or government (Federal or Provincial) is corrupt, undemocratic, or biased in favor of Northern Gateway's approval.
<b>We Can Stop NG (Call to action)</b>	Democratic publics can have the power to stop Northern Gateway <b>or</b> appeals to members of the public to take actions that will stop Northern Gateway.
<b>First Nations Oppose NG</b>	BC First Nations oppose Northern Gateway, and this opposition makes the project unlikely or unacceptable.
<b>First Nations are united against NG</b>	Large numbers of First Nations (locally, nationally, or internationally) are united in their opposition to Northern Gateway.
<b>First nations and local settlers allied</b>	Regional First Nations and Local Settlers are allied against Northern Gateway
<b>NG/OS harms FN economy/culture/ways of life</b>	Northern Gateway and/or Oil Sands development harms or puts at risk local First Nations economies, traditional cultures, traditional lands, or ways of life.

Queries were conducted in NVIVO to identify which frames and claims were deployed by particular organizations and coalitions. Key passages, arguments, and statements were pulled from the texts and subjected to discourse analysis, with particular attention paid towards the ways different materials framed the Northern Gateway controversy. Several prominent frame and claim categories were identified, such as those related to economic and technocratic appeals concerning economic benefits, export market diversification, or regulatory systems; appeals to nationalism and regionalism; left wing and right wing populism; First Nations development, identity, and political preferences; social justice and progressivism; attack, invasion, corruption,

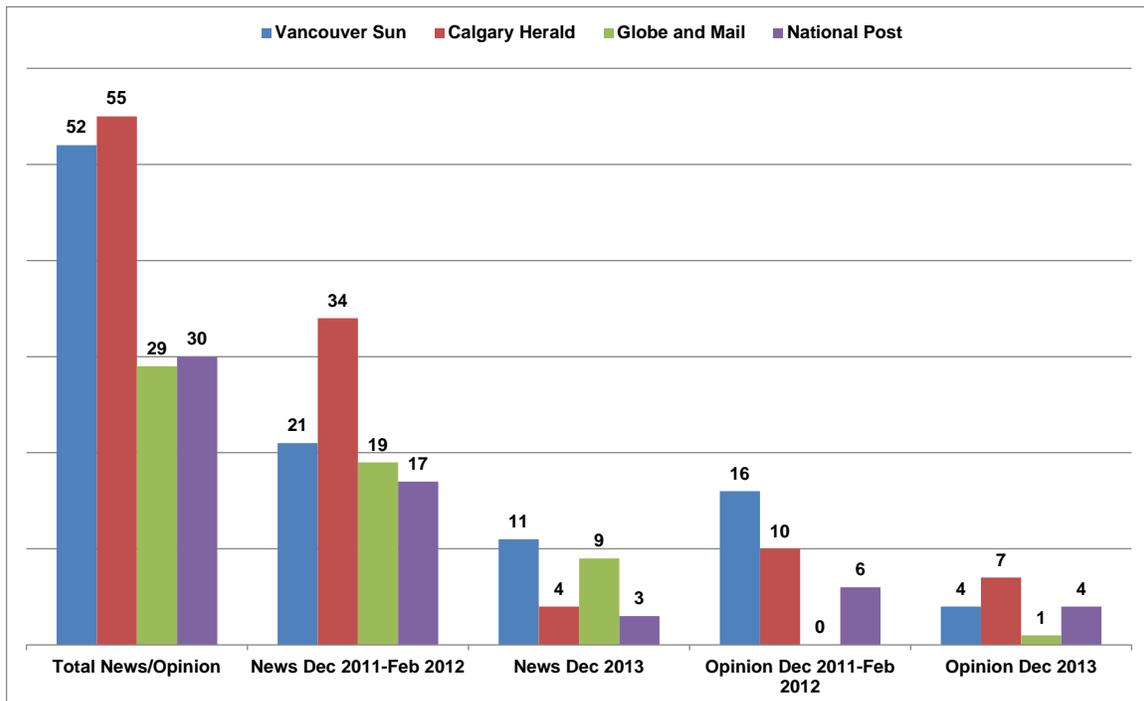
and/or betrayal frames; environmental and economic risk and the relative distribution of cost-benefit and/or risk-reward outcomes; and different types of 'interest' (ie. National interest, provincial interest, workers interest, intergenerational interest, community interest, etc.).

Special note was made of the discursive delineation of in groups and out groups; the recirculation and citation of materials by different organizations; the deployment of populist frames and the nomination of particular types of actors as the enemies of the 'popular'; descriptions of First Nations and their relation to the Gateway project; and geographic and social interpellation – i.e. the implicit positioning of the audience as Canadian, British Columbian, Albertan, working class, taxpayers, and so on. This allowed for an examination of how different actors discursively navigated the distribution of risk and benefit inherent to the Northern Gateway project and neoliberal extractivist development, and the ways this constituted collective political subjectivities and attributed causality for perceived harms done to those subjectivities. When combined with the SNA component, this discourse analysis helps us understand not just the discursive strategies of different organizations, but also the emergent discursive coordination of coalition members based on their specific cultural capitals.

#### **4.6. Research Design: News Sample**

In addition to the social network and discourse analysis of pro- and anti-Gateway organizations, a discourse analysis was conducted on stories from four major national and regional daily papers. These included 2 national papers – the Globe and Mail and the National Post – both based in Ontario. The two most geographically relevant regional papers – the Vancouver Sun and the Calgary Herald – were also included. All four are so-called prestige papers, with wide readership and a high level of perceived legitimacy as trusted news sources. These papers were chosen because, as Champagne (2005) explains, “most prestigious media outlets... are read more, their stories are picked up more often by other outlets, and... they exert a true power of consecration on other papers by virtue of where they pick up their stories” (63). Though Canadian readership and daily circulation has declined markedly over the past two decades (Errett, 2016, April 19; Fatah, 2015, Dec. 11), these papers still enjoy wide readership and a high level of perceived legitimacy as trusted news sources. The two regional papers – the Sun and the Herald – are also the most widely read papers in British Columbia and Alberta

respectively. They therefore present an opportunity to assess whether or not the proximity of an outlet to either the Alberta tar sands or the British Columbian anti-Gateway movement altered coverage of Northern Gateway. Finally, of the four papers, three (the Post, Sun, and Herald) are Postmedia outlets. Numerous papers in the Postmedia chain have been described as editorially in favor of tar sands expansion, and as friendly outlets for industry backed ecoskeptical think tanks like Fraser (Gutstein, 2009; 2014). Therefore analyzing the extent to which Postmedia papers shared a common political disposition regarding Gateway seemed to have particular merit.



**Figure 1: News and Opinion Pieces by Outlet**

The Canadian Newsstand database was searched for hard news and opinion pieces relating to Northern Gateway published within two separate sampling frames chosen for their proximity to key political events (See Figure 1). The first sampling frame was between Dec 2011 and February 2012. Multiple newsworthy events occurred during this period, including the addition of new indigenous signatories to the Save the Fraser declaration; the release and dissolution of a controversial equity agreement between Enbridge and the Gitksan nation; Minister Oliver’s ‘foreign funded radicals’ letter; and the initiation of the JRP’s public hearings. The second sampling frame was December 2013, which included the lead up to and immediate aftermath of Gateway’s conditional approval of the JRP’s. Finally, where appropriate a handful of stories falling outside of

the main two sample periods were included for analysis. These were op-eds written by key proponents or opponents of the project which gave added context to the materials in the main sample periods. All together 166 stories were collected and coded using the same emergent coding schema as was used to analyze the coalition groups' communication materials.

I coded and analysed the pieces within the press sample using the same coding schema developed for analysing the communication materials of opponents and supporters. Analysis was undertaken to determine which frames, claims and sources utilised by Northern Gateway's opponents and supporters were also present in the press sample pieces, and to what extent. In doing so, I examined how opponents and opponents of Gateway were able to circulate their preferred articulations in the public sphere via major news media. Finally, I examine how editorial cultures and journalistic norms and practices affected coverage of Gateway and interacted with the broader activities of pro- and anti-Gateway coalitions.

## Chapter 5. State of the Industry

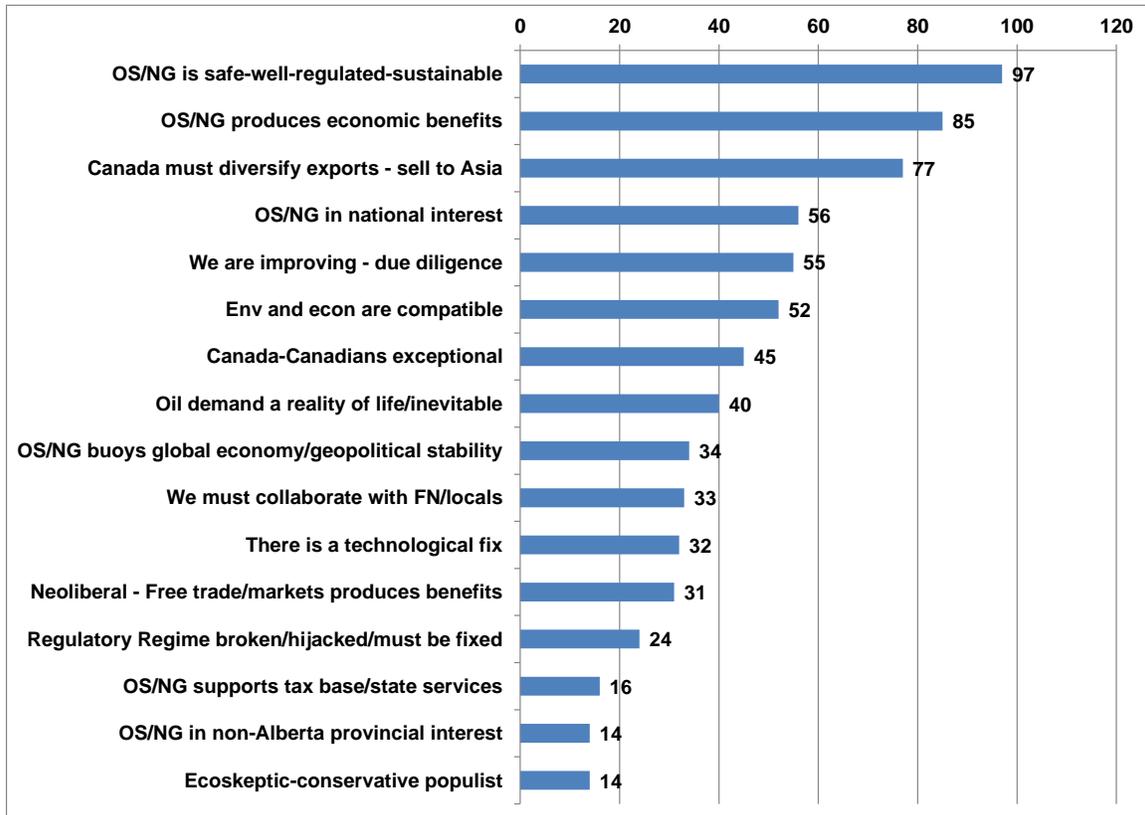
State actors have a long history of promoting major infrastructure projects that serve the interests of Canadian capital, going at least as far back as the construction of the Canadian National Railway and the St. Lawrence Seaway (Barney, 2015). In recent years, oil sands proponents have increasingly called on allies to promote controversial tar sands projects in the public sphere (Gunster and Saurette, 2014), a task enthusiastically taken on by Conservative cabinet ministers in the case of Northern Gateway (Barney, 2015). These state actors are joined by firms and industry associations, who have been an important source of technocratic expertise and pro-industry claims deployed by the industry's supporters in the public sphere (Barney, 2015; Gunster and Saurette, 2014). Yet some political parties and governments have emerged as opponents of various tar sands projects, leveraging their public profile to counter the claims of industry supporters. In this chapter I analyze the discursive strategies of prominent state and industry actors supporting or opposing Northern Gateway.

### 5.1. Common Frames and Arguments

Generally speaking, state and industry proponents eschewed populist claims in favor of technocratic and nationalist ones (see Figure 2). One cluster of common proponent claims concerned environmental risk and regulation. The most common proponent claim was that **Northern Gateway and/or the oil sands were safe, well-regulated, and/or sustainable**. Other common sustainability-oriented claims were that **economic growth was compatible with environmental sustainability** (sixth most common proponent claim); and that **Canada's environmental project assessment and regulatory regime was broken and/or needed significant reforms**.

The second cluster of proponent claims advocated for Northern Gateway on technocratic-economic grounds (See Figure 2). These included the claims that **Canada must maximize the economic benefits associated with the oil sands and/or Northern Gateway** (the second most common proponent argument) and that **it was economically necessary to diversify bitumen exports to Asia or other international markets** (the third most common). Other common economic claims were that **Northern Gateway and/or the oil sands were a vital source of state revenue and/or helped**

fund vital state services; that rising global oil demand and/or modern society's dependence on oil was an inevitable or inescapable reality of life; and neoliberal arguments in favor of free enterprise and de-regulated trade.

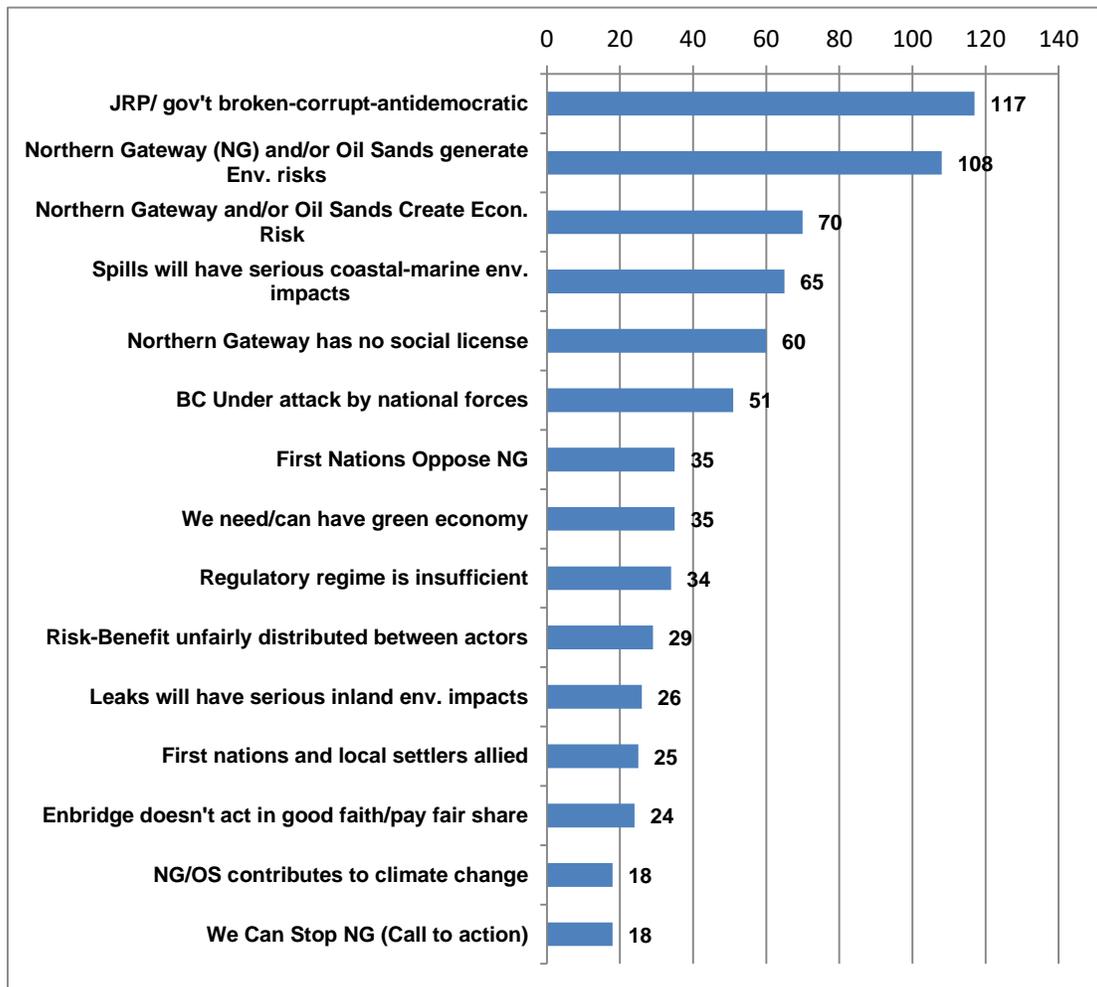


**Figure 2: Common Claims for State and Industry Proponents**

A third cluster of common proponent claims were nationalist in nature (See Figure 2). These included the claim that **Northern Gateway and/or oil sands development was in the Canadian national interest** (the fourth most common claim); that **Canada and/or Canadians were an exceptional people, nation, or culture** (seventh most common); and that **Northern gateway and/or Canada's energy industry buoyed the global economy, global consumers, and/or geopolitical stability** (ninth).

Unlike proponents, Northern Gateway's state opponents generally eschewed nationalist arguments. Rather, many of the most common opponent claims concerned *regional* ecological and economic risks (see Figure 3). The second-most common opponent claim was that **Northern Gateway and/or the oil sands represented unacceptable levels of environmental risk**, with most of these consisting of the claim

that **Northern Gateway presents unacceptable environmental risk to BC’s coastal or marine ecosystems**. Significantly less attention was paid to **risks posed to inland areas from pipeline construction or a pipeline leak or risks to the global climate posed by Northern Gateway and/or the oil sands**. In keeping with their regional focus, opponents frequently argued that **Northern Gateway represented unacceptable economic risks**.



**Figure 3: Common Claims for State and Industry Opponents**

However, the most common opponent claim did not directly concern risk at all. This was that **the Joint Review Panel and/or government (provincial or federal) were broken, corrupt, and/or undemocratic** (see Figure 3). This claim set the tone for the broader claims of the opposition, which was much more likely than proponents to deploy populist or democratically-oriented arguments concerning *regional interests or concerns*. Claims concerning the JRPs illegitimacy tended to focus on its domination by

the Federal Government and Albertan oil interests, often referring to the Joint Equivalency agreement between Ottawa and Victoria. Also common were populist accounts positioning the legitimate regional interests of provincial actors against the illegitimate interests of 'out of province' project supporters. The fifth most common opponent claim was that **Northern Gateway had no social license and/or British Columbians had no meaningful say in project approval**. Other common claims were that **BC was under attack by Canadian out-of-province actors supporting Gateway** and that **BC would absorb a disproportionate amount of project risk while other actors would accrue most of the benefits**. Finally, opponents frequently claimed that **regional First Nations were opposed to the project** and that **First Nations opponents were allied with local settlers and/or environmentalists**.

Often, opponents and proponents tended to utilise different discursive frames. Yet because the same frames could sometimes be used in arguments either for or against Northern Gateway's approval, some frames were used to varying degrees by both sides (See Figure 4, Table 6). For instance, proponents were the most likely to rely on **technocratic frames**. They often focused on **best practices and regulation**, whether discussing the supposed 'hijacking' of the JRP by project opponents; the need to reform the environmental assessment and regulatory regime; or the high quality of Canada's environmental regulations. Yet when opponents utilised the best practices and regulation frame, it was generally to decry the supposed illegitimacy of the approval process or the weakness of current environmental regulations.

Yet the most common technocratic frames deployed by proponents tended to be *economic* in nature, with proponents drawing on the **economic benefit** frame, **globalization, foreign investment, and global competitiveness** frames, **market and export market diversification** frames, and the global and domestic demand frame (see Figure 4; Table 6). All of these were used to portray Northern Gateway's approval as an economic necessity. When opponents discussed the economy they tended to draw on the **economic risk** frame to portray Northern Gateway as an economic liability. Yet they were less likely to discuss economic risks than proponents were economic benefits.

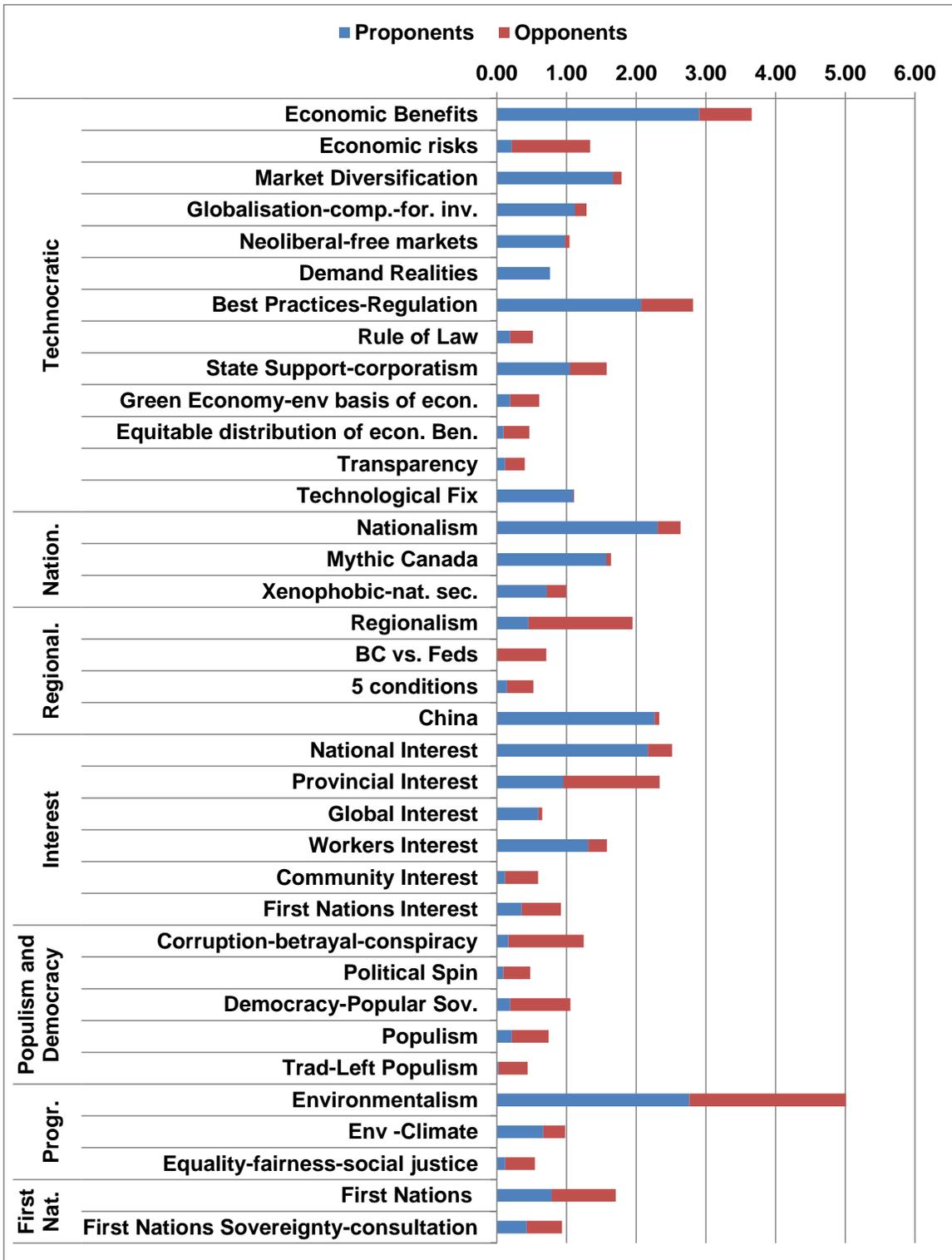


Figure 4: Common Frames for State and Industry Opponents and Proponents (weighted mentions per sample corpi)

**Table 6: Common Frames for State and Industry Proponents and Opponents**

		Proponents					Opponents				
		All Prop	Fed Gov't	Alb Gov't	CAPP	En.	All Opp	BC NDP	BC Govt	Fed NDP	Fed Lib
<b>Total Texts</b>		42	20	6	6	15	89	60	18	9	4
<b>Technocratic</b>	<b>Economic Benefits</b>	122	84	15	16	7	70	13	36	18	3
	<b>Economic risks</b>	9	4	0	4	1	106	58	28	14	6
	<b>Market Diversification</b>	70	33	13	16	8	11	2	8	1	0
	<b>Globalisation-compet.-foreign inv.</b>	47	43	0	4	0	15	4	6	5	0
	<b>Neoliberal-free markets</b>	41	36	2	3	0	6	0	5	1	0
	<b>Demand Realities</b>	32	18	0	11	3	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Best Practices-Regulation</b>	87	60	0	10	17	81	16	35	15	15
	<b>Rule of Law</b>	8	7	0	0	1	30	16	11	2	1
	<b>State Support-corporatism</b>	44	39	2	3	0	51	12	21	14	4
	<b>Green Economy-env basis of econ.</b>	8	6	0	2	0	47	20	0	17	10
	<b>Equitable distribution of econ. Ben.</b>	4	0	0	4	0	33	3	30	0	0
<b>Transparency</b>	5	4	0	0	1	27	17	6	2	2	
<b>Technological Fix</b>	46	23	0	9	14	3	0	0	1	2	
<b>Nationalism</b>	<b>Nationalism</b>	97	57	14	19	7	37	6	15	8	8
	<b>Mythic Canada</b>	66	43	5	11	7	13	0	1	5	7
	<b>Xenophobic-nat. sec.</b>	30	11	10	9	0	25	6	15	4	0
<b>Regionalism</b>	<b>Regionalism</b>	19	7	10	1	1	139	93	38	2	6
	<b>BC vs. Feds</b>	0	0	0	0	0	63	59	4	0	0
	<b>5 conditions</b>	6	1	2	1	2	34	6	28	0	0
	<b>China</b>	95	77	6	12	0	6	3	3	0	0
<b>Interest</b>	<b>National Interest</b>	91	63	12	7	9	37	5	14	12	6
	<b>Provincial Interest</b>	40	17	13	4	6	126	69	46	8	3
	<b>Global Interest</b>	25	25	0	0	0	10	2	0	3	5
	<b>Workers Interest</b>	55	46	0	6	3	26	9	0	15	2
	<b>Community Interest</b>	5	3	2	0	0	52	31	2	9	10
	<b>First Nations Interest</b>	15	11	1	0	3	54	24	17	9	4
<b>Populism and Democracy</b>	<b>Corruption-betrayal-conspiracy</b>	7	7	0	0	0	103	75	0	21	7
	<b>Political Spin</b>	4	4	0	0	0	35	33	0	1	1
	<b>Democracy-Popular Sov..</b>	8	6	1	1	0	77	67	4	6	0
	<b>Populism</b>	9	9	0	0	0	47	39	4	4	0
	<b>Trad-Left Populism</b>	1	1	0	0	0	37	36	0	1	0
<b>Progressive</b>	<b>Environmentalism</b>	116	78	7	23	8	215	129	47	24	15
	<b>Env -Climate</b>	28	17	0	11	0	31	24	0	4	3
	<b>Equality-fairness-social justice</b>	5	0	1	4	0	38	8	29	1	0
<b>First Nations</b>	<b>First Nations</b>	33	27	2	0	4	86	43	26	13	4
	<b>First Nations Sovereignty-consultation</b>	18	17	1	0	0	48	19	20	6	3

Opponents were much less likely than proponents to deploy **nationalist** frames, being more likely to deploy **regionalist** ones (See Figure 4; Table 6). The most common of these was the **BC vs. Federal Government** frame which positioned an anti-Gateway British Columbia against a pro-Gateway Federal Government. While opponents rarely referred to the **national interest**, they frequently referred to the *interest of the British Columbian province* (**provincial interest** frame), and the interests of local communities (**community interest**) and BC First Nations (**First Nations interest**). These often went hand in hand with a **corruption-betrayal-conspiracy** frame, a **democracy/popular sovereignty** frame and a **populist** frame.

Both sides discussed First Nations (see Figures 2, 3, 4 and Table 6). Yet neither side discussed them very much or in great detail. Neither side focused on frames concerning **First Nations culture, economies, or traditional ways of life**, core issues for Gateway's indigenous opponents who saw Northern Gateway as a threat to all three. Rather, they tended to discuss the legal dimension of indigenous opposition, drawing heavily on the **First Nations sovereignty and consultation** frame. So while the legal reality of indigenous rights and title was discussed, and generally accepted, by both sides, the *reasons* for indigenous opposition were generally ignored.

All of this painted a clear picture of the Northern Gateway conflict, with opponents deploying a regional-populist narrative in which BC was 'under attack' by project opponents generally described as out-of-province elites and their local collaborators. Gateway's opponents, on the other hand, were described as a democratic-popular force motivated by legitimate regional interests. Meanwhile, proponents described Gateway as a safe and sustainable project serving the interests of Canada, Canadian workers and the global economy/community. Yet in making this argument proponents cleared the way for the one significant deployment of populist arguments by state or industry proponents. This was Joe Oliver's 'foreign funded radicals' letter and his subsequent descriptions of project opponents as foreign-funded radicals or elite ideologues at odds with the interest of Canadian workers and the national economy (see Table 6). Unlike with opponents, these populist appeals were almost never articulated alongside democratic ones evoking democratic legitimacy, the public will, or democratic activities such as voting or contacting an elected representative. In short, when proponents **did** use populist narratives, these were not seemingly designed to mobilise their constituents politically. Rather, the Conservatives'

populist appeals seemed designed to *undermine the democratic legitimacy of Gateway's opposition and justify actions by the Conservative government hoped to undermine that opposition*. Minister Oliver thereby articulated a type of 'authoritarian populism' (Hall et al, 2013), in which the national-popular's interests were simply *represented* by the Conservatives as opposed to being *manifested through the political activities of citizens*. It was populism *for the people*, but not *by the people*.

## **5.2. Interested Parties: Gateway, Neoliberal Extractivism, and Symbolic Nationalization**

Understanding the support for Northern Gateway by state and industry elites necessitates an understanding of these actors as aligned in service of a common political project that serves their interests more than it does a reified 'Canadian nation' or 'national public good'. Partially, the logic behind state support for the oil sands is economically self-interested. Despite low royalty and taxation *rates* – which ensure that Albertan taxpayers receive a pittance of resource rent as state revenue – by 2010 high energy prices had made energy exports a key revenue source for both the Albertan and Federal Governments (Hoberg, 2013; Nikiforuk, 2009).

State support for export market diversification is also motivated by dense interconnections between state actors, the oil industry, and industry funded neoliberal think tanks and advocacy groups. Consider Ted Morton, who served as Alberta's Minister of Energy between 2011 and 2012. Morton is a leading figure of the so-called Calgary School, and was once Director of Policy and Research for Stephen Harper when the latter was leader of the opposition in Parliament. An Executive in Residence at the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy, the academic center with strong ties to Canada's New Right EPII network and oil and gas industry (Hoggan with Littlemore, 2009), Morton has championed the oil sands throughout his career. Since leaving office he has continued this work, publishing a paper in 2015 for the Manning Centre, a policy analysis and networking organization for Canada's New Right discourse coalitions. The paper, entitled "Death by a Thousand Cuts", argued against the new environmental regulations and royalty reforms then being proposed by Rachel Notley's newly elected New Democratic Party (Morton, 2015). Meanwhile, Morton's successor as Minister of Energy, Ken Hughes, was still a director of Alberta Oilsands Inc. when he was sworn in to his new post in 2012 (Energy minister Hughes, 2012, May 11). The Albertan

government also holds two dedicated seats for its MLAs – including the Assistant Minister of Energy – on the board of the Canadian Energy Research Institute, an industry-funded think tank which consistently argues for tar sands expansion.

The Federal Conservatives also had salient reasons for supporting Oil Sands development, including old fashioned regulatory capture. One 2012 study of federal lobbying between 2008 and 2012 revealed that the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers was by far the most successful federal lobbyist in terms of access (Cayley-Daoust and Girard, 2012, vii). Other incentives to maximize bitumen exports arise from the political dynamics which constitute the Albertan Progressive Conservatives and Federal Conservative parties. In Alberta, the large proportion of economic activity generated by oil and gas combines with the dominant ideological trope of ‘western alienation’ to generate significant public support for the oil sands. This is to a large degree true of the Federal Conservatives as well, given that much of their core electoral base resides in Alberta (Bricker and Ibbitson, 2013).

Tar sands diversification and neoliberal extractivism more generally also benefits much of Canada’s corporate elite. A combination of low royalty and taxation rates, inadequate environmental regulation and monitoring, and the high capital (and low labor) intensity of the industry combined to create high profits for firms and investors during the boom, even while workers and taxpayers received a small fraction of oil rent (Barney, 2015; Boychuck, 2010; Fast, 2013, 46-50;). The country’s financial industry is also heavily invested in the oil sands, which represents a growing source of foreign investment (Fast, 2014, 38-45). The oil sands therefore allow Canadian finance to make quick and easy profits attracting foreign capital to develop the significantly foreign owned industry (Barney, 2015; Boychuck, 2010; Pratt, 2008). This is an attractive prospect for national capital fractions whose profits are increasingly dependent upon their integration into globalized economic circuits as opposed to cultivating robust domestic markets (Robinson, 2004). Importantly, the financialisation of the economy means that such trends benefit not just finance capital but a growing subsection of Canadian economic elites whose wealth is increasingly invested in oil and gas stocks or financial instruments whose value is bound up with sector profits.

This is not to say that Canadian economic elites are monolithic. Certain industries, such as Central Canadian manufacturing, are seriously undermined by the oil

booms through the ‘Dutch disease’ effect (Brown et al., 2009). Yet this does not change the fact that particular capital fractions and economic elites stand to benefit from increased bitumen production and export market diversification, regardless of whether these activities significantly contribute to employment, working class incomes, or tax revenue.

Because appeals to a *reified national interest* do not meaningfully describe the distribution of the industry’s costs and benefits, the nationalist claims of Northern Gateway’s supporters are an example of what Gunster and Saurette (2014) have termed ‘symbolic nationalization’. In this discourse, the benefits from the tar sands accrue not just to specific regional and class actors but to *all Canadians* and/or *the Canadian nation as a whole*. This is often achieved by gesturing to national economic indicators like GDP growth while ignoring information on corporate profitability and foreign investment (which would draw attention to the way that oil rents are actually distributed).

On a similar note, Darin Barney (2015) explains how Northern Gateway’s state proponents presented a fanciful portrait of the nation to justify tar sands expansion:

In this imaginary country, jobs spring from the ground in great numbers, and seem to go on forever, and the public coffers are always full of revenues generated by taxes and resource royalties. Cultivating a perception that the economic benefits of oil sands development will be socialized in the form of jobs for working-class Canadians and revenue-support for public services has been crucial to the effort to frame the [oil sands] project as a national imperative (10).

By avoiding discussion of the relative distribution of oil rents, such discourses “represent the particular, private interest of the (increasingly transnational) capitalist class as the general, collective interest of the nation.” In doing so, “concrete interests of capital are abstracted and projected onto the body of the nation as whole, whose interests are reduced to those of something called ‘the economy’”:

Thus, manufacturing national legitimacy for oil sands pipelines requires a two-pronged ideological operation: first, the economic interests of the energy industry must be socialized in the form of the promise of jobs and public revenues; and, second, the interests of the country as a whole must be identified with those of the province of Alberta (or at least that portion of it that benefits from the energy industry) (11).

### 5.3. Hand in Glove: The Emergent Network Response of State and Industry Promoters

Generally speaking, the response of state and industry proponents to the Northern Gateway opposition was oriented around three interrelated strategies. The first involved a series of technocratic-nationalist claims concerning the economic benefits that would accrue to Canadians from project approval, including increased employment, GDP growth, and tax revenue. All state and industry proponents made such claims (see Figures 2 and 7). The second tactic was only utilized by the Federal and to a lesser extent Albertan Governments. It involved conservative populist and ecoskeptic denunciations of the pipeline's environmental opposition as 'foreign funded radicals' who had 'hijacked' the JRP, putting Canadian jobs at risk in the process. Although previously developed by industry proponents in Alberta (Gunster and Saurette, 2014), this 'foreign funded radicals' narrative emerged as a core *national* trope for Gateway's supporters following the release of Natural Resource Minister Joe Oliver's controversial public letter in January 2012. The 'Oliver letter' also helped popularize the third discursive tactic: claiming that the JRP's 'hijacking' justified the government's proposed 'streamlining' of the nation's environmental assessment regime so as to delimit future public involvement in project reviews.

All three of these claims were based on the logic of 'symbolic nationalization', as clearly demonstrated by Minister Oliver's January 9, 2012 'Public Letter' (hereafter referred to as the 'Oliver Letter'). The letter, building on the arguments of Vancouver blogger Vivian Krause, criticized anti-Gateway groups like Dogwood Initiative for accepting funding from US-based foundations like Tides Canada. It thereby argued that resistance to Northern Gateway came not from domestic democratic publics, but 'foreign funded radicals' who had 'hijacked' the JRP process to harm Canada's national economic interest.

The letter kicked off a wave of press coverage, editorial comment, and civil society interventions that reproduced longstanding eco-skeptic arguments of industry-backed EPII groups and conservative media actors. It also reproduced *regional* discourses already developed by the Industry's Albertan supporters (Gunster and Saurette, 2014) on a *national* stage. Perhaps most significantly, the 'Oliver Letter' brought together in one text *all* of the elements of symbolic nationalization discourse

which came to define the petrobloc's response to the anti-Gateway opposition: economic arguments in favor of export market diversification and the integration of Canada's oil industry into globalizing economic circuits; the predication of these arguments on the projection of stable oil demand decades into the future; the articulation of economic benefits as accruing to a reified national subject; denunciations of project opponents as radical, foreign enemies of the Canadian people; and the corresponding need to reform the nation's assessment and regulatory regime:

For our government, the choice is clear: we need to diversify our markets in order to create jobs and economic growth for Canadians across this country. We must expand our trade with the fast growing Asian economies. We know that increasing trade will help ensure the financial security of Canadians and their families.

Unfortunately, there are environmental and other radical groups that would seek to block this opportunity to diversify our trade. Their goal is to stop any major project no matter what the cost to Canadian families in lost jobs and economic growth. No forestry. No mining. No oil. No gas. No more hydro-electric dams.

These groups threaten to *hijack our regulatory system* to achieve their *radical ideological agenda*. They seek to exploit any loophole they can find, *stacking public hearings with bodies* to ensure that delays kill good projects. They use *funding from foreign special interest groups* to undermine Canada's national economic interest. They attract *jet-setting celebrities* with some of the largest personal carbon footprints in the world to lecture Canadians not to develop our natural resources. (Emphasis added). (Oliver, 2012, Jan. 9).

As we shall see, the populist narratives deployed by Joe Oliver and the Harper Government were buttressed with reference to technocratic claims made by other state and industry actors concerning economic benefit and rising oil demand. This demonstrates the way loosely allied organizations in a discourse coalition can deploy different-yet-complementary discourses which together construct a relatively unified 'meta-narrative'. In this metanarrative, some actors – like Industry associations and firms – are better situated to deploy technocratic expertise, while others – such as elected officials – are able to leverage that expertise in service of emotionally charged, populist narratives. In this way the metanarrative can be understood as an emergent network response of the petrobloc to opposition.

### 5.3.1. Nation of the Mind: Northern Gateway and the Discourse of Technocratic Nationalism

State and industry proponents went to great lengths to position Northern Gateway as benefit to Canadian workers, taxpayers, and the nation as a whole. This was often achieved through the selective quotation of figures provided by Industry Associations, various elite-dominated civil society groups, and the business press (See Figure 5). Such technocratic posturing is old hat for industry. Berry (1974) noted that as far back as the 1973 oil shock, industry’s advantage in financial and technical resources allowed them to monopolize perceived expertise in the field (610), which was then “easily employed for the production of distorted and highly selective information” (612).

The Federal Government was the most prolific citer of external technocratic expertise, which was leveraged to argue that tar sands development was in the national economic interest. Speeches by Prime Minister Harper and Minister Oliver to various national and international elites as well as press releases from Natural Resources Canada frequently cited studies from the International Energy Association (IEA) and the Canadian Energy Research Institute (CERI) (See Figure 5). These were sometimes used to argue for the reality of stable and rising oil demand – especially from East Asia – decades into the future. The Canadian Association of Manufacturers used material from the IEA and CERI in a similar capacity.

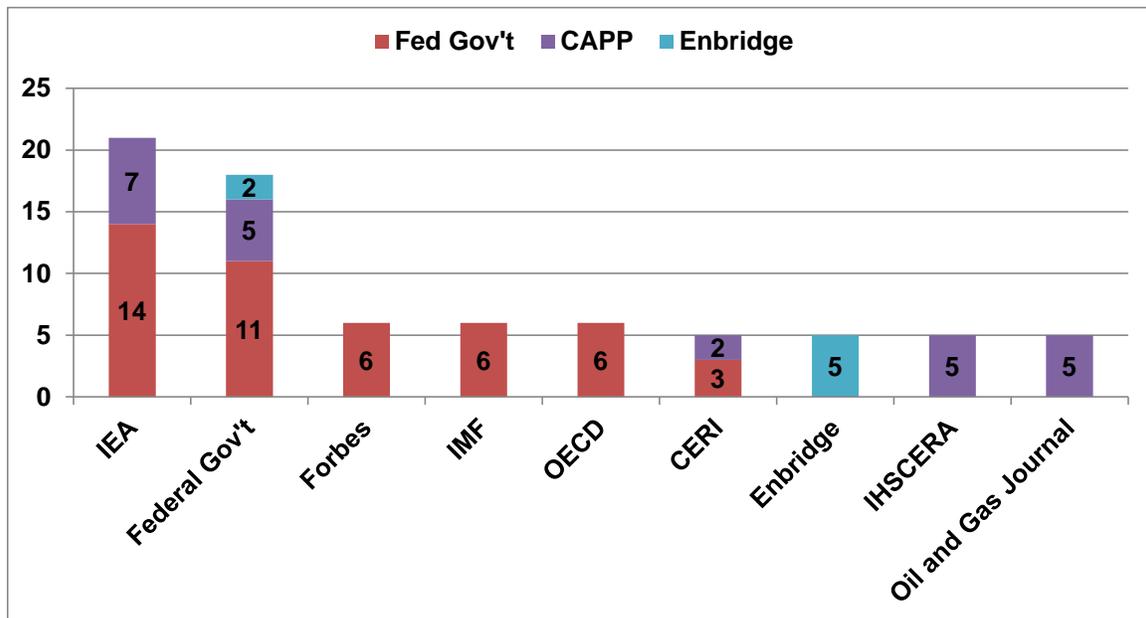


Figure 5: Most Common Sources for State and Industry Proponents

The Federal Government also cited transnational governing bodies like the IMF and OECD and the international business magazine Forbes. Canada's high ranking from these organizations in terms of investment climate and prospective growth was used as justification for the government's intention of doubling down on neoliberal reform and extractivist development. For instance, in Oliver's 2012 speech to the BC Chamber of Commerce, he stated that "It's clear we're on the right track" because "the IMF and the OECD predict Canada's economic growth will be among the best this year and next" (Oliver, 2012, Jan. 23). Together, the selective citation of such material demonstrates the importance of sources such as oil industry-funded think tanks, transnational neoliberal governing bodies, and the business press in developing and circulating the technical claims used to justify neoliberal extractivist governance.

In keeping with the discourse of symbolic nationalization, proponents frequently claimed that **Northern Gateway and/or the Oil Sands would produce significant economic benefits** and that **Northern Gateway and/or the Oil Sands served Canada's national interest** (see Figures 2 and 7). A typical CAPP presentation made to the Canadian Association of Universities and Colleges on April 21, 2013 (see Figure 6) positioned the "Oil and Natural Gas Industry" as a "Key Driving Force in the Canadian Economy" (CAPP, 2013, April, 21). Using national economic indicators, it explained that the industry employed "more than 550,000" people across the country and generated approximately 18% of national exports.

## The Oil and Natural Gas Industry A Key Driving Force in the Canadian Economy

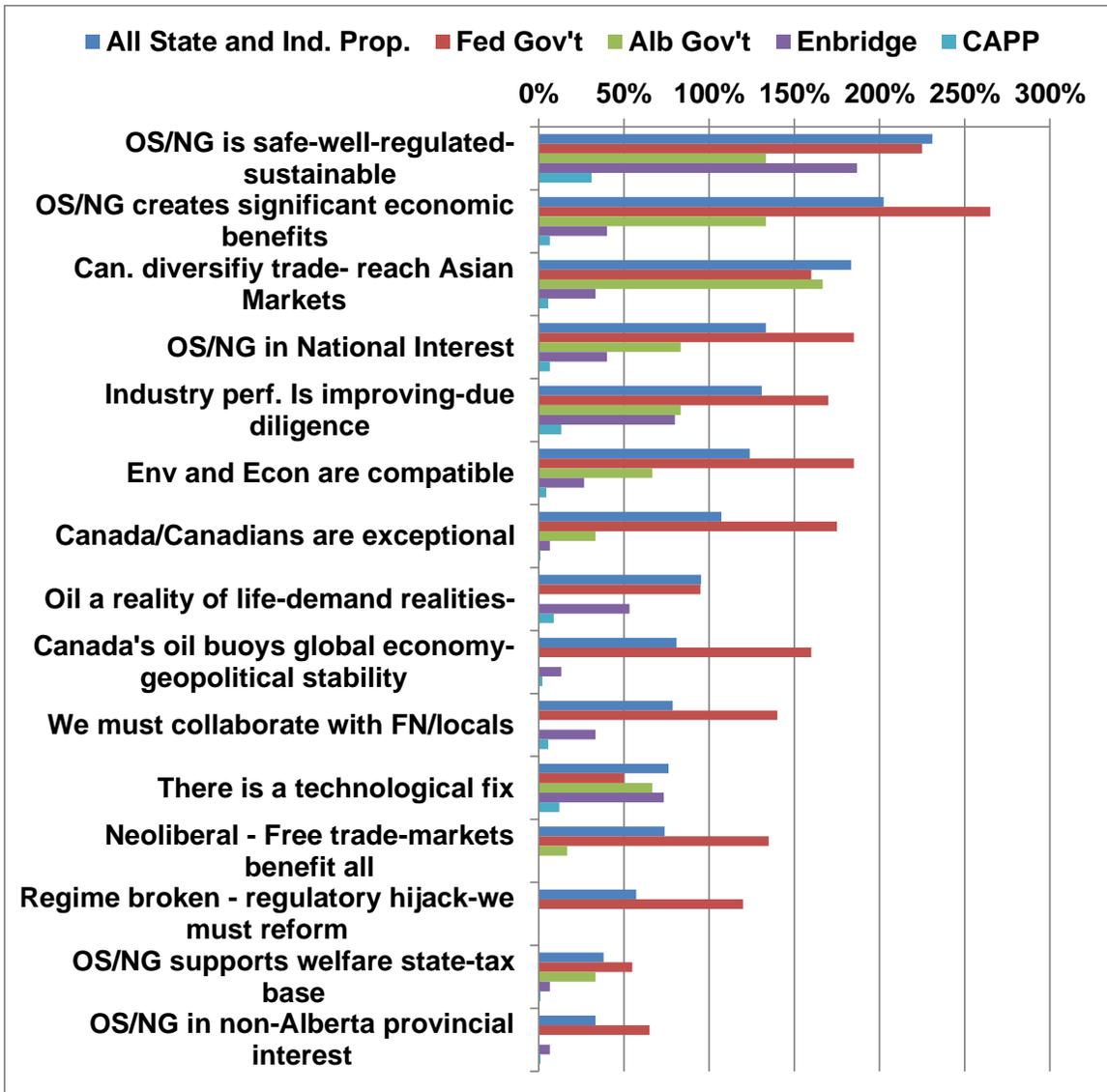
- **Industry will invest \$71 billion in Canada in 2014**
  - Largest single private sector investor in Canada
- **Payments to governments average about \$18 billion per year**
- **Oil and gas accounts for 20% of value on Toronto Stock Exchange**
- **Oil and Gas accounts for close to 18% of exports**
- **Industry employs more than 550,000 in Canada (direct & indirect).**



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CAPP

Figure 6: Slide from CAPP Presentation to Canadian Association of Universities and Colleges on April 21, 2013



**Figure 7: Claims of State and Ind. Proponents (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

The Federal Government was the proponent most likely to deploy this national interest frame (see Table 6), and frequently argued for the economic benefits of the oil and gas industry (See Figure 7). Once again, such claims were usually buttressed by *national* economic indicators of GDP growth and job creation. In a 2011 speech to Toronto’s Canadian Club, Oliver (2011, Sept. 23) pointed out that “energy represents roughly 7% of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and creates hundreds of thousands of direct and indirect jobs *across the country* (emphasis added).

These claims were often supported with references to organizations that coordinated industry’s monopolization of expertise, such as the industry- and state-

funded CERI (See Figure 5). In a speech to the Economic Club of Canada, Oliver (2012, Jan. 27) noted that “according to the Canadian Energy Research Institute, if you include proposed pipeline expansions and projected increases in oil production, the oil sands will support on average 700,000 jobs *across Canada* over the next 25 years on an annual basis” (emphasis added).

At times, Northern Gateway’s state proponents attempted to amplify the salience of the national interest frame complementary *nation building* frame. Barney (2015) notes how pipelines have emerged as the latest in a long line of ‘nation-building’ infrastructure projects such as the St. Lawrence Seaway or the Canadian National Railway used by corporate and state planners to represent the national public good:

“Materially, spacebinding infrastructure spans far-flung territories creates a common economic and political space supportive of commercial exchange and capital accumulation. Discursively, infrastructure provides a medium for a rhetoric of national purpose and identification that summons collective investment in large-scale technological projects presented as coinciding with the nation’s interests. This is the recipe for technological nationalism in Canada: the nation needs infrastructure to bind it physically, and massive infrastructure projects that serve the interests of capital need the imperative of national purpose in order to be considered legitimate.”

A paradigmatic example was Minister Oliver’s April 2013 speech to the University of Calgary’s Extractive Resource Governance Policy Program, in which he stated that:

Over the coming decade, as many as 600 major resource projects are planned or underway worth over \$650 billion and representing over a million new jobs for Canadians....*and this is nation-building. And it is nation-building on a grand scale, comparable to the building of the great railroads in the 19th century or the highway system of the 20th century.* (emphasis added) (Oliver, 2013, April 18).

Even the Alberta government deployed nation building frames. This was a dramatic about-face for a provincial government that had nurtured the industry for the greater part of a century (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011), spending \$ billions in public moneys to finally make the industry profitable. This history of provincial corporatism had combined with Western Alienation ideology and the traditional constitutional division of powers to entrench the idea in Alberta that the oil sands were a provincial patrimony. Since the political fallout of the Federal Liberal’s National Energy Program in the 1980s, keeping Ottawa’s hands off Albertan oil had emerged as a core trope of Albertan politics

and the broader political discourse of western alienation. Yet nationalist appeals had obvious political utility in the conflict between Alberta and BC. In her July 2012 press release responding to British Columbia's '5 conditions' for Northern Gateway's approval, which criticized the unequal distribution of project risks and benefits between BC and Alberta, Premier Redford argued that:

*"Alberta is committed to building our country and cementing Canada's position as a global energy superpower. Leadership is about working together, and that's when our country benefits from our energy economy. (Redford, 2012, July 23).*

### **5.3.2. Think Locally, Sell Globally: The Canadian Nation as Transnational Project**

It was not simply tar sands *expansion* that was framed as in the national interest, but the *diversification* of bitumen exports to East Asia. This strategy was particularly vulnerable to criticisms oriented around regional inequalities. Compared with value-added refining projects, raw bitumen exports produce relatively few regional economic benefits from increased employment or local economic multipliers. Yet proponents went to great lengths to describe diversification as a benefit not just to globally integrated oil companies or provincial government coffers, but to *the nation as a whole*.

These fascinating claims served to reframe the longstanding 'staples thesis' (Barney, 2015; Innis, 1999; Pratt, 2008). In the Keynesian-Fordist era, governments argued for industrial policy to support value-added activities such as manufacturing in order to overcome the so-called 'staples trap', in which an overreliance on staples exports undermined the development of a diversified industrial economy. Gateway's supporters flipped this logic on its head: under the global competitive pressures of neoliberal capitalism, Canada's interests were served not by state support of value-added industry, but by *doubling down* on its staples export dependency.

Industry actors like the CAPP and Enbridge frequently argued for the economic benefits of diversifying export markets (See Figure 7). A June 2014 Enbridge press release celebrating Federal Cabinet's approval of Northern Gateway argued that "opening new markets for our energy resources is critical for *all Canadians*" and would provide a "major boost to *our* provincial and national economies" (emphasis added) (Enbridge, 2014, June 24). The Federal Government, sometimes referring to the

research of neoliberal extractivist allies, made similar arguments. In his January 2012 speech to Vancouver's BC Chamber of Commerce, Minister Oliver pointed to "a recent study from the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy" which estimated "that opening the Asia and California markets to Canadian oil through the West Coast could add as much as \$132 billion to Canada's GDP between 2016 and 2030 as a result of higher international prices" (Oliver, 2012, Jan. 23).

This focus on diversification achieved two things. First, it symbolically nationalized diversification projects, framing revenue generated by Gateway as accruing to the Canadian *nation*, as opposed to a largely foreign-owned oil industry or particular domestic class fractions. However, it also framed the Canadian national interest as *dependent upon* and *constituted by* ongoing processes of transnational economic integration – especially with the 'rising' economies of East Asia. This played on widespread public fears of economic insecurity and disciplinary capital flight by defining Canada's interest as dependent on its transnational integration with 'East Asia', whose rising star signified the future of the post-crisis world order. If neoliberal reform, abandonment of capital controls, global financialisation and transnationalisation of production ensured that Canadian manufacturing would lose out to the 'East', the Canadian economy could simply be reoriented to *servicing* the region as opposed to *competing* with it.

Not only Canada's *interest* but also its *identity* was defined through its capacity to service the global economy, with the nation taking its rightful place as a *global energy superpower*. As Barney (2015) explains, constructing a Canadian national identity around the export of raw staples to global markets has a long history in elite discourse, and this tradition was appropriated to publically advocate for diversifying bitumen exports. At a June 2012 meeting of the Business Council of British Columbia, Jim Prentice, Harper's former Minister of the Environment and then VP of the financial conglomerate CIBC declared that Canada "should take pride in who we are and what we do" (1). And what did Canada do? "We extract resources from our abundant natural deposits and rely on the proceeds of those sales to help provide an exceptional standard of living" for all Canadians.

A few months earlier, Minister Oliver noted in a speech to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce that:

... the United States, Asia and other parts of the world need oil. With the right infrastructure in place, they can meet a significant part of their needs with oil from Canada — oil that has been produced to the highest standards of environmental and social responsibility — or they can, and must, get it from somewhere less reliable, less stable and less friendly (Oliver, 2012, Jan. 25.).

The assumption that Canada's interest resided in servicing transnational economic flows sometimes depended upon the projection of stable energy prices and rising demand decades into the future. This distracted from the boom and bust cycles which define the industry, and which are felt most severely by workers and citizens dependent on *steady* incomes and state revenues. Companies and investors, on the other hand, are better positioned to wait out market downturns, reinvest capital in more immediately profitable enterprises, or mitigate losses through layoffs, tax write offs, and other cost cutting measures. Yet the temporal projections of Gateway's proponents deflected attention away from the possibility of a rapid collapse in world oil prices.

This was a remarkable discursive maneuver: since the 1980s, global financial deregulation and integration had led to the increased frequency, intensity and volatility of speculative bubbles and crashes (Harvey, 2005; Hope, 2010; Robinson, 2004). Both the tech bubble of the 1990s and the housing bubble of the 2000s had resulted in catastrophic market collapses when speculative frenzies led to steadily rising prices increasingly divorced from the value of underlying assets. Simply put, *if there is one thing we know from experience it is that bubbles collapse*, especially under conditions of global financial deregulation and integration. By 2010 a similar price crash for oil was becoming increasingly likely due to softening global demand, sputtering global growth, and a rapidly growing glut of unconventional energy production around the world. Yet the neoliberal rhetoric of perpetual growth distracted from the growing danger posed by financial market volatility and speculative bubbles. This was a threat that staples economies are particularly vulnerable to given their overdependence on high and stable commodity prices and significant levels of FDI (Karl, 2008).

The *myth* of modern China was key to this articulation. China – and to a lesser extent India – was not seen as just another potential market. Following a decade and a half of massive growth, and the continuance of that growth following the 2008 crisis, China had come to symbolize endless accumulation for neoliberal apologists. More importantly, China had emerged as a symbol for globalization itself. China had come to

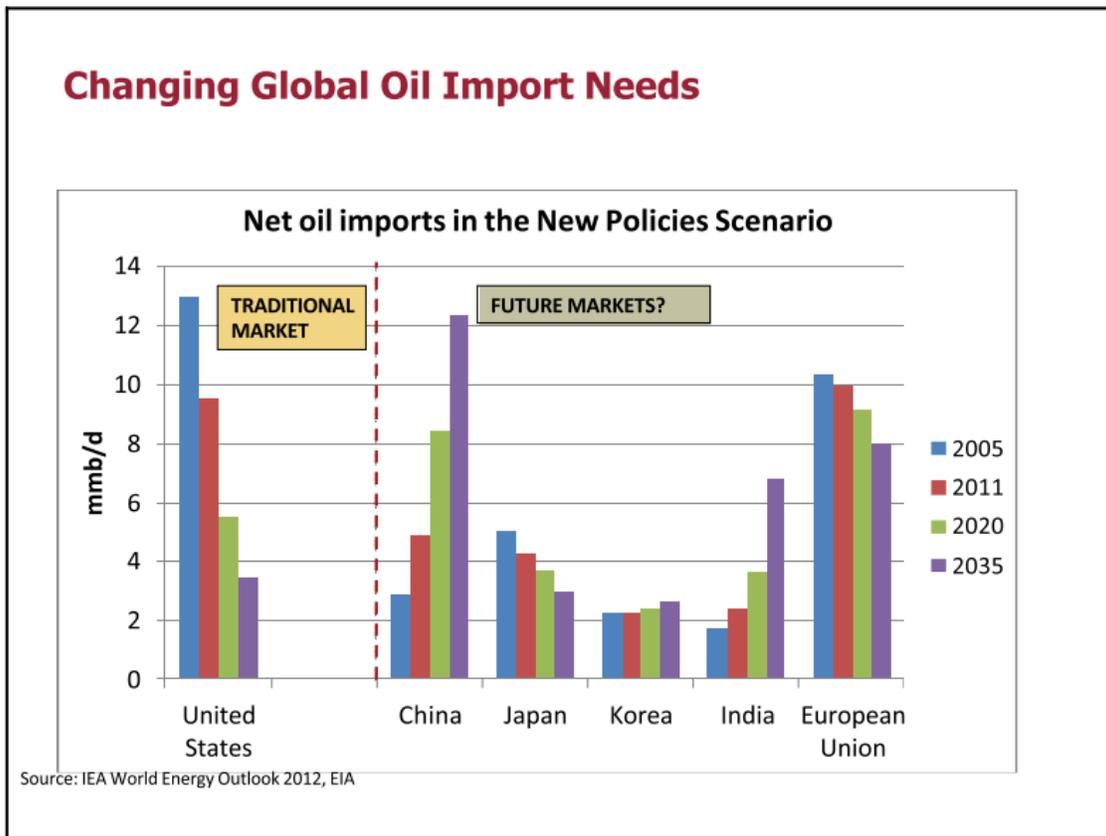
represent both the futility of resistance to neoliberal globalization – ‘there was no competing with Chinese manufacturing’ – and the ultimate salvation of the same system – ‘Canadian prosperity is secure because China will keep growing indefinitely’. By gesturing to bullish estimates of future Chinese demand, Gateway’s supporters undermined concerns about market volatility and the dangers of an undiversified staples economy. If Chinese demand for energy would rise steadily for the foreseeable future, betting all of Canada’s eggs in the tar sands basket was not a dangerous gamble, but an obvious opportunity Canadians would be foolish not to take advantage of.

There were numerous ways this discourse was deployed, but a key tactic involved the claim that steady demand for oil was a *reality of life* (See Figures 2 and 7). Though this claim was deployed by nearly all proponents, few did so with as much gusto as Minister Oliver in his various speeches to international and national elites. These claims were often backed up with reference to various transnational organizations, especially the IEA, the IMF, and the OECD. In his 2011 speech to the World Affairs Council in San Francisco, Oliver (2011 Sept. 14) made his point quite clear:

Twenty years from now — even under the most optimistic scenario for alternatives — fossil fuels will still be needed to meet almost 70% of world energy demand, according to the International Energy Agency. Oil is here to stay for the foreseeable future. We cannot ignore this fact. Our challenge, then, is to develop oil resources to meet growing demand, and to do so in a socially and environmentally responsible manner.

Similar claims were made to the Canadian public. In a September 2013 press release, Oliver noted how “Global energy demand is expected to increase by 35 percent from 2010 to 2035, and Canada is well-positioned to support that demand” (Natural Resources Canada, 2013 Sept. 13). Industry made similar use of these projections. In CAPP’s 2013 presentation to the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (Figure 8), IEA data was once again used to project growing Chinese, Indian, and European oil imports far into the future – in this case up until 2035.

## Changing Global Oil Import Needs



**Figure 8: Slide from CAPP Presentation to Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada on April 21, 2013**

Generally, these projections were not described as predictions at all. Proponents regularly argued that rising oil demand and/or continued oil consumption was a reality of life (See Figures 2 and 7). To deny this reality would impoverish not just Canada, but the world. This futurological suturing of national and global interest was deployed in speeches to national audiences *and* global elites. In Minister Oliver's 2011 speech at the London School of Economics, he addressed:

...the role energy plays in Canada's economy and the increasingly important contribution it will make to global energy security and economic stability, not only in my country but internationally...

Global oil consumption is expected to rise from today's 87 million barrels a day to 105 million barrels a day by 2030 — an increase of nearly 20 percent. That is the reality. We cannot just turn off the tap. That would create economic chaos and relegate more than a billion people around the world to further decades of energy poverty. (emphasis added) (Oliver, 2011. Oct 20).

Like broader arguments for export market diversification, this temporal projection was articulated alongside descriptions of the economic rise of East Asia and Canada's new identity as an energy supplier to the region. In an April 2013 speech to the University of Calgary, Oliver brought all these themes together. Once again, selective references were made to the IEA and the OECD in order to project global oil demand *decades* into the future, despite both organizations having become advocates of economic decarbonization and the urgent need to address climate change:

America's massive discoveries of tight oil and shale gas mean that it will need less and less from Canada in the future. So *it is critical that we expand our markets*. The good news is that those markets are already there, just waiting for us to develop. The *International Energy Agency estimates that the global demand for energy will increase by more than one-third by 2035*. And according to the Organization of the Economic Cooperation Development, *92 percent of global growth by that year will come from non-OECD countries...*

[I]n China, the number of civilian-owned cars and trucks grew from 5.5 million in 1990 to 214 million in 2011. And in the next 20 years, this is forecast to more than double again, which means there will be more cars in China in 2030 than there were in the entire world in the year 2000...

Global urbanization is continuing at an astonishing rate..., driving up energy demand in the world's largest countries. *Canada can play a critical role in fueling that growth, if we act now.* (Oliver, 2013, April 18).

### **5.3.3. Crisis Identity: Securing The Nation from Global Economic Catastrophe**

The framing of the Canadian nation as a transnational project was given heightened saliency when Federal Government actors framed extractivism as a means to insulate the economy from global crisis. As far back as his 2011 speech to the Canadian Club, Minister Oliver (2011, Sept. 23) argued that "Canada's emergence as a global energy superpower" was "more vital than ever" in "light of the fragility of the global economy". And in a January 2012 speech to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, he explained how "Canada's oil reserves are the most strategic of our energy assets, in particular the oil sands, which represent 170 of our 174 billion barrel proven reserves" (2012, Jan. 25). As such, "[d]iversifying our markets and developing the necessary infrastructure to transport our resources is key to helping ensure the financial security of Canadians and their families for decades to come." Oliver explicitly pointed to

deteriorating conditions in the United States and the Eurozone as a sign of things to come were Canada to ‘turn off the taps’:

Canada is the only G-7 economy to have more than recovered both all of the output and all of *the jobs lost during the recession*. While *others are raising taxes to pay down deficits*, Canada can offer the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment in the G7.... While some countries find themselves *forced to make drastic cuts to their public sectors*, Canada is able to take measured steps without undermining our most important social services and other programs. Make no mistake, *these are still uncertain times*. *The economic and fiscal difficulties in Europe* are worrisome, and *slow recovery in the U.S.* is a reason for caution. But Canada has a lot of advantages, and our government is committed to making the most of those advantages *to the benefit of all Canadians*. (emphasis added).

This argument was particularly interesting given how counter-intuitive it was. Undiversified staples economies were notoriously susceptible to global market volatility and the boom and bust cycle of commodity bubbles. Oliver’s advice was therefore *the opposite* of what one might expect from a supposedly prudent and pragmatic economic manager. Not only, he claimed, would doubling down on energy staples *not* make Canada vulnerable to a potential price crash, but it would actually *insulate* Canada from global economic risk by putting *more* eggs in the basket of global energy demand.

#### **5.3.4. Oil as a Reality of Life: Science vs. Unreason in Petrobloc Discourse**

While Minister Oliver and CAPP used the projections of transnational groups like the IEA to posit oil as a simple reality of life, Enbridge spun similar narratives in a less technocratic fashion. Following widespread regional opposition to Northern Gateway, the company debuted a new communications campaign in 2014 called ‘Life Takes Energy’ consisting of a series of short video advertisements circulated online, on television, and in movie theatres across the province. While previous Enbridge ads had focused on refuting opponents’ environmental risk claims or explaining how they would innovate their way out of ecological problems, these had largely failed to convince worried BC residents. The Life Takes Energy campaign radically changed course, making no mention of Northern Gateway at all. Rather, the short videos drew attention to the various ways the ‘energy’ Enbridge provided made daily life possible. To do this, they drew heavily on the family frame. The various ads depicted brief vignettes of meaningful

family outings, events and memories: a road trip with the dog, bringing a newborn baby back from the hospital, a blissful family vacation, and so on.

One video, entitled “E= a warm welcome”, featured a newborn child being given a warm bath, while an unseen narrator explained how:

‘We [Enbridge] didn’t organize the drawers of little socks and onesies, but... we did warm the bathwater that gave her a warm welcome home. When the energy you invest in life, meets the energy we fuel it with, beautiful things happen’ (Enbridge, 2014a).

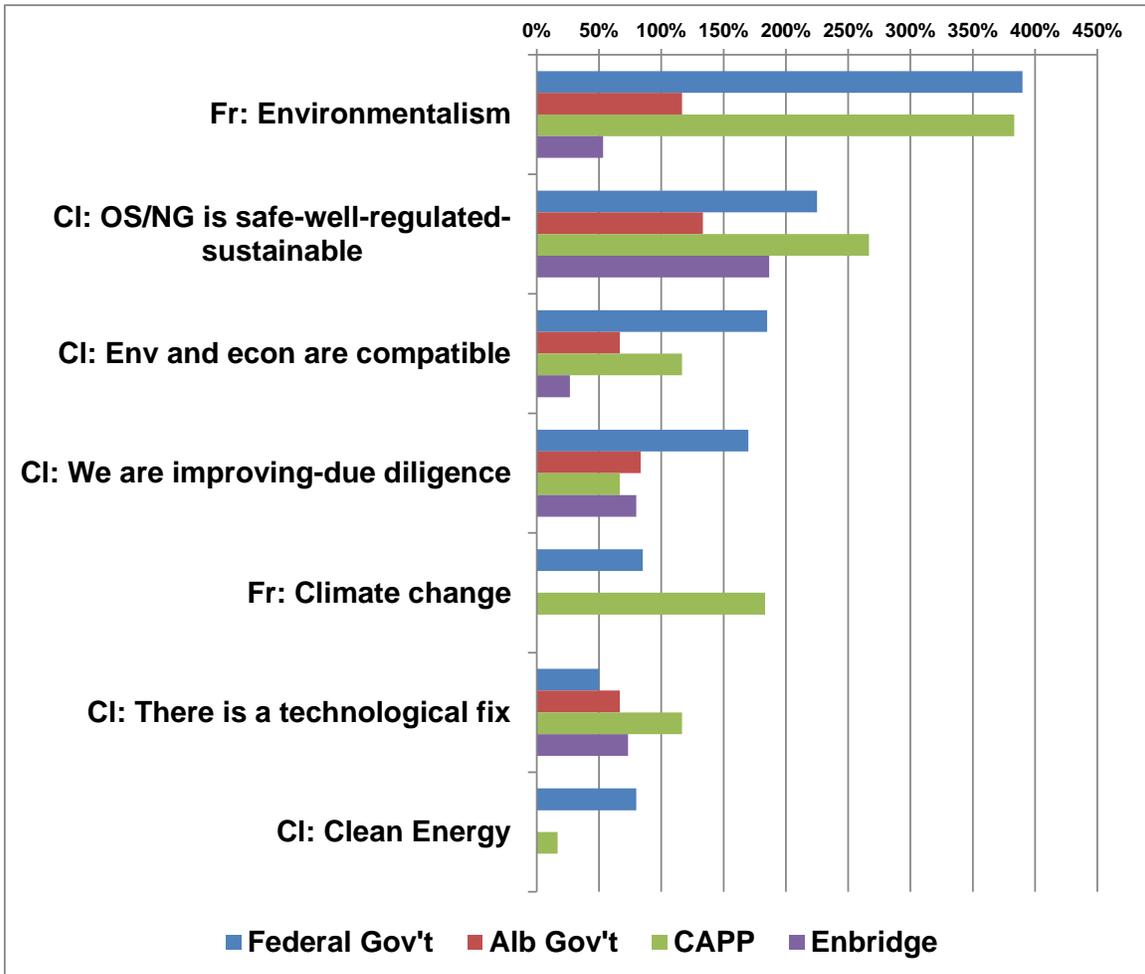
Another video, entitled “E= Making memories”, featured a young mother on vacation with her children, shown happily playing on the beach and snorkeling before flying home on a commercial airliner. All the while, the narrator intoned that “We [Enbridge] didn’t spend hours researching the perfect destination, and we didn’t go snorkeling for the first time, but we did fuel the plane that took them farther away, to bring them closer than ever” (Enbridge, 2014b).

The Life Takes Energy campaign followed other Northern Gateway proponents’ attempts to undermine opposition by claiming that *oil was simply a reality of contemporary life*. If ‘life takes energy’, those opposed to Enbridge were engaged in a quixotic campaign against life itself. Oil, according to these ads, was what allowed ‘us’ to provide a good life for ‘our’ loved ones. By implicitly positioning the goals of project opponents as unreasonable or impossible, they undermined regional concerns about the distribution of project risk and benefit. In the Life Takes Energy campaign, ‘we’ all share from the benefits of oil, regardless of whether or not one individually profits from a particular pipeline or project.

### **5.3.5. Risky Business: Petrobloc Expertise and Environmental Risk**

Faced with unprecedented degrees of public opposition for a project of its kind, Gateway’s state and industry supporters have continued in the ecoskeptic tradition laid out by American pollster and conservative communications strategist Frank Luntz (2003). In his famous 2003 memo to the Bush White House, Luntz refined and popularized the ecoskeptic discourses already being deployed by neoliberal EPII groups. Luntz’s advice to conservative communicators was to assure “your audience that you

are committed to ‘preserving and protecting’ the environment”, stressing that you are seeking “a fair balance” between the environment and the economy.”



**Figure 9: Sustainability Claims and Frames for Industry and State Proponents (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

The Harper Government’s strategy showed clear parallels with Luntz’s formula. Federal Government texts did not ignore the environment, frequently deploying the environmental frame (see Figure 9). Yet they rarely mentioned clean energy or climate change. Instead, they argued that **the environment and economy were compatible** and that **Northern Gateway and/or the oil sands were safe and sustainable**. Such claims were used to justify ongoing regulatory reforms such as those in C-38 and C-45. Described as a means to ensure ‘Responsible Resource Development’, reforms were claimed to balance environmental concerns with the need to maintain global economic competitiveness, allowing Canada to emerge as a ‘Global Energy Superpower’.

An April 2013 speech by Minister Oliver to the University of Calgary's Extractive Resource Governance Policy Program explained that:

For our Government, environmental protection is not a nice-to-have, it is a must-have. We do not accept — and we will never accept — the false choice between economic development and environmental responsibility...

That is why we introduced a sweeping new approach to how we regulate resource development. We call it responsible resource development and it does a number of things. It makes project reviews more predictable and timely with fixed end dates for key assessments, and it ends duplication in reviewing projects with the goal of one project, one review. (Oliver, 2013, April 18) (Emphasis added).

These reforms were described as necessary because “Canadian industry is facing significant global competition with a narrow window of opportunity”, making it “critical that our regulatory process be as expeditious and predictable as possible”.

This argument did not posit that more rigorous environmental regulation would enhance global competitiveness. Rather, it was generally assumed that environmental regulation was already *too* rigorous or that ongoing technological and regulatory innovations had made lengthy public reviews by multiple government bodies obsolete. Such claims often leveraged a ‘mythic’ construction of Canada’s national identity. Barthes (1972) argued that myth as ideology involved the crystallization of history into nature, with particular symbols becoming fixed as signifiers of a given signified’s transhistorical essence (ie. Wine as the symbol of ‘Frenchness’). Project proponents deployed similar concepts of a Mythic Canada which *assumed* that Canada was a socially just and ecologically sustainable nation. Critics were therefore mistaken: Northern Gateway was sustainable because Canada is *by definition* a leader in sustainability. In a 2012 speech to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, Minister Oliver explained that:

Canada is a world leader in clean energy and environmental responsibility....Canada's oil sands are subject to the toughest environmental monitoring and regulation in the world. We are working to identify gaps with respect to monitoring, and the government is working to remedy this. [Critics] don't mention the billions of public and private sector dollars invested in the development of new technologies and techniques to limit their environmental impact and accelerate the adoption of clean energy technologies throughout our economy. (Oliver, January 25, 2012)

What is remarkable about such claims is that numerous reviews and studies have demonstrated conclusively that provincial regulation of the oil sands – especially with respect to impacts on water – was virtually non-existent, with minimal scientific awareness or study of the local impacts of tar sands expansion (Davidson and Gismondi; 2009; Nikiforuk, 2009). Similarly, the Federal Government had no meaningful climate change strategy to speak of, having resisted various calls for a national carbon tax, emissions limits, or other means of curbing emissions. Add to this the fact that the Harper Government had become notorious for muzzling federally funded climate scientists and cutting funding for environmental research and regulatory enforcement, and it is not hard to see why arguments promoting Northern Gateway’s sustainability largely failed to satisfy critics. Yet only by *assuming* the high quality of Canada’s environmental governance could the delimiting of future reviews under C-38 and C-45 be framed as a ‘balancing’ of the economy and environment.

## Greenhouse Gas Emissions

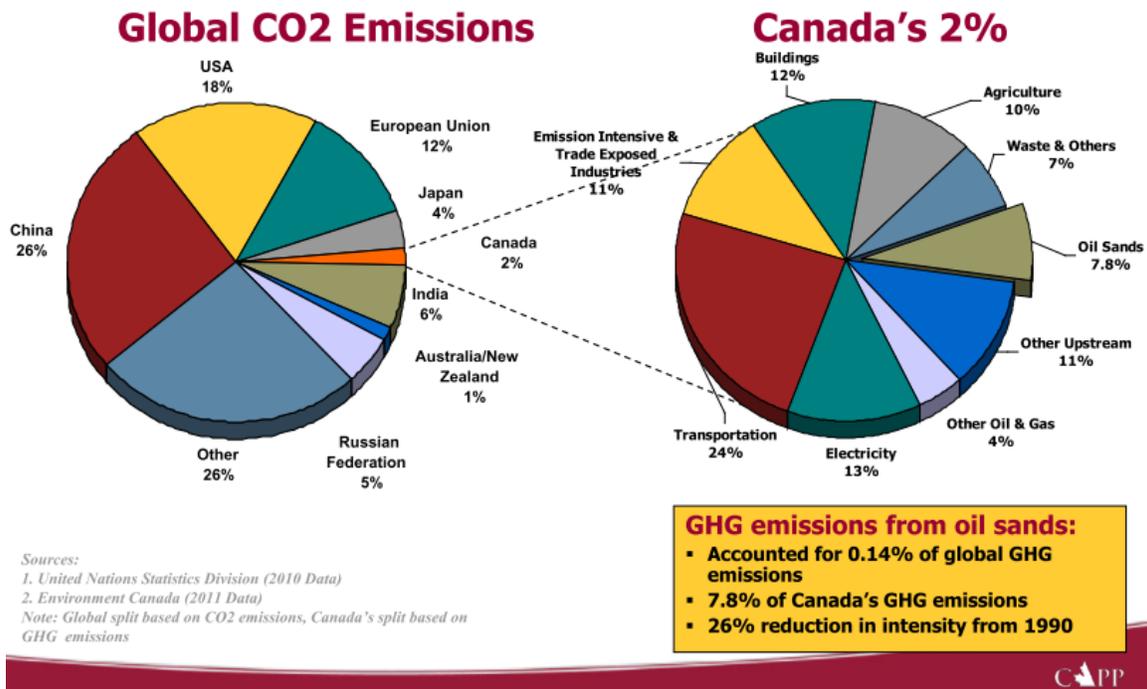


Figure 10: Presentation by CAPP, “Canada’s Oil Sands”, Delivered on April 7, 2014

CAPP indirectly supported this line of reasoning by frequently arguing that Northern Gateway and/or the tar sands were safe, sustainable and well regulated

(See Figure 9). In doing so, it replicated arguments previously made by the Alberta Government which deflected concerns about the tar sands' carbon-intensity by focusing on ecologically irrelevant reductions in Greenhouse gas *intensity* per unit of GDP growth and the tar sands' relatively small proportion of global emissions (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011, 133). Such claims ignored how "Alberta's greenhouse gas emissions in 2008 were 41% above 1990 levels, despite a 16% decrease of emissions intensity between 1990 and 2008". Similarly, a typical CAPP presentation (Figure 10) explained how Canada's total emissions in 2011 only represented 2% of the world total, giving the impression that tar sands emissions were a 'drop in the bucket'.

Enbridge made similar claims about Northern Gateway. In its press releases the firm frequently claimed that Northern Gateway was safe, sustainable, and well regulated, that ecological risk could be overcome through technological innovation (the so-called technological fix), and that Enbridge was constantly improving its environmental performance (See Figure 9). Such claims have a long history in skeptic discourse, and once again the Luntz (2003) memo is instructive. Luntz argued that conservative discourse should emphasize how "Technology, innovation and discovery should play a major role in preserving a clean and healthy environment", thereby obviating the need for government regulation. Similarly, state and industry supporters of Alberta's oil sands have a long history of using technocratic discourses promoting sustainability through organizational and technological innovation (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011).

Enbridge frequently made reference to the various technical fixes which would ensure Northern Gateway's sustainability (See Figure 9). In a July 2012 press release announcing their filing of Reply Evidence to the JRP they detailed "*further enhancements in pipeline design and operations*" which "build on the plan in the application presently before federal regulators that *already far surpasses industry codes and standards*" (Enbridge, 2012, July) (emphasis added). And while Enbridge Executive Vice President Janet Holder explained how the firm "recognize[d] that there are concerns among Aboriginal groups and the public around pipeline safety and integrity", they "*had already planned to build a state-of-the-art project, using the most advanced technology, safety measures and procedures in the industry today*".

### 5.3.6. Popularity Contest: Reifying the National Conservative-Popular and the Liberal Elite Enemy

Perhaps the greatest threat to the extractivist status quo was the cooperation between First Nations, settler communities, and environmental organizations that constituted the anti-Gateway movement. Historically, the relationship between First Nations and environmentalists in Canada has often been ambiguous or even hostile (Nadasdy, 2005), while the First Nations decolonization movement is by definition hostile to the continued dominance of local settlers. Yet now, as the CDFAI's Tom Flanagan had warned, this unlikely alliance threatened the export market diversification strategies of the petrobloc. And so the Federal Government turned to emotionally-charged populist rhetoric to discredit their rivals, most notably with Minister Oliver's much-publicised 'foreign funded radicals' letter of January 2012.

Conservative populist and ecoskeptical discourses have been a cornerstone of neoliberal communications strategies for decades (Gutstein, 2009; Lakoff, 2010), and the Harper Conservatives possessed close connections to the EPII groups and New Right actors which had pioneered these narratives (Gutstein, 2014). Harper himself has longstanding ties to Calgary School intellectuals like Tom Flanagan and Ted Morton, as well as neoliberal EPII groups such as the National Citizens Coalition (which he became president of in 1998) and the climate change-denying Fraser Institute. One of Harper's Chiefs of Staff, Robert Novak, was a researcher at the National Citizens Coalition when Harper was that group's leader. Another of his Chiefs of Staff, Nigel Wright, was a board member of the Manning Centre for Building Democracy, a conservative policy planning and networking organization run by former Reform Party leader – and Harper mentor – Preston Manning.

This is not to argue for some simplistic conspiracy theory. It is merely meant to draw attention to the fact that the Harper Conservatives operated in the same political and intellectual milieu as that of industry funded EPII groups. Allied state and civil society actors formed part of a broader *interfield neoliberal project* which increasingly looks to extractivist development as a source of corporate profits, fiscal stability, and political legitimacy. It is therefore unsurprising that the eco-skeptical denunciations of pipeline opponents closely mirrored the narratives of New Right EPII groups.

As Laclau (1977) noted, populist appeals attempt to constitute diverse political subjects as a collective entity. Often this allows elites to “give coherence to [their] ideological discourse by presenting [their] class objectives as the consummation of popular objectives” (109). Similarly, conservative populist denunciations of Northern Gateway’s opponents were bridged with nationalist discourses in an attempt to secure two key objectives. Firstly, by reifying regional opponents as a foreign enemy hostile to national-popular interests, the Conservatives could deflect attention from the various regional, national, and class disparities inherent to neoliberal extractivist development. In this way the division between Gateway’s ‘winners’ (oil companies, finance capital, Albertan energy workers and governments increasingly dependent on energy development for state revenues) and ‘losers’ (First Nations and settler communities along the pipeline route, BC taxpayers, citizens deprived of a reasonable share of resource rent in wages or tax-supported services, and so on) was sublimated into the leveling terrain of *national interest*. Conservative national-populist discourse was thereby used to obscure the maldistribution of risk and benefit between different actors *within* the nation. Secondly, national-populist discourses erased the inequities inherent in the transnationalisation of the tar sands enterprise, in which over 50% of sector revenues accrue to multinational firms and investors (Barney, 2015). By focusing on a reified *national* interest, national-populist discourse drew attention away from the fact that the interests of national and regional elites may be more in line with those of their transnational cohort than with local workers, communities and taxpayers.

Much like ecoskepticism emerged from the bridging of neoliberal, conservative populist, and environmentalist frames, ecoskeptic discourse was used by the Harper Conservatives to bridge the ‘liberal elite’ frame with ‘pipeline opponents’. Much of this depended on *deep framing* techniques. Framing, notes Crompton (2010), does not merely exist at the symbolic level. Rather, deep frames can be “activated and strengthened through many aspects of our lived experience – including our experience of living with particular public policies and social institutions” (12). The economic insecurity brought about by neoliberal governance, globalization, and the economic crisis can thereby activate deep frames when they are interpreted in light of neoliberal economic theory, which cautions against intervention in market forces for fear of eroding global competitiveness. The activation of these deep frames lends interpretive *and* emotional saliency to a core tenet of ecoskeptic discourse: the championing of

regulatory rollback and the attack on environmentalism as a threat to economic “progress” and financial security (Jacques et al., 2008, 354).

Minister Oliver’s ‘foreign funded radicals’ letter was a textbook operationalization of this discursive strategy. It also helped set the tone for the ecoskeptic arguments to follow, deploying various frames and arguments subsequently picked up in other Federal Government statements. *Economic interest* frames were bridged with powerful *corruption and betrayal*, *populist*, and *xenophobic–national security* frames to argue that the JRP had been ‘hijacked’ by liberal elites, radical ideologues, and foreign special interests who sought to undermine Canada’s national economic interest and ‘Canadian jobs’ (See Table 6; Figure 7). Much like the Oliver Letter described pipeline opponents as “foreign special interest groups” and “jet-setting celebrities”, a later speech to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce argued that “You won’t hear *American special-interest groups, celebrity environmentalists or champagne socialists* acknowledge that Canada’s oil sands are subject to the toughest environmental monitoring and regulation in the world.” (Emphasis added) (Oliver, 2012, Jan. 25). These elites were often described as not merely foreigners, but *radical ideologues*. As Oliver (2012, Jan. 23,) explained to the British Columbia Chamber of Commerce, it was not concerned Canadians but “radical environmental groups” blocking “this opportunity to diversify our trade”, “no matter... the cost to Canadian families in lost jobs and economic growth”. By stacking the JRP hearings, they threatened “to hijack our regulatory system to achieve their radical ideological agenda”.

If *elite environmental ideologues* allied with *hostile foreign interests* threatened the national economic interest, *reason and science* had proven the benefits of export market diversification. As noted earlier, Minister Oliver frequently insisted that it was simply the ‘reality’ that demand for oil would keep rising, which made any curb on oil production both economically damaging and environmentally irrelevant. If global demand was going to inevitably increase, only an ideologue would impoverish both Canada and the world (system) in service of an impossible goal.

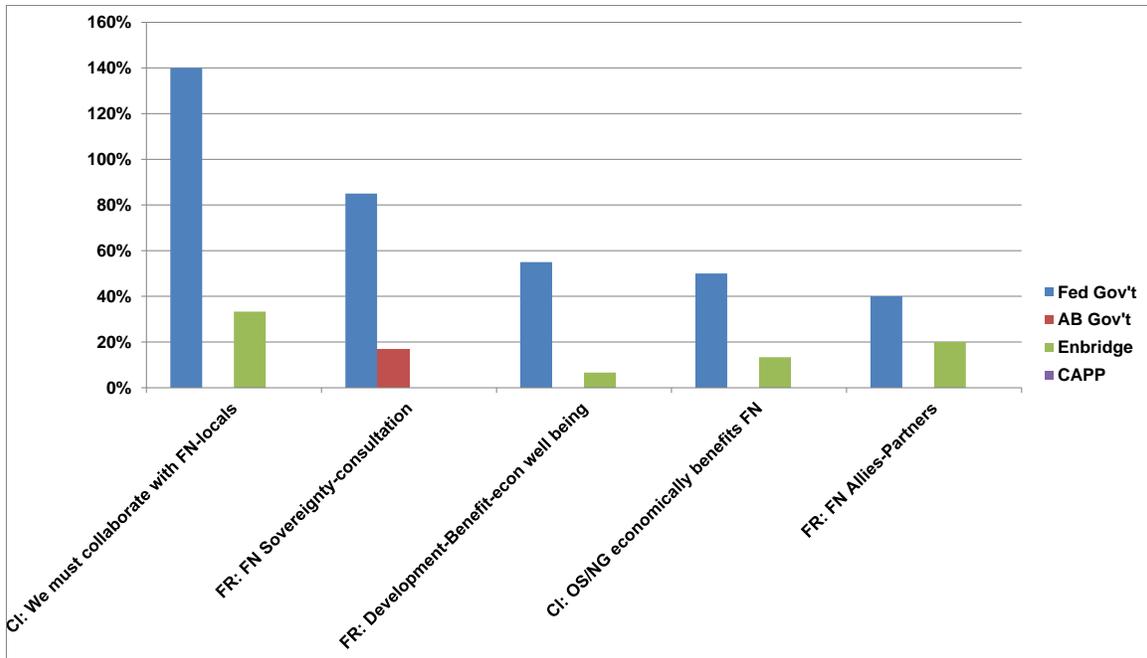
### 5.3.7. Ignoring the Decolonial: The Erasure of First Nations Resistance in Proponent Discourse

If environmentalist opponents were framed as liberal elite ideologues threatening the nation, First Nations opponents were treated rather differently. More to the point, they were erased altogether. Much as in Gunster and Saurette's (2014) analysis of Calgary Herald coverage of the oil sands, First Nations were almost never mentioned as members of the anti-Gateway opposition. In fact, CAPP never mentioned First Nations *at all*, and the Alberta government only rarely (see Figure 11). Meanwhile, neither Federal Government nor Enbridge materials used the **First Nations opposition** frame when discussing indigenous peoples. Instead, they tended to use a **First Nations economic development** frame to claim that **First Nations would economically benefit from energy resource projects and/or Northern Gateway**. This was often in conjunction with **First Nations consultation/sovereignty** and **First Nations as allies or partners** frames which were used to claim that **project proponents must collaborate with First Nations and local communities** if they wished to secure new resource projects. In short, while opponents were framed as foreign funded, environmental (re: white) radicals hurting the nation, First Nations were symbolically offered a space *within the nation building project*.

A telling example was a press release marking Minister Oliver's July 2013 visit to the port of Kitimat, where the proposed pipeline would meet up with supertankers to transport the diluted bitumen to Asian markets. Kitimat's Haisla nation was a steadfast project opponent. Yet while Oliver had described environmentalists in stark derogatory terms, his description of First Nations was quite different:

Responsible resource development has the potential to create significant new opportunities for Aboriginal peoples across Canada...The Government will make every effort to ensure that Aboriginal peoples in Canada have the opportunity to share the benefits of energy resource development in the years ahead. (Natural Resources Canada, 2013, July 23).

The following year, Oliver's successor Greg Rickford issued a similar press release explaining how "Our government is committed to continue working in partnership with First Nations to strengthen their engagement in energy projects, with training for employment and business opportunities, and with a role in assessing and managing environmental safety of projects" (Natural Resources Canada, 2014, May 27).



**Figure 11: First Nation Frames and Claims of State and Industry Proponents (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

Enbridge, which had tried in vain to entice First Nations communities with their 10% equity offer, also argued that Northern Gateway would economically benefit First Nations communities (See Figure 11). In a June 2014 press release responding to Northern Gateway's final approval, the Enbridge President Al Monaco replicated the Federal Government's bridging of First Nations development and economic nationalism:

"In the broader context, opening new markets for our energy resources is critical for all Canadians. It will mean a major boost to our provincial and national economies.....Importantly, Northern Gateway will involve Aboriginal communities as owners and partners in the project, and it provides meaningful training, job and business opportunities in communities along the right-of-way." (Enbridge, June 17, 2014).

In all these cases, First Nations opposition was simply erased, with communities along the project route repositioned as savvy business partners eager for extractivist development. First Nations were symbolically split from the anti-Gateway alliance, with opponents reified as wild eyed, anti-Canadian environmental ideologues, their foreign funders, and jet setting celebrities bent on sabotaging the nation, its people, and the entire global capitalist system. If Tom Flanagan described an alliance between First Nations and environmentalists as the oil industry's 'nightmare scenario', these narratives

were the hallucinatory fever dreams developed to burn off the infection corrupting the petrobloc and its global fantasies.

### **5.3.8. Regime Change: Regulatory Reform and Neoliberal Corporatism**

All proponents had framed projects like Northern Gateway as the centerpiece of national prosperity and identity. And because the Conservatives framed project opponents as foreign-funded elite ideologues who had ‘hijacked’ a broken approval process (See Figure 7), upcoming or recent changes to the regulatory regime such as C-38 and C-45 could be presented as pragmatic reforms needed to secure the national interest. In Oliver’s January 2012 speech to the British Columbia Chamber of Commerce, he explained how Gateway’s opponents “threaten... to hijack our regulatory system to achieve their radical ideological agenda” and “kill good projects:

Our Government is committed to a regulatory system that ensures sound environmental protection and respects the right of people with a legitimate interest, including Aboriginal rights. We can do that and also have realistic timelines that facilitate economic prosperity. These goals are not mutually exclusive....But we can’t do these things under the current regime, where the process is unpredictable and timelines are often missed. (Oliver, 2012, Jan. 23)

Here lies a seeming paradox: the promotion of state corporatism in defense of neoliberal values. Many scholars (Harvey, 2005; McNally, 2012; Preston, 2013; Robinson, 2004) have noted that despite the anti-state rhetoric of its proselytizers, neoliberalism has always depended on a strong state, whether to slash regulation, enforce rule by technocratic experts, undermine democratic interventions in the economy, or establish new markets. Neoliberal extractivism requires an even greater degree of intervention. Governments must carry out project reviews; help secure foreign buyers; guarantee critical infrastructure; manage stakeholder relations; make needed regulatory changes, and so on.

The tension between neoliberal dogma and corporatist reality is a longstanding feature of state discourses defending the tar sands. It is uncanny how closely Davidson and Gismond’s (2011) previous descriptions of the Alberta Government’s pro-tar sands discourse resembles the statements of Gateway’s supporters:

Government accounts emphasize how politicians are managing the oils sands as a public resource...; the results and the burdens shared equitably for the public good. Huge corporate profits are seldom mentioned.... Rather, decisions and actions driving oil sands investment and expansions are presented as abstract forces, such as global consumer demand for oil, the free market, and economic globalization. The role of government, if there is one, is to nurture a fledgling but vital industry, by providing infrastructure and economic subsidies to meet a unique investment “moment.” In exchange, global corporations will develop the crown resources in the interest of the public. Albertans, and especially outsiders, dare not interfere with the market (or the pace of development) because oil sands growth ensures Canada’s place in the global economy. Indeed, the world is depending on the people of McMurray (69).

It is telling, and not a little ironic, that the Federal Government was the actor most likely to deploy neoliberal frames in service of heavy state intervention (See Table 2). In this context, state corporatism was a matter of ‘streamlining’ regulation so as to maintain global competitiveness. A 2011 speech by Minister Oliver (November 24, 2011) to the Manning Foundation displayed precisely this combination of neoliberal dogma and state corporatist pragmatism:

We have in place several key ingredients that attract investment: competitive taxes, a stable political environment and non-discriminatory policies. But when it comes to major resource projects, there's no question that another key factor is the regulatory process. A regulatory regime that is objective, expert and effective is a basic ingredient of a stable, predictable investment climate.

Oliver’s other speeches made similar neoliberal arguments. One focused on “Canada’s extractive resource industries and how government can be an ally in their efforts” by “lowering taxes, cutting red tape and promoting free trade” (Oliver, April 18, 2013). Similar sentiments were expressed by Alberta’s Premier Allison Redford in response to BC’s ‘5 conditions’ for pipeline approval. Redford used familiar neoliberal tropes to chastise Premier Clark, who was ignoring how projects like Gateway were:

...essential for the economic benefit of Canada. Our confederation works as well as it does because of the free flow of goods and products through provinces and territories...We’ve worked very hard ... to ensure free trade across the BC/Alberta/Saskatchewan borders and the shared economic rewards have been great for our citizens (Redford, 2012, July 23).

Curiously, one state corporatist argument made by project proponents did not reinforce neoliberal discourse at all. The Federal Government, Alberta government, and

Enbridge materials all argued that maximizing oil revenues would generate tax revenues and/or help sustain the Canadian welfare state (See Figure 7). In a November 2012 press release, Minister Oliver argued that pipelines “must be built to export our natural resources that fund critical social programs like health care and education” (Natural Resources Canada, 2012, Nov. 26). If it was amusing that the fiercely neoliberal government of Steven Harper, which had often worked to dismantle or curtail various social programs, was now seemingly committed to saving the same, this applied equally to the neoliberal Alberta Progressive Conservatives. In a press release issued in the wake of the JRP’s approval, Energy Minister Diana McQueen explained how accessing new markets would help generate “higher royalties and taxes to help pay for the vital public services like quality health care and education that Albertans expect.” (Government of Alberta, 2013, Dec. 19). Even Enbridge (2014, June 17) got in on the welfare state revival, with company President Al Monaco claiming that Northern Gateway would “create jobs and result in new tax revenues for communities and governments to support social programs and infrastructure”. Now this was a strange form of neoliberalism, indeed.

#### **5.4. The Solution to Crisis in Crisis: Opposition to Northern Gateway from the Regional Popular**

As Gateway’s proponents discovered, the pursuit of neoliberal extractivism presents significant vulnerabilities for state and corporate elites. If global political-ecological systems can be conceptualized as a series of ‘flows’, Davidson and Gismondi (2011) argue, then in “the case of the tar sands, two of the most prominent flows... that characterize the disproportionality of this enterprise include the flows of benefit and of risk” (183). For Northern Gateway, benefits mostly accrue to the Albertan economy, the Albertan and Federal Government, energy sector workers (to an extent), and various regional, national and multinational firms and investors. The lion’s share of economic gains mostly accrue to the latter, foreign actors, as low royalty and taxation rates, high rates of corporate compensation, eschewing of value-added refining activities, and the industry’s internationalization combine to assure that the majority of resource rents are shipped out of country as corporate profits and investment returns (Barney. 2015; Boychuck, 2010; Campanella, 2012). The flip side is that the tar sands produce *relatively*

little value for Canadian workers and taxpayers even while the largely foreign-owned industry remains one of the most profitable in the world.

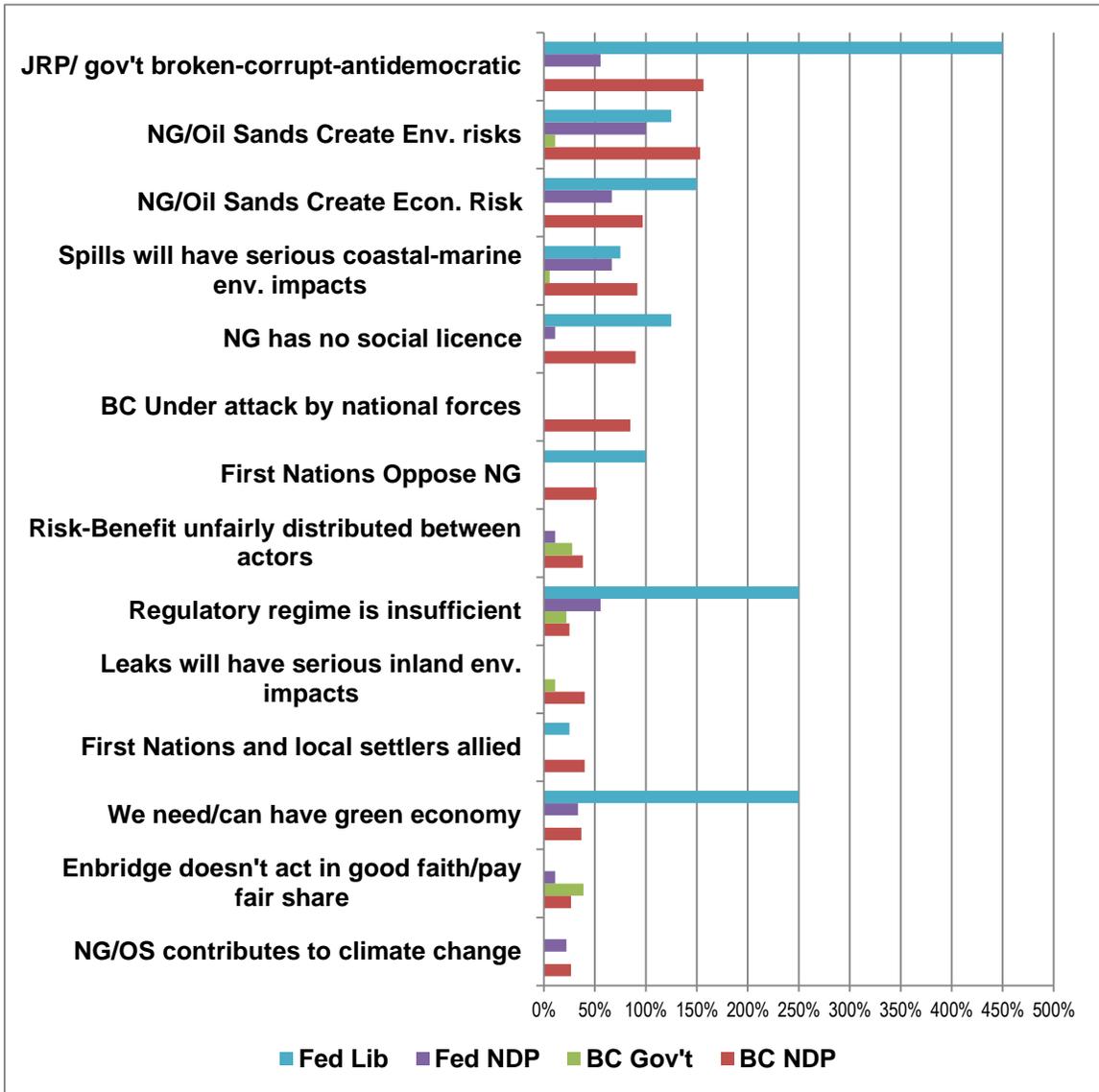
Risks, on the other hand, are mostly absorbed by various settler and First Nations communities along the project route, British Columbian workers and taxpayers, and those around the world most vulnerable to the effects of catastrophic climate change (including the coastal communities of Northern BC). Northern Gateway therefore intensifies the basic legitimization problem of the tar sands, owing to the severe disparity in costs and benefits between not just owners and workers, but also between Albertans, (significantly foreign-owned) oil companies, and international investors on the one hand, and Canadian taxpayers, workers, lower and middle income people, environmentalists, and British Columbians and First Nations located along the project route on the other. For this reason, the abstracted reification of the *Canadian nation, taxpayer, or worker* as the prime beneficiary of Gateway is, in theory, a cunning discursive maneuver. Yet it is also one easily rejected by those *regional* actors which absorb *local risk* while receiving few of the supposedly *national benefits*. And it is precisely these contradictions that Gateway's state opponents leveraged for their own political benefit.

#### **5.4.1. Risk: The Game of Local Articulations**

In opposing Northern Gateway, both the BC NDP and the governing BC Liberals deployed emotionally charged regional-populist narratives to portray the conflict as a battle between legitimate regional actors fighting illegitimate outsiders. Critically, nearly all BC Liberal texts were press releases, while the vast majority of BC NDP texts were either press releases or blog posts (See Chapter 4). Opponents thereby directed most communications to their public constituency – whether directly or through the provision of information subsidies to the press. In doing so, they drew on *regional, provincial, or local* subject positions – British Columbians, coastal communities, First Nations, etc. – as a foil to the national reifications leveraged by project proponents.

In keeping with their regionalist framing, opponents almost exclusively focused on the *local* risks Northern Gateway posed to the province (See Figures 3 and 12). The most common risk-based claim deployed by *all state* opponents was that **the project would generate significant environmental risk for coastal and marine ecosystems**. The BC NDP was the opponent most likely to make this claim. One March 2010 blog

post published on the 21st anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill explained that the Gateway project “would see 525,000 barrels per day of Alberta Tar Sands oil shipped in supertankers along the coast – threatening the Great Bear rainforest and putting wild salmon, killer whales and 150 other species at risk.” (NDP of BC, 2010, March, 23).



**Figure 12: Common Claims of State and Industry Opponents (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

Yet the contribution of the project and tar sands expansion to *climate change* was discussed much less frequently by state opponents (See Figures 3 and 12). When climate was discussed, it was rarely described as a *provincial or local concern*.

Furthermore, climate-related claims were generally not made in any detail. One rare example was BC NDP leader Adrian Dix's letter to the JRP:

The rapid development of the oil sands makes it increasingly difficult for Canada to shape and implement greenhouse gas reduction plans that will be both effective for climate protection and equitable to all provinces and all sectors of the economy. As increased emissions from the Alberta oil sands are 'locked in' with the massive expansions now underway, all other sectors of the economy and all other provinces lose options for effective and affordable emission reduction measures. (Dix, 2012, April 30).

Opponents also focused on the *local economic* risks of a potential pipeline or tanker spill. Environmental and economic health was explicitly linked, with opponents frequently claiming that the project entailed unacceptable risks to local economies (See Figures 3 and 12). This regional focus was often articulated alongside a symbolic construction of at-risk areas as 'precious local spaces' which were globally unique and irreplaceable:

"The northwest is known worldwide for intact wilderness and incredible hunting and sport-fishing opportunities," said Doug Donaldson, the New Democrat MLA for Stikine. "All it would take is one spill to destroy our reputation as a destination for tourism, fishing and hunting – which would blow a hole in the northwest economy that short-term construction jobs could never fill." (NDP of BC, 2010, July 28).

Opposition at the federal level also focused on economic risks. In a June 2014 press release following Northern Gateway's approval by Cabinet, Federal NDP leader Thomas Mulcair argued that, "Allowing supertankers into the Douglas Channel would be madness and a spill would be catastrophic for the economy of the entire region" (NDP of Canada, 2014, June 17).

Yet the BC NDP was the only state actor to argue that **Northern Gateway would significantly undermine First Nations economy, culture, or way of life** (see Figure 15). A December 2010 press release quoted Skeena MLA Robin Austin, who noted that:

"Oil spills kill fish," said Austin. "If there is one thing that brings people in the communities I work for together, it is salmon. Whether one is *a fishing guide that relies on salmon to bring tourists from around the world through the doors of their lodge, a member of a First Nation that sees salmon as a vital link to their culture, a commercial fisher, or someone who simply likes to relax and go fishing on the weekend* – salmon are an

irreplaceable resource that people in the northwest are unwilling to sacrifice....” (NDP of BC, Dec. 10, 2010) (emphasis added).

#### **5.4.2. Enemies at the Gates: Framing the Regional-Popular**

Opponents focused not just on risk, but its unfair distribution. For instance, the BC NDP frequently argued that Northern Gateway represented an inequitable distribution of risk and benefit (See Figure 12), noting that BC was “the province that assumes all of the risk and receives very little benefit.” (NDP of BC, 2012, July 17). Opponents leveraged the issue of the maldistribution of risk and benefit to construct regional-populist narratives that portrayed the Northern Gateway conflict as a battle between legitimate regional actors fighting illegitimate outsiders imposing their will upon the province.

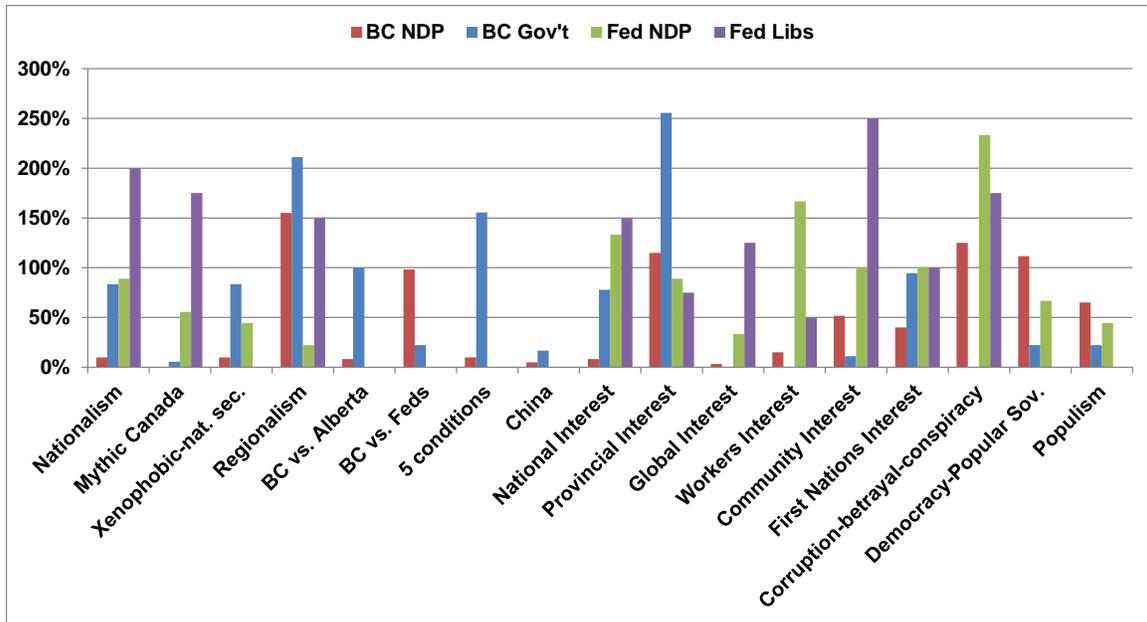
Yet the ways in which the two BC parties described this conflict was quite different, owing to their political rivalry and differing positions on resource development. Northern Gateway was a difficult storm for the BC Liberals to weather. Even after their issuance of BC’s ‘5 conditions’, many were skeptical of the extent to which the Liberals actually opposed the project. It was they who had originally signed the agreement with Ottawa waiving the province’s right to conduct its own environmental assessment, thereby ceding authority to a Federal Government openly supportive of Gateway. Also, the BC Liberals had only changed their position once opposition to the project had become strong enough to threaten their chances in the upcoming 2013 election. This history limited the strategic depth of BC Liberal communications, while opening them up to attack from the BC NDP on grounds that they had ‘sold BC out’.

This tactic was aided not just by the BC Liberals’ signing of the equivalency agreement, but also by their close connections with key petrobloc institutions and actors. Most notable here was Ken Boessenkool, who became Premier Clark’s chief of staff in 2012 (Cayley-Daoust and Girard, 2012, 7). Before joining Clark’s government, Boessenkool had lobbied on behalf of Enbridge as an employee of the PR firm Hill and Knowlton. He also had served as a policy advisor to Stephen Harper from 2002-2004, and more recently had “worked in the Harper campaign war room during three consecutive elections”. Boessenkool possessed close ties to EPII groups, having been a policy analyst for the conservative C.D. Howe Institute and a board member of Civitas, the secretive networking and policy conference of the Canadian right. These sorts of

connections were not unheard of for the BC Liberals. One-time Party Leader Gordon Gibson, for instance, now serves as senior fellow at the oil-backed, climate change-denying Fraser Institute. However, Boessenkool's high profile hiring at the height of public opposition to Northern Gateway helped amplify the perception that the Liberals were allied with the projects' petrobloc backers (Dhillon, 2012, Jan. 12).

The BC NDP, on the other hand, had connections to the same network of environmental NGOs now opposing Northern Gateway. Before his election in 2013, the party's Green Economy critic George Heyman had served as executive Director of Sierra Club BC, and was previously a board member of the left wing Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Sierra Club BC Director Doug MacArthur was a BC NDP MLA from 1978-1983. Sierra's 2014 Director of Communications, Tim Pearson, had previously served as the BC NDP's communications director. These types of connections were reflected in the sources the party cited in its materials, which quoted reports issued by regional ENGO's like the Living Oceans Society, the West Coast Environmental Law Association, the BC Wildlife Federation, and the Pembina Institute. Tellingly, they were the *only* state or industry actor to cite ENGOs in this way.

The different makeup of party leadership helped the BC NDP articulate the Gateway conflict as a populist battle between local communities, environmentalists and First Nations (all of whom were implied to be the NDP's natural constituency) and a BC Liberal party of business-friendly insiders in league with hostile outside forces. Such populist framing depended significantly on its emotional saliency, as it is largely feelings of anger or resentment towards powerful elites which gives populism its ideological force (Zizek, 2009). The BC NDP frequently made the emotionally-charged argument that **BC was under attack from outside forces based in Canada** (See Figure 12). This argument was often directed at the Northern Gateway-supporting Federal Government. The party frequently deployed a BC vs. Federal Government frame, often referencing the recent alterations to federal regulations contained within C-38 and C-45 (See Figure 13). One blog post by MLA Rob Fleming (2012, July, 11) published after C-38's passage described the bill as an undemocratic assault on the province from without. Fleming noted how the new legislation allowed the federal cabinet "to go ahead with the controversial Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline project, which would create great risks and little reward for B.C., even if the decision of the National Energy Board's joint review panel is not to approve it".



**Figure 13: Regionalist, Nationalist, Democratic, and Populist Frames for State and Industry Opponents (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

This framing was replicated by Fleming’s Federal NDP counterparts, for whom Northern Gateway represented a significant political opportunity. For the first time in Canadian history, the NDP were leaders of the official opposition, leaving the once-hegemonic Federal Liberals in a distant third place in parliamentary seats. The NDP thereby saw Gateway as an opportunity to increase their share of the BC vote by tarring the Conservatives as anti-environment ideologues imposing their will on British Columbia to enrich their oil industry buddies. In this way, the party hoped to emerge as the natural party of Western Alienation in BC, protecting the west from an exploitative east. In a 2013 press release accusing Ottawa of “gutting environmental assessment procedures”, BC MP Peter Julian claimed that the “Conservatives have launched an all-out attack on the British Columbians, First Nations and environmental groups who are opposed to this project” (NDP of Canada, 2013, Dec. 19).

The Federal Liberals also saw Gateway as an opportunity to distinguish themselves from the Conservatives and gain votes in BC. One Liberal blog post noted that:

Despite the Conservatives’ own admission in 2007 that the protection of our environment is critically important for the Canadian economy, this week Mr. Harper approved the Northern Gateway pipeline. This project will have serious negative effects on the environment, as well as the

coastal economy of British Columbia, local communities, First Nations, and the Great Bear Rainforest that the government had previously committed to protecting. (LP of Canada, 2014, June 19)

The narrative that BC was under attack by hostile outside forces was frequently articulated alongside a **corruption-betrayal-conspiracy** frame, which was one of the most common frames deployed by the BC NDP (See Figure 13). This framing was used to argue that **the JRP process was broken, corrupt, or antidemocratic**. This was the most common claim of state opponents, and the BC NDP made more use of it than any other state opponent (See Figures 3 and 12). They were also the opponent most likely to utilize a **democratic sovereignty** frame (See Figure 13). In press releases, blog posts, and op-eds, events such as the BC-Federal equivalency agreement and the passage of C-38 were presented as evidence that British Columbians were being denied their democratic rights by an autocratic eastern government. One Vancouver Sun op-ed by BC MLA and Environment Critic Rob Fleming (2012, Oct. 18) noted how:

The [equivalency] agreement... allows the Federal Government to approve the project without the consent of British Columbians. There are no British Columbians on the review panel. And due to changes in the federal omnibus bill last spring, Prime Minister Harper's cabinet now has final authority to overrule any decision from the National Energy Board's environmental review.

It was ironic that the Harper Conservatives were now described as a hostile foreign government imposing the will of the East upon BC. Much of the Conservatives' political leadership – including Harper and others from the old Reform and Alliance parties – had emerged from Alberta's politics of 'western alienation' which sought to liberate western provinces from the exploitative rule of the eastern hegemon. Now, less than a decade after the party's founding, the Conservatives were cast in the same hegemonic role vis-à-vis BC – the westernmost province in Canadian federation.

Yet the blame for this out-of-province assault was also laid at the feet of the BC Liberals. In BC NDP press releases and blog posts, the Liberals were accused of tying "the province's hands behind its back by giving away project approval to the Federal Government" (NDP of BC, 2014, June 12,) and of being "prepared to sell out our pristine land and coastline for the right price." (Fleming, 2013, January 10). This argument was an explicitly left populist one, in which the party promised to defend a *regional-popular* subject from out-of-province elites and their local collaborators. The BC NDP were the

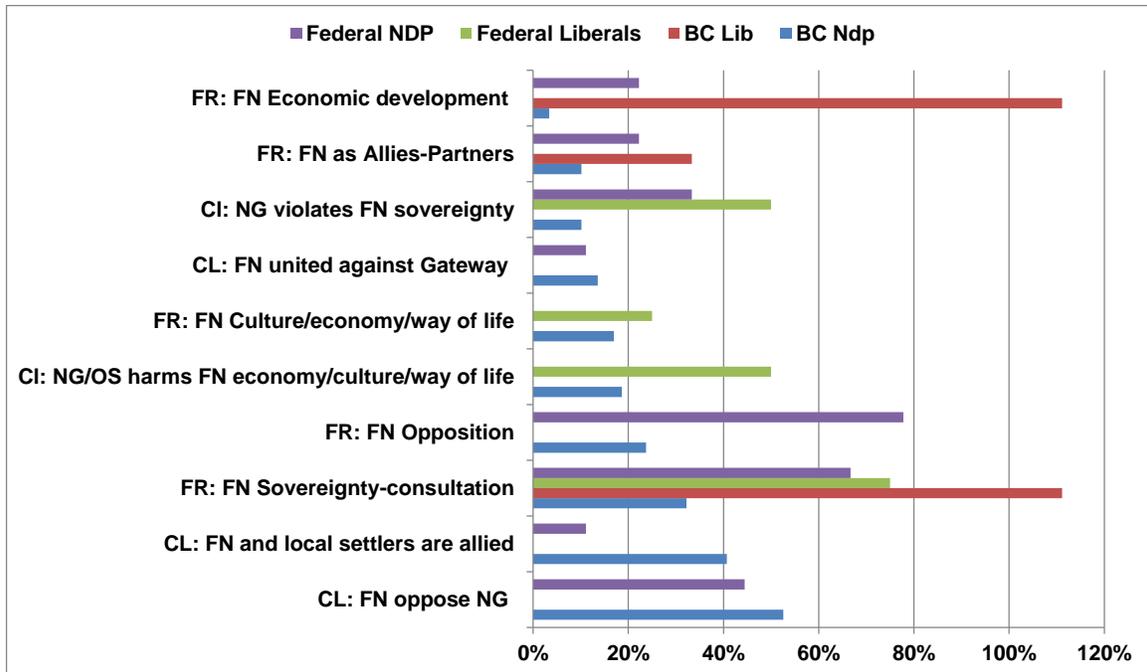
opponent most likely to deploy populist frames (See Figure 13). “Instead of listening to British Columbians”, declared one 2010 release, “the B.C. Liberals are pandering to one of their major campaign donors”, going on to explain how Enbridge had “donated more than \$50,000 to the B.C. Liberal party from 2005 to 2009” (NDP of BC, 2010, July 28). These regional-populist denunciations of the Clark government continued even after the BC NDP was defeated in the 2013 election. A June 2014 press release, provocatively titled “B.C. Liberals should listen to British Columbians on Enbridge, not eastern politicians”, quoted recently appointed BC NDP leader John Horgan:

“Northern British Columbians and First Nations don’t care which former Ontario premier or Goldman Sachs executive is in favor of this project...Eastern politicians and investment bankers aren’t being asked to put their environment, community and economy at risk with next to no benefit.” (NDP of BC, 2014, June 12).

### 5.4.3. First Nations and the Regional-Popular Resistance

By appealing to regional subjects as *British Columbians*, state opponents hoped to counter Northern Gateway’s proponents’ sublimation of the project’s unequal regional distribution of risks and benefits into a *reified national interest*. Yet the central role of First Nations opposition meant that this regionalist approach needed to take into account both settler Canadian and indigenous resistance. As such, the BC NDP regularly positioned First Nations *alongside* settler Canadians. They were the opponent most likely to claim that **BC First Nations and settlers were allied in their fight against Northern Gateway**, implicitly linking the two as members of a collective political subject (See Figure 15). This was rarely done in any detail, and often First Nations were referred to only in passing. Occasionally, the presumed solidarity between First Nations and settlers was outlined in greater detail, as in a press release following Kitimat’s April 2014 rejection of Northern Gateway in a municipal referendum:

With their no vote Kitimat citizens join with Terrace, Smithers, Prince Rupert, the Skeena-Queen Charlotte Regional District, and the Kitimat-Stikine Regional District which have all already opposed the Enbridge pipeline and associated oil tanker traffic. *They also join with many First Nations*, including the Haisla, the Haida, the Gitga’at, the Wet’suwet’en and the Yinka Dene Alliance who oppose Enbridge’s plan to pipe diluted bitumen across northern B.C. and ship it through North Coast waters. (Emphasis added) (NDP of BC, 2014, April 5).



**Figure 14: Common First Nations Frames and Claims for State and Industry Opponents (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

This account was significant if only because the BC and Federal NDP were the *only* state or industry actors to consistently refer to First Nations' resistance to the project (See Figures 11 and 14). All state actors made frequent reference to the **First Nations consultation/sovereignty** frame, with the BC Liberals the state actor most likely to discuss indigenous consultation. Yet the BC Liberals almost *never* deployed the **First Nations opposition** frame, only obliquely acknowledging indigenous resistance by reiterating the legal need for successful consultation. This was likely owed to the centrality of upcoming Liquefied Natural Gas projects for the BC Liberals' economic growth strategy. Like with Northern Gateway, any major LNG project would require at least some degree of First Nations collaboration. By focusing on botched JRP *consultations* as opposed to steadfast indigenous *opposition*, the Liberals could create the impression that they, unlike the Conservatives, would be able to *get the consultations right for the right project*. The BC NDP, on the other hand, could make liberal use of the opposition frame. One forceful 2011 blog post quoted Alberni-Pacific Rim MLA Scott Fraser:

"First Nations from across the province are protesting the Enbridge tar sands pipeline ... Yet the B.C. Liberals continue to indicate they are ready to ram through this project against the will of First Nations. (NDP of BC 2011b).

#### 5.4.4. West Coast Alienation: The Falling out of two Neoliberal Premiers

While the two BC parties described the province as being under attack by outside aggressors, the BC NDP rarely attacked Alberta, whose company would build the pipeline and whose provincial government supported it. While happy to attack the BC Liberals and the Federal Conservatives, they rarely deployed the **BC vs Alberta** frame (See Figure 13). In contrast, the BC Liberals utilized this frame consistently. This mostly occurred during the lead up to the 2013 election, corresponding with the Clark government's increasing vulnerability on the Northern Gateway issue. By shifting blame onto Alberta, the Liberals could deflect criticism of their close ties to the Federal Conservatives, the Albertan oil industry and right wing EPII groups. They could also avoid discussion of their signing of the equivalency agreement that had relinquished provincial jurisdiction to the pro-Gateway Federal Government. The centerpiece of this strategy was Premier Clark's September 26, 2012 public letter to Alberta Premier Allison Redford (Clark, 2012 Sept. 26). In the letter, Clark argued that "there are *significant environmental risks* associated with the Northern Gateway Project (NGP) proposal, and, while there are *significant economic benefits to Canada and Alberta*, there are *few benefits to British Columbia*" (emphasis added). The Premier elaborated on this theme the following week in a public address at the University of Calgary. As an attempt at inter-provincial dialogue, it was ham-fisted and counterproductive. But as a plea to British Columbian voters, which was almost certainly its main purpose, it was a cunning piece of political communication:

"We're being asked to take 100 per cent of the marine risk, and it's substantial, to move a unique and very difficult product. We're being asked to take the bulk of the risk on our land base, and yet right now according to the economic analysis that's been provided to the joint review panel by Enbridge itself, British Columbia would get about eight per cent of the benefits. If you were in business, would you take that deal? If you were sitting down to negotiate, would you take a deal where you take all the risk and get eight per cent of the benefit?" (Clark, Oct. 2, 2012).

#### 5.4.5. It's the Global System, Stupid

While Northern Gateway's opponents were keen to focus on the economic *risks* of an oil spill, they were less likely to articulate a positive vision for a sustainable

economy. State opponents only rarely claimed that **Canada and/or BC needed or could have a Green economy** (See Figures 3 and 12). These generally took the form of boilerplate statements tacked onto the end of various blog posts and press releases. A typical variant is found in a January 2011 press release, whose last line read that the “B.C. New Democrats have proposed an environmental plan that would reinvest carbon tax revenue in transit and climate change initiatives, create green jobs, and offer legislated protection for species at risk” (NDP of BC, 2011, Jan.13). This seemed to betray a tepid commitment to finding sustainable alternatives to the economic status quo, as without specificity, generic appeals to a green economy are unlikely to resonate.

The Federal NDP was the only state or industry actor to discuss the Green Economy with any detail or depth. This was in a 2013 speech made by party leader Tom Mulcair (2013, Dec. 4) to the Economic Club of Canada, entitled “A new vision for a new century. Our plan for a prosperous and sustainable energy future”. The speech provided a direct critique of neoliberal economic models:

For far too long, Canadians have been told they have to choose. Choose between our economy and our environment. But this is a false choice. It’s an approach that’s stuck in the past. It may be reassuring to believe that market forces will somehow guide this process entirely on their own, but that’s just not how it works. Businesses face uncertainty, and business leaders face short-term realities that don’t always reflect even their own company’s long-term interests. Without a clear vision and clear commitments for the future — without clear rules — our energy sector is left grasping in the dark.

Later in the speech, which was replete with proposals for ‘greening’ the economy, Mulcair gestured to oil-rich Norway, whose social democratic governance was starkly contrasted with Canada’s neoliberal extractivist approach. In doing so, he followed the Federal Conservatives in constructing a national vision for Canada as a global energy ‘leader’ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

In the 1970s, Norway used its vast offshore resources to become leaders in the construction of gravity-based drilling platforms. And they now stand poised to invest the wealth created by their traditional energy industry in clean, renewable energy, not only at home, but worldwide. Just as Norway leveraged its natural advantages in the last century, Canada can lead the way into this new century—if we get it right.

#### 5.4.6. The Strengths and Deficiencies of the Regional Response to Gateway

To recap, the communications of the opposition parties bore many similarities to those of the governing BC Liberals. All developed regionalist narratives that undermined the national articulations of project proponents. Yet the BC Liberals mostly framed the debate as a conflict between BC and Alberta, deflecting attention away from their signing of the Equivalency Agreement and their own petrobloc connections. Meanwhile, the BC NDP directed their regional populist denunciations at the BC Liberals and the Federal Conservatives, the latter of whom were also targeted by the Federal opposition. All three opposition parties thereby constructed a narrative in which BC had not only been *attacked from outside*, but *betrayed from within*.

These regionalist articulations, like the nationalist ones of project proponents, invoked *regional subjectivities* from whose vantage point these discourses were intelligible. As Althusser (2006), Laclau (1977), and Hall (1988) have argued, ideology constitutes not just a particular view of the world, but a particular *viewer* of that world. Laclau (1977), for instance, argued that populist discourses allowed political actors to interpellate subjects as members of the *national-popular*, sublimating differences between actors into the leveling domain of a reified 'populace' (143-200). Yet with clear regional disparities in risk and benefit, Gateway's opponents turned to alternative identifications – that of the *regional-popular*.

Yet these regional-popular articulations betrayed a significant weakness: none offered a meaningful challenge to neoliberal extractivism. Of course, as governments-in-waiting, this lack of any systematic challenge to extractivism can be thought of less as a weakness than a hedge, opening space for their own prospective future governments to pursue their own extractivist programs. Yet in the context of any social movement against neoliberal extractivism, it is arguably a strategic error. By focusing almost exclusively on the *local* effects of a bitumen spill, opponents courted a form of NIMBY-ism almost entirely geared towards protecting local spaces. Consequently, there was little room for articulating a positive vision of what could replace the neoliberal extractivist strategy which had put those precious places at risk to begin with! The structural problems inherent in neoliberal globalization – and the capitalist system at large – went largely unchallenged. These include the system's tendency towards constant growth,

intensified energy consumption, rising inequality, geographic expansion, and other phenomena which together conspire to undermine the system's natural and social conditions of production. This was particularly galling in light of the relative paucity of *climate change related* arguments made by project opponents, even though in the long run climate change will likely be as devastating for BC's coastal ecosystems as any potential bitumen spill. Yet the local and regional articulations of opponents, divorced from systemic analysis of *global* ecological destruction, were largely silent on this issue.

## 5.5. Conclusion

Throughout the sample, state opponents and proponents both deployed a common set of framing techniques and argumentative strategies. Both sides leveraged emotionally charged populist and corruption-betrayal frames that attacked perceived deficiencies in the regulatory system and offered potential means to address them. Yet only the Federal Government made significant use of nationalist frames to establish a narrative that positioned Canadian identity and prosperity as dependent on transnational economic integration and the defeat of 'foreign funded' pipeline opponents. In doing so, they drew on technocratic nationalist discourses which 'symbolically nationalized' project benefits, deflecting attention away from various disparities in the distribution of risk and benefit while attacking Gateway's regional opponents. This discourse often relied upon the projection of oil demand into the future, discursively erasing the risk posed by financial market volatility and a potential oil price crash to an industry that was only profitable under conditions of historically high oil prices.

While CAPP and Enbridge never engaged in ecoskeptic and national-populist denunciations of project opponents, they were vital actors in the symbolic nationalization of Gateway and the tar sands more generally: framing economic benefits of Gateway as *national* in nature, projecting steadily rising demand into the future, and so on. Given the extremely close ties between the Federal Conservatives and CAPP – the most successful lobbyist of the Harper Government in terms of access – it is fair to describe the varying yet complementary discourses deployed by both organizations as part of the petrobloc's *emergent network strategy*. In this strategy, some actors can deploy their cultural capital of technocratic expertise, while others can rely on that expertise to help justify their populist narratives.

Yet Conservative National-Populist denunciations were directed only against environmentalists and their international allies. First Nations were symbolically erased from the opposition, described as valuable partners in and potential beneficiaries of resource development. This attempt to symbolically split the emergent bloc of anti-Gateway actors emerged from the reality of increased First Nations' legal standing regarding rights and title and the growing power of the decolonization movement. Yet even Northern Gateway's state opponents rarely discussed First Nations concerns with any degree of depth or detail (though they seemed willing to leverage indigenous opposition to buttress their own political priorities).

Another difference between proponents and opponents was that only the latter articulated their populist claims with the democracy-popular sovereignty frame. In contrast, Federal Government proponents married their populist rhetoric to an overt state-corporatist discourse in which the 'Conservative National-popular' was not expected to democratically manage its own affairs. Rather they were framed as dependent on the neoliberal corporatist state to *represent* and *defend their interests* through the promotion of Gateway and the undermining of project opposition. However, the stunning failure of Gateway's proponents to move public opinion *within* British Columbia demonstrates the limits of the 'foreign funded radicals' narrative when moved from a regional Alberta context to a national context. The argument that foreign-funded elite ideologues has played well *within* Albertan political discourse, where there is a coherent sense of collective identity based on an industry whose economic benefits – to the extent that they are not simply exported abroad – are enjoyed mostly by Albertans. At the national level, however, there is too much heterogeneity for these nationalist articulations to be convincing – especially to BC actors who absorb the majority of project risk while receiving relatively few regional economic benefits. If polls – and the BC Liberal's shift to a 'Gateway-skeptical' position – were any indication, BC publics were much more receptive to regional-populist claims. The clear regional discrepancies in risk and benefit, and the JRP's obvious lack of regional democratic accountability, made it easy for opponents to portray the controversy as a battle to protect local ecosystems and economies from out-of-province economic and political elites promoting the project against the democratic wishes of British Columbians.

Finally, proponent discourses generally reinforced the broader frameworks of neoliberal extractivism. They used conservative populist and nationalist discourses to

present export market diversification as a national means to escape a global crisis itself brought on by the neoliberal system some of these elites had helped develop in the first place. Only the BC NDP, Federal NDP, and Federal Liberals discussed the possibility of a 'green economy' as a viable *alternative* to neoliberal extractivism, and only then in a generally cursory or boilerplate fashion. This could be seen in the preoccupation of opponents with *local* spills and leaks, and the short thrift given to climate related arguments for Gateway's rejection. There was therefore no attempt to articulate the push for Gateway as an externality of the current system's drive towards inequality, constant growth and ecological catastrophe. There was also little discussion of neoliberal extractivism as a globalizing elite project in which local governments and national capitalist fractions were increasingly dependent on inflows of foreign investment and the servicing of foreign markets for their economic and fiscal sustainability, thereby divorcing their class interests from those of working class Canadians. As such, discussion of the green economy was relatively toothless, with no meaningful alternative to neoliberal extractivism on offer. Of course, there are legitimate structural limitations to oppositional parties making such systemic critiques – most notably the possibility that they may one day form a government and face pressure to pursue *their own* extractivist agenda! Yet absent any structural critique of neoliberal extractivism, it was left to Gateway's civil society opponents to challenge the root causes of the conflict and offer long-term alternatives. Absent this, it was possible that anti-Gateway and anti-tar sands activists might win the conjunctural battle, yet lose the systemic war.

## **Chapter 6. Enemies in The Gateway: Extractivism's Civil Society Supporters**

Scholarship in Canada (Gutstein, 2009; 2014; Hoggan with Littlemore, 2009) and the United States (Micklethwait and Woolridge, 2004; Stefancic and Delgado, 1996; Stone, 1994) has credited the interconnection, coordination, and interfield nature of New Right discourse coalitions with their success in promoting neoliberal policies in the public sphere since the 1980s. In Canada, the Fraser Institute has emerged as an important network hub, with its directorate boards and conferences bringing together politically aligned actors from different fields in a common political project (Gutstein, 2014, 118).

EPII groups like Fraser have been key figures in the emergent petrobloc of state, industry, media and civil society actors that have promoted neoliberal extractivism in Canada. Located in civil society, they aid these efforts precisely because of their presumed social distance from the state and industry fields. With the distinct cultural capital that comes from being a technocratic policy institute or a populist-inflected advocacy group, these organizations can recirculate and amplify claims made by their allies in other fields. They can also develop and circulate policy proposals, rhetorical frameworks and arguments which back up the petrobloc's political priorities from a position of nominal independence. In the case of neoliberal extractivism, this has involved the promotion of ecoskeptic and climate change denial claims since the 1990s, with the Fraser Institute in particular emerging as the nation's premier denier organization (Gutstein, 2009, 227-259; Hoggart, with Littlemore, 2009). Often this has involved the conservative populist denunciation of tar sands critics as elite ideologues operating against the interests of 'average' workers and taxpayers. At other times, promoting extractivism has involved the 'symbolic nationalization' of the industry, with technocratic claims used to describe the benefits of tar sands development as accruing to the entire nation. The effect is to obscure the inequalities of an industry which increasingly benefits various regional, national and international elites at the relative expense of regional and national working classes and taxpayers.

This has been particularly important with Northern Gateway, given the extreme discrepancies in the distribution of economic gains – which would mostly accrue to Alberta, national and international investors, and so on – and economic and ecological

risks - which would be absorbed by coastal communities, First Nations along the project route, manufacturing workers affected by Dutch Disease, and so on. What's more, intense opposition required that the Federal Government pursue intensive corporatist governance strategies which had to be politically justified – whether these be reforms to the federal regulatory regime or new policies to ensure First Nations collaboration.

The capacity of EPII groups to engage in these activities stems from their ability to translate the economic capital of their wealthy backers into the cultural and symbolic capital of perceived expertise and the social capital of interpersonal and professional networks which can then be reinvested in other social fields (Neubauer, 2011). Key to this is the ability to house and support epistemic communities of New Right intellectuals, allowing them to coalesce into networked discourse coalitions committed to shared political projects (Stone, 1994). As Bourdieu (1991) notes, to be considered an authoritative representative of a given field – academic, political, civil society, and so on – one must possess the capital appropriate to that field. In the case of a think tank scholar, legitimacy derives from the cultural capital of perceived expertise, which may sometimes be conferred on an actor merely by virtue of their affiliation with the think tank itself (Gutstein, 2009). For this reason, think tanks sometimes go to great lengths to hide their ideological bias and elite connections, presenting themselves as objective, nonpartisan experts (Gutstein, 2009; Stone, 1996, 118). Such expertise is highly valuable to time- and resource-stretched journalists increasingly dependent on the low-cost information subsidies such groups provide in the form of interviews, op-eds, policy briefs, press releases, studies, and so on (Raso and Neubauer, 2016).

Yet while New Right EPII groups have often demonstrated a high degree of coordination (Gutstein, 2009; 2014; Oreskes and Conway, 2010; Stefancic and Delgado, 1996; Stone, 1994; Micklewait and Woolridge, 2004), discourse coalitions are not monolithic. New Right organizations may have varying degrees of association within and across multiple networks and coalitions, and even those groups within a given coalition may hold significant differences in policy preference, strategy, board makeup, funding streams, material interests, and so on. One should therefore reject the simplistic assumption that just because several groups favor the same policy option, that they are all somehow 'in cahoots'.

## **6.1. Civil Society Proponents of Northern Gateway**

And so it is important to ascertain the extent to which the groups in the proponent sample are part of the broader discourse coalitions and networks associated with neoliberal extractivism and climate denial in Canada. In the initial news sample used to generate the civil society sample, the four most commonly cited pro-Gateway organizations were selected for analysis. These included one advocacy group – Ethical Oil – and three policy institutes or ‘think tanks’ – the Canadian Energy Research Institute (CERI), the MacDonald Laurier Institute (MLI), and Vancouver’s Fraser Institute.

### **6.1.1. The Fraser Institute**

The Fraser Institute is a multi-issue policy institute based in Vancouver, BC. It was founded in 1973 by policy entrepreneur Michael Walker with the purpose of promoting neoliberal policy and philosophy in Canada (Gutstein, 2009). From its inception, Fraser has been the most fiercely neoliberal of the nation’s industry-backed policy institutes, with a strong ideological predisposition towards far right libertarian intellectuals like Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises of the ‘Austrian school’ of economics (Gutstein, 2014). The organization was originally set up with the support of Anthony Fisher (Gutstein, 2009), the British industrialist and Hayek protégé who founded Britain’s first neoliberal think tanks in the late 1950s (Desai, 1996). Today Fraser is a member of the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, the international network set up by Fisher in 1981 to aid the development of New Right policy institutes all over the world.

Since its founding, Fraser has been identified as one of the key institutional actors responsible for promoting and rationalizing Canada’s neoliberal shift (Gutstein, 2009). It pioneered many of the ‘New Right’ coalition tactics now widely used to promote neoliberal policy and philosophy to state, media, and academic elites as well as the general public. For instance, Fraser is a tireless producer and distributor of information subsidies – op-eds, research reports, media interviews – to the press. Their research areas encompass a broad variety of subjects, including monetary and fiscal policy, labor law reform, free trade, and environmental policy. All of these are approached from a deeply neoliberal economic perspective which consistently champions state deregulation and the ‘freeing up’ of ‘market forces’ as a means to achieve both prosperity and liberty.

Fraser has been a leading actor in dragging New Right, libertarian, and neoliberal ideas out of the fringe and into Canada's political center with influence which extends beyond its research and media activities. Fraser's funding streams, conferences, list of fellows, and directorate boards represent a cross section of the interfield networks constituting the bleeding edge of Canada's neoliberal extractivist discourse coalitions (Gutstein, 2009). The Institute has long been funded by the major Canadian conservative foundations, including the Donner Canadian Foundation. Fraser also receives significant corporate support, notably from the finance sector and the oil patch. The Institute has also received significant funding from oil industry actors such as the Koch brothers, the right wing American oil billionaires who have long funded New Right causes in the United States, including the Tea Party and climate-change denying think tanks like the libertarian Cato institute (Gutstein, 2014, 65).

Fraser's staff and boards of directorate reveal a far reaching cross section of Canada's New Right, often bringing together well-connected, influential actors from across multiple fields. Its sprawling board of directors is populated with numerous high ranking corporate executives, including many prominent energy industry and financial executives (Gutstein, 2009). Its list of fellows and directors represent some of the most influential right wing intellectuals from the world of think tanks, academia, advocacy groups, public relations, media, and government from both Canada and the US. Many Fraser fellows and directors go on to work in other think tanks, foundations, media outlets, and political parties (Gutstein, 2009). The inverse is also true, with various academics, politicians, and media figures becoming Fraser fellows or directors later in their careers. Many conservative media figures are also connected to the Institute, and many Fraser interns, staff and scholars have gone on to find work in media outlets. In fact, several members of the Asper family, the one-time owners of the CanwestGlobal media chain, were prominent Fraser board members and supporters before that company's bankruptcy in 2009 (Gutstein, 2009).

The op-eds, research reports, journalist briefings, and interviews provided by Fraser and its sister organizations to Canadian journalists have been a major force in the promotion of climate denial in Canada and the undermining of political momentum for a post-carbon transition. As explained in previous chapters, the broad strokes of Minister Oliver's 'foreign funded radicals' argument were developed at the regional level and promoted in Albertan dailies such as the Calgary Herald (Gunster and Saurette, 2014).

Yet in a broad sense, the conservative populist frames that constitute this narrative were informed by the earlier climate denial and ecoskeptical campaigns pioneered by groups like Fraser. For decades, Fraser has promoted and replicated the work of US sceptic groups such as CATO, AEI, and Heritage. Generally speaking, this work has combined misleading claims concerning the economic benefits of the oil industry, deliberate misreadings of contemporary scientific findings, and populist denunciations of environmentalists, climate scientists, and supportive politicians as corrupt, elite ideologues willing to mislead the public in service of their material wellbeing and radical ideological agenda (Gutstein, 2009; Hoggan with Littlemore, 2009).

Yet despite turning up as sources in the preliminary news sample, Fraser only produced 7 texts directly related to Northern Gateway over the course of the study (See Chapter 4). Most of these were features in its newsletter, Fraser Forum, a policy publication circulated widely amongst coalition members, journalists, civil servants, and political leaders (Gutstein, 2009). Its 137-person social network sample was made up of fellows, directors, and staff.

### **6.1.2. Canadian Energy Research Institute**

Founded in 1975, CERI is a classic corporatist think tank. Unlike Fraser, it is not a multi-issue research institute but a specialist organization devoted entirely to researching Canada's energy industry. Also unlike Fraser, it does not describe itself as beholden to any particular ideology, portraying itself as a purveyor of objective expertise. The group describes itself as "a non-profit organization dedicated to producing transparent and unbiased research... in energy and environmental issues to benefit business, government, academia and the public" (About CERI, n.d.). It receives funding from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and other industry associations, as well as over 100 national energy corporations. It also receives support from the University of Calgary and numerous government agencies, including Natural Resources Canada, Environment Canada, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the Alberta Department of Energy, and the British Columbia Ministry of Energy & Mines. Its board members are mostly oil executives, though CERI reserves dedicated seats for representatives from the Canadian and Albertan governments.

CERI was a prominent supporter of Northern Gateway, and were cited in the Canadian press as expert sources on both the project and the broader need for energy export market diversification. Yet CERI was also the only proponent offering even a measured critique of Northern Gateway, releasing a well-publicized report in July 2012 that explained how most project benefits would accrue to Alberta (Goodine, 2012, Aug. 12). This was possibly due to funding arrangements between CERI and numerous governments, which rely on CERI's legitimate research to direct policy priorities.

The CERI discourse analysis sample included 24 texts [See Chapter 4], most of which targeted elite decision makers. These included PowerPoint presentations made to various Canadian elites and opinion leaders and multiple research reports. CERI's 25-person social network sample was made up of its executive, directors, and key staff.

### **6.1.3. MacDonald Laurier Institute**

Compared to Fraser and CERI, the MacDonald Laurier Institute is a very young organization. MLI was formed in 2010 by Brian Crowley, the New Right policy entrepreneur who founded and was executive director of the Atlantic Institute of Market Studies, the Donner Canadian-funded neoliberal think tank based in Halifax (Gustein, 2010).

MLI's claims to objective non-partisanship are, like many think tanks, ambiguous. As this chapter will demonstrate, the organization is tightly linked to New Right networks, and in 2010 had its research lauded by Prime Minister Harper himself (Gustein, 2014, 56). MLI's advisory board hosts numerous New Right policy entrepreneurs with tight ties to EPII networks, such as Calgary school intellectual and Fraser fellow Rainier Knopff. And Crowley's media appearances and op-eds often make use of a highly ideological tone. For instance, a 2014 Vancouver Sun op-ed critiquing Gateway's opponents and the concept of social license utilised numerous neoliberal and conservative populist tropes in a decidedly heavy-handed manner (Crowley, 2014, May 2).

Yet in other ways, MLI cultivates an aura of objective expertise which sets itself apart from groups such as Fraser. Unlike Fraser, the group has worked to attract various technocratic scholars and bureaucrats who – despite their neoliberal leanings – often possess significant credentials and solid public reputations. One MLI fellow Philip Cross

joined the group following 35 years of employment at Statistics Canada, where he spent many years as the organization's chief economic analyst. Meanwhile, MLI advisory board member Paul Romer was a highly respected Stanford economist before joining the Stern School of Business at New York University (Leonhardt, 2011, May 27). Romer has been described as a 'top economist' in the New York Times, and his work on neoliberal reform in the global south has gained significant traction in some US government circles, leading to his current position as Chief Economist and Senior Vice President of the World Bank, (Paul Romer, n.d.).

More importantly, MLI does not generally describe itself or its research in political or ideological terms. Unlike Fraser, they tend not to use many of the standard neoliberal euphemisms that tend to mark such groups as 'true believers', such as references to freedom, liberty, and individual responsibility. Instead, its website describes the group as "Canada's only truly national public policy think tank based in Ottawa", claiming its work is designed to help "make poor quality public policy in Ottawa unacceptable to Canadians and their political and opinion leaders by proposing thoughtful alternatives through non-partisan and independent research and commentary". The group's name was chosen to communicate these bi-partisan bonafides, combining the surnames of two respected Liberal and Conservative Prime Ministers, Wilfred Laurier and John Macdonald. Their core work involves "[i]nitiating and conducting research identifying current and emerging economic and public policy issues facing Canadians, including, but not limited to, research into defense and security, foreign policy, immigration, economic and fiscal policy, Canada-US relations, regulation, regional development, social policy and aboriginal affairs".

MLI tends to present and frame its work in an objective-sounding, technocratic manner. While pieces solely authored by Crowley often wear their ideological leanings on their sleeves, most of their press releases and research reports eschew ideological language, keeping to objective, technocratic rhetoric and framing (MLI, 2012, March 14; 2012, May 30; 2012, May 31). Even those pieces which the fiercely-neoliberal Crowley *co-authors* with other MLI scholars and associates rarely demonstrate the kind of ideological language deployed in Crowley's more bombastic solo material (Coates and Crowley, 2013, May). As a result, MLI is often framed in the press as an objective, non-partisan organization, and its work as the product of objective expertise. While on occasion columnists have described MLI as "right leaning" (Lamphier, 2012, May 31), much – if

not most – media coverage of MLI research makes no mention of any ideological leaning or partisan affiliation (Barbara, 2016, Jan. 8; Isfeld, 2013, Jan 6; O’Neil, 2016, Jan. 20).

MLI emerged as one of the country’s leading civil society groups promoting Northern Gateway and neoliberal extractivism more generally. Over the course of the study, the group was a major provider of information subsidies to Canadian media, publishing numerous well publicized research reports, press releases, and newspaper op-eds supporting Gateway’s approval. Much of MLI’s work on Gateway was featured in the national media, including one report attempting to disprove the existence of the ‘Dutch disease’ phenomenon (Isfeld, G. 2013, Jan. 6); another advocating against a tanker ban on BC’s North Coast (MLI, 2012, March 14); and numerous reports outlining policy proposals hoped to bring First Nations leadership on board with resource development projects (MLI 2013, May 30).

The social network sample for MLI included 38 directors, advisory board members, academic advisory board members, research fellows, and staff. Its discourse analysis sample included 20 texts [see Chapter 4]. Unlike Fraser and CERI, some of these were targeted towards the general public either directly through newspaper op-eds and a handful of blog posts – or indirectly through press releases. Even MLI’s several research reports– the specialty of any think tank – did a kind of ‘double duty, targeting the various opinion-leaders, media workers, and policy makers that they were distributed to while reaching the public via coverage in the mainstream press.

#### **6.1.4. Ethical Oil**

Ethical Oil was founded in 2011 as a non-profit organization dedicated to popularizing the thesis of Ezra Levant’s book ‘Ethical Oil’, which advocates for increasing international and domestic trade in Canadian bitumen, described as a more ‘ethical’ product than other sources of oil:

We at EthicalOil.org encourage people, businesses, and governments to choose Ethical Oil from Canada, its oil sands, and from other liberal democracies. Unlike Conflict Oil from some of the most politically oppressive and environmentally reckless regimes in the world, Ethical Oil is the “fair trade” choice in oil (About Ethical Oil, n.d.).

EthicalOil.org describes itself as primarily a blog devoted to advocacy and grassroots political mobilization:

The blog, in addition to rebutting inaccurate and unfair criticisms of the oil sands, also sought to engage its readers: inviting them to write letters to their local newspapers, call talk radio stations and suggest ideas for Access to Information requests to expose the network of anti-oil sands lobbyists who meet regularly with senior Environment Canada officials.

Despite its self-description as a blog, Ethical Oil is actually a registered charity. While the blog was founded by Alkyahn Velshi (a young policy entrepreneur and Harper Cabinet insider), the charity was legally registered by oil patch lawyer Thomas Ross and Ethical Oil author Ezra Levant (O'Neil, 2012, Aug. 11). Levant is a well-known Canadian conservative intellectual who currently runs the far-right alternative media website, *The Rebel*. He is a longstanding member of Canada's New Right discourse coalition who began his career as a Fraser Institute intern in the early 1990s (Gustein, 2009). He has been a senior staffer and party activist in both the Reform party and the Canadian Alliance, and is a prominent media commentator who at one point sat on the National Post's editorial board.

This does not imply that Levant or his organization marches in lockstep with these other actors. In recent years, Levant has become a somewhat controversial figure in New Right circles, sometimes attracting negative press attention and damaging law suits through his bombastic behavior as a media figure (Ezra Levant ordered, 2014, Nov. 27). Stories have long circulated that he shares a mutual animosity with Stephen Harper dating back to his days in the Reform Party (Gatehouse, 2013, Jan 12), and in recent years he has bitterly critiqued New Right icons like Preston Manning (Hopper, 2015, Jan. 2). This is all to say that Levant, like his organization, is somewhat of a wild card. As such Ethical Oil's precise relation to groups like Fraser and other prominent neoliberal network hubs is somewhat ambiguous.

Furthermore, there was significant ambiguity in Ethical Oil's self-description as a grassroots organization. Much of Ethical Oil's success as a book was based on the publicity it received as the newest project of Ezra Levant – a well-known conservative gadfly and as close to a national celebrity as one is likely to find in a Canadian policy entrepreneur. The novelty of Ethical Oil the 'organization' was therefore its goal of popularizing the thesis of a prominent book by a high-profile Conservative celebrity.

And yet Ethical Oil quite clearly described itself as a “grassroots advocacy group” (About Ethical Oil, n.d.). Its website prominently announced that “hundreds of Canadians from all walks of life have donated” to the organization, noting that “the median size of our donations to date is \$38.” It described itself as an “online community that empowers people to become grassroots community activists on the frontlines of the campaign for Ethical Oil.” The group articulated a vision of grassroots social change analogous to online-facing ‘movement-oriented’ groups like Dogwood: “by using our blog, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube we can spread the word about Ethical Oil even without the money and professional staff that the anti-oil sands activists have at their disposal.” In short, although it’s ‘populism’ was mediated through Levant’s celebrity, the group went to pains to self-present as an organization run by, and standing up for, ‘everyday Canadians’ juxtaposed with the various elites supposedly dominating the anti-oil sands ‘lobby’.

Ethical Oil has been a vocal supporter of all the major pipeline proposals meant to link the oil sands to tidewater. With Northern Gateway, their efforts mostly involved the populist denunciation of pipeline opponents, most notably in their reproduction of Minister Joe Oliver’s ‘foreign funded radicals’ argument, itself based on the research of Vancouver blogger Vivian Krause. In blog posts and media interviews, Ethical Oil lauded Oliver for his attacks on Gateway’s opponents, and vocally supported ongoing changes to the project review process contained in Bills C-38 and C-45. Such activities were described as necessary to defeat organizations like Dogwood who had helped sign up record numbers of participants to the JRP.

The 39 Ethical Oil texts in the discourse analysis sample were almost entirely blog posts (See Chapter 4). While the group has no publically listed board of directors, the social network analysis identified a 6-person sample made up of its co-founders and publically listed employees between 2010 and 2014.

## **6.2. Hegemon’s New Clothes: The Pro-Gateway Coalition and Canada’s New Right**

Because previous work on neoliberal and ecoskeptical discourse coalitions has demonstrated significant institutional overlap and political coordination across multiple fields, it is important to analyze the groups in the civil society sample in terms of the social, political, and economic networks in which they are embedded. The Fraser

Institute, for example, has deep connections with the Alberta oil industry, and has been a leading supporter of the oil sands as a prominent climate denial group. Yet Fraser was not the most active proponent in the sample. More active were CERI, MLI, and Ethical Oil. While the institutional priorities of CERI – an industry and state-funded think tank expressly tasked with aiding the energy industry – were fairly obvious, the same could not be said about the other two organizations. MLI is a young organization whose materials often eschewed the overt preoccupation with ‘property rights’ and ‘economic freedom’ which often signify a group’s neoliberal credentials. As a self-described purveyor of objective research, its cultural capital depended on it *not* being publically associated with the Fraser Institute, the Harper Conservatives, and similar actors. Meanwhile, Ethical Oil’s self-description as a “grassroots advocacy group” relied on a different form of cultural capital for its symbolic authority – that of the ‘representative popular’. In short, the four groups in the sample were – on the surface – quite different from each other.

### **6.2.1. Capital Gains: Pro-Gateway Groups and Corporate Influence**

One commonality shared by most New Right think tanks is their close relation to the capitalist interests which fund them and staff their boards. The Fraser Institute, for example, has longstanding connections to the Canadian financial and energy sectors, both of which have heavily funded the group throughout its history (Gutstein, 2009). Unfortunately, Canadian legislation does not require think tanks to publically reveal their sources of funding, and so few do (2014, 64). Yet secondary measures of corporate influence can be ascertained through analyzing a group’s membership boards. Do corporate executives sit on its board in large numbers? Do they disproportionately derive from a particular industry? And so on.

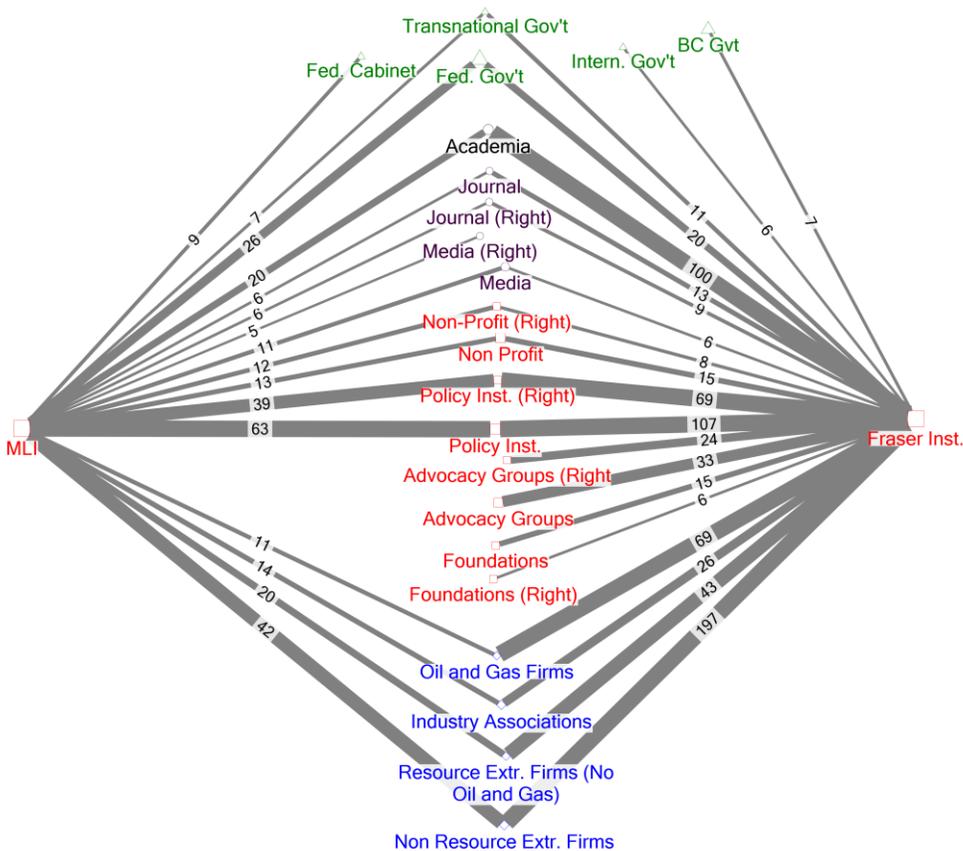
Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of CERI’s corporate ties were with oil and gas companies (See Table 7). The Fraser sample also possessed numerous ties to Canada’s corporate elite, with a significant bias towards the oil and gas sector (See Figure 15)<sup>6</sup>. The Fraser Institute subgraph identified 69 ties with oil and gas companies – or 0.5 ties per Fraser sample member – and 197 ties with non-resource extraction firms.

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<sup>6</sup> For the purpose of the social network analysis, a tie was defined as a current or prior position on a corporation’s executive or directorate board, or a commensurate senior position in the firm.

Organizations and Fields	Fraser Institute		MLI		Ethical Oil		CERI	
	Total	Per SNA Sample Member	Total	Per SNA Sample Member	Total	Per SNA Sample Member	Total	Per SNA Sample Member
Industry Ass.	27	0.2	14	0.37	1	0.17	5	0.31
Policy Inst.	107	0.78	63	1.66	5	0.83	2	0.13
Policy Inst. (Cons.)	69	0.5	39	1.03	5	0.83	2	0.13
Fed Govt	8	0.06	10	0.26	3	0.5	4	0.25
Transn. Gov't	11	0.07	7	0.18	0	0	0	0
Oil and Gas Firms	69	0.5	11	0.29	2	0.33	47	2.94
Resource/Extr. Firms (non-oil and gas)	43	0.31	20	0.53	0	0	5	0.31
Non Resource Extr.	197	1.44	42	1.11	1	0.17	6	0.38

**Table 7: Ties Between Civil Society Proponents and Fields**



**Figure 15: Ties Between Fraser, MLI and Other Fields**

Unlike Fraser and MLI, Ethical Oil has no public board of directors. However, its co-founder Thomas Ross is a partner in the Calgary law firm McClelland Ross LLP, which actively courts tar sands clients. The organization also admits to accepting

donations from Canadian 'producers of Ethical Oil', and it has refused on several occasions to deny accepting money from Enbridge and other major oil sands players.

MLI's sample possessed relatively few ties with oil and gas firms (See Table 7; Figure 15) However, it did include many ties to various capital fractions increasingly associated with neoliberal extractivism, including non-oil and gas resource extraction firms (who would also benefit from the changes to the review process contained in C-38 and C-45); providers of secondary and tertiary services to the oil sands sector; and numerous non-resource industry firms engaged in construction, engineering, car and large vehicle manufacture, and finance. This last is interesting given the ongoing financialisation of the tar sands, in which Canadian banks are increasingly invested in oil sands operations and dependent on the sector as a growing source of foreign direct investment (Fast, 2015). Interestingly, when Crowley first established the group, he received donations from 4 out of the 5 major Canadian banks (Gutstein, 2014, 64).

### **6.2.2. Wrath of NeoCon: Northern Gateway Supporters and New Right Discourse Coalitions**

Beyond corporate funding, EPII groups benefit from a variety of institutional affiliations which aid the formation of interfield political projects. Many New Right groups are supported by the major conservative charitable foundations which have funded them since the 1970s (Gutstein, 2009; 2014, 51-53, 56, 62, 70). The most prominent of these in Canada has been the Donner Canadian Foundation, a corporate-backed charitable foundation which has long funded the Fraser Institute and similar groups. In the 1990s, Donner gave significant financial support (and often seed funding) to neoliberal groups such as the CD Howe Institute, the Frontier Center for Public Policy, the Montreal Economic Institute, and the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies (AIMS), the latter of which was founded by MLI executive director Brian Crowley.

Yet the power of New Right groups does only stem from their elite funding, but their capacity to translate that economic capital into cultural and social capital which can be invested in other fields (Neubauer, 2011). This requires the ability to house and support epistemic communities of New Right intellectuals, allowing them to coalesce into a networked discourse coalition committed to common political projects (Stone, 1994). This coalition is not necessarily monolithic or totalizing. Micklethwait and Woolridge

(2004) note in their study of the American conservative movement how right wing think tank networks are composed of different ideological or political factions, such as the fiercely libertarian CATO Institute or the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute.

Yet these groups still manage to collaborate, or at least they rarely air their philosophical disagreements in public. Partly this is due to a common ideological baseline shared by most groups in the network – for instance a broad adherence to neoliberal philosophy and policy. Partly this is due to the coordinating role of key network hubs, including policy discussion groups and similar organizations which bring together politically aligned actors from multiple fields. As Domhoff (1978) once demonstrated in the US, these groups tend to “bring together...members of the power elite from all over the [US] to discuss” policy problems and generate potential solutions (68). This allows these elites to develop what Fred Fischer (1994) has termed a ‘rolling consensus’ on key policy issues, facilitating their collective coalescence into a coherent coalition.

Several organizations play analogous roles for Canada’s contemporary New Right discourse coalitions, such as the Fraser Institute or the Manning Centre for Democracy (created by Reform party founder Preston Manning). One lesser known example is C2C, a recently founded online conservative journal which “aims to contribute to the national arena of ideas by promoting principles of Democratic governance, Individual freedom, Free markets, Environmental stewardship, [and] Peace and security” (About C2C Journal, n.d.). As indicated by the euphemistic description of New Right principles (free markets, environmental stewardship, individual freedom, etc.), the magazine’s directorate board and authors list consist of an impressive array of New Right intellectuals, political leaders, and policy entrepreneurs from multiple fields who write to the journal’s conservative audience on policy issues and movement strategy.

Another prominent discussion group is Civitas, the secretive intellectual society whose annual conferences bring together a constellation of prominent New Right coalition members from across different fields (Gutstein, 2014). Civitas describes itself as “the premiere venue in Canada where people interested in conservative, classical liberal and libertarian ideas can not only exchange ideas, but meet others who share an interest in these rich intellectual traditions” (Welcome, n.d.). As that description indicates, much of Civitas’ work is oriented towards both strengthening the interpersonal networks of Canada’s new right discourse coalition and bridging the intellectual divide between

that coalition's neoliberal and neoconservative wings. This point was made in 2005 by the organization's then-president (and soon to be MLI founder) Brian Crowley (2005, Oct. 27), who noted that Civitas grew "out of Canadians' desire to take up one of the great challenges of Western civilization: how to reconcile our desire for individual freedom with the need for social order."

Neither C2C nor Civitas seek to *directly* impact public discourse in the manner of MLI or Fraser. C2C generally directs its writing towards other conservative intellectuals and policy makers, serving as an online forum where New Right coalition members can discuss ideas, put forward policy proposals, and hash out philosophical differences. Similarly, Civitas functions as a meeting ground for coalition members, its' conferences providing a private setting where Canada's New Right intelligentsia can discuss and debate the philosophical and policy dimensions of pressing political issues. Both groups function similarly to Domhoff's American post-war policy discussion forums, aiding the coalition's interfield coordination by bringing together well-connected actors from multiple fields and providing them with low-stakes, relatively private forums where divergences of opinion can be discussed and policy options vetted.

Finally, there are various prominent transnational organizations which have helped constitute neoliberal discourse coalitions at the international level (Mato, 2005; 2008). Foremost among these is the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, founded in 1981 by neoliberal policy entrepreneur and Friedrich Hayek protégé Anthony Fisher. The organization's mission, according to its website, is to "achieve a society of free and responsible individuals, based upon private property rights, limited government under the rule of law and market order" (Atlas Economic Research Foundation, n.d.). It aims to do this by "discover[ing], develop[ing] and support[ing] intellectual entrepreneurs worldwide who have the potential to create independent public policy institutes and related programs", providing "ongoing support as such institutes and programs mature" (McGann and Sabatini, 2011,178). As of 2006, Atlas was working with over 200 think tanks in 70 countries (Mato, 2008 427), including some of the most prominent neoliberal and climate denial groups in North America. These include the Cato Institute, AEI, and Heritage in the US, and Fraser, MLI, AIMS, MEI, FCPP and Civitas in Canada.

### 6.2.3. Coalition Building from c2 Shining c: Donner Parties, Global Epistemics and the New Right

As both American (Stefancic and Delgado, 1996, 17) and Canadian (Gutstein, 2009) scholarship has demonstrated, New Right groups tend to share many institutional connections, with many of the same fellows, board members, and staff working in different institutes, foundations, and advocacy groups. The social network findings indicate that Fraser, MLI, and Ethical Oil all follow this model (See Table 8, Figures 16 and 17). While CERI's sample possessed very few ties to New Right groups, the other three organizations possessed numerous ties to such organizations. Fraser's and MLI's samples possessed 107 and 63 ties, respectively, with other North American policy institutes, with the vast majority of these being openly neoliberal or neoconservative. No ties were discovered linking the Fraser, MLI, or Ethical Oil samples to any major progressive think tank, such as the CCPA or the Broadbent Institute. Nor were any ties discovered between these groups and any major environmental or labor organization.

Like Fraser, MLI is an Atlas member, and the organization's first book, *The Canadian Century: Moving out of America's Shadow*, won the Atlas-issued Sir Antony Fisher International Memorial Award in 2011. Also like Fraser, the group is a Donner recipient, having received \$48,000 in start-up funds with an additional 390,000 over the first four years of its operation (Gutstein, 2014, 64). Fraser, MLI and Ethical Oil all possessed numerous ties to each other, Donner-funded groups, Atlas members, Civitas, and the C2C journal (See Table 8, Figures 16, 17 and 19). Many of the organizations with which Fraser and MLI shared the most ties were Atlas Network members who were also Donner recipients, such as AIMS (Brian Crowley's old organization), the climate denying FCPP, and each other. While MLI's sample mostly possessed ties to other *Canadian* Atlas groups (like Civitas, AIMS, and Fraser), Fraser also shared numerous ties to US-based Atlas members. These included prominent climate change deniers (Hoggan with Littlemore, 2009; Jacques et al, 2009; Oreskes and Conway, 2010) such as the Heartland Institute, the American Enterprise Institute, the Cato Institute, and the Heritage Foundation. Yet while MLI's cultural capital was partially dependent on its reputation as a purveyor of objective expertise, when weighted for the much larger size of Fraser's social network sample the MLI sample was the most likely to possess ties to Donner recipients, Atlas members, C2C, and Civitas (See Table 8). For instance, MLI's

12 ties with Civitas represented 0.32 ties per MLI sample member, dwarfing Fraser's 0.05 ties to Civitas per Fraser sample member.

**Table 8: Ties Between CS Proponents and New Right Discourse Coalitions (total and weighted)**

	Fraser		MLI		Eth. Oil.		CERI	
	Total	Weighted	Total	Weighted	Total	Weighted	Total	Weighted
<b>Policy Inst.</b>	107	0.79	63	1.66	2	0.33	2	0.13
<b>Atlas Groups</b>	75	0.56	53	1.39	5	0.83	2	0.13
<b>Policy Inst. (Cons./Neolib.)</b>	69	0.51	39	1.03	0	0.00		0.00
<b>Donner Funded</b>	34	0.25	34	0.89	3	0.50	2	0.13
<b>Atlantic Inst. For Market Studies (D, A)</b>	13	0.10	13	0.34	1	0.17	0	0.00
<b>MLI</b>	10	0.07	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>CATO (A)</b>	10	0.07	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>C2C</b>	8	0.06	6	0.16	1	0.17	0	0.00
<b>CD Howe (D, A)</b>	7	0.05	4	0.11	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Civitas (A)</b>	7	0.05	12	0.32	2	0.33	0	0.00
<b>Manning Cent. (A)</b>	6	0.04	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Pacific Research Inst. (A)</b>	6	0.04	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>American Enterprise Inst. (a)</b>	5	0.04	0	0.00	1	0.17	0	0.00
<b>Heartland Inst. (A)</b>	5	0.04	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Frontier Centre For Public Policy (D, A)</b>	4	0.03	7	0.18	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Mont Pelerin Soc. (A)</b>	4	0.03	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Heritage Fnd. (A)</b>	3	0.02	1	0.03	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Inst. For Liberal Studies.</b>	2	0.01	2	0.05	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Can. Taxpayers Fed. (A)</b>	1	0.01	2	0.05	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Fraser Inst.</b>	0	0.00	10	0.26	2	0.33	2	0.13
<b>Ethical Oil.</b>	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Galen Inst. (A)</b>	0	0.00	2	0.05	0	0.00	0	0.00

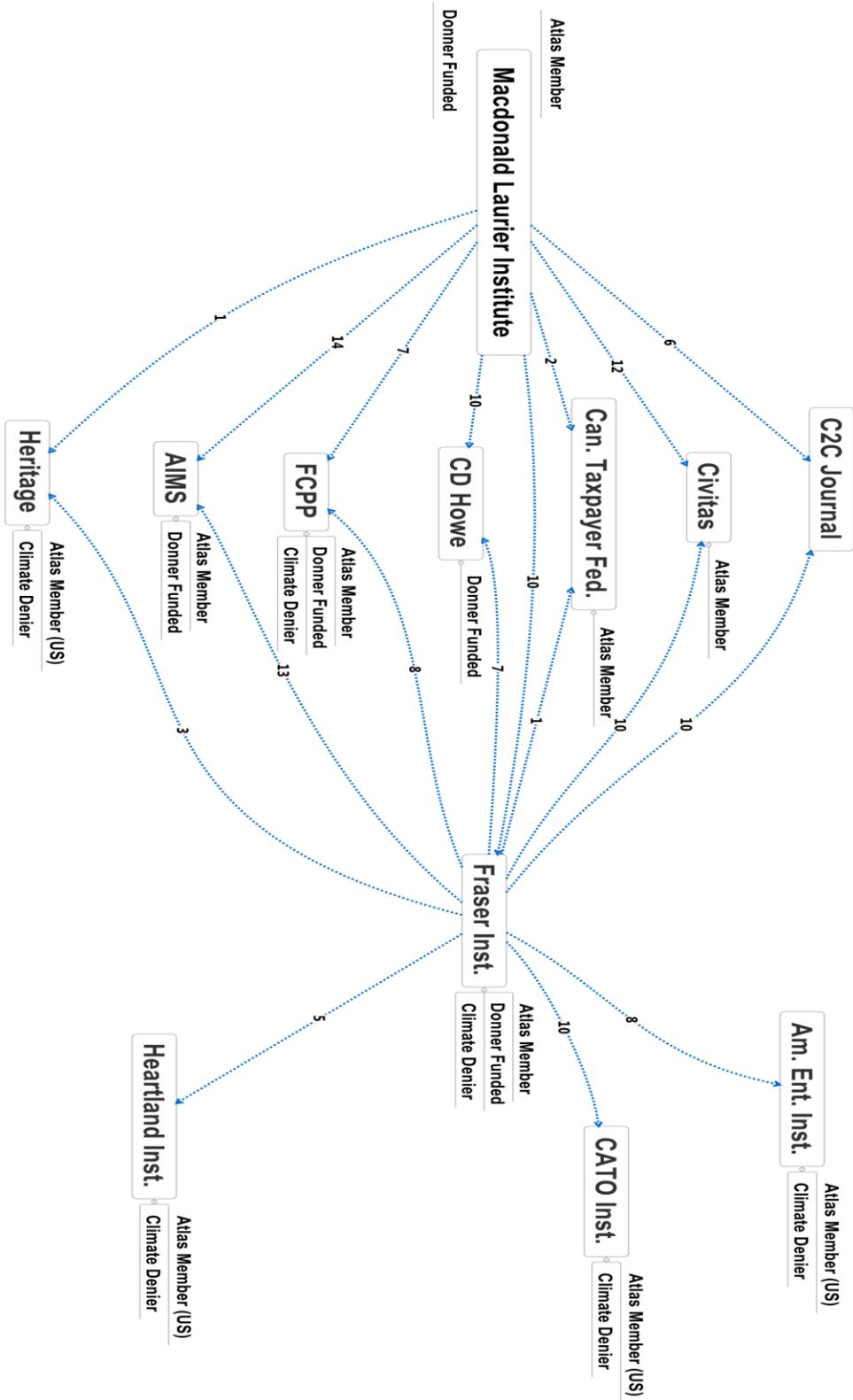
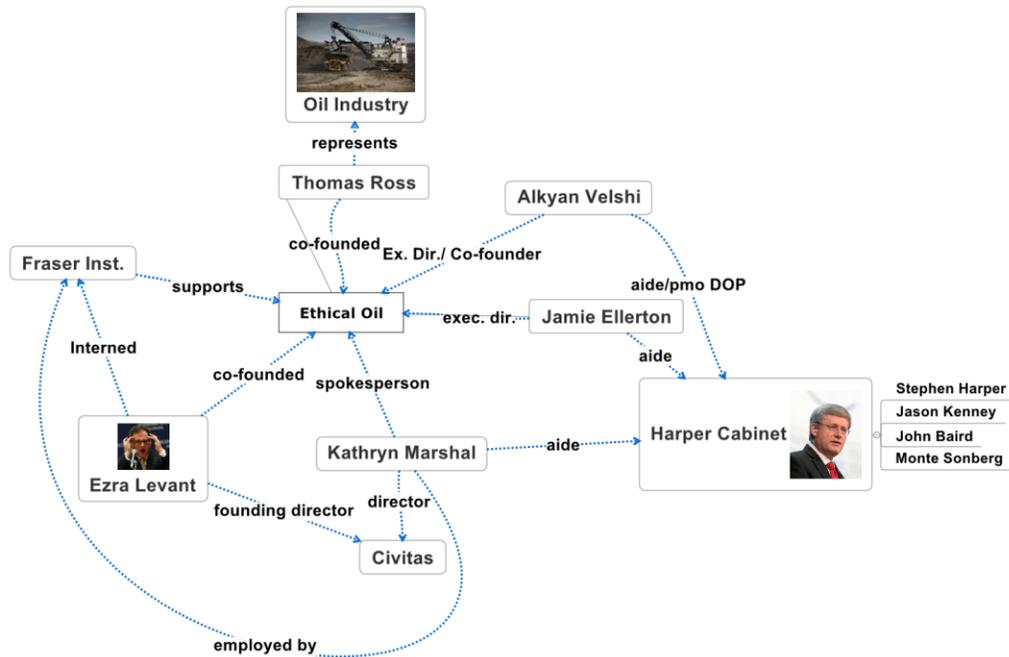


Figure 16: Common Ties between MLI and Fraser, Donner Funded Groups, and Atlas Groups, Civitas and C2C

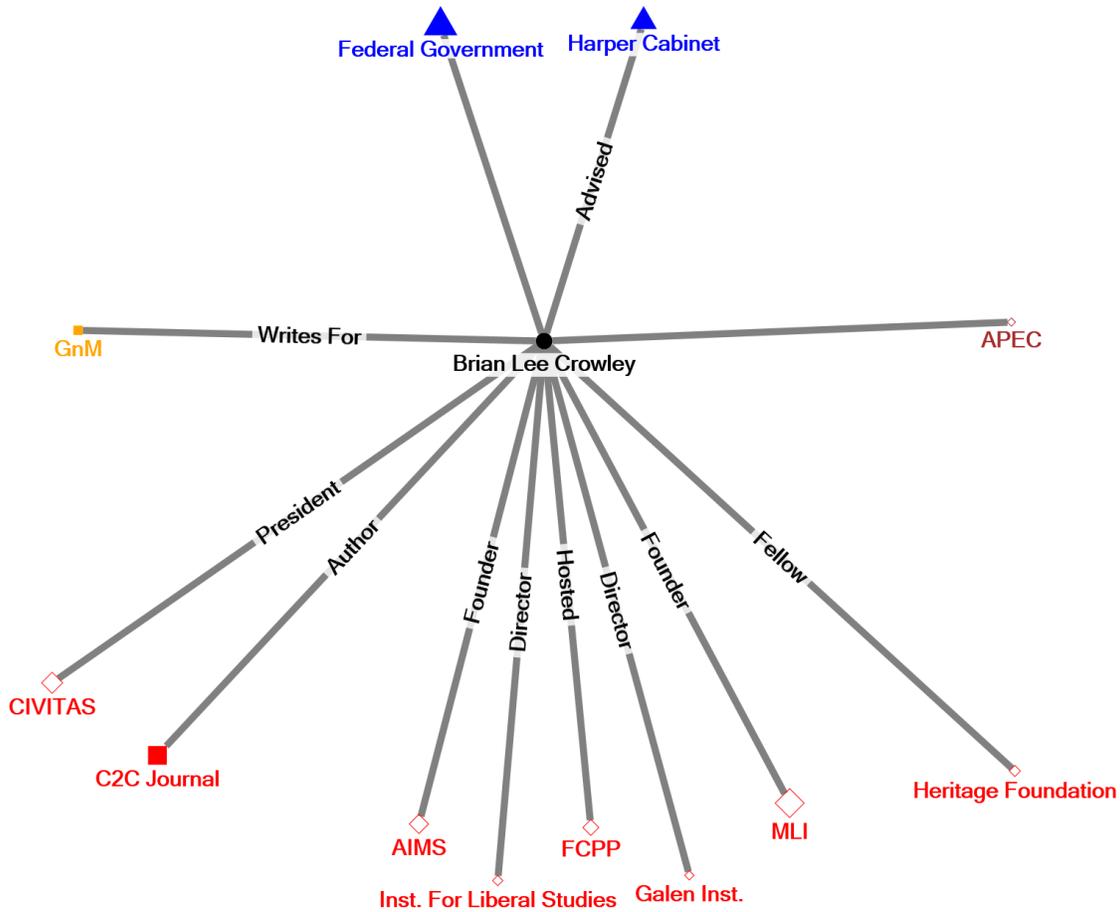
Ezra Levant’s Ethical Oil possessed similar ties to Donner funded groups, Atlas members, and Civitas (See Table 8, Figure 17). Its 6-person sample shared 3 ties with Donner-recipients and 5 ties with various Atlas groups. Tellingly, numerous conservative think tanks and advocacy groups – such as the previously Harper-run National Citizens Coalition – publicized Levant’s Ethical Oil book upon its release (Gutstein, 2014).

**Figure 17: Ethical Oil’s Ties to the Oil Industry, Harper Conservatives, Fraser, and Civitas**



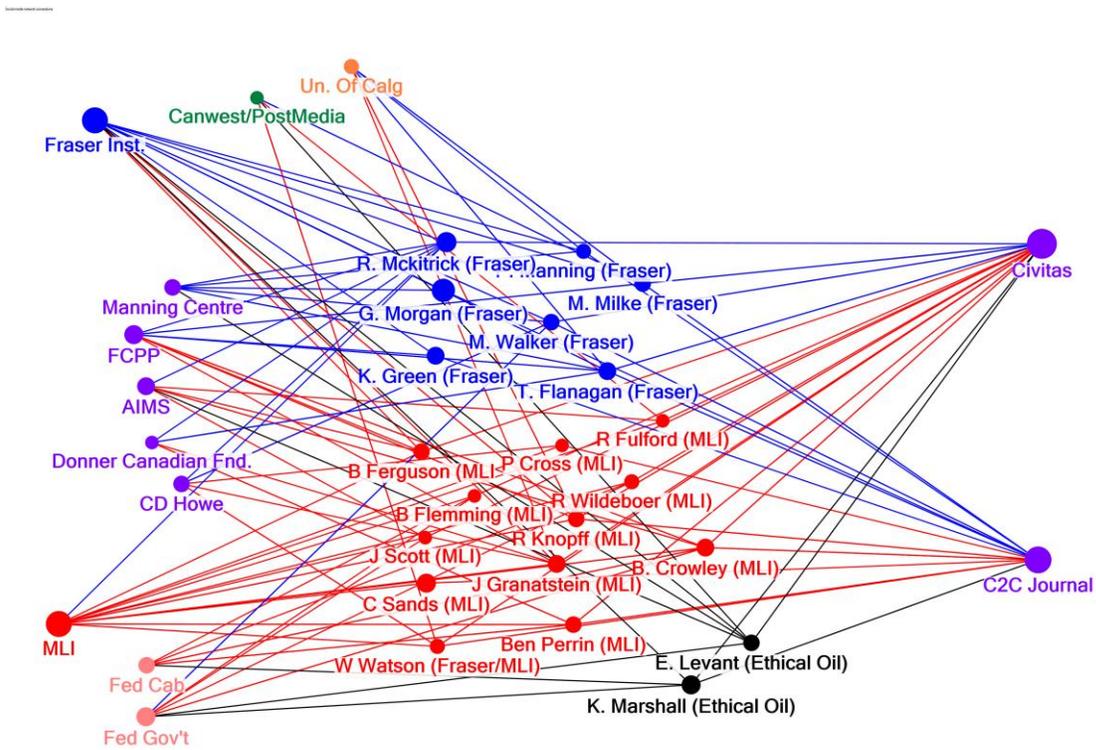
Groups like Atlas, C2C, and Civitas help suture the neoliberal discourse coalition by bringing together actors from different social fields – often across national borders. Stephen Harper addressed the Civitas conference in 2003 to discuss his vision for remaking Canada after becoming leader of the newly formed Conservative Party (Gutstein, 2014, 14-15). On another occasion the group was addressed by US Republican pollster Frank Luntz, who helped develop the GOP’s climate denial strategy in the early 2000s. Kenneth Green, a prominent climate sceptic who had previously been a fellow for the US-based, Atlas-affiliated Heritage Foundation, is a senior fellow for the Fraser Institute and a listed C2C author. Meanwhile, ex-George W. Bush speechwriter David Frum was a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, another US Atlas

group, as well as a C2C founding advisory board member and a Civitas founding director.



**Figure 18: MLI Founder Brian Lee Crowley’s Ties to New Right Groups and Harper Cabinet**

If the institutional affiliations of MLI, Fraser, and Ethical Oil members represented network ties, then several well connected actors could be considered network bridges, linking together discourse coalitions through their prolific institutional ties across organizations and fields. One notable example is MLI founder Brian Crowley (See Figure 18), who founded AIMS with over a million dollars in Donner funding years before accepting start-up funds from the same foundation to found MLI. Interestingly, AIMS was the group in the proponent subgraph with the largest number of ties to MLI (see Figure 16). Crowley has also sat on the boards of various Atlas groups, including the Institute for Liberal Studies, Civitas, AIMS, and the US climate-denying Heritage foundation (Gutstein, 2014, 53). He is also a C2C author and one-time Civitas president.



**Figure 19: Ties Between CS Proponents, C2C, Civitas, and New Right Groups**

Other examples abound of well-connected actors linking new right EPII groups like MLI, Fraser, C2C, and Civitas (See Figure 19). Fraser Institute founder Michael Walker is a 2c2 founding advisory board member and a founding director of Civitas. Calgary school academic Rainier Knopff is an MLI advisory board member, a Fraser institute senior fellow, a C2C advisory board member and a one-time Civitas President.

Other actors represent the ability of civil society groups like MLI, Fraser, Civitas and C2C to bring together politically aligned actors from the fields of civil society and government (See Figure 19). Calgary school intellectual, Harper mentor, and Conservative Party strategist Tom Flanagan is currently a Fraser Institute senior fellow, Civitas founding director, and C2C advisory board member. The co-founder of C2C journal, UBC law professor Ben Perrin, is an MLI senior fellow and onetime adviser to Prime Minister Harper who previously served as the PMO's legal counsel. Reform party founder Preston Manning, a long-time mentor to Stephen Harper, is a Fraser Institute senior fellow and a C2C founding advisory board member. Ethical Oil's Levant was a

Fraser Institute intern (Gutstein, 2014, 148) and is a Civitas founding director. Ex-Ethical Oil spokesperson Katheryn Marshal, a onetime Fraser Institute staffer, is a C2C author who chaired a panel at the 2015 Civitas conference. Before joining Ethical Oil, Marshall had worked for the Conservatives as a “strategist on political campaigns across the country at all levels of government” and had worked for two senior Ministers in the Harper Cabinet (142). Finally, BC Premier Christy Clark’s ex-chief of staff Ken Boessenkool, who possessed close ties to the Harper administration and once represented Enbridge as a client for PR giant Hill and Knowlton, is a C2C author and one-time Civitas director. The year before being hired by Clark he chaired a 2011 Civitas panel entitled “Defending The Oil Sands”.

Despite their different organizational profiles, activities, and professed ideologies, Ethical Oil, Fraser and MLI are all deeply embedded in the discourse coalitions which have helped coordinate the nation’s interfield neoliberal and ecoskeptical projects since the 1970s. All three groups’ samples possessed numerous ties to each other, Donner-funded groups, Atlas members, Civitas, C2C, and other coalition hubs linking New Right actors from different organizations, fields and countries. Yet the epistemic communities oriented around these groups are not identical. While both MLI and Fraser were Atlas members, only Fraser possessed significant ties to US-based Atlas Groups. However, both Fraser and MLI possessed numerous ties with *Canadian-based* Atlas groups, including notable climate deniers. Yet it was MLI, *not* Fraser, which had the most ties per sample member with C2C, Civitas, and Atlas groups. Given the lack of ties with prominent left wing or green think tanks or advocacy groups, organized labor or other left-progressive organizations, it seems clear that MLI is embedded in the same industry-funded, transnationally-linked New Right discourse coalitions as Fraser. This is particularly important because MLI is such a young organization, and one which bills itself as a nonpartisan provider of objective research. Its positive treatment in the press on Northern Gateway and other issues resided precisely in this cultural capital of perceived expertise, capital which would be undermined were MLI openly identified as yet another industry backed neoliberal crusader.

#### **6.2.4. State of Denial: Government Actors and Ecoskeptical Groups**

Since their inception, groups like Fraser did not limit themselves to influencing the media. They also worked to influence policy by creating inroads with state elites, as

evidenced by the state actors which often sit on their boards (Gutstein, 2009). For instance, the Fraser sample possessed ties with the Federal Government, the BC government, the Alberta government, and the Canadian Alliance and Reform parties (See Table 9). Such ties speak to the neoliberal project’s interfield nature, with economic elites and their favored epistemic communities creating civil society groups to generate the necessary social and cultural capital to influence the state (Neubauer, 2011).

Organizations		Fraser Institute		MLI		Ethical Oil		CERI	
		Total	Per Member	Total	Per Member	Total	Per Member	Total	Per Member
Federal	Fed Cab	3	0.02	10	0.26	3	0.5	1	0.06
	Fed Cons	0	0	3	0.08	2	0.33	0	0
	Alliance	2	0.01	0	0	1	0.17	0	0
	Reform	2	0.01	1	0.03	1	0.17	0	0
	Fed Libs	0	0	3	0.08	0	0	0	0
Prov.	AB Gvt	3	0.02	1	0.03	0	0	5	0.31
	BC Gvt	4	0.03	1	0.03	0	0	1	0.06
	BC Liberals	1	0.01	1	0.03	0	0	0	0
Transn.	Asian Development Bank	1	0.01	0	0	0	0	0	0
	European Union	3	0.02	0	0	0	0	0	0
	United Nations	1	0.01	0	0	0	0	0	0
	World Bank	3	0.02	0	0	0	0	0	0
	World Economic Forum	3	0.02	0	0	0	0	0	0
	OECD	1	0.01	1	0.03	0	0	0	0
	World Trade Organization	0	0	1	0.03	0	0	0	0
Trilateral Commission	0	0	1	0.03	0	0	0	0	

**Table 9: Primary Affiliation Ties between Civil Society proponents and state organizations (total and weighted per SNA sample member)**

MLI and Ethical Oil seem to be somewhat different organizations, more in keeping with the US Keynesian groups studied by Domhoff (1971; 1978) that were more fully integrated into the state’s policy planning apparatus. Such groups often served as an “informal recruiting ground” for future state planners, with academics, planners, and politicians moving back and forth between state-connected civil society groups and government (1978, 121). These interactions were by no means abandoned with the rise of neoliberal think tanks. Such groups have often acted as incubators of ideas and

people which can later be brought into government (Micklethwait and Woolridge, 2004), with the personnel of neoliberal institutes often advising state actors (Beder, 2012, 145-170). Yet Ethical Oil and MLI seemed to embody this logic in *reverse*: both groups were recently co-founded by actors working in the Harper cabinet immediately prior to forming their respective organizations. And both groups subsequently worked not only to influence the political priorities of the Harper Government, but also acted as nominally independent civil society actors which could *justify those priorities in the press*.

Three out of the six Ethical Oil actors had worked as aides in the Harper cabinet prior to joining the new organization (See Table 9 and Figure 17). Ethical Oil's co-founder Alkyhan Velshi had worked as a senior aide for two Harper cabinet ministers – Environment Minister John Baird and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney – immediately prior to joining the new group (Gutstein, 2014, 149). Later, Velshi returned to Ottawa where he was promoted to Director of Planning in the Prime Minister's Office. He was replaced at Ethical Oil by new executive director Jamie Ellerton, who had been working as Minister Kenney's executive assistant.

Ethical Oil regularly backed up the Harper Government's corporatist strategies concerning Northern Gateway. Their blogs and press releases lauded the government's plans to approve the pipeline, reform the approval process, and audit Gateway's opponents. Conversely, Levant's 'Ethical Oil' trope emerged as an official Conservative talking point following the book's publication in 2011 (though industry itself seemed more ambivalent about embracing the term) (Gutstein, 2014, 147). At one point Levant was invited to testify before the House of Commons as an expert witness on Canadian energy policy. Finally, in 2012 the "law firm representing ethicaloil.org filed with the Canada Revenue agency alleging that Sierra Club[s]" opposition to the pipeline "was in violation of tax rules" prohibiting political advocacy, helping launch Revenue Canada's seemingly punitive audits of Gateway opponents (146). This interfield coordination is significant because Ethical Oil's claim to public legitimacy partially depended on its cultural capital of 'representative populism', with the group representing not state elites, but 'average Canadians' economically dependent on the oil sands.

The MLI sample also revealed significant ties to the Harper Government and the Canadian state more generally. This is notable because MLI was the only policy institute in the sample founded *after* the election of the Conservatives, a hardline neoliberal party

with ties to New Right discourse coalitions (Gutstein, 2014, 47). A closer look at MLI founder Brian Crowley reveals the interfield nature of the neoliberal petrobloc (See Figure 18). Not only was Crowley a founder of AIMS – a Fraser-linked, Donner-funded Atlas group – but after leaving that organization he was appointed as the Clifford Clark Visiting Economist in the Department of Finance in 2010, where he advised Minister Jim Flaherty on the upcoming federal budget. Four months later Crowley incorporated MLI, with Flaherty hosting and promoting one of the group’s first fundraisers in Toronto.

MLI’s sample was even more likely than Fraser’s to possess ties with high ranking state elites, holding 10 primary and 26 secondary ties to the Federal Cabinet (See Table 9). Many MLI members had long histories in public service, working for Cabinet ministers or serving as ministers themselves earlier in their careers. MLI’s government connections were often bi-partisan, with numerous MLI staff, fellows and board members sharing ties to the Reform party, the Federal Conservatives, and the Federal Liberals (there were no recorded ties with the Federal NDP or Green parties). For instance, MLI academic advisory member and Civitas director Brian Flemming was Assistant Principal Secretary and Policy Advisor to Liberal PM Pierre Trudeau.

Finally, MLI and Fraser shared ties with various neoliberal transnational governing bodies (See Table 9). While Fraser’s sample possessed ties to the World Bank and the World Economic Forum, MLI’s sample shared ties with the OECD, the WTO, the Trilateral Commission, and NAFTA. Such groups constitute what William Robinson (2004; 2009) has termed the Transnational State Apparatus, and have been critical actors in establishing global neoliberal policy regimes oriented around transnational capital mobility (Cox, 1981; Gill, 1995; Harvey, 2005; Hope, 2011).

These findings provide insight into MLI’s claims of ‘non-partisanship’. While the group’s sample shared no ties with the NDP or Green Party, its ties to the Conservatives, Liberals, and transnational neoliberal governance bodies reflects the hegemony of neoliberalism domestically and globally. As with the Clinton Democrats in the US, most Canadian neoliberal reforms took place under successive Liberal governments before the Conservatives came to power. It is no coincidence that MLI named itself after two of Canada’s most prominent Conservative and Liberal Prime Ministers – it reflects the hegemonic status of the neoliberal worldview within Canada’s two ruling parties.

These ‘bipartisan’ (as opposed to non-partisan) ties indicate that the group’s strategy is the further institutionalization of neoliberal dogma beyond the territory of the radical libertarian and Austrian networks oriented around the Fraser Institute, Atlas, and so on. While the epistemic community associated with MLI shows a clear bias towards New Right think tanks and foundations, the group also hosts more moderate and highly-lauded neoliberal technocrats like Paul Romer and Philip Cross. This allows it to further neoliberal dogma’s hegemonic status even while leveraging it in service of contemporary legislative priorities. MLI can therefore be thought of as similar to Civitas or C2C, in that all three groups partially function as coordinating mechanisms for interfield political projects. Unlike Civitas and C2C, however, the less overtly ideological coding of MLI materials and the broader, more ‘moderate’ nature of *some* of its membership – whose worldviews are nonetheless firmly rooted within the common sense of contemporary neoliberal governance – allows it to better act as a forum for establishing an elite ‘rolling consensus’ concerning contemporary policy problems.

Such insights allow us to better understand the close relationship between MLI research and the Harper Conservatives’ political priorities. As Oreskes and Conway (2010) note, EPII groups often provide conservative politicians with ideological cover for their own political activities, justifying them with seemingly ‘objective’ research. As with Ethical Oil, MLI regularly produced material whose subject and policy prescriptions paralleled current and upcoming Conservative priorities. For instance, a 2011 MLI study supported Harper’s ‘tough-on-crime’ agenda by claiming that Statistics Canada was systematically underreporting the national crime rate (Gutstein, 2014, 54). Later, C2C founder and PMO special counsel Ben Perrin (2011, September 28) argued strenuously in favor of the government’s so-called ‘tough on crime’ omnibus bill in the *National Post*, where he was identified as a senior fellow at MLI. Other research directly supported or justified the Harper Government’s support of Gateway (Gutstein, 2014, 54-57). In various reports, interviews, and op-eds, the organization and its members promoted diversifying energy exports and building new pipelines to tidewater; argued against the oil boom’s role in undermining Canadian manufacturing through ‘Dutch Disease’; claimed that benefits from energy exports were shared equally amongst the provinces; and discussed various means to bring First Nations on boards with resource development projects. MLI was so supportive of contemporary Conservative priorities, that in 2010 Harper himself thanked the organization for its “laudable work” (56).

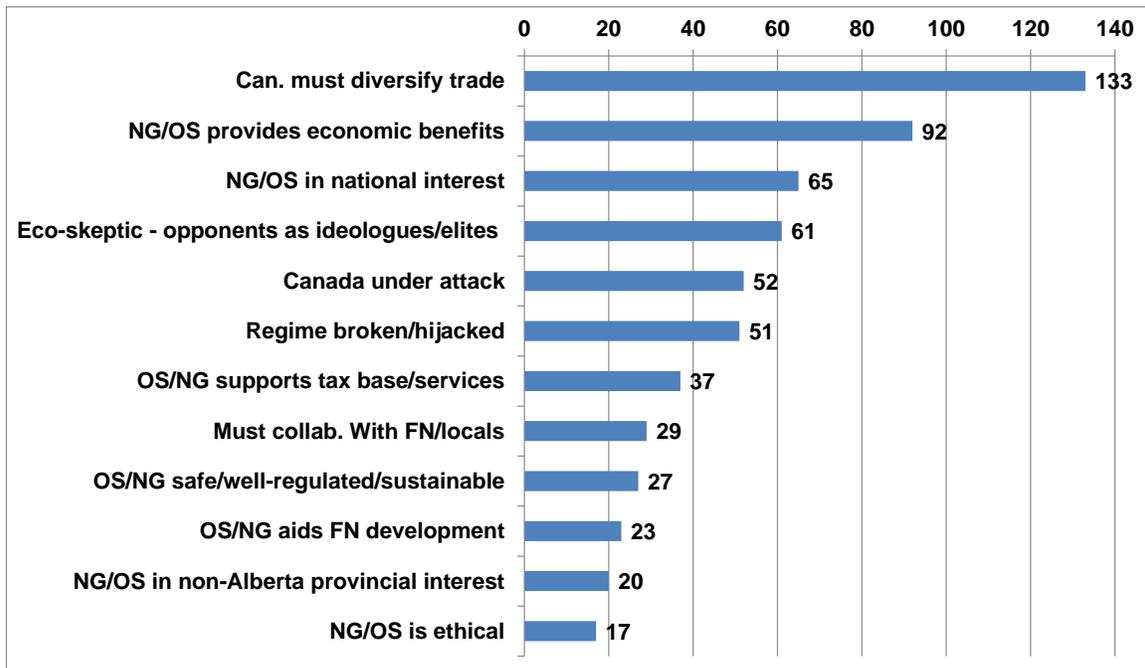
In short, Ethical Oil and MLI can be described as new nodes in previously existing New Right coalitions seeking to influence state policy, while having been created by Conservative insiders whose political networks were partially constituted by those same coalitions. This is why it is not necessary, or even coherent, to ask whether the rise of MLI or Ethical Oil is evidence of neoliberal coalitions informing the government field, or of government actors corrupting the civil society field. The interfield nature of the neoliberal project means that *both* propositions can be true!

### **6.3. Framing the Nation: Northern Gateway, Nationalism, and Discourse Coalitions**

If proponents like MLI and Ethical Oil have been part of the same discourse coalitions oriented around the Harper Conservatives and groups like Fraser, what of the actual discourses they generate? As Hoggart and Littlemore (2009) explain in their analysis of Canadian climate denial networks, one strength of ecoskeptical discourse coalitions is their capacity to create discursive echo chambers in which “claims from one denier or think tank can end up being repeated, cited, or promoted by various other groups in the network” (163). Yet this account does not capture the interfield nature of the extractivist petrobloc, in which civil society groups discursively support the priorities of their state and industry allies. At the same time, different groups may make use of different framing strategies which, while tailor-made for their specific cultural capital, are made in service of the same overarching arguments and priorities.

Generally speaking, groups in the civil society proponent sample propagated several key claims meant to win public support for Northern Gateway and the broader regime of neoliberal extractivism more generally. Most of these obscured unequal distributions of risk and benefit by engaging in a form of ‘symbolic nationalization’, with benefits from the oil sands and Gateway described as benefiting not just particular actors, but the Nation as a whole. Such national framing increased the salience of *national subjectivities* which had to be internalized by target audiences in order for nationalist arguments to appear convincing. Four of the most common claims made by civil society proponents were ones that the project’s state and industry proponents had also frequently made: that **Northern Gateway and/or the Oil Sands produced significant economic benefits**, that **Northern Gateway and/or the oil sands served Canada’s national interest** or were in the **interest of provinces other than Alberta**,

and that it **was economically beneficial/necessary to diversify markets for energy exports**. Related to such claims were two others meant to deal with concerns over environmental risk: that **Northern Gateway and/or the oil sands were safe, well regulated, and/or sustainable**, and that **Canada’s oil industry was ‘ethical’** when compared to other sources of energy.



**Figure 20: Common Claims of CS Proponents**

While these claims were often technocratic in nature, they tended to buttress a more emotionally charged set of nationalist populist claims that were often made with greater frequency than with Gateway’s state and industry supporters: that **Canada was under attack by foreign critics of the oil sands**, that **opponents were Liberal Elites or self-interested environmental ideologues (ie. eco-skeptic claims)**, and that **Canada’s regulatory and approval regime was broken and/or had been hijacked by Northern Gateway’s opponents**. Such claims were often used to support ongoing Conservative activities, such as the drastic reforms to the nation’s regulatory and project assessment regime and targeted federal audits of pipeline opponents. Finally, another set of common claims were that **Northern Gateway and/or the oil sands could support First Nation’s economic development** and that **project supporters must collaborate with First Nations and/or locals**. While these last two claims were partially

designed to overcome indigenous opposition, they also stood as a *refinement* of the extractivist coalition's strategies concerning relations with indigenous peoples.

	CS Proponents		CERI		Ethical Oil		Fraser Institute		MLI		
	To.	Wei.	To.	Wei.	To.	Wei.	To.	Wei.	To.	Wei.	
Techn. Nation.	CI: Can. must diversify markets	133	164%	106	530%	7	21%	9	129%	11	55%
	CI: NG/OS provides economic benefits	92	114%	43	215%	24	71%	3	43%	22	110%
	CI: NG/OS in national interest	65	80%	20	100%	26	76%	4	57%	15	75%
	CI: OS/NG supports tax base/services	37	46%	21	105%	6	18%	0	0%	10	50%
	CI: OS/NG safe/well-regulated/sustainable	27	33%	8	40%	12	35%	1	14%	6	30%
	CI: NG/OS in non-Alberta provincial interest	20	25%	9	45%	3	9%	1	14%	7	35%
First Nations	CI: Must collab. with FN/locals	29	36%	0	0%	0	0%	2	29%	27	135%
	CI: OS/NG aids FN development	23	28%	0	0%	2	6%	3	43%	18	90%
	Fr: FN as Allies-Partners	29	36%	0	0%	2	6%	2	29%	25	125%
	Fr: FN Culture-economy-way of life	3	4%	1	5%	0	0%	0	0%	2	10%
	Fr: FN Opposition	12	15%	1	5%	0	0%	1	14%	10	50%
	Fr: FN Sovereignty-consultation	34	42%	1	5%	2	6%	3	43%	28	140%
Populist/Dem. Sovereignty	CI: Eco-skeptic - opponents as ideologues/elites	61	75%	0	0%	58	171%	0	0%	3	15%
	CI: Canada under attack	52	64%	0	0%	52	153%	0	0%	0	0%
	CI: Regime broken/hijacked	51	63%	0	0%	34	100%	14	200%	3	15%
	Fr: Corruption-betrayal-conspiracy	57	70%	0	0%	50	147%	1	14%	6	30%
	Fr: Cons Pop.	53	65%	0	0%	51	150%	0	0%	2	10%
	Fr: Radicals-Ideologues	13	16%	0	0%	13	38%	0	0%	0	0%
	Fr: Democracy-Popular Sov.	17	21%	3	15%	10	29%	0	0%	4	20%

**Table 10: Common Claims and Frames of CS Proponents (total counts and weighted percentages)**

While these claims constituted the broader extractivist discourse of the petrobloc's leading civil society members, not all four groups made the same claims to the same extent. Ethical Oil and MLI, for example, both made similar overarching arguments: that diversifying bitumen exports was in Canada's economic interest; that Canada's national interest was fundamentally intertwined with that of global capitalism; and that state intervention was necessary to further these national goals. Yet the specific claims and frames they deployed in service of these broader arguments were often radically different and related to each group's specific cultural capital, which in both

cases was dependent on their ability to obscure their connections to the Harper Conservatives and industry-funded EPII groups. Together, however, they reproduced the exact arguments deployed by Oliver in his 'foreign funded radicals' letter and subsequent communications – which combined both populist and technocratic claims – while supporting the government's corporatist attempts to rationalize the petrobloc's export market diversification plans. Ethical Oil leveraged its cultural capital of the 'representative popular' to reproduce Minister Oliver's populist denunciation of opponents (See Table 10). MLI leveraged its cultural capital of expertise, joining Oliver, CAPP, Enbridge, and CERI in making technocratic claims concerning the benefits of diversification and the need to bring First Nations on board. Importantly, these complementary sets of claims mirrored the neoliberal and ecoskeptical arguments deployed by New Right discourse coalitions for decades. They also demonstrate the interfield nature of the petrobloc, in which civil society, industry, and state elites deploy complementary messages as members of a decentralized discourse coalition.

### **6.3.1. The Technocratic Nation: Economic Arguments and National Reifications**

Unlike Gateway's opponents, civil society proponents rarely discussed environmental risk (see Figure 21). When they did, they tended to claim that the **oil sands and/or Northern Gateway are safe and/or sustainable**. Such claims were sometimes mediated through 'mythical' conceptions of nationalism in which Canada was considered in its *essence* to be a sustainable and socially just nation. A March 2012 press release for the MLI report *Banning Oil Tankers of the West Coast: All Pain, Little Gain* quoted marine fleet manager Dr. Philip John, who provided:

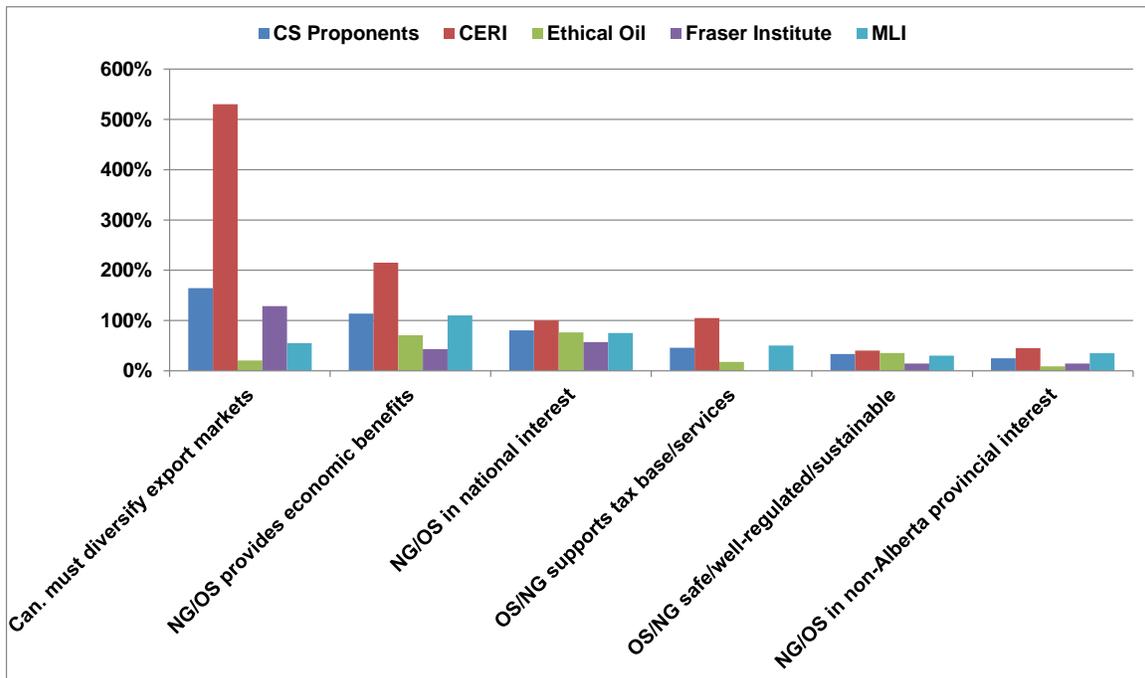
compelling data that Canada's record of managing oil tanker traffic safely in ecologically sensitive waterways is already much envied in the international shipping community. The number of oil spills in Canada has declined dramatically over the last 30 years from a high of 18 in the 1980s to six during the 1990s, to zero in the 2000s....Dr. John attributes this success to Canada's regulatory standards and a keen sense of awareness for safety and environmental consciousness. (MLI, 2013, March 14)

Ethical Oil, the group most likely to discuss environmental concerns, mediated this 'mythic' nationalism through its 'Ethical Oil' thesis (see Figure 21). This rhetoric was utilized less for defending Northern Gateway than for attacking project opponents. If

Canadian oil was inherently 'ethical', then environmentalists must oppose selling more of it because they were somehow duplicitous. One 2012 blog post by Jamie Ellerton lambasted Environmental Defense president Rick Smith for criticizing Gateway's 'ethical' bonafides on the ground it would transport oil to human-rights abusing China:

Smith doesn't prefer we sell our oil to ethical countries, as he now disingenuously pretends; he prefers we didn't sell our oil at all... We can't compare Canadian oil exports to some fantasy energy source free of any environmental impact whatsoever and that turns its buyers into liberal democracies overnight. We can only compare Canadian oil to the alternatives: dirtier, bloodier crude from conflict oil producers.

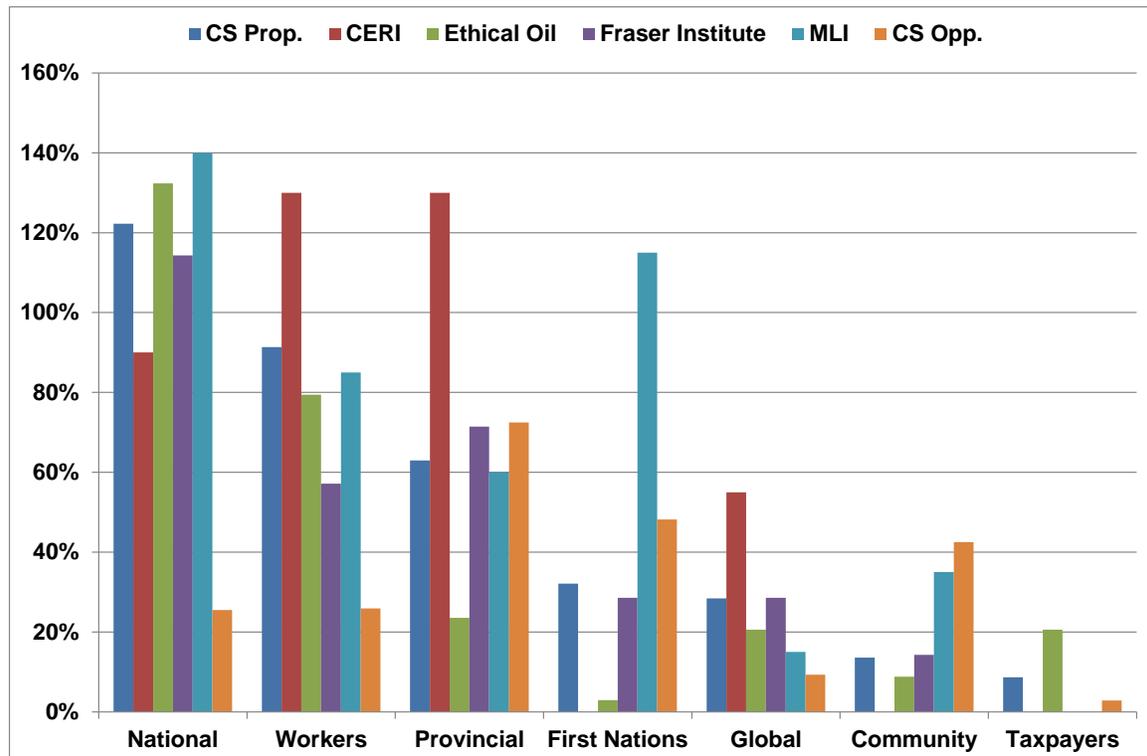
[Environmental Defense] apparently doesn't consider our oil to be ethically superior to that of Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Iran. When multinational corporations do business in Canada, they abide by our standards. They heed our unparalleled protections for the environment and workers. That's why Canadian oil workers are among the most privileged in the world. It's why Alberta is the first Canadian jurisdiction to impose carbon emission taxes. It's why oil sands oil has reduced its carbon footprint per barrel by nearly a third in the last two decades, to the point where oil sands oil is already less carbon intensive than conflict oil from Russia and Nigeria. (Ellerton, 2012, June 18)



**Figure 21: Technocratic Nationalist Claims of Civil Society Proponents (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

Much more common than environmental claims were those that 'symbolically nationalized' the industry's benefits. Most proponents were less likely than opponents to

deploy community interest frames, but were much more likely to refer to the *national interest* [See Fig 22]. This is not a novel phenomenon for elite-dominated civil society groups. As Domhoff (1978) wrote in 1978, US power elite groups tended to “legitimate their members as ‘serious’ and ‘expert’ persons capable of... selfless pursuit of the ‘national interest’” (121) so as to distract from the regime’s class disparities.



**Figure 22: Interest Frames for Civil Society Proponents and Opponents (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

Articulating Northern Gateway as in the ‘national interest’ was just as important for Northern Gateway’s proponents given the strength of regional political resistance and the project’s disparities in risk and benefit. By framing benefits as ‘national’, proponents effaced these disparities while reinforcing an inside/outside frame through which opponents could be delegitimized as foreigners. All proponents, for instance, argued that **Northern Gateway and/or tar sand expansion produced significant economic benefits** and that **Northern Gateway and/or tar sands expansion was in the national interest** (See Figure 21). Yet CERI, MLI and Fraser often articulated these claims alongside references to the *provincial* interest, often via technocratic claims concerning the economic benefits that would accrue to non-Alberta provinces. Such claims rarely mentioned potential ecological risks absorbed by BC, the industry’s high rate of profit,

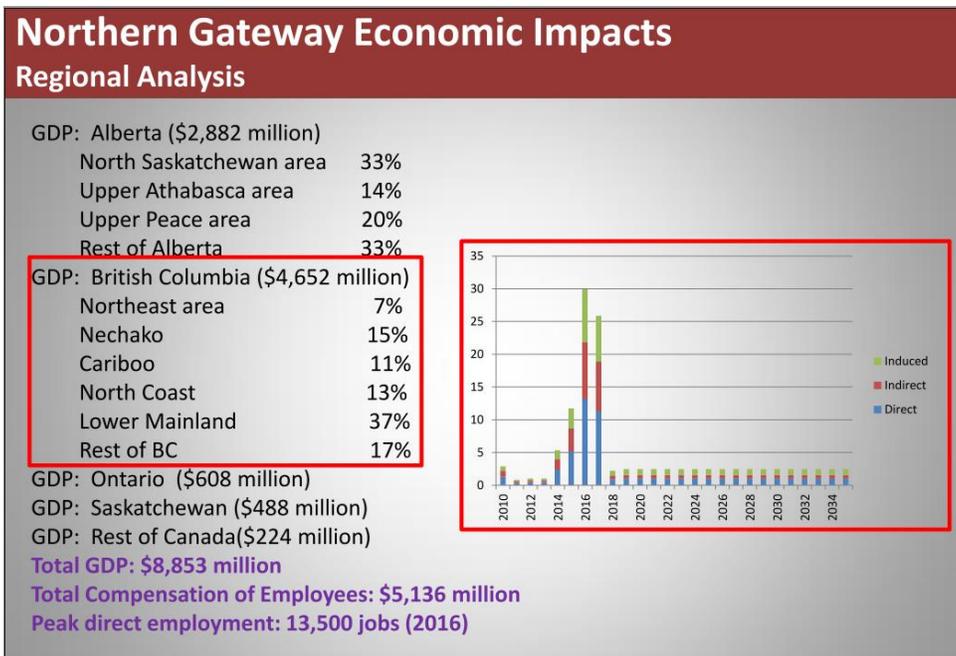
low rates of employment intensity and employee compensation, the international outflow of profits, or the low share of resource rent acquired by Albertan taxpayers.

The technocratic claims of MLI and CERI relied on those groups' cultural capital of *perceived objective expertise*. Yet with MLI such claims were sometimes deployed by those actors with the strongest ties to the Harper Government and New Right EPII groups, such as MLI founder, Harper advisor, and Civitas president Brian Crowley (See Figure 18). For instance, Crowley co-authored a widely publicized May 2012 report that attempted to refute the argument that oil boom-induced 'Dutch Disease' was undermining Canadian manufacturing, a claim then being advanced by the Federal NDP and groups like Dogwood Initiative. Undermining this claim was important for Northern Gateway's supporters. If high oil prices were hurting manufacturing workers in Ontario while benefitting the Albertan economy, then the industry's benefits were demonstrably **not** equally distributed across the nation. As such it was important to frame the industry's benefits as accruing to provinces other than Alberta.

In a May 30 press release announcing a paper entitled "NO DUTCH TREAT: OIL AND GAS WEALTH BENEFITS ALL PARTS OF CANADA", MLI explained how:

Ontario, Quebec and other provinces will enjoy benefits from oil- and gas-rich western provinces that far outweigh any ill effects from a higher Canadian dollar. ...In No Dutch Treat: Oil and Gas Wealth Benefits All of Canada, authors Robert Murphy and Brian Crowley argue that even provinces not directly involved in oil and gas enjoy large gains from such activity in other provinces. "While the so-called 'Dutch Disease' mechanism may operate, in practice it is . . . offset by the gains to the overall Canadian economy," they write. (MLI, 2012, May 30)

CERI made similar arguments in its presentations and reports, in which graphs, charts and figures alluded to large economic multipliers generated by the oil sands. Often this was done by referring to GDP gains. In one report, the organization projected economic benefits generated by the completion of Northern Gateway and other oil sands projects building "required pipeline capacity to move new product" (Honarvar et al, 2011, ix). The projections argued for a "Total Canadian GDP impact as a result of the investment shocks...estimated at close to \$4,925 billion over the 25-year period" between 2010 and 2035, as well as "Canadian employee compensation" of "almost \$1,417 billion. At other times, CERI outlined optimistic projections of GDP growth that would accrue to provinces like British Columbia were Gateway to proceed (See Fig. 23).



**Figure 23: Slide from CERI presentation to Vancouver Oil and Gas Summit, May 2012**

At times, proponents utilized the same ‘nation building’ frame deployed by the Harper Conservatives, the Alberta Progressive Conservatives, and certain industry actors. MLI’s Crowley wrote a July 2012 opinion piece published in the Ottawa Citizen, the Calgary Herald, and The Province that decried Christy Clark’s ‘5 conditions’ as a betrayal of the national interest and the nation-building project:

A good friend of mine [who] grew up beside the St. Lawrence near Cornwall. The St. Lawrence Seaway was being built, and the family’s beloved summer place had been expropriated to accommodate it. Upset, the boy wondered why his father accepted the loss with such equanimity.

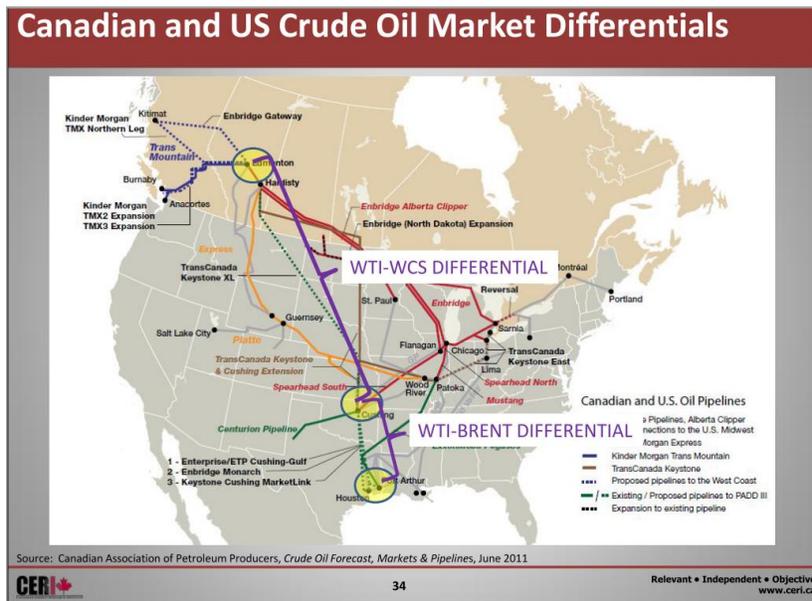
His answer, which so struck my friend and me, was essentially this: *The Seaway is a grand project that will benefit people in many parts of this great country that has given us so much. Yes, we will lose something we care about and that is reason to be sad. But when you set against that the progress for the country and all those who will be made better off, it is something that we should support. That’s what being Canadian means.*

What brought this story to mind was the news this week of Premier Christy Clark’s list of conditions for giving “permission” for Enbridge’s Northern Gateway pipeline to cross British Columbia to the coast. This pipeline will allow Western Canada’s oil to reach Asian markets, where it would fetch much higher prices than in North America.

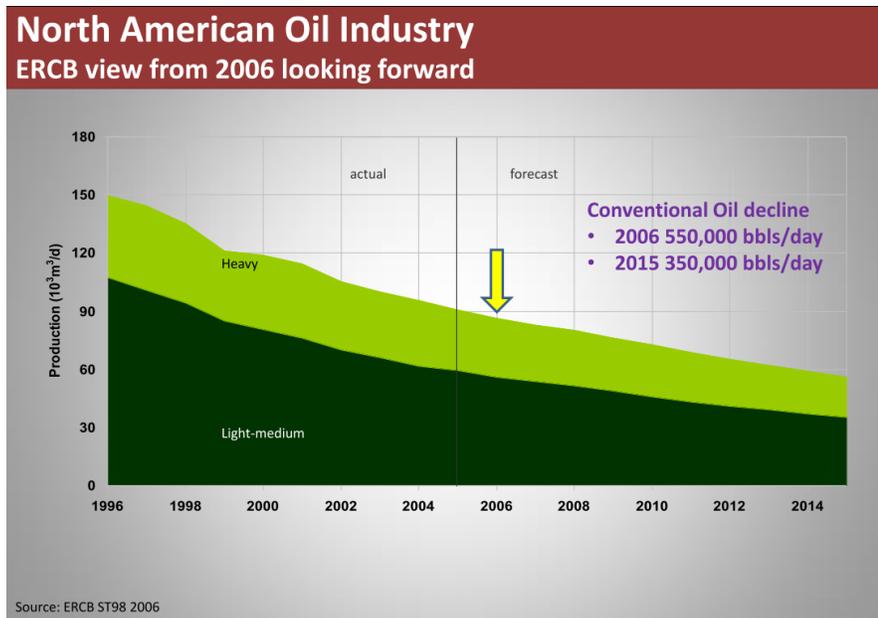
*This is exactly what Canada was supposed to prevent. In 1867, we created a national government and Parliament to represent all Canadians and to take decisions in the national interest, not the interests of individual provinces or groups.... (emphasis added) (Crowley, 2012, July 28).*

### 6.3.2. National Interest, Global Identity: Canada, Export Market Diversification and the World System

The claims made by CERI, MLI and Fraser often articulated Canadian national identity with transnational economic integration (See Fig 21). All three frequently discussed the *economic benefits of export market diversification*, with CERI the most likely group to do so. At times, the group recirculated material produced by petrobloc actors from the state and industry fields. At the May 2012 Vancouver Oil and Gas Summit, data from CAPP was used to highlight the dangers of the WTI-WCS and WTI-Brent price differentials. At a 2013 presentation, data from Alberta’s energy regulator was used to highlight the economic dangers of declining conventional oil production (See Figures 24 and 25).



**Figure 24: Slide using CAPP data from CERI Presentation, “The Economic Impacts of Pipeline Access to Pacific Tide Water” to May 2012 Vancouver Oil and Gas Summit.**



**Figure 25: Slide using ERCB Data from CERI March 21, 2013 Presentation, “WCSB Production Potential and Transportation Hurdles”, in Calgary, Alb.**

Yet only the Harper-connected MLI reproduced Conservative talking points concerning Canada’s emergence as a ‘global energy superpower’ whose exports could buoy the global system. One 2013 press release announcing “RESCUING NORTHERN GATEWAY”, a well-publicized paper co-authored by Crowley, explained how:

*Canada is failing to live up to its potential as an energy superpower due to a lack of access to world markets, but a new paper by the Macdonald-Laurier Institute shows how the Northern Gateway pipeline project can be put on sounder footing and deliver sustainable benefits to Canadians, including First Nations in the pipeline corridor, by increasing access to Asia.*

*Presently, Western Canada's oil resources are suffering from artificially low prices as a result of lack of access to growing markets in Asia. The Northern Gateway project would help to rectify this ongoing shortfall, delivering oil to energy hungry China and India, tens of billions in increased GDP for Canadians and increased revenue for provincial and Federal Governments...*

*It is in the national interest that this project move forward; otherwise, as we document in the paper, the costs of this missed opportunity would be enormous for all Canadians, not only those in Alberta and British Columbia. (MLI, 2013, May 30). (Emphasis added).*

In reproducing the government’s ‘global energy superpower’ talking point, MLI also reproduced their argument that both Canada’s national interest and identity resided

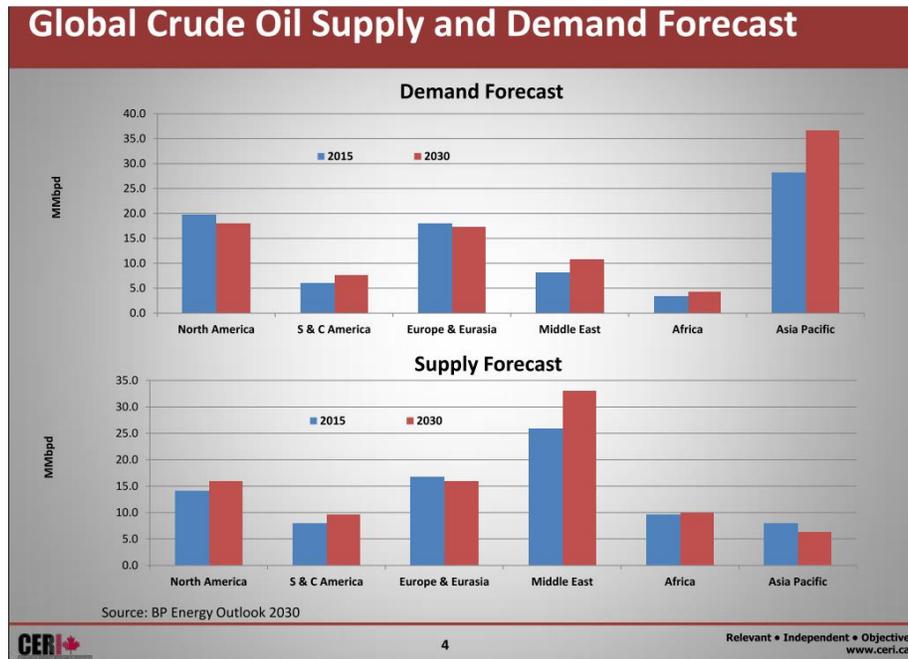
in its capacity to service global economic networks. At the same time, by focusing on ‘energy hungry China and India’, MLI leveraged many Canadians’ economic anxieties concerning neoliberal globalization, envisioning a future in which Canadian workers *served* rising Asian economies instead of competing with them. Like with Gateway’s state and industry supporters, such narratives positioned China as the symbolic manifestation of globalization’s threat *and* promise. While inevitably rising Chinese energy demand positioned environmental opposition to the tar sands as fundamentally quixotic, Canadians were assured that ample riches awaited them if they would only build new energy infrastructure, envisioned as a 21<sup>st</sup> century Silk Road.

MLI was joined by CERI and Fraser in pinning Canada’s economic hopes on long term demand growth in East Asia. One July 2012 Fraser report by Vanadis Oviedo and Fraser fellow Gerry Aventine (a one-time CERI director) focused on how:

“Demand for oil products in countries in the Asia-Pacific region is rapidly increasing [, allowing] crude oil ... [to] be sold in those markets at a premium. If Canadian oil producers had access to the US and the Asia-Pacific region, they could secure the best possible return on their investment. .... Construction and operation of pipelines from Alberta to ports in British Columbia could contribute substantially to GDP, and to employment and income in Alberta, British Columbia, and the rest of Canada. (Aventine and Oviedo, 2012)

As with state and industry proponents, such claims were sometimes predicated on the projection of rising energy demand into the future. This effaced the *temporal contradictions* of neoliberal extractivism in which the real-time pricing of oil exports on globalized commodities markets created significant risk for projects (and jobs) dependent on historically high prices. A 2012 paper by MLI fellow Laura Dawson and Stefania Bartucci (2012) made precisely these types of futurological projections. In “Sustaining the Crude Economy: Future prospects for Canada’s global energy competitiveness”, the pair explained how “the greatest frustration for Canadian producers is the lack of access to the tidal water in order to reach fast growing Asian markets”, given the “long-term shift in demand towards” the region (2). MLI’s Crowley and Coates (2013, May) made similar arguments in a May 2013 paper, claiming that “Canada must find a way to build the necessary infrastructure to capitalize on ... robust international markets for energy” because the “opportunities... in Asia, are very significant and – most important – long term (1). CERI also predicated its claims upon the projection of Asian demand, often decades into the future (see Figure 26). In one

January 2013 presentation on “Canadian Westbound Crude Exports”, the organization cited figures from British Petroleum predicting steadily rising oil demand in the Asia Pacific region *up to 2030*.

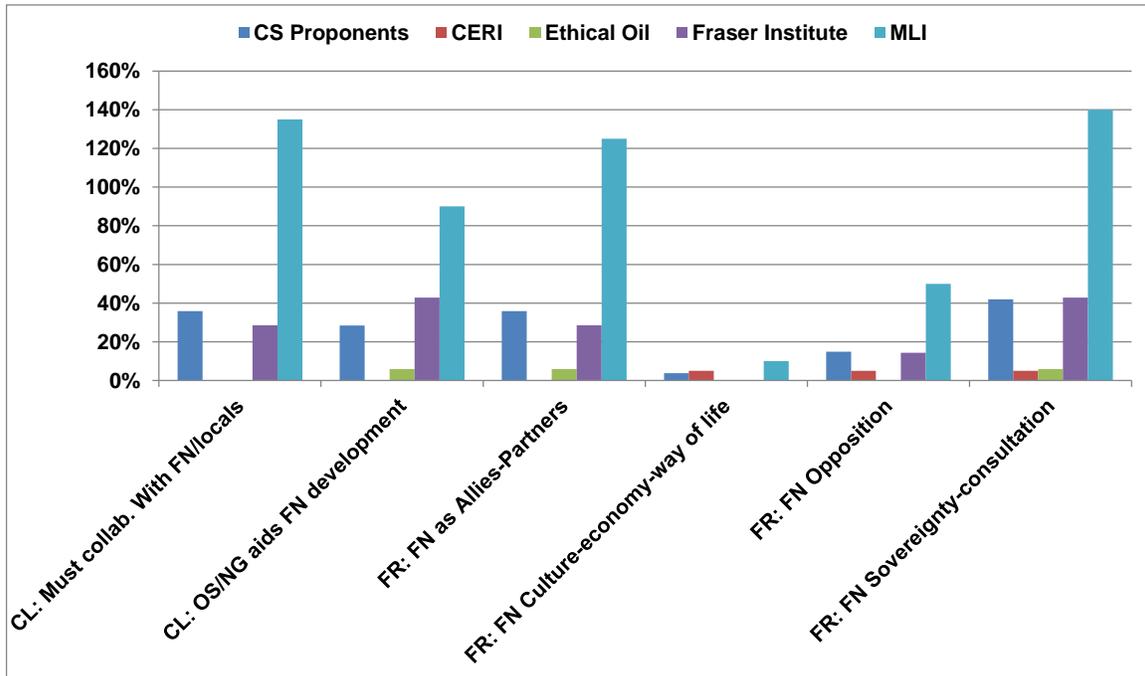


**Figure 26: Slide from January 2013 CERI Presentation “Canadian Westbound Crude Exports”, by Dinara Millington**

### **6.3.3. First Nationalism: Integrating Indigenous Peoples into the Extractivist Project**

If the national project was predicated on global integration, then what role were First Nations offered in it? Incredibly, virtually every single civil society proponent studiously ignored First Nations (See Figure 27). The only exception was MLI, which in 2013 launched a research project dedicated to securing indigenous collaboration in resource extraction (Gutstein, 2014, 106). This work was not just an amplification of the extractivist echochamber, but a strategic refinement of it. Since at least the publication of Tom Flanagan’s (2008) ‘First Nations, Second Thoughts’, neoliberal discourse coalitions, New Right EPII groups, and Calgary School intellectuals have often argued that the social and economic problems of Canada’s indigenous peoples could only be only mitigated by eliminating First Nation’s unique legal status, dismantling the reserve system, and/or opening up indigenous territories to privatization. Yet the petrobloc’s push for new pipeline capacity, the resistance to such plans by many indigenous

communities (particularly in BC), increased legal standing concerning rights and title, and growing decolonial militancy necessitated a revamped corporatist approach.



**Figure 27: Common First Nations Claims and Frames for Civil Society Proponents (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

All of this had brought the ‘aboriginal question’ to the forefront of the neoliberal discourse coalitions’ internal deliberations, which were carried out in various forums within which MLI members were often embedded. When Fraser fellow and Harper advisor Tom Flanagan published his new book *Beyond the Indian Act* in 2010, advocating for the restoration of private property rights on the reserve system, MLI hosted his book launch (Gutstein, 2014, 107). The following year, Civitas hosted a panel discussion on Aboriginal self-government featuring a speaker from the Atlas-affiliated Frontier Centre for Public Policy and indigenous Conservative Senator Patrick Brazeau. The panel sought to determine whether “aboriginal self-government, as laid out by the Nisga’a Treaty, create[d] a racebased [sic] and unconstitutional third order of government” or promoted “responsible self-government by freeing Aboriginals from the paternalism of the Indian Act?” (Civitas, 2011). A year later in 2012, as indigenous opposition to Gateway was escalating, Fraser Fellow Mark Milke (2012) published an article in C2C lambasting the Yinka Dene Alliance’s claims that indigenous economic and social problems were attributable to ongoing settler colonial processes as “nonsense on stilts”. Rather, “the problems Aboriginals face in Canada today are directly

attributable to a reserve system that defies economic logic.” In short, when MLI launched its indigenous research project in 2013, settler-indigenous relations were at the forefront of the neoliberal extractivist coalition’s internal deliberations. Yet much of this discussion reproduced longstanding coalition tropes about the need to eliminate special status for indigenous peoples and dismantle/privatize the reserve system.

When MLI launched its First Nations research project, it laid out detailed proposals for new corporatist strategies to overcome indigenous resistance to extractivist projects (Gutstein, 2014, 56). Interestingly, MLI was seemingly the only non-native organization in the civil society sample – proponent or opponent – with indigenous representation on its board. MLI director Calvin Helin is an indigenous entrepreneur and author who has written extensively on the capacity of indigenous peoples to pursue decolonization through capitalist entrepreneurship (Calvin Helin, n.d.). Though he has no known connections to any major indigenous governance body or advocacy group, he *is* a director of Denendeh investments and Eagle Spirit Energy Holdings, two firms developing plans to complete energy-pipeline and infrastructure projects on West Coast First Nations territory. He is also a member of Geoscience BC, a provincially funded NGO whose “mandate is to attract mineral and oil & gas investment to British Columbia through generating, interpreting and publicly distributing geoscience data in partnership with First Nations, communities, governments and industry” (About Us, n.d.).

As Davidson and Gismondi (2010) note, relations with the oil industry represent an “ethical dilemma” for many indigenous people, as “the very companies responsible” for degrading their traditional territories are “the same companies that now serve as the only employment option in the region” (99). This reality was adroitly leveraged by MLI, whose materials almost never deployed the **First Nations opposition** or **culture-economy-way of life** frames used by First Nations opponents to describe their own position on Northern Gateway (See Figure 27, Chapter 7). Like the Conservatives and Enbridge, MLI instead used the **First Nation development** frame to claim that **Northern Gateway and/or the Oil sands contribute to indigenous economic development** (see Chapter 5). In their 2012 paper “Banning Oil Tankers on the West Coast: All Pain, Little Gain”, MLI framed projects like Gateway as a potential means for First Nations’ political and economic independence from Ottawa:

Aboriginal governments and communities are frustrated by the poverty, cultural loss, unemployment, social challenges and lack of optimism among their people. The vast majority of Indigenous leaders understand, too, that dependence on Ottawa is no long-term solution... Remote communities -- the majority of the First Nations and Inuit villages in Canada -- know that there are precious few opportunities to create lasting jobs or to secure substantial revenues for their communities. Resource developments, properly done and with a fair return to the Indigenous peoples, are one of the very few opportunities available to Indigenous governments wishing to control their own destiny (MLI, 2012, March 14).

Yet MLI's discourse did not simply reproduce that of Harper and his ministers. Rather, it was a corrective to both the arrogant proscriptions of its fellow coalition members – who blamed the reserve system, special indigenous legal status, and cultural pathologies for persistent economic problems – and the ham fisted approach to consultation developed by Enbridge and the Harper Government. As supposedly objective experts independent of state and industry, MLI could sidestep the hostility faced by Enbridge and the Conservatives over the many shortcomings of their indigenous consultation strategies, which included: shutting First Nations out of the NEB scoping process; refusing to conduct nation-to-nation negotiations with communities along the project route; scrapping the Kelowna accord and its funding commitments; increasing surveillance of First Nations communities by the RCMP and other bodies; and passing omnibus bills C-38, -45 and -51, interpreted by many as a direct assault on indigenous sovereignty.

Arguably, many of Harper's missteps on the Northern Gateway file regarding indigenous consultation emerged from his Cabinet's general agreement with the hardline approach advocated by Fraser's Milke and others in the neoliberal coalition who demonstrated a distinct lack of respect for aboriginal rights and status (Harris, 2014, 286-311). As Coulthard explains, Bill C-45 played such a crucial role in launching the Idle No More resistance because it was seen as a stealth attempt to "erode Aboriginal land and treaty rights" by "reduc[ing] the amount of resource development projects that require environmental assessment;... chang[ing] the regulations that govern on-reserve leasing in a way that will make it easier for special interests to access First Nation reserve lands for the purposes of economic development and settlement; and... radically curtail[ing] environmental protections for lakes and rivers (160). MLI's approach, on the other hand, did not blame First Nations' problems on cultural pathologies, the reserve system, or indigenous legal status. Instead, MLI drew on the **First Nations**

**sovereignty/consultation** and **First Nations as allies/partners** frames to advocate for a more collaborative framework that largely left the basic structures of the reserve system and indigenous legal status intact.

Yet while Gateway's opponents framed indigenous opposition as a *democratic manifestation of sovereignty* [see Chapter 7], MLI reproduced discourses of the project's industry and state proponents by framing First Nations development and sovereignty as *a corporatist project to be co-managed by state and capital*. In a May 2013 report authored by Coates and Crowley (2013, May) entitled "New Beginnings: How Canada's Natural Resource Wealth Could Re-shape Relations with Aboriginal People", the authors linked the nation building project with First Nations sovereignty and development:

The scale and intensity of resource development in Canada has kept the national economy strong in the midst of global difficulties; equally important, the vast treasure trove of Canadian resources provides solid assurance that the Canadian economy will remain robust well into the future.

These exciting and important opportunities, however, hinge on Canada's ability to establish fair, clear, and durable agreements with First Nations. This paper sets the stage for the Macdonald-Laurier Institute's major new three year project on Aboriginal Canada and the Natural Resource Economy by drawing attention to the experience of Aboriginal engagement with resource development, growing Aboriginal empowerment over the last 40 years, and the constructive, mutually beneficial collaborations that have emerged between Aboriginal groups, governments, and developers informed and shaped by recent court decisions and modern treaties. We believe that this overview gives reasons for hope for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians alike that the natural resource economy may provide the basis for shared prosperity and progress.

A release for the report referred to the numerous potential policy proposals hoped to achieve First Nations acceptance of extractivist projects, including "Self-financing equity participation by Aboriginal communities to ensure full partnership in every aspect of the project's execution and operation while reducing dependence on government; Creation of several separate revenue streams that benefit First Nations all along the pipeline corridor; A new long-term and region-wide approach to Impact and Benefit Agreements (IBAs) that guarantee jobs, training and other economic opportunities", and other measures (MLI, 2013, May 30). Unlike Flanagan's new book, Milke's arguments in C2C, and the 2011 Civitas panel, MLI's recommendations took the

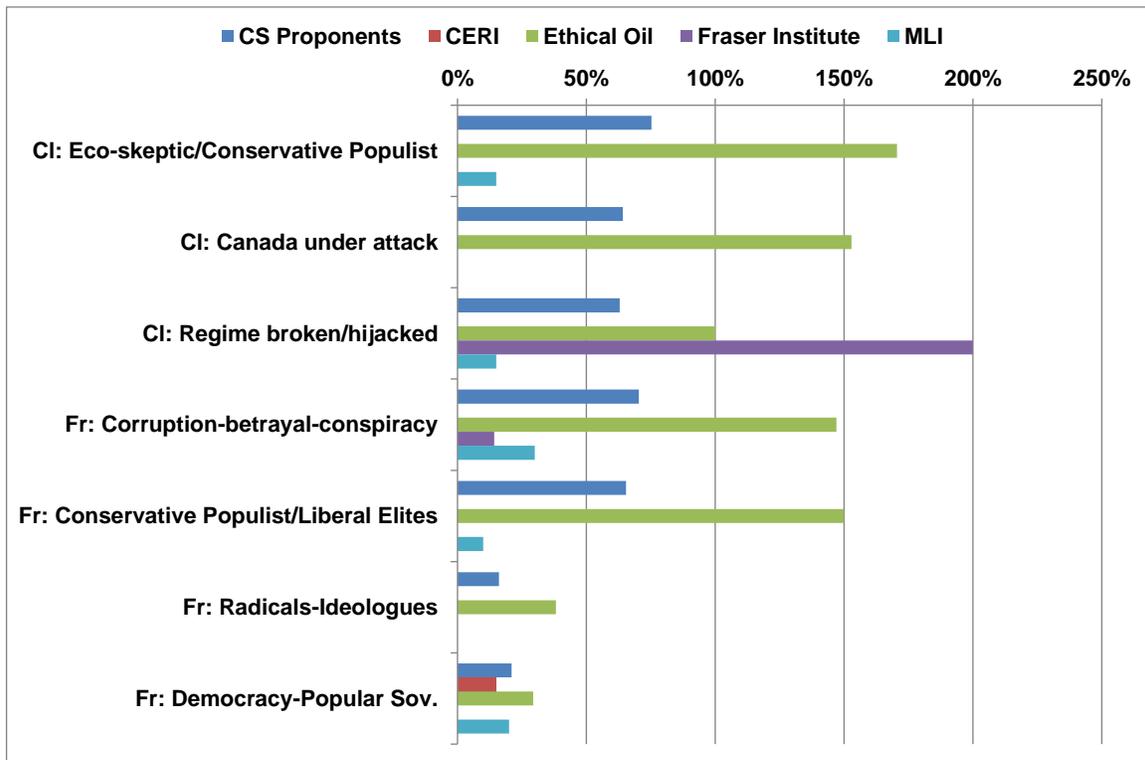
basic structure of indigenous legal status, the treaty system, and the reserve system as a given. As such, their work represented an intervention in and refinement of existing coalition debates, offering more potentially fruitful avenues for corporatist collaboration between industry, government, and indigenous communities.

#### **6.3.4. Popular Front Group: Ethical Oil, Populism, and the Pro-Gateway Coalition**

While MLI attempted to integrate First Nations into their nation building project, widespread indigenous opposition was almost entirely ignored by most civil society proponents (See Figure 27). Instead, these actors deployed all of Minister Oliver's technocratic claims concerning the economic benefits accruing to both Canada and First Nations from export market diversification. Yet one key aspect of Oliver's discourse was largely missing: *the conservative populist and ecoskeptical denunciation of project opponents* utilized most infamously in the 'foreign funded radicals' letter (See Chapter 5). While conservative populist frames *did* turn up occasionally, as in Crowley's (2014, May 2) op-ed on social license, on the whole MLI, CERI and Fraser texts rarely made use of populist or ecoskeptical claims. Of course, the foreign funded radicals' narrative was wholly complementary to the more technocratic arguments in favor of project approval. If export market diversification benefited a *reified national subject*, opposition to Gateway was necessarily an *attack on the Canadian nation*.

Yet Ethical Oil was the only organization to frequently make this claim (See Figure 28). Following the 'Oliver Letter', the group posted numerous blog posts reproducing the 'foreign funded radicals' discourse and supporting government actions to reform the approval process and audit pipeline opponents. This discourse complimented that of MLI, with the two groups collectively reproducing Oliver's broader technocratic and populist discourses. Importantly, it was these two organizations that had the closest ties to the Harper Conservatives, having both been founded by cabinet insiders. They were also both closely aligned with Canada's New Right discourse coalitions that had pioneered the deployment of ecoskeptical discourses in Canada. The specialized-yet-complementary activities of these groups speaks to the broader intra- and inter-field coordination of New Right discourse coalitions, which are of course not monolithic. In fact, it is the relative autonomy of these groups that allows them the

institutional space to develop their own strategies regarding the best way to secure contemporary coalition priorities based on their own unique cultural capital.



**Figure 28: Conservative Populist Arguments and Frames for Civil Society Proponents (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

Despite this relative autonomy, the conservative-populism of groups like Ethical Oil is invaluable to the broader discourse coalitions in which they are embedded. This is because populist rhetoric gains force through the delineation of ‘in groups’ – with whom target audiences are meant to identify – and ‘out groups’ – often articulated as oppressive elites hostile to popular forces (Jamieson and Capella , 2008, 178). Various accounts explain how conservative populism in the US emerged as a strategy to help Republicans overcome class and region disparities in conservative voting blocs, uniting voters against common enemies (Frank, 2012; Jamieson and Capella, 2008, 59)

Scholarship demonstrates that cognitive acceptance of environmental risk claims are mediated through a subject’s acceptance of the legitimacy of the ‘expert’ communicating them (Kahan et al., 2011 2; Mooney, 2011, 2). This partially explains how self-described conservatives in the United States have become *less* likely to accept the scientific consensus on climate change over time. The more that extractivist

coalitions frame climate scientists and environmentalists as ‘liberal elites’ exploiting the ‘conservative popular’, the more that their findings are rejected. Because elites are often defined as those who meddle in ‘market forces’, ecoskeptic discourse parallels Wendy Brown’s (2006) description of neoconservatism and neoliberalism as ideologies oriented around ‘political passivity’. Ecoskepticism is therefore the conservative populist discourse *par excellence*, with ecoskeptic actors consistently identifying environmentalists who democratically intervene in market activity as: **a)** anti-capitalist ideologues wishing to exert regulatory power over beleaguered consumer-citizens; and **b)** self-interested elite actors financially benefiting from environmental hysteria by way of increased grants and donations (Oreskes and Conway, 2010, 134).

Yet a specific cultural capital is required to convincingly deploy populist frames. Elected officials can do so – with some difficulty – by positioning themselves as legal representatives of the popular will. Yet as organizations whose cultural capital emanates from their self-presentation as *experts insulated from special interests and democratic publics*, think tanks cannot claim to represent much of anyone. It is therefore much easier for advocacy groups like Ethical Oil to deploy populist frames. Even while mediated through the celebrity of Levant and his well-publicized book, EthicalOil.org attempted to cultivate the cultural capital of the ‘representative popular’ by speaking on behalf of ‘everyday Canadians’ dependent on extractivism for their economic wellbeing. Despite their connections to the Harper Conservatives, the oil industry, the Fraser institute, Civitas, and so on, the group had to *present itself* as members – or at least allies – of the national popular so as to credibly deploy the populist claims that complemented the technocratic ones of MLI and others.

Such discourses do not *necessarily* have to interpellate subjects as members of the conservative national popular in order to be politically effective. As Hirsch argued, “to preserve ideological hegemony, it is only necessary for the ruling group to reinforce dominant values and at the same time prevent the dissemination of opinion that effectively challenges the basic assumptions of the society” (quoted in Domhoff, 1978, 170). This is because, notes Domhoff, “[p]ublic knowledge of inequality and injustice isn’t so damaging as long as these perceptions are not drawn together into a coherent, opposing ideology” which could form “the basis for an anti-corporate, anti-capitalist social movement” (198). I believe these thinkers understate the power of hegemonic ideologies to frame the social world for many people. However, they help us keep in

mind how elites may be as well served by tactics that *eliminate their opponents' capacity to articulate and circulate alternative ideological positions* as they are by the successful interpellation of working and middle class individuals as subjects fully accepting of hegemonic articulations.

By reinforcing Oliver's 'foreign funded radicals' framework, Ethical Oil attempted to discredit the anti-Gateway opposition as a viable political force offering a worthy ideological alternative to neoliberal extractivism. More importantly, Ethical Oil's nominal distance from government allowed them to publically back the Conservatives' corporatist attempts to reform the review and regulatory process and audit project opponents. In doing so, they directly referenced offending organizations like Dogwood Initiative and Sierra Club, denouncing both groups for accepting money from US-based foundations and helping sign up members of the public to the JRP.

The interfield and specialized nature of the extractivist coalition was demonstrated by the way Ethical Oil's conservative populist claims sought validity by referencing the technocratic claims of other state and civil society proponents. In one angry denunciation of Northern Gateway's opponents, Ethical Oil referenced "federal natural resources minister Joe Oliver", who had publically explained how "opening markets beyond the U.S. to Canada's Ethical Oil will create here at home 'hundreds of thousands of new jobs' and 'trillions [of dollars] in economic benefits'" (Ellerton, 2012, July 26). The post went on to explain that "All provinces will benefit handsomely from the successful development of the oil sands industry — in jobs and tax transfers — as the Canadian Energy Research Institute has exhaustively detailed". Another post cited MLI's paper dismissing the Dutch Disease phenomenon (2012, June 11). It critiqued how "some politicians — \*cough, Thomas Mulcair, cough\* — spread disinformation and unfounded economic assertions about the oil sands having a negative effect on Canada's economy". Meanwhile:

"a report [by] an Ottawa think tank demonstrates how the oil industry is benefiting Canadians across the country. The study from the independent Macdonald-Laurier Institute determines that the economic benefits of Canada's oil and gas industry far outweigh any concerns such as currency issues".

With the symbolic nationalization of the industry established, Ethical Oil could join Minister Oliver in describing Canada as under attack by corrupt, foreign-funded

environmentalist elites who had hijacked the nation's regulatory apparatus in service of their own radical ideological agenda. Eschewing community or provincial interest almost entirely, Ethical Oil frequently referred to the **national interest** (See Figure 22) in conjunction with a powerful **corruption-betrayal-conspiracy** frame to warn that **the nation was under attack by project opponents** who had **hijacked the nation's review process** (See Fig 28). In a blog post entitled "Time to stand up to foreign meddlers", the group blasted "the foreign interests that are colluding to manipulate our government's decision on whether to approve the Northern Gateway pipeline project" (Ethical Oil, 2012, Jan. 4). They referred to the work of Vancouver Blogger (and Oliver-approved source) Vivian Krause, who they claimed had done "great investigative work uncovering the foreign dollars behind anti-industry groups (like Dogwood) operating in Canada". Opponents were framed as foreign elites: "we [Canadians] can all agree that a pipeline inside Canada, affecting Canada, is something that is something that Canadians get to make the decision about — not American billionaires, or the Swiss, or the British."

In this narrative, Canadian opponents had entered the service of foreign elites because **they were radical ideologues** (See Figure 28). In one April 2012 post, the group referred to "zealously anti-oil groups with their fevered conspiracy theories that our government is a secret puppet of Big Oil" (Graham, 2012, April 18). By signing up hostile members of the public to the JRP hearings, Canada's "regulatory processes [had] been turned into a circus by radical groups interested only in paralyzing our reviews" in service of an "anti-development dogma" dedicated to "cripple[ing] Canada's competitiveness for investment".

Yet it was not just ideology, but the lure of foreign dollars motivating these corrupt ideologues to betray their country. A post entitled "Dogwood doesn't care about the 'national interest'" critiqued Dogwood's Emma Gilchrist for disingenuously deploying the 'Dutch Disease' argument in a recent column in the Calgary Herald:

The Dogwood Initiative isn't paid big money by billionaire foreigners to help Canada's trade balance: it's paid big money by foreign billionaires to [sic], as one of these arrangements clearly stipulates, "to help grow public opposition to counter the Enbridge [Northern Gateway] pipeline construction ..." (Ethical Oil, 2012, Feb 22)

As with the technocratic claims of other proponents, Canada's interest was positioned as dependent on further transnational economic integration, which was seen as more benign than the insidious transnationalisation the environmental movement:

To Dogwood, foreign investment that could create jobs and opportunities for Canadians is something to be stopped. The only kind of foreign investment Dogwood appears to support is the cheques the organization gets from its rich, foreign patrons. That's not good economics. And that's not standing up for Canada's national interests. That's just Dogwood standing up for its own interests.

In their claims that opponents had *hijacked or corrupted the regulatory process*, Ethical Oil regularly supported ongoing corporatist attempts by the Harper Government to secure extractivist projects and shut down democratic opposition. In doing so, they demonstrated a key difference between the populist discourses of proponents and opponents. Opponents had framed resistance to Northern Gateway as a manifestation of democratic popular sovereignty, which was seen as furthering the popular interest (See Chapters 5 and 7). Yet Ethical Oil, like other proponents, rarely deployed democratic frames (See Figure 28). Instead, their populism justified the *corporatist* governance of the Conservatives. Though reforms to the approval process were designed to undermine future public intervention, such anti-democratic corporatism could be described as a benevolent attempt to protect the national popular from the country's enemies. In an April 2012 post entitled "Smartening up a flawed approval process", the group backed the C-38 omnibus bill, which would radically delimit public participation in future reviews and devolve final authority for all projects back to Cabinet:

Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver announced on Tuesday new details of plans outlined in the recent federal budget to ensure that major project proposals don't keep getting bogged down in interminable regulatory red tape... In the past, some applications have taken as long as six years from proposal to approval. "What kind of message does that send to investors?" Oliver asked.

Anti-development groups know exactly what kind of message that presents: "Don't invest in Canada; don't create jobs for Canadians; take your money somewhere else." And it's exactly the message they want to send. Clogging up regulatory approval processes to block new projects and scare off investment — and the jobs that come with them — is their modus operandi (Graham, 2012, April 18)

Another post lauded the government for carrying out tax audits against project opponents (following a complaint originally filed by Ethical Oil's law firm):

Groups like the Dogwood Initiative and Forest Ethics actually work every day to take prosperity away from Canadians, by standing in the way of energy infrastructure projects like the Northern Gateway pipeline. But they probably aren't terribly worried about what average Canadians think about them... "mobbing the mic" at the public hearings into Gateway [because] Dogwood gets its money from... Tides Canada, which gets a lot of its money from foreign donors. Dogwood's foreign backers don't care about Canadian jobs and prosperity. They don't care if we can afford to build more schools and hospitals...

But Tides gets charitable status to collect foreign money, and then gets tax breaks to give that money to these zealously anti-oil sands groups, who get more tax breaks. They're moving around huge sums of money used to attack Canada's energy industry and taxpayers get stuck with a bill for their services. That can't be what Ottawa intended when it created special charitable tax exemptions (Ethical Oil, 2012, March 17).

Ethical Oil's focus on regulatory reform and politicized audits demonstrated the interfield nature of the extractivist coalition, with the civil society group giving discursive cover for the political activities of the very Federal Cabinet in which its leading members were recently employed. It was also indicative of the emergent coordination of the coalition's various members based on their respective cultural capitals. While MLI joined CAPP and CERI in making detailed technocratic arguments in favor of approval, Ethical Oil backed up the Harper Government's populist denunciations of opponents. Together both groups reproduced the broader discursive strategy of the Harper Conservatives, with whom they were both intimately linked. What's more, the emergent coordination between these groups aided a fundamental goal of the coalition – symbolically splitting green and settler opposition from First Nations. As Jen Preston (2013) notes, "promoting division and non-co-operation between" First Nations and green groups" was described by petrobloc intellectuals like Tom Flanagan as "the best way to ensure the 'security' of the tar sands". In keeping with this goal, populist denunciations of opponents never even *mentioned* First Nations, who were symbolically integrated into the nation-building project by the various reports, op-eds, and press releases of MLI.

## 6.4. Conclusions

The four groups in the civil society proponent sample were clearly part of a common pro-Gateway discourse coalition. Yet like any such coalition there was a good deal of internal differentiation, and it was not clear that all 4 groups were part of the longer-standing New Right and ecoskeptical coalitions oriented around groups like Fraser.

CERI's sample in particular registered few ties to new right think tanks and other network hubs, and was the only group that admitted to Northern Gateway's regional disparities concerning risk and benefit. CERI, in short, appeared to be a more classical corporatist institute relied on by its state and industry backers for legitimate research, as opposed to groups like Fraser that tend to package dogma and coalition priorities in the guise of research. Yet there is little doubt that the basic ideological and policy preferences of CERI's work lie firmly within the neoliberal extractivism worldview. This is no surprise, given that the group's energy industry backers were foundational in the promotion of this ideology since their initial bankrolling of the Fraser Institute in the 1970s.

It is these connections to the Canadian energy industry and state actors that allows CERI to be so easily integrated into a pro-Gateway coalition dominated by more overtly ideological New Right and ecoskeptical actors. While one might suspect Fraser to have taken the lead in this coalition, given its pioneering role in developing Canadian eco-skepticism, the groups produced relatively few Northern Gateway-specific texts. Yet the two younger organizations – Ethical Oil and MLI – which produced the majority of texts were just as deeply embedded in the broader New Right coalition. Both groups were founded by prominent New Right policy entrepreneurs and possessed numerous ties to Donner funded organizations, Atlas groups, Civitas and C2C. These last two groups functioned similarly to the US policy planning groups studied by Domhoff, Dye, and Fisher, bringing together elite actors and intellectuals from multiple fields to discuss contemporary policy issues concerning the broader coalition. This is what Domhoff (1978) described as the “policy formation process”, in which it was “within the organizations of the policy planning network that the various special interests join[ed] together to forge, however slowly and gropingly, the general policies that will benefit them as a whole” (60). Similarly, within C2C and Civitas New Right luminaries from government, industry, academia, think tanks, and media can identify shared policy goals and discuss the best means of achieving them. This was precisely what occurred with the coalition's First Nation's ‘portfolio’. MLI's more collaborative approach served as an intervention into strategies then being discussed by coalition actors from MLI, the Fraser Institute, the Frontier Centre for Public Policy, and the Conservative Party within the articles of C2C, the books of Tom Flanagan, and the conferences of Civitas.

Both Ethical Oil and MLI were also tightly linked to capital fractions increasingly dependent on neoliberal extractivism for their own profitability. They were also the two

groups most closely associated with the Harper Conservatives. Yet instead of trying to influence state policy from the outside or serve as an incubator for future state planers, both groups were co-founded by state actors associated with the Harper Cabinet and worked to promote the Conservatives' political priorities. As such, ties linking MLI and Ethical Oil to New Right EPII groups on the one hand, and to the Harper Conservatives on the other, are evidence of the *interfield* nature of the New Right discourse coalition and the neoliberal extractivist petrobloc it has helped constitute and defend.

The discourse deployed by coalition members indicates an emergent network coordination, in which different groups use complementary yet distinct framing strategies related to their specific forms of cultural capital in service of a common, boarder argument. All groups collectively reproduced the broader arguments of Minister Oliver's 'foreign funded radicals' letter. MLI, Fraser, and CERI all deployed technocratic nationalist arguments concerning diversification which symbolically nationalized the project's economic benefits. Meanwhile Ethical Oil deployed the conservative populist and ecoskeptic 'foreign funded radicals' argument to denounce project opponents, sometimes recirculating Oliver's statements and the work of groups like CERI and MLI to do so. Importantly, all groups focused on frames and arguments best suited to their specific forms of cultural capital. They also tended to back up the ongoing political priorities of the Harper Conservatives. MLI deployed the very same 'global energy superpower talking point originally developed by the Harper Conservatives, while Ethical Oil wrote numerous blog posts directly supporting the government's recent omnibus bills and auditing of opponents.

By symbolically nationalizing project benefits, these groups attempted to counter the regionalist arguments of opponents while amplifying the salience of national subject positions from whose vantage points their own claims would be intelligible. This strategy helped efface the maldistribution of risks and benefits which did not align with a reified national space in either a geographical and sociological sense. Geographically, the risk of a spill or leak would be borne by BC settlers and First Nations, while project benefits would largely accrue to Alberta, the Federal Government, and Eastern Canadian and international investors. Sociologically, a focus on a reified 'national interest' erased the class divisions that structure such projects. Relatively few jobs are produced building pipelines or indeed extracting and shipping raw bitumen, since the capital intensive industry produces relatively little employment per dollar invested compared with

manufacturing and service industries with higher rates of employment intensity and employee compensation. Similarly, 'Dutch Disease' threatens to undermine workers dependent on value-added manufacturing. In short, the symbolic nationalization of project benefits erased the fact that the national class fractions most likely to benefit from Gateway's completion have interests more in line with global finance capital and overseas energy markets than they do with the nation's own working classes.

Though proponents' claims were ultimately rejected by the majority of British Columbians (as demonstrated in polls conducted before and after JRP approval), they were not a total failure. First, they provided ideological cover for the government's corporatist attempts to secure energy export market diversification – the Conservatives surely benefited from having an interfield echo chamber in which 'independent' civil society actors amplified their own foreign funded radical discourse, dismissed concerns about Dutch Disease and environmental risk, and supported their legislation and auditing of Gateway opponents. Second, these groups aided the long term hegemony of neoliberal extractivism in Canada. As Rich (2005) notes, a key function of think tanks is to "create a substantive context for future policy change" in which long term ideational work "accumulate[s] over time in a policy area to convince decision makers of a preferred course of action" (213). This "work does not have an immediate effect on policy debates, but it can play a critical and substantive role in the long run". In this sense, the symbolic nationalization of project benefits helped keep neoliberal extractivism within the realm of policy consensus by framing Northern Gateway as part of a broadly accepted development trajectory more important than any single project.

Such discourse does provide a space for opponents to develop critical counter-narratives – if oil sands development is about benefiting the nation, why not nationalize the sector in a manner similar to a country like Norway? Yet in the absence of calls to socialize the benefits and risks of development, this potential weakness in symbolic nationalization discourse may be difficult to exploit. If contemporary political developments are any indication, this has indeed been a missed opportunity. While Trudeau's Liberal government *has* rejected Northern Gateway (Tasker, 2016, Nov. 29), the Canadian media has gleefully eviscerated the LEAP manifesto, while both Trudeau and Alberta NDP premier Rachel Notley take continued export market diversification and tar sands expansion as a foregone conclusion (Taber, McCarthy, and Fife, 2016, Jan. 22). Trudeau has even managed to approve the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion – a

project which raises many of the same economic and ecological concerns as Northern Gateway – while Trudeau and Notley both continue to talk about the necessity of meeting Canada’s climate change commitments. In this context, it appears that the pro-Gateway coalition *has* been successful in keeping neoliberal extractivism within the sphere of consensus.

None of this means the extractivist coalition was entirely united or monolithic. MLI’s work on First Nations, for instance, cannot be understood as simple ‘water carrying’ for the group’s state or civil society allies. MLI’s research was clearly intended as a corrective to the Conservatives’ disastrous attempts to secure indigenous consent for contemporary extractivist projects. MLI had the relative autonomy necessary to pull this off precisely because they were *not* simply a front group for the Harper Conservatives. MLI does not *merely* exist to reproduce Conservative talking points, but also to develop a ‘rolling consensus’ which can determine just what the interests of its elite backers and the broader neoliberal extractivist petrobloc actually *are*. As Domhoff (1978) noted, just because power elite groups “dominate policy making” does not imply the existence of a “united power elite that always gets exactly what it wants” (119). It merely implies an attempt to ensure the “[r]uling class has the institutional capability to develop policies on the major issues facing the social system” (121).

Finally, we must ask: why were the youngest groups in the coalition the most prominent on this issue? Given their previous dominance in climate denial and neoliberal extractivist campaigns, why was Fraser not the most active group on the Gateway issue? One possible explanation is that Fraser’s connections to the oil industry, the Harper Conservatives, and climate denial networks are now very well documented. As Oreskes and Conway (2010) demonstrate, when denial groups have their industry connections exposed, their elite backers are forced to find (or found, as the case may be) new organizations better capable of promoting their interests. In accordance with the cultural cognition of environmental risk, Fraser’s work today mostly appeals to those actors that openly identify with the organization’s far right worldview. MLI and Ethical Oil, despite having the same connections to industry, New Right EPII groups, and the Harper Conservatives, were not yet associated with such actors in the minds of most members of the public. They could therefore maintain perceived source credibility based on their unique forms of cultural capital, which in both cases was dependent on an audience’s lack of knowledge of their various New Right and elite connections.

## **Chapter 7. Civil War: Discourse Coalitions, Civil Society and the Gateway Opposition**

As Dianne Stone (1996) argues, a discourse coalition whose “policy perspective is not politically accepted must diffuse its knowledge beyond the state”, often by cultivating networks of civil society groups which can develop and promote its political vision (103). Like the neoliberal extractivist coalitions’ elite backers, the environmental movement has been relatively successful in creating its own advocacy groups that utilize sophisticated public relations tactics to promote environmentalism in the public sphere (Greenberg and Knight, 2011). First Nations activists have also challenged neoliberal extractivism, less by appealing to broader settler publics than by cultivating solidarity-based movements with indigenous peoples across the country and making legal challenges based on aboriginal rights and title (Coulthard, 2014).

Yet expansion of the tar sands has largely continued apace since the first major boom in the 1990s, which is why the Northern Gateway conflict deserves such close scrutiny. As Gramsci (1996) and his followers (Hall, 1988; Laclau, 1977) argued, no hegemonic order is invulnerable. Faced with a serious enough crisis the underlying ideological assumptions of a given social order may become unmoored. This may afford oppositional groups new opportunities to form alternative discourse coalitions which can coordinate their own interfield political projects.

As I have argued, the battle over Northern Gateway can be understood as the political manifestations of and reactions to a series of interlocking local and global economic, political, and ecological crises. Canadian corporate and state planners face a growing dependence on resource extraction to attract foreign capital, pursue global markets, and maintain growth and fiscal stability – albeit in a way which disproportionately benefits various Canadian elites and capital fractions whose interests are increasingly aligned with those of their global counterparts. Yet the drive to link Canadian bitumen to overseas markets has increasingly run up against neoliberal extractivism’s ecological and economic contradictions.

The place-bound materiality of oil sands production means that local resistance to such projects threatens to cut off the oil sands from international markets and foreign

investors (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011). In the case of Gateway, resistance was generated by the inequities inherent to neoliberal extractivism and Northern Gateway in particular, in which benefits would mostly accrue to the Alberta and Federal Government; Albertan and multinational oil companies; the Canadian finance industry; Canadian elites whose financial equity is bound up with tar sands profits; various global investors, and – to an extent – energy workers who would gain in income and employment. Costs would largely be absorbed by First Nations and settler communities along the project route; manufacturing workers and provincial governments harmed by ‘Dutch disease’; taxpayers who would continue to forego a reasonable share of resource rents; energy workers deprived of increased employment from value-added refining activities; and all those most at risk from climate change.

That energy workers can be described as both winners and losers – making *absolute economic* gains even while taking *relative* losses from the industry’s forgoing of value-added refining activities and low rates of employee compensation – highlights the political role of communication. Industry-friendly narratives must point to the *absolute gains* in economic benefit, while downplaying the sector’s inequalities and instabilities. Opponents, meanwhile, must highlight *absolute* losses faced by particular communities and regions, like the devastation wrought by a leak or spill. However, they must also discuss the *relative* distribution of risk and benefit associated with tar sands projects. As we shall see, the civil society actors discussed in this chapter developed narratives which highlighted both Northern Gateway’s absolute and relative costs, making them invaluable and in some ways leading members of the anti-Gateway discourse coalition.

## **7.1. Civil Discourse: The Anti-Gateway Discourse Coalition**

The ENGOs and First Nations groups explored in this chapter generated and deployed similar discursive repertoires, marking them as members of a common anti-Gateway discourse coalition. Yet a closer look reveals a good deal of complexity. The two settler organizations, for example, seem to be quite similar on the surface. Yet in many ways, Dogwood Initiative and Sierra Club BC are quite different organizations.

### 7.1.1. Sierra Club BC

Sierra Club BC (SCBC) has existed since 1969, when it emerged out of a regional grassroots campaign to protect wilderness areas in BC's Nitinat Triangle. While it was once a Canadian branch of Sierra Club US, the influential US conservation organization, today the group is fully independent from both Sierra Club US and Sierra Club Canada (Sierra Club BC, "History", n.d.). Though SCBC is a classic example of a 'legacy' environmental organization, it follows the path of its US sister organization in embracing a model of social change oriented around democratic mobilization and grassroots organizing (Hestres, 2015). For decades, SCBC has been active in campaigns aimed at protecting ecologically sensitive areas throughout the province, relating local issues to global environmental problems and sustainable economic development. As their website notes:

'Sierra Club BC works to defend B.C.'s wild places and species, within the urgent context of climate change. We advocate for a rapid shift away from fossil fuels to a low carbon, equitable economy.'

Sierra was instrumental in developing the 2009 agreements establishing the Great Bear Rainforest – which the Northern Gateway project was proposed to cross – as a protected ecological site (Sierra Club BC, "History", n.d.). Despite the troubled history between Sierra Club US and indigenous peoples (Smith, 2015), there has been increasing collaboration between SCBC and local First Nations in recent years. SCBC has been an ongoing supporter of the Coastal Guardian Watchmen Network, established in 2005 as "an accredited training program for First Nations focused on monitoring land and water-based resource activities on traditional territories" (Sierra Club BC, "History", n.d.). The Watchmen Network was an active opponent of the Gateway project, which would have impacted much of the unceded territory under its jurisdiction.

SCBC was a major opponent of Northern Gateway. They wrote op-eds in various mainstream and alternative media publications, organized demonstrations, communicated directly with supporters via digital media, served as intervenors in the JRP, and collaborated actively with First Nations opposition. The latter involved media campaigns publicizing the work of the Coastal Guardian Watchmen and signing the Yinka Dene Alliance (YDA)'s Save The Fraser Declaration Solidarity Accord, created to give settler allies the opportunity to support the YDA's territorial ban on Gateway.

SCBC was one of the main groups targeted by Northern Gateway's proponents. Along with Dogwood, they were criticized by blogger Vivian Krause as a recipient of grants from US-linked charitable foundations like Tides Canada (Krause, 2012). Krause's research became the basis for Minister Oliver's 'foreign funded radicals' letter, and SCBC was subsequently targeted by various non-state members of the pro-Gateway discourse coalition – including the advocacy group Ethical Oil and various journalists and media figures – who went on to reproduce the 'foreign funded radicals' argument. They were also one of the organizations targeted for audits by Revenue Canada, seemingly as a result of their anti-Gateway stance (Beeby, 2015, April 30).

### **7.1.2. Dogwood Initiative**

Despite their alliance against Northern Gateway, Dogwood Initiative (DI) is a somewhat different organization than SCBC. Not only is it much younger, having been founded in 1998, it also does not generally refer to itself as an environmental group. Instead it describes itself as a “people-powered organization driven by a shared love of place” whose “goal is to build a grassroots base of engaged citizens” organizing around land and water use issues (Dogwood, 2016). As Dogwood explains in its website:

Everything we do is about giving British Columbians ways to take back decision-making power over their land and water. Right now, 96 per cent of British Columbia's land is owned by the people, but 88 per cent of that land is controlled by large timber, mining and oil companies. That stinks.

Dogwood's work is oriented towards direct political organizing. The organization's 2015 annual report claimed that “At the end of this fiscal year Dogwood Initiative had 119 local teams knocking on doors and working the phones in 37 provincial ridings across British Columbia” (Dogwood Initiative, 2015, 6). Much of this activity has been oriented around Dogwood's No Tankers campaign against Northern Gateway, which the group launched in 2007, and which DI claims has over 100,000 supporters. Despite its offline organizing focus, DI can be considered an example of what Hestres (2015) has termed a new generation of 'internet mediated advocacy organizations', such as 350.org in the United States. Like these groups, DI seems to differ from some traditional 'legacy' ENGO's through their focus on using online tools to stimulate offline mobilization.

The No Tankers campaign is a textbook example of this type of organizing. Dogwood used online outreach to help sign up local residents to the JRP process

(Krause, 2012). They also organized significant voter outreach and mobilization campaigns across the province that helped voters identify candidates from various parties who opposed Northern Gateway. Following the project's federal approval in 2014, the group began organizing for a provincial direct ballot initiative, while shifting much of their voter mobilization efforts to fighting Conservative candidates in the 2015 federal election (Nagata, Feb 12, 2015). They also engaged in numerous political demonstrations and other forms of direct activism, while releasing press releases and blog posts aimed at mobilizing regional opposition.

Like Sierra, the organization boasts a strong working relationship with local First Nations, whose claims to territorial sovereignty the organization overtly recognizes; "United by love for our shared home", explains the group, "First Nations and everyday British Columbians are working to realign Canadian law with underlying Indigenous laws" (Dogwood Initiative, 2015). Throughout the No Tankers campaign, the group staged joint news conferences with Coastal First Nations, and like SCBC has signed the Yinka Dene Alliances' Save the Fraser Declaration Solidarity Accord.

### **7.1.3. Coastal First Nations**

One of the greatest threats to the extractivist project posed by the anti-Gateway resistance was its capacity to unite local settlers and environmentalists with a strengthened First Nation's decolonization movement. An alliance would leverage the respective political strengths of settlers (who had voting numbers and economic clout), environmentalists (who had financial resources and connections with a domestic and global network of ENGOs) and First Nations (who had legal claims along most of the project route and an increasingly mobilized cross-Canada grassroots social movement).

Unlike SCBC and DI, neither Coastal First Nations (CFN) nor Yinka Dene Alliance (YDA) are clear-cut advocacy groups. They could just as accurately be defined as international organizations, as both bodies are umbrella organizations representing multiple BC First Nations governments. CFN was launched in the spring of 2000 as an alliance of Nations from British Columbia's North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii. Its member nations include Wuikinuxv Nation, Heiltsuk, Kitasoo/Xaixais, Nuxalk Nation, Gitga'at, Metlakatla, Old Massett, Skidegate, and the Council of the Haida Nation. The group's collective territories – all of which are

unceded – include “the Northern and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii areas of B.C., from the Alaskan border in the north to Vancouver Island in the south” (About, n.d.).

CFN was created to promote local sustainable economies by combining traditional indigenous and western approaches to resource management, and the group frames indigenous economic systems as an alternative to industrial resource extraction on indigenous territory:

For thousands of years First Nations carefully managed the abundance of natural resources in the sea and on the land by relying on our knowledge of seasonal cycles to harvest a wide variety of resources without harming or depleting them... For those of us who live in coastal communities the cost of industrial exploitation has been enormous. The most obvious cost is the depletion of forests and fish. It's clear an economy based on exploitation of natural resources is no longer viable (Coastal First Nation, n.d.).

CFN's website describes a variety of ongoing development projects and strategies based on traditional indigenous production methods and ecosystem management:

We have developed land use plans that provide ecosystem-based management over our Traditional Territories, created conservancy areas and special protection areas.

Our communities are also in the process of developing marine use plans, implementing economic opportunities in renewable energy, carbon credits, forestry, ecotourism, non-timber forest products and shellfish aquaculture (Coastal First Nations, n.d.)

Several CFN member nations are located in the Great Bear Rainforest and other ecologically sensitive areas along the proposed Northern Gateway route. These nations were quick to realize the risks to their sustainable development operations from a potential spill or leak, and in 2010 the group banned Gateway on their unceded territories using indigenous law (CFN, 2013, Dec 19). The group and several of its members were interveners in the JRP process, despite having misgivings about its legal authority concerning rights and title. They also engaged in demonstrations, hosted events, commissioned research reports identifying project risks, and penned press releases and op-eds condemning the project.

The group states that they are open to collaboration with settler organizations, noting that their “strategic approach to development includes”

numerous “partnerships and cooperative arrangements with governments, industry, ENGOs and other stakeholder groups” (History, n.d.). Throughout the Northern Gateway campaign, they collaborated with various ENGOs, including local organizations like the SCBC and global groups like the World Wildlife Fund.

#### **7.1.4. Yinka Dene Alliance**

The Yinka Dene Alliance is also a multi-nation umbrella group, consisting of the “Nadleh Whut'en, Nak'azdli, Takla Lake, Saik'uz, Wet'suwet'en, and Tl'azt'en First Nations in northern BC” (YDA, n.d). Unlike CFN, YDA formed as a direct response to Northern Gateway in December 2010 with their issuance of the Save the Fraser Declaration, which used indigenous law to ban Gateway on the unceded territory of its signatories. The Declaration has since been signed by over 130 Nations across Canada.

The YDA nations and their allies have engaged in a number of activities in an attempt to enforce their territorial ban, including the issuance of press releases, publicity tours, public demonstrations, and ongoing legal action. In 2012 they launched the Freedom Train, a cross-country tour meant to publicize the Declaration and reach new supporters (Perkel, 2012, May 9). The “Train” began at Jasper Alberta on April 30 and ended in Toronto on May 9, where the delegation confronted Enbridge at its annual shareholders meeting.

YDA has mostly welcomed the support of Gateway’s settler opponents, with members engaging in joint demonstrations with Sierra, Dogwood, and other settler groups. Their Freedom Train delegation was joined by a variety of settler organizations, and on the anniversary of the Fraser Declaration the group issued a “solidarity accord” that they encouraged settler allies to sign. The accord was signed by major unions such as Unifor and the BC Teachers’ Federation and a variety of prominent left and environmental advocacy groups, including the Council of Canadians, Greenpeace, Forest Ethics, the West Coast Environmental Law Association, the Wilderness Committee, the David Suzuki Foundation, Sierra Club BC, and Dogwood Initiative.

## 7.2. General Findings: Discourse Analysis

Like Northern Gateway’s state opponents, the civil society opponents in the sample deployed various claims concerning environmental and economic risk. Most of these focused on regional risks to coastal-marine ecosystems from a spill or leak (See Figure 29 and Table 11), while a significantly smaller number dealt with climate change, the risks to inland areas, and the need for a sustainable green economy. However, civil society opponents deployed several risk-based claims that were only rarely made by state actors. These included the claims that **Northern Gateway was an exceptionally bad project due to local environmental conditions or the project route’s passage through culturally, economically, or ecologically important, unique, or fragile ecosystems** and that **ecological damage from a spill or leak would be inevitable and/or would have effects that would be impossible to reverse.**

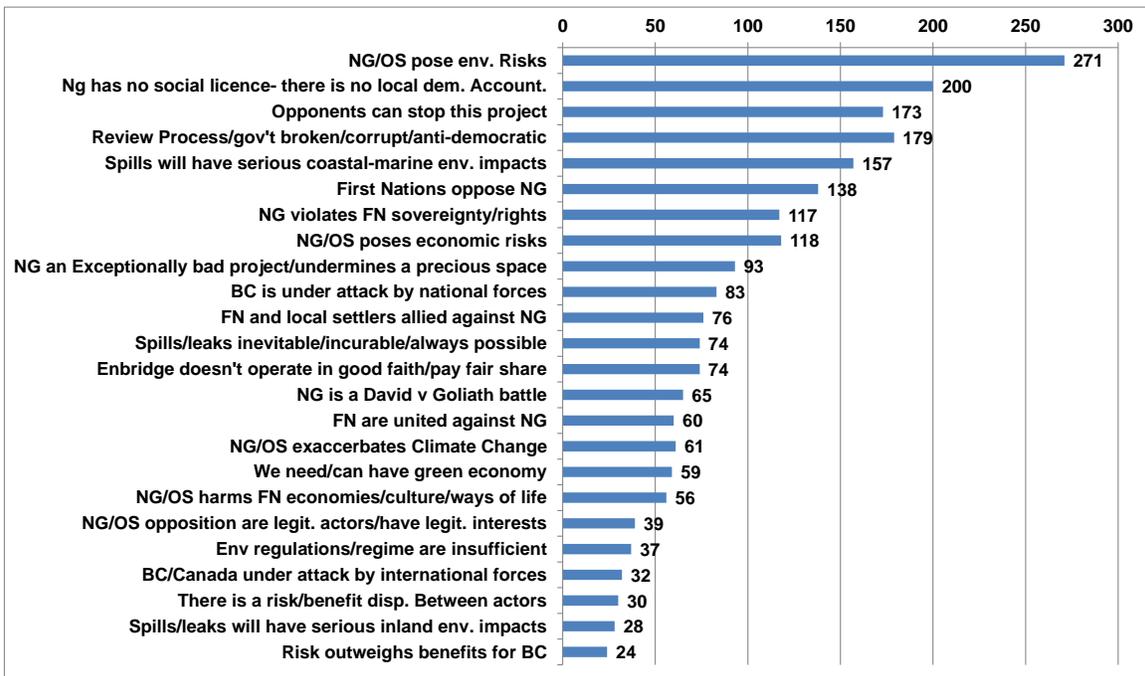


Figure 29: Common Claims of Civil Society Opponents

**Table 11: Common Claims of CS Opponents (total and weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

	All CS Opponents		CFN		Dog. In.		Sierra		YDA	
	Tot.	Wei.	Tot.	Wei.	Tot.	Wei.	Tot.	Wei.	Tot.	Wei.
<b>NG/OS poses Env. Risks</b>	271	1.10	45	1.73	83	0.61	130	1.97	13	0.72
<b>NG has no social license- no local dem. accountability</b>	200	0.81	7	0.27	137	1.00	50	0.76	6	0.33
<b>Opponents can stop this project</b>	173	0.70	6	0.23	138	1.01	23	0.35	6	0.33
<b>Review Process/gov't = broken/corrupt/anti-democratic</b>	179	0.72	20	0.77	96	0.70	47	0.71	16	0.89
<b>Spills will have serious coastal-marine env. impacts</b>	157	0.64	20	0.77	52	0.38	77	1.17	8	0.44
<b>First Nations oppose NG</b>	138	0.56	11	0.42	60	0.44	43	0.65	24	1.33
<b>NG violates FN sovereignty/rights</b>	117	0.47	11	0.42	49	0.36	26	0.39	31	1.72
<b>NG/OS poses economic risks</b>	118	0.48	33	1.27	34	0.25	46	0.70	5	0.28
<b>NG is an exceptionally bad project/undermines a precious space</b>	93	0.38	16	0.62	25	0.18	50	0.76	2	0.11
<b>BC is under attack by national forces</b>	83	0.34	9	0.35	56	0.41	14	0.21	4	0.22
<b>FN and local settlers allied against NG</b>	76	0.31	4	0.15	35	0.26	26	0.39	11	0.61
<b>Spills/leaks = inevitable/incurable/always possible</b>	74	0.30	5	0.19	35	0.26	32	0.48	2	0.11
<b>Enbridge doesn't operate in good faith/pay fair share</b>	74	0.30	21	0.81	34	0.25	17	0.26	2	0.11
<b>NG is a David v goliath battle</b>	65	0.26	4	0.15	53	0.39	4	0.06	4	0.22
<b>FN are united against NG</b>	60	0.24	9	0.35	18	0.13	18	0.27	15	0.83
<b>NG/OS exacerbates Climate Change</b>	61	0.25	1	0.04	11	0.08	45	0.68	4	0.22
<b>We need/can have green economy/economy depends on nature</b>	59	0.24	17	0.65	10	0.07	28	0.42	4	0.22
<b>NG/OS harms FN economies/culture/ways of life</b>	56	0.23	17	0.65	8	0.06	24	0.36	7	0.39
<b>NG/OS opposition are legit. actors</b>	39	0.16	0	0.00	38	0.28	0	0.00	1	0.06
<b>Env regulations/regime are insufficient</b>	37	0.15	7	0.27	18	0.13	11	0.17	1	0.06
<b>BC/Canada under attack by international forces</b>	32	0.13	0	0.00	18	0.13	14	0.21	0	0.00
<b>There is a risk/benefit disp. Between actors</b>	30	0.12	10	0.38	13	0.09	7	0.11	0	0.00
<b>Spills/leaks will have serious inland env. impacts</b>	28	0.11	1	0.04	13	0.09	12	0.18	2	0.11
<b>Risk outweighs benefits for BC</b>	24	0.10	6	0.23	12	0.09	6	0.09	0	0.00

Like state opponents, groups in the civil society sample railed against not just the *existence* of risk, but its *distribution*. In doing so, they positioned Northern Gateway as a

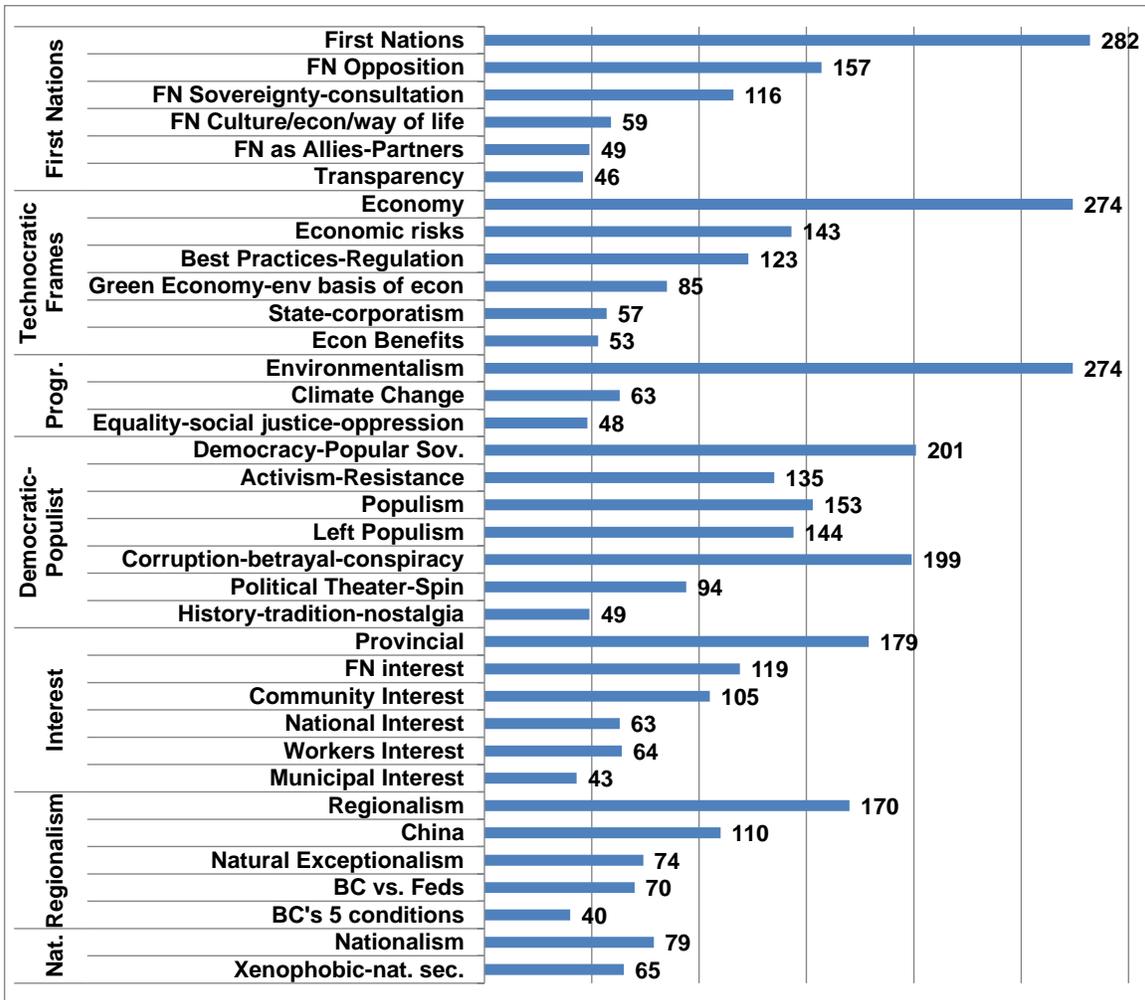
democratically illegitimate project being forced on BC by various out-of-province elites (See Figure 29 and Table 11). Yet they often made such claims with more depth and greater frequency than Gateway's state opponents. They were generally more likely than state opponents to claim that **Northern Gateway had no social license and/or that the project approval process had no local democratic accountability**, and much more likely to claim that **opponents could stop the project if they united and took political action**. Also, while state opponents regularly decried Gateway's *Canadian* out-of-province supporters, only civil society opponents frequently claimed that **BC and/or Canada was under attack by hostile *international* actors**. Similarly, only civil society opponents regularly deployed the narrative that **the Northern Gateway conflict was a David vs. Goliath struggle between weak local forces and much more powerful elites**.

Finally, the civil society groups differed from state opponents in the ways they discussed First Nations (See Figure 29 and Table 11). Not only did they discuss First Nations more often than state actors, frequently discussing First Nations opposition, sovereignty, and the alliance between First Nations and local settlers. They also made certain claims that state actors did not. These included the claims that **First Nations were united against the project** and that **Northern Gateway and/or the oil sands would harm indigenous communities' economies, culture, or ways of life**.

While proponents had often described Northern Gateway as in the **national** interest, civil society opponents aligned with their state allies in demonstrating a greater focus on the **interests** of the **province**, local **communities**, and **First Nations** (See Figure 30 and Table 12). Yet civil society opponents utilised various regional-populist frames that state opponents had rarely deployed to articulate project opponents as legitimate democratic and popular actors and proponents as an illegitimate, corrupt and/or duplicitous cabal of often foreign elites. These included **left populist, corruption-betrayal-conspiracy, political theatre or spin, xenophobic-national security, activism-resistance** and **democratic-popular sovereignty** frames.

**Table 12: Common Frames for CS Opponents**

Organizations		All CS Opponents		CFN		Dogwood Init.		Sierra		YDA	
Frames		Total	Wei.	Total	Wei.	Total	Wei.	Total	Wei.	Total	Wei.
First Nations	First Nations	282	1.14	51	1.96	114	0.83	84	1.27	33	1.83
	FN Opposition	157	0.64	14	0.54	72	0.53	44	0.67	27	1.50
	FN Sovereignty-consultation	116	0.47	11	0.42	48	0.35	29	0.44	28	1.56
	FN										
	Culture/econ/way of life	59	0.24	17	0.65	10	0.07	25	0.38	7	0.39
	FN as Allies-Partners	49	0.20	5	0.19	15	0.11	17	0.26	12	0.67
Techn. Frames	Transparency	46	0.19	7	0.27	32	0.23	4	0.06	3	0.17
	Economy	274	1.11	50	1.92	124	0.91	78	1.18	22	1.22
	Economic risks	143	0.58	32	1.23	52	0.38	52	0.79	7	0.39
	Best Practices-Regulation	123	0.50	4	0.15	90	0.66	20	0.30	9	0.50
	Green Economy-env basis of econ	85	0.34	21	0.81	29	0.21	31	0.47	4	0.22
	State-corporatism	57	0.23	2	0.08	37	0.27	6	0.09	12	0.67
Progr.	Econ Benefits	53	0.21	7	0.27	28	0.20	14	0.21	4	0.22
	Environmentalism	274	1.11	45	1.73	74	0.54	141	2.14	14	0.78
	Climate Change	63	0.26	1	0.04	12	0.09	46	0.70	4	0.22
	Equality-social justice-oppression	48	0.19	9	0.35	22	0.16	12	0.18	5	0.28
	Democracy-Popular Sov.	201	0.81	14	0.54	152	1.11	34	0.52	1	0.06
	Activism-Resistance	135	0.55	0	0.00	100	0.73	30	0.45	5	0.28
Dem-Pop.	Populism	153	0.62	16	0.62	109	0.80	25	0.38	3	0.17
	Left Populism	144	0.58	15	0.58	104	0.76	23	0.35	2	0.11
	Corruption-betrayal-conspiracy	199	0.81	30	1.15	113	0.82	42	0.64	14	0.78
	Political Theater-Spin	94	0.38	0	0.00	84	0.61	6	0.09	4	0.22
	History-tradition-nostalgia	49	0.20	10	0.38	27	0.20	11	0.17	1	0.06
	Provincial	179	0.72	15	0.58	132	0.96	25	0.38	7	0.39
Interest	FN interest	119	0.48	14	0.54	54	0.39	33	0.50	18	1.00
	Community Interest	105	0.43	11	0.42	46	0.34	38	0.58	10	0.56
	National Interest	63	0.26	8	0.31	38	0.28	14	0.21	3	0.17
	Workers Interest	64	0.26	6	0.23	24	0.18	29	0.44	5	0.28
	Municipal Interest	43	0.17	0	0.00	27	0.20	12	0.18	4	0.22
	Regionalism	170	0.69	31	1.19	96	0.70	38	0.58	5	0.28
Region.	China	110	0.45	3	0.12	86	0.63	17	0.26	4	0.22
	Natural	74	0.30	12	0.46	25	0.18	35	0.53	2	0.11
	Exceptionalism	70	0.28	9	0.35	57	0.42	2	0.03	2	0.11
	BC vs. Feds	40	0.16	3	0.12	33	0.24	4	0.06	0	0.00
Nation.	BC's 5 conditions	40	0.16	3	0.12	33	0.24	4	0.06	0	0.00
	Nationalism	79	0.32	8	0.31	46	0.34	21	0.32	4	0.22
	Xenophobic-nat. sec.	65	0.26	5	0.19	36	0.26	20	0.30	4	0.22



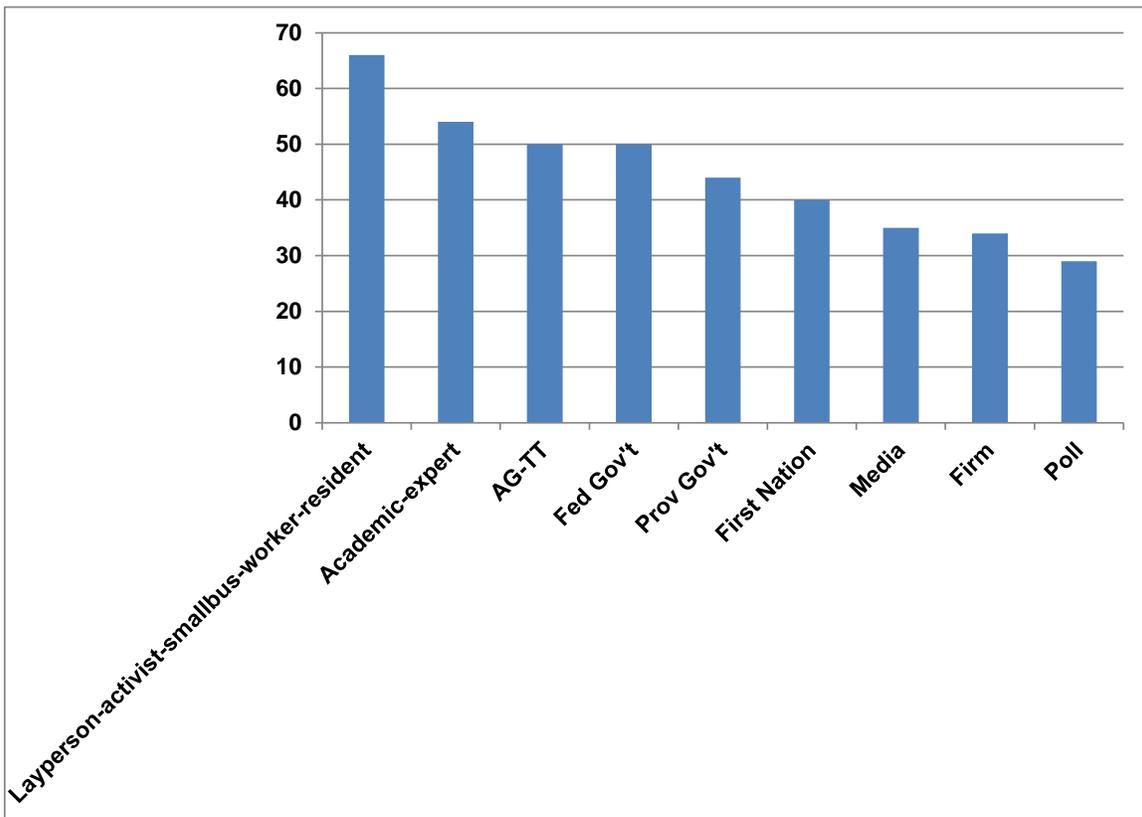
**Figure 30: Common Frames CS Opponents**

Civil society opponents in the sample also referenced certain types of sources with much greater frequency than state opponents (See Tables 13 and 14, Figures 31 and 32). They frequently cited various ‘laypeople’, including **residents, activists, workers, small business owners** and so on. They also often made reference to **various regional polls**.

**Table 13: Common CS Opponent Source Types Compared with State Opponents (totals and weighted)**

	Civil Society Opponents		State Opponents	
	Total	Weighted	Total	Weighted
Party-State	106	43%	111	125%
Layperson-activist-worker-resident	66	27%	0	0%
Academic-expert	54	22%	12	13%
Advocacy Group- Think Tank	50	20%	8	9%
First Nations	40	16%	6	7%
Poll	29	12%	0	0%

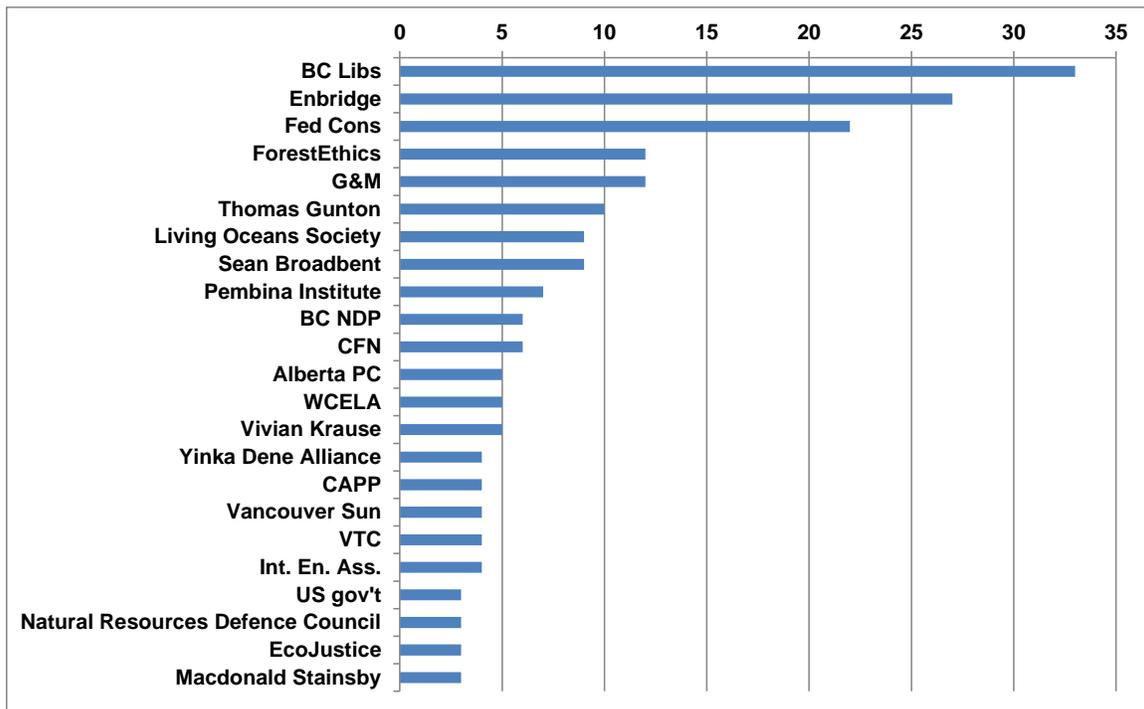
Civil society opponents were also more likely than state opponents to cite **First Nations Organizations or Individuals**, with the most commonly cited groups being **Coastal First Nations** and the **Yinka Dene Alliance** (See Tables 13 and 14, Figures 31 and 32). They were also much more likely to cite other advocacy groups or think tanks, with most of these being green or left groups like Forest Ethics, Living Ocean Society, the Pembina Institute, and Ecojustice.



**Figure 31: Source Types Cited by Civil Society Opponents**

**Table 14: Common Source Types for Civil Society Opponents**

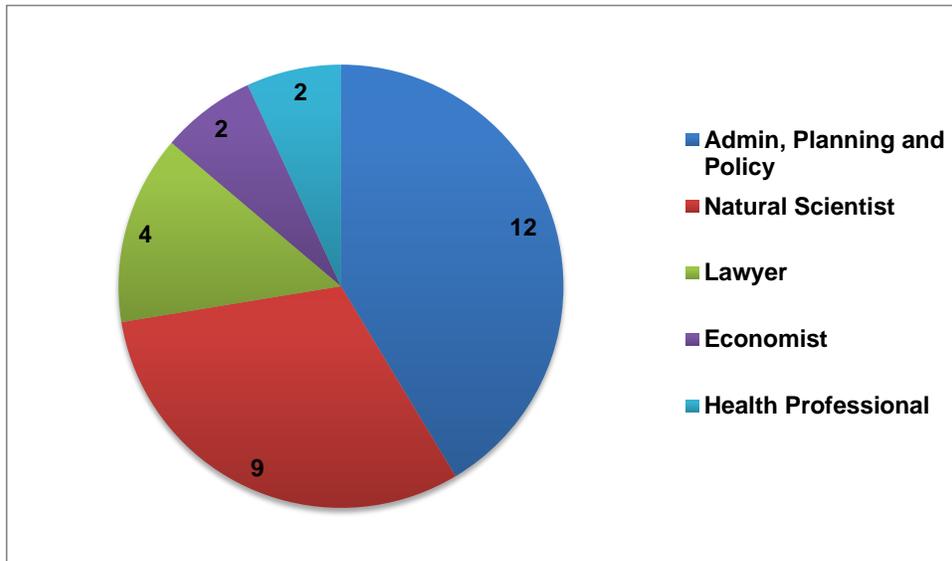
	Total CS Opponents	CFN	Dogwood Initiative	Sierra	YDA
Layperson-activist-small bus-worker-resident	66	1	47	18	0
Academic-expert	54	19	16	18	1
Adv. Group - Th. Tank.	50	1	20	27	2
Fed Gov't	50	6	26	14	4
Prov. Gov't	44	1	35	7	1
First Nations	40	3	6	24	7
Media	35	0	32	3	0
Firm	34	7	21	6	0
Poll	29	0	27	2	0
Artist	8	0	6	2	0
Industry Association	7	1	3	2	1
Transn. Gov't	7	0	0	6	1
Union	6	0	1	2	3
Blog	5	0	5	0	0



**Figure 32: Sources Most Cited by CS Opponents**

Finally, civil society opponents made frequent reference to various **academic experts**, with a particular focus on **administrative, planning and policy** scholars and **natural scientists** (See Figures 31, 32, and 33, Table 14). This is notable because

natural scientists were rarely cited by state opponents (See Table 13), while state and industry proponents tended to reference the studies and claims of economists, political scientists, and legal experts (See Chapter 5).



**Figure 33: Most Common Academic Experts cited by Civil Society Opponents**

### 7.3. Social Network Analysis

Scholarship on elite-funded civil society networks has argued for the central importance of decentralized yet relatively coherent institutional and interpersonal networks in solidifying neoliberal discourse coalitions in both the United States (Stefancic and Delgado, 1996; Stone, 1998) and Canada (Gutstein, 2009; 2014). The boards, staff directorates, and conferences of think tanks, advocacy groups and foundations have provided these coalitions with important network hubs, bringing together politically or ideologically aligned actors from across different social fields (Raso and Neubauer, 2016). As demonstrated in the previous chapter, some of Northern Gateway’s civil society proponents were integrated with each other and broader civil society, corporate and state networks in precisely this manner. It is therefore useful to explore to what extent left wing, indigenous, and environmental groups constituting the anti-Gateway discourse coalition benefited from the same kind of networks. Did the boards and staff directorates of the groups in our sample help bring together aligned actors from the fields of media, government, civil society, and so on? Did these groups’ board and staff members currently or previously work in common groups and fields? In

short, to what extent do these groups share the types of institutional networks that bind together the discourse coalitions of the neoliberal extractivist petrobloc?

### **7.3.1. Estranged Bedfellows: Sierra Club, Dogwood, and the Environmental Discourse Coalition**

The neoliberal project has benefitted from a sprawling network of interconnected New Right civil society organizations that house its discourse coalitions. Broadly speaking, DI and SCBC are similarly embedded in common civil society networks associated with environmentalist or anti-Gateway movements. The social network samples of both organizations were more likely to share ties with other green and leftist advocacy groups than they were organizations from any other social field (see Figure 34, Table 16). Sierra's social network sample possessed 15 ties with other environmental or leftist organizations, while Dogwood's 25-person sample shared 19 ties with such groups. Yet the two groups' samples only shared two ties with each other, and few ties with any other single group. Groups they did share ties with tended not to be large international NGOs – as would be implied by the 'foreign funded radicals' discourse – but regional and national groups. For instance, SCBC and DI respectively shared one and two ties to EcoJustice, a Canadian environmental law charity previously associated with the Sierra Club (See Figure 35). Sierra director Robert Mitchell was previously Ecojustice's executive director, while Dogwood's executive director Will Horter was once the coordinating lawyer for the group's Forestry Projects section. Dogwood's two ties with Ecojustice represented the largest number of primary ties between either Sierra or Dogwood and any other single progressive or left group.

Neither group's membership shared significant ties with any major national left-wing citizens group (See Figure 35). The Sierra sample possessed just one tie with the Council of Canadians – arguably the most notable non-environmental left-advocacy group connected to *either* Dogwood or Sierra in the opponent subgraph. And few ties were recorded with any prominent Canadian left-wing policy institute. This is notable because scholarship has identified right wing policy institutes like Fraser as key organizational hubs in neoliberal discourse coalitions, often bringing together actors from a variety of social fields (Gutstein, 2009; Stefancic and Delgado, 1996). In contrast, neither Dogwood nor Sierra shared any primary ties with the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives (CCPA), the left-wing think tank which opposed Gateway and that is

Canada's nearest progressive equivalent to the Fraser Institute. Sierra possessed only one secondary tie to the group, as the NDP's environmental critic George Heyman was a one-time CCPA director and SCBC executive director. Neither group possessed ties with the Pembina Institute, Canada's most prominent environmental think tank (whose reports were cited by both the Sierra Club and Dogwood texts in the sample). Simply put, the formal ties linking the civil society opponents in the sample and other left wing or environmental groups seemed thinner than analogous ties linking Gateway's civil society opponents to New Right discourse coalitions.

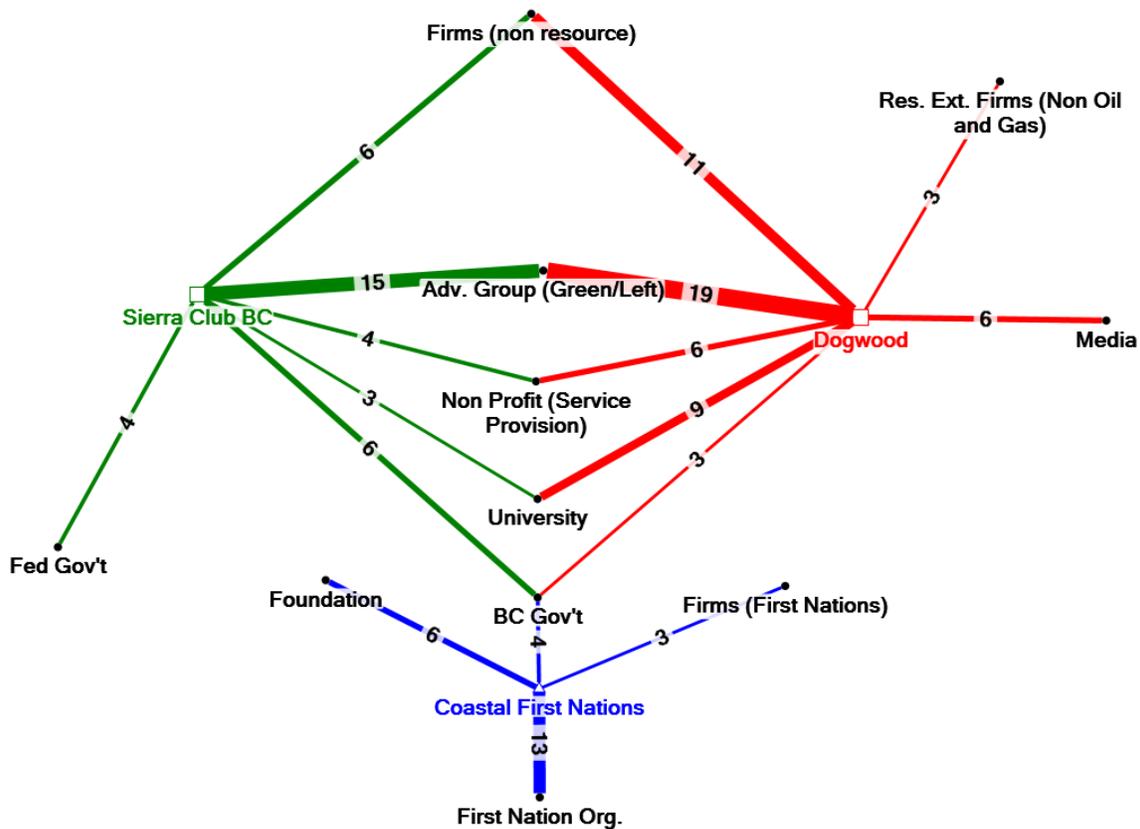
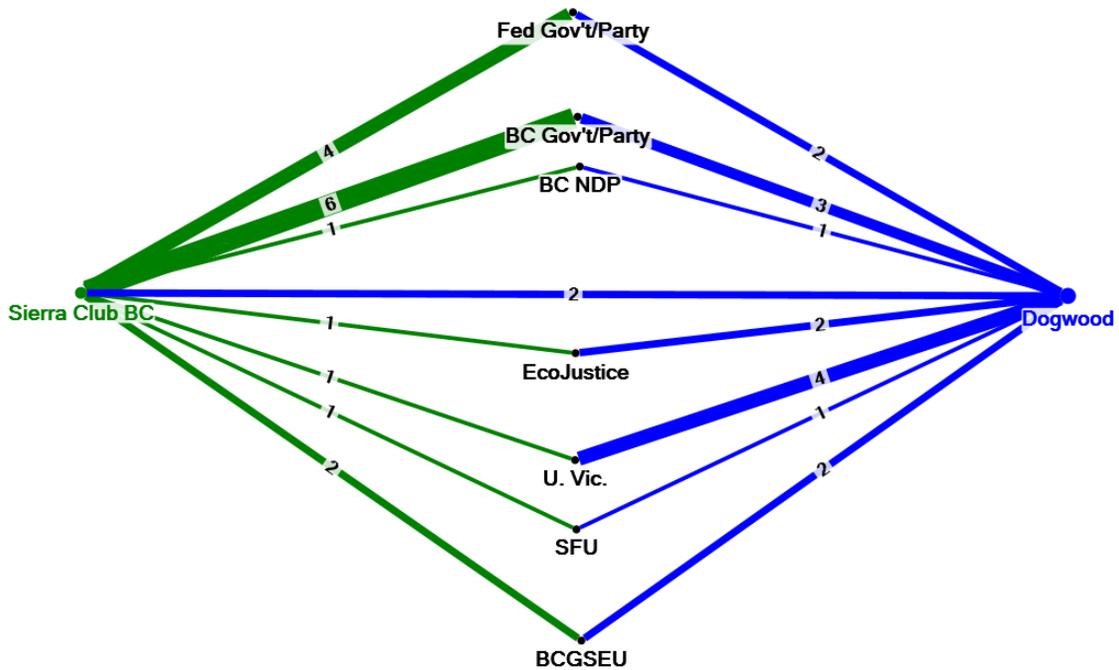


Figure 34: Primary Affiliation Ties between Civil Society Opponents and Social Fields



**Figure 35: Primary Affiliation Ties Between SCBC, DI, and Common Groups**

Yet despite the relative paucity of ties between SCBC or DI and any one *single* environmental or left organization, the high number of *total* ties both groups and other left-green civil society organizations indicate that both groups were jointly embedded in a broader environmental-left discourse coalition. This observation is supported by both organizations' frequent citation of *other* Green and left groups opposed to Northern Gateway (See Table 15). Dogwood and Sierra each quoted the Living Oceans Society 5 and 4 times, the Pembina institute 3 and 3 times, and the West Coast Environmental Law Association 4 and 1 times, respectively.

**Table 15: Sources Most Cited by CS Opponents**

	CS Opponents	CFN	Dogwood Initiative	Sierra	YDA
Fed Gov't	50	5	35	6	4
BC Gov't	32	1	28	3	0
Enbridge	27	7	14	6	0
Forest Ethics	14	0	10	4	0
Globe & Mail	12	0	9	3	0
Thomas Gunton	10	10	0	0	0
Sean Broadbent	9	9	0	0	0
Liv. Oc. Soc.	9	0	5	4	0
Pem. Ins.	7	0	3	3	1
CFN	6	0	1	4	1
Eth. Oil	6	0	5	1	0
US gov't	6	2	4	0	0
WCELA	5	0	4	1	0
Vivian Krause	5	0	5	0	0
Alb. Gov't	5	0	4	1	0
YDA	4	0	1	3	0
CAPP	4	0	2	2	0
Vancouver Sun	4	0	4	0	0
VTC	4	0	4	0	0
BC NDP	4	0	2	2	0
Int. En. Ag.	4	0	0	4	0
Ecojustice	3	0	0	3	0
MLI	3	0	3	0	0
NRDC	3	0	0	3	0
Macdonald Stainsby	3	0	3	0	0
Nat. Post	3	0	3	0	0
Opposition Official	3	0	2	1	0

### **7.3.2. First Nations, Environmentalists, and the Anti-Gateway Discourse Coalition**

In assessing a common discourse coalition of environmental and First Nations groups, one can once again begin with an analysis of the affiliation networks constructed out of the social network analysis data. In doing so, the question arises: Did Coastal First Nations share many ties with Sierra, Dogwood, or other prominent green or left advocacy groups and think tanks? For the most part, the answer is no. The SNA data

indicates that neither DI nor SCBC seemed to possess any indigenous members on its directorate boards or key staff (See Figure 34, Table 16). Nor did their SNA sample register any significant ties with First Nations governments, corporations, foundations, or advocacy groups – including Coastal First Nations. CFN’s membership shared only one tie with a prominent green advocacy group. In contrast, CFN’s membership possessed numerous ties with various First Nations foundations, governments, corporations, and other First Nations-specific organizations.

**Table 16: Primary Ties Between Civil Society Opponents and Social Fields**

Fields	Sierra Club BC	Dogwood	CFN
Non Profit (Service Provider)	4	6	1
Policy Institute	1	1	1
Advocacy Group (All)	17	20	1
Advocacy Groups(green/left)	15	19	1
Foundation	1	0	6
University	3	9	0
Oil and Gas Firms	0	1	0
Res. Extraction Firm (non Oil and Gas)	2	3	0
Firm (not resource)	6	11	0
Firm (Indigenous)	2	0	3
Industry Association	1	1	0
Fed Gov't/Party	4	1	2
BC Gov't/Party	6	3	4
Municipal Gov't/Party	0	2	0
International Gov't	2	0	0
Transnational Gov't	1	0	0
First Nation Org.	1	0	13
Media	1	6	0
Media (left/green)	0	2	0
Org. Labor.	2	2	0

Yet the political collaboration between settler-dominated ENGO’s and First Nations groups indicates a blind spot for social network analysis, which is best suited to discussing *formal* membership ties. Despite the predominance of formal institutional networks in constituting neoliberal extractivist discourse collations, oppositional social movements may cultivate *informal* connections between actors which are difficult to pick up in this study’s network analysis. Such connections may develop not out of

overlapping board memberships, but from the pragmatic and dynamic nature of social movement organizing itself.

Despite the lack of strong formal affiliation ties between them, Green and First Nations groups engaged in significant political collaboration within the context of the Northern Gateway resistance. Such collaboration often emerged from their collective response to major political events. The Conservative's passage of C-38, C-45, and C-51 helped galvanize both the Idle No More movement and the environmentalist response to Northern Gateway, leading to greater collaboration between ENGO's, citizen groups, and First Nations organizations by illustrating how all three sets of actors were under common threat. Minister Oliver's 'foreign funded radicals' letter united the anti-Gateway coalition in a similar manner. YDA's issuance of the Save the Fraser Declaration provided Gateway's environmental opposition with a powerful rhetorical weapon to wield against the project. And later, the YDA's issuance of the Save the Fraser Declaration Solidarity Accord allowed groups like DI and SCBC to formally declare their solidarity with the YDA. The same could be said for all manner of demonstrations co-organized by settler ENGO's and indigenous organizations.

As such the formal ties explored in the social network analysis, while illuminating, are not some crude heuristic for proving the existence or absence of an anti-Gateway discourse coalition per se. Also important were the direct political collaborations that united the various groups in our sample both with each other and with groups from other social fields. Dogwood and Sierra often publicized the activities of both CFN and YDA, regularly releasing blog posts and press releases documenting new signatories to YDA's Save the Fraser Declaration. On December 1, 2011, Dogwood's executive director Eric Swanson (2011, Dec. 5) personally witnessed the signing of the Declaration by several new Nations, publicizing the event on Dogwood's blog. Sierra, meanwhile, sent observers, photographers, and filmmakers into First Nation territory in the Great Bear Rainforest and other locations to document indigenous relations to local ecosystems, describe ongoing ecosystem management programs, and interview First Nations opponents of the project (Vernon, 2010, Sep 04). In 2014 they co-launched the Pull Together campaign, a program dedicated to "raising funds for First Nations legally challenging Enbridge's proposed Northern Gateway pipeline" (History, n.d. [2]). Other ENGOs collaborated with First Nations groups in a variety of ways. In a 2013 press release, CFN announced an "international social media campaign to stop Enbridge's

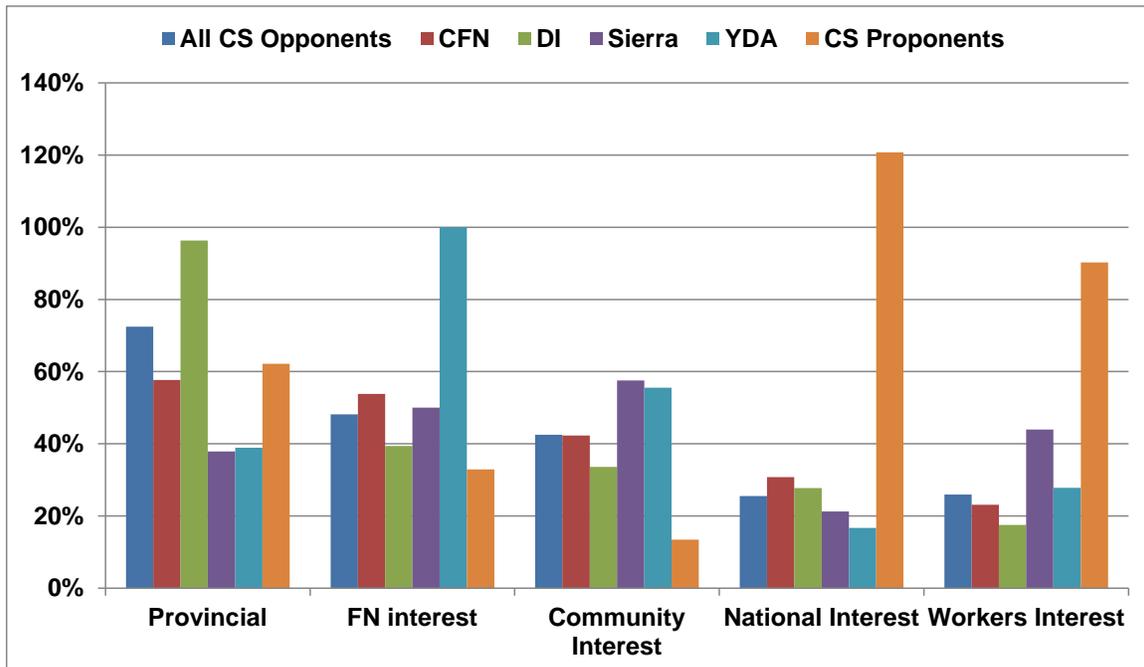
proposed Northern Gateway oil pipeline project launched by partners Coastal First Nations and WWF” (Sterrit and Miller, 2013). Meanwhile, the Yinka Dene Alliance (2013, Dec. 5) issued a press release lauding the David Suzuki Foundation’s signing of the Fraser Declaration solidarity accord (which was also signed by Sierra and Dogwood).

## 7.4. Environmental Risk and Regional Subjectivity

Common institutional affiliations implicated Dogwood and SCBC in a common discourse coalition, while the dynamics of emergent political collaboration helped integrate First Nations groups such as YDA and CFN into that coalition. Importantly, movement participation in the anti-Gateway campaign involved grassroots mobilization of movement supporters, keeping with the modus operandi of the four groups in the sample. Although technically a ‘legacy’ environmental organization, SCBC seems to mirror the organizing principles of its US counterpart, which have long been based on a grassroots organizing model (Hestres, 2015). In this, Sierra joins groups like Dogwood which share much in common with recently founded ‘internet mediated advocacy organizations’ in the United States that have eschewed traditional lobbying and education efforts in favor of direct political mobilization of movement supporters. And groups like CFN and YDA, relatively isolated from hegemonic power centers, are also reliant on the mobilization of grassroots supporters to affect political change.

As Dorceta Taylor (2000) notes, successful framing strategies for grassroots social movements must relate to the political opportunities that enhance movement participation and growth (52). Numerous such opportunities existed for Northern Gateway’s opponents. **The existence of the JRP** allowed opponents to air their grievances in a public forum, whilst heightening the project’s media visibility. The **2012 provincial election** further enhanced this visibility while enabling opponents to frame the project as a voting issue, eventually forcing the Liberals to change their position. Broader structural crises – such as the **economic uncertainty following 2008** and the **looming climate crisis** – further prepared the ground for a public re-evaluation of the Canadian oil industry. **Numerous pipeline and oil spills** – including Enbridge’s own leak into Michigan’s Kalamazoo river – created similar opportunities. And **the reigniting of the First Nations decolonization movement**, culminating with Idle No More in 2012, combined with **increasing indigenous legal standing regarding rights and title** to give project opponents – both indigenous and settlers – significant political opportunities.

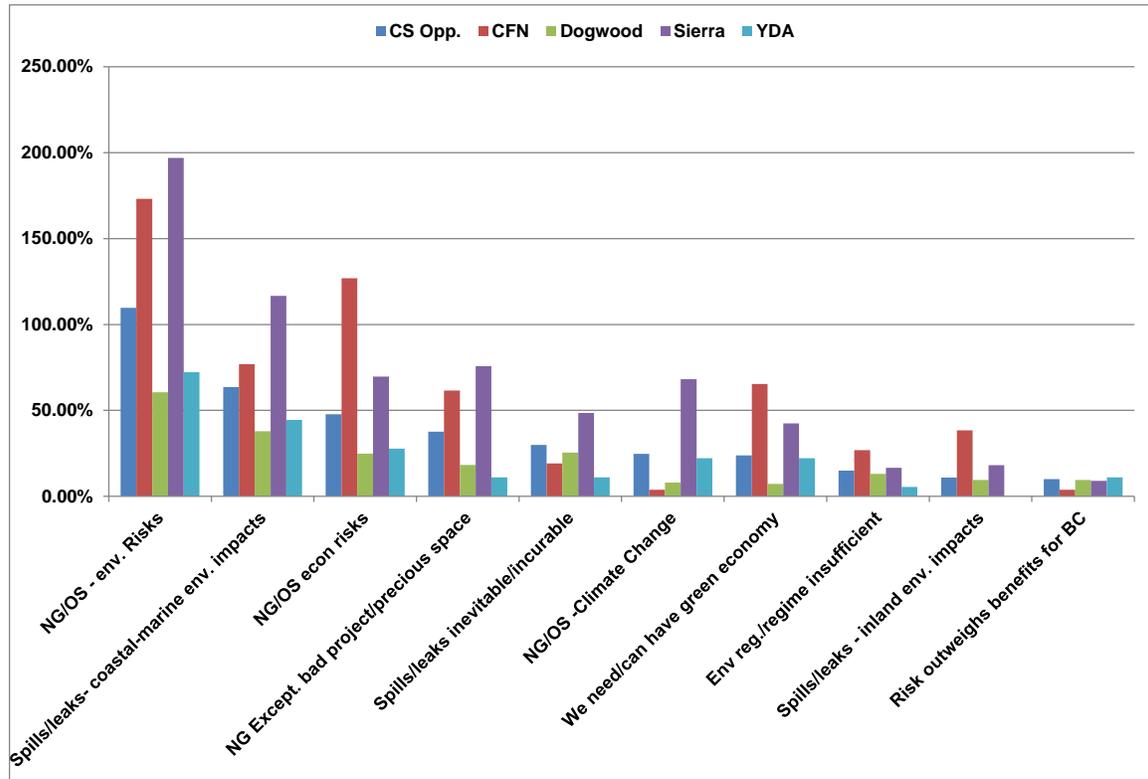
As success would require translating these various political opportunities into broad public mobilization, opponents directed most of their communications activities at public audiences and social movement constituents. This was generally accomplished in two very different ways. All four groups in the civil society opponent sample (see Table 3) utilized the issuance of press releases and newspaper op-eds. This was indicative of a classic public relations strategy of providing information subsidies to media outlets so as to indirectly influence public opinion via media discourse. The second strategy was more direct and novel. It involved the heavy use of blog posts alongside other social media to directly communicate with and mobilize potential supporters. Only the two settler ENGO's – Dogwood and SCBC – made significant use of blog posts (though this does not mean that CFN and YDA did not use other means to directly mobilize supports online – such as posts made to social media – that are not captured in this study).



**Figure 36: Common Interest Frames among Civil Society Opponents and Project Proponents (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

Translating political opportunities into public mobilization required Northern Gateway's opponents to symbolically link the project to master frames and discourses (Taylor, 2000) which could help them undermine project support. Since ideologies tend to constitute individuals as particular types of *subjects* (Laclau, 1977; Hall, 1988), these master frames – such as populism, democracy, and sustainability – had to draw on particular subject positions from whose vantage points opponent claims would appear

intelligible. This was apparent in the ways proponents framed *interest*. With some exceptions, opponents were generally much more likely to refer to *community, provincial or First Nation's* interest (See Figure 36) than were proponents, who in turn were more likely to focus on the *national* interest and the interest of *workers* (often operationalised through the promise of increased employment and jobs).



**Figure 37: Common Risk and Sustainability Claims (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

This focus on community or provincial interest helped establish a shared discourse on *local* risk oriented around regional subjectivities (See Figure 37). The **ecological risk from a pipeline or tanker spill** was by far the most common form of risk discussed by all opponents. Yet in general, Sierra was far more likely to focus on environmental risk – whether local risk or the risk of global climate change – than was Dogwood. This was likely owed to its status as a legacy ENGO whose mandate was geared towards promoting ecological sustainability and which relied at least partially on an educational model of social change (Hestres, 2015). Dogwood, on the other hand, was a more recently founded populist-inflected group reminiscent of younger ‘internet mediated advocacy organizations’ that tend to place greater emphasis on using online tools to directly mobilize already-convinced movement supporters. They may have seen less

need to convince potential supporters of the reality of project risk than to mobilize constituents already hostile to the idea of increased tanker traffic on the North Coast.

In keeping with this interpretation, Sierra was the group most likely to claim that the **Northern Gateway project represented unacceptable risks to coastal-marine ecosystems** and that a **spill or leak would be inevitable and/or impossible to clean up after the fact** (See Figure 37). One blog post by Ray Grigg (2011, Sept 1) argued that “Anyone who is concerned about the arrival of pipelines and tankers to BC’s West Coast should be worried”. This was because “the inevitable result will be – sooner or later – a ruptured pipeline despoiling pristine rivers and a broken tanker spilling millions of barrels of oil into one of the few undefiled ecologies remaining on our planet”.

SCBC and DI often referred back to other environmental organizations in support of their risk-based claims, emulating the success of New Right discourse coalitions whose civil society organizations regularly cite each other in order to lend legitimacy to and amplify their arguments (See Table 15). One January 2012 SCBC post referred to a recent report documenting project risk jointly published by the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Pembina Institute and Living Oceans Society (Sierra Club BC, 2012, Jan. 23). Sierra leveraged this report to legitimate its own risk-based claims:

The report details the dangers of bitumen transportation and the risks of spills to the environment and the economy in a region that depends on healthy fisheries, lands, and waters. At risk from an oil spill would be the approximately \$250 million annually from commercial fishing, \$550 million annually from recreational fishing, and hundreds of millions of dollars from nature tourism.

This discursive focus on local place often drew on the longstanding environmental master frame of *nature as a pristine or sublime space* at risk from outside interference (Remillard, 2011, 132) which has often informed environmental discourse in British Columbia (Willems-Braun, 1996). Sierra in particular was likely to draw on this frame, and was the opponent most likely to claim that **Northern Gateway was an especially bad project given its traversal of various precious, ecologically significant, fragile, or difficult-to-navigate spaces** (See Figure 37). These claims often described local ecosystems as precious spaces that were globally unique, irreplaceable, and/or fragile. One 2010 op-ed by Sierra’s Caitlyn Vernon (2010, Sept 27) published in the Georgia Straight described the Great Bear Rainforest as home to the

rare Spirit Bear. Vernon noted that the forest was “the only place in the world that these bears live”, and that a “spill from the proposed oil tankers would put at risk their home and future”. Other texts focused on the dangerous reputation of BC’s difficult-to-navigate North Coast. A January 2013 blog post by Dogwood’s Emma Gilchrist (2013, Jan. 15) referred to expert testimony at a Victoria JRP hearing, noting how “Several oil spill experts testified that B.C.’s northern coastal waters are too risky for oil tankers and that a cleanup would be impossible”.

CFN and YDA deployed many of the same local and regionalist frames and claims as settler groups. Both organizations claimed that ***the project generated high levels of environmental risk for coastal and marine ecosystems***, while CFN frequently argued that ***Northern Gateway was an especially bad project given its traversal of various precious, ecologically significant, fragile, or difficult-to-navigate spaces*** (See Figure 37). A 2013 blog post jointly written by CFN executive director Art Sterrit and WWF President David Miller echoed statements by DI and SCBC in describing areas along the project route as ecologically unique and irreplaceable:

The Great Bear Sea is ranked one of the world’s most treacherous waters by Environment Canada. Its unpredictable weather and massive swells make it an infamously dangerous sea way.

A recent study commissioned by the province of British Columbia found that if there was an oil spill in this region, only 3 to 4 per cent of it could be cleaned up within 5 days. Despite the Canadian government’s claim that it can build a “world class” oil spill prevention and recovery strategy, there is no adequate technology to recover diluted bitumen – which is much heavier than oil - in the Great Bear’s remote waters...

An oil spill here would be disastrous. It would destroy an irreplaceable ecosystem and the lives of the people who depend on it. (Sterrit and Miller, 2013, Nov 19).

On occasion, arguments concerning local risk related regional subjectivities not just to space but to *time*. In previous chapters, I explored how Northern Gateway’s proponents related project benefits to a reified *national* space by projecting steadily rising global oil demand decades into the future. In an analogous move, some opponents projected the place-based interests of the province and local communities into the future as well. This often involved a focus on intergenerational interests, eloquently described by Sierra’s Vernon (2013, Jan 11) in a January 2013 blog post:

When I try to picture what sort of future I want for myself, and for any children and grandchildren I might have one day, I don't see tar sands or tankers. I see a future where we have made a choice to stop burning so much oil. There will still, I hope, be salmon in the rivers and shellfish in the oceans. We will have made a choice – before it was too late – to stop building pipelines, to stop releasing the greenhouse gases that are heating up our atmosphere and acidifying our oceans.

We know the climate science. We know that an oil spill would only be a matter of time. We know the impacts of a spill and the impossibility of clean-up. And so I encourage you to make the decision that your grandchildren will look back on with pride. We could be the ancestors that messed it up, and left a legacy of destruction. Or we could be the ancestors that took action when it was so urgently needed, and left behind us a legacy of hope.

YDA made similar intergenerational arguments. In one Dec 2013 press release, the organization used justified its rejection of the recent JRP decision:

We have put ourselves in the frontline for all British Columbians and together we are fighting for our homes, our future and our children's future. We are parents, and our responsibilities to future generations are not subject to negotiation, or judgment, by others. (YDA, 2013, Dec 19)

#### **7.4.1. It's the Ecology, stupid!: Environment, Economy, and Systemic Critique**

The coalition's local focus extended to its treatment of Northern Gateway's economic risks, which were almost invariably discussed in the context of a potential bitumen spill or leak spill (See Figure 37). This represents an important discursive shift, given that it ruptures the 'economy versus environment' frame which structures both neoliberal extractivist discourse and broader capitalist ideologies. In discussing the *economic* risks associated with environmental devastation, opponents obliterate this false dichotomy by foregrounding the ways healthy ecological systems constitute the conditions of production undergirding all economic activity (O'Connor, 1998).

This was most apparent with CFN, which drew on regional indigenous discourses that did not separate economic and ecological phenomena. CFN frequently argued that **Northern Gateway generated unacceptable economic risks** (See Figure 37), linking unique regional ecosystems not only with local economies, but local subjectivities. An August 2012 press release (CFN, August 2, 2012) noted that:

The Great Bear is one of the richest and most biologically productive places on earth. It is one of the only places on our planet where intact coastal temperate rainforest, large wild rivers, and healthy cold-water seas come together....The forests, rivers, and seas represent daily food and a way of life for coastal communities and First Nations. The immense natural capital of this region sustains a diverse economy representing tens of thousands of long-term Canadian jobs, valued at billions of dollars annually. Over the past decades, this region has become a model of conservation and sustainable economic development that is recognized around the world.

While Dogwood and YDA were less likely than CFN to discuss economic risk, Sierra frequently did so (See Figure 37). A Dec 2013 press release quoted campaigner Caitlyn Vernon on the link between coastal ecosystems and local economies:

“Pipelines and tankers are not job creators, unless you want to work in oil spill response. Enbridge’s Northern Gateway proposal would endanger 45,000 jobs in seafood and marine recreation – the backbone of local economies on the North and Central Coast” (SCBC, 2013, Dec 4).

Importantly, SCBC was the only opponent to frequently move beyond the local frame, at times explaining the broader economic risks to the Canadian economy associated with the tar sands. A March 2012 blog post by Sierra’s Ray Grigg (2012, March 3) challenged assertions of Northern Gateway’s national economic benefits, linking the ongoing bitumen boom to:

the phenomenon of the so-called "Dutch Disease". The Dutch discovered to their chagrin that a huge influx of revenue from oil inflated the value of their currency, made their exports more expensive and less competitive, increased unemployment and weakened their entire economy.

Other disadvantages of oil-supported economies are also noteworthy. Unstable boom-and-bust economic cycles are created by fluxuating oil prices. And a single source of monetary wealth tends to cause governments to neglect the other vital drivers in their economies.

Yet Northern Gateway’s civil society opponents were generally more adept at criticizing ecological and economic risks than they were at advocating for a new economic paradigm which might obviate the perceived need for such projects. This failure to articulate alternatives may undermine environmental opposition to the tar sands in the long run. If neoliberal extractivism constitutes part of Canada’s dominant social paradigm, note Davidson and Gismondi (2011), then a true “paradigm shift cannot occur until a viable alternative paradigm has emerged” (195).

Only SCBC – a legacy ENGO with an institutional mandate to advocate for sustainability – and CFN – which had spent years developing its own sustainable economic initiatives – regularly claimed that **Canada and/or BC can have and/or needs a sustainable green economy** (See Figure 37). In a March 2012 report on the impact of increased tanker traffic, CFN’s Sterrit claimed that “All the work we are doing to create a sustainable economy would be wiped out by an oil spill” (CFN, 2012 March). This “would devastate fishing, tourism, and traditional subsistence harvesting, which are the backbones of the economy in the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii”. The following September, another press release quoted Sterrit, who pointed out that CFN had “invested more than \$300 million dollars over the past decade to establish a sustainable economy on the coast” (CFN, 2013, Sept 23). “If Stephen Harper approves the Northern Gateway pipeline,” noted Sterrit, “an oil spill could wipeout all of our hard work and silence our communities”.

Ironically, while Dogwood rarely made economic arguments, they were the only group to explicitly argue for **the ecological need for a radically new economic paradigm** that would obviate the need for expanded bitumen production. All 5 of these instances came early in Dogwood’s No Tanker campaign and were written by Campaign Director Eric Swanson. In one June 2011 blog post, Swanson (2011, June 8) critiqued capitalism’s growth-oriented structure, explaining that “for the economy to continue growing perpetually, as we’re falsely told it must, more and more needs to be cut, dug, and pumped from our lands and waters”, leading to projects like Gateway. In a post later that month, Swanson (2011, June 22) discussed the “root issues” of the No Tankers campaign: “the need for more local control over resources, reconciliation between First Nations and the rest of society, climate change, and the unfortunate paradigm that infinite economic growth is both desirable and necessary”. However, following these posts systemic critiques linking capitalism, climate, colonialism and local sovereignty seemed to fall off Dogwood’s agenda.

The general lack of systemic critique was partially explained by opponents’ extremely local focus on coastal marine risk, and the relative paucity of climate-related arguments that might facilitate systematic critiques of extractivism. Only SCBC, the one legacy ENGO in the sample, frequently linked the broader issue of climate change, the economic risks this entailed, and the possibility of generating sustainable economic alternatives (See Figure 37). A January 2012 press release noted how:

the oil sands alone store enough carbon to catapult global warming beyond catastrophic thresholds. Global warming will cost the Canadian economy between \$5 billion to \$43 billion annually in the next 40 years, according to an October 2011 study from the National Round Table on the Environment and Economy (SCBC, 2012, Jan 18).

Later, a March 2014 press release referring to a recent IPCC report quoted executive director Bob Peart about the possibility of a low carbon economy:

The Enbridge pipeline alone would cause annual greenhouse gas emissions 150 per cent greater than B.C.'s entire emissions in 2011 and Kinder Morgan would add approximately the same. There is an alternative path, toward a prosperous low-carbon economy that focuses on green jobs and allows B.C. to prepare for the impacts of climate change (SCBC, 2014, Mar 31)

Yet CFN, DI, and YDA rarely discussed climate (See Figure 37). This arguably related to longstanding problems environmentalists have faced in engaging publics on climate change. Research demonstrates that climate change is often perceived as a global problem whose effects will occur in the distant future or in faraway places, leading to a focus on more perceptually immediate concerns (Norgaard, 2011; Remillard 2011, 136). As Gunster (2011) argues, a key problem is the perceived "absence of solutions commensurate with the scale of the threat" (497). This is because "when risks are perceived as threats (i.e., beyond our capacity to respond), they generate... denial, paralysis, or apathy" (497). The preoccupation of Northern Gateway's opponents with local concerns can therefore be understood as a tactical decision borne from the failure of the Canadian climate movement to put forward a convincing economic alternative to neoliberal extractivism and to frame climate change at a local level. SCBC, a legacy ENGO, had an institutional mandate to organize and educate around climate change. But Dogwood – focused on mobilizing potential supporters around immediate concerns – and CFN and YDA – concerned with the immediate protection of their territories – may have decided to focus on what could best achieve these goals in the short term.

But this is a significant weakness in the face of widespread public anxiety over domestic economic insecurity and global uncertainty. What's more, silence on climate change may reinforce local and regional subjectivities at the expense of the *global subjectivities* that heighten the salience of global ecological devastation. As Davidson and Gismondi (2011) note, it is only through a "growing ecological awareness of the global extent of many commons, including the oceans, atmosphere, water cycle, and the

like, [that] we increasingly recognize that one individual's bond to another individual outside her country is generated not solely by an identity with humanity, but also by the ecological ties that bind" (182). The shared, interdependent nature of "[e]cosystem services challenge our ability to socially construct boundaries around membership in politically prudent but ecologically arbitrary ways" – such as nation or province. By focusing on local ecosystems, opponents could not strengthen the conceptual salience of these global ecological ties that, like regional subjectivities, challenge the nationalist reifications of interest propagated by Gateway's proponents.

This is not to glibly dismiss most opponents' focus on local risks. The conditions of possibility for the anti-Gateway discourse coalition were constituted by the salience of local risks and subjectivities connected to the lived experience of regional actors. Local threats posed by potential bitumen spills or leaks have increased cognitive salience for many concerned citizens. Unlike our dependence on a stable global climate, the dependence of local coastal communities on healthy ecosystems is a well-accepted reality of life for many in the region. From direct experiences with local spills to memories of Exxon Valdez to recent coverage of the Deepwater Horizon blowout, the connection between a spill or leak and regional well-being are well known and relatively uncontested. And unlike the risks from climate change, these local risks did not have to be mediated via the complicated technical explanations of climate scientists. A coastal community economically dependent on local fish stocks or a regional urbanite that regularly makes recreational use of marine areas have direct experiences with the local ecosystems upon which they depend.

Yet it may not be necessary to choose between frames that draw on salient *regional* subjectivities and those that articulate *global* and *national* systems, risks, and injustices. They are not mutually exclusive. Northern Gateway provided an excellent opportunity to bridge concerns about local ecological devastation with systemic critiques of neoliberal extractivism. Opponents *could* have worked to discursively bridge that economic strategy – and the various inequalities and instabilities it entails – to the drive to construct new pipeline projects and the corresponding externalisation of project risk onto local populations with no meaningful democratic input. Similarly, a focus on local economic risk from a spill or leak could be linked with the need to pursue sustainable economic paradigms. Finally, a focus on local ecological and economic risk could be an excellent opportunity to bridge local risk frames with the dangerous effects that climate

change are predicted to have on coastal and marine ecosystems, cultures, and economies (EPA, n.d.). To be clear, this would not be an easy task, or a simple matter of political will. It would likely be a challenging and long-term process which could generate political risks of its own. But such risks are increasingly necessary if local project opponents hope to halt extractivist projects which threaten their communities – with local spills or the effects of climate change – in the long term.

## 7.5. Pretty Popular Around Here: Place, Subjectivity, and Populist Appeal

Though undermining the capacity of civil society opponents to systematically critique the neoliberal extractivist regime, the focus on local risk, place and subjectivity helped opponents articulate the Northern Gateway controversy as a *regional-populist* battle between local popular forces and elite outsiders. In this way opponents did illuminate the inherent regional, international, and class inequalities associated with the Northern Gateway project, while undermining the nationalist reifications of proponents. All civil society opponents framed local risks as the result of an *assault on the region by elite outsiders* – whether the Federal Government, Alberta, multinational oil companies, or China – and opposition as legitimate resistance from popular local forces.

Popular resistance against invading foreign elites was a powerful framing device, as evidenced by the fact that Minister Oliver and Ethical Oil resorted to the same basic narrative in their ‘foreign funded radicals’ discourse. Yet ENGOs and First Nations groups were particularly well situated to construct such narratives due to their social location in civil society. Unlike elite-connected think tanks or advocacy groups, the political power of many green organizations derives from their capacity to mobilize sympathetic sectors of the broader population, who are unlikely to *automatically* identify with elite priorities (Davidson and Gismondi, 2011; Taylor, 2000). As Robert Brulle (2010) argues, the relative distance of these groups from hegemonic actors makes them “unhindered by the limitations of institutions based in either the market or the state” (84), helping them articulate an “[a]ternative map of the social world around which individuals can collectively mobilize” (85). This is even truer for First Nations groups associated with the decolonization movement, who are even more distanced from hegemonic power centers and are also politically dependent on their capacity to mobilize large numbers of supporters (as was the case with Idle No More).

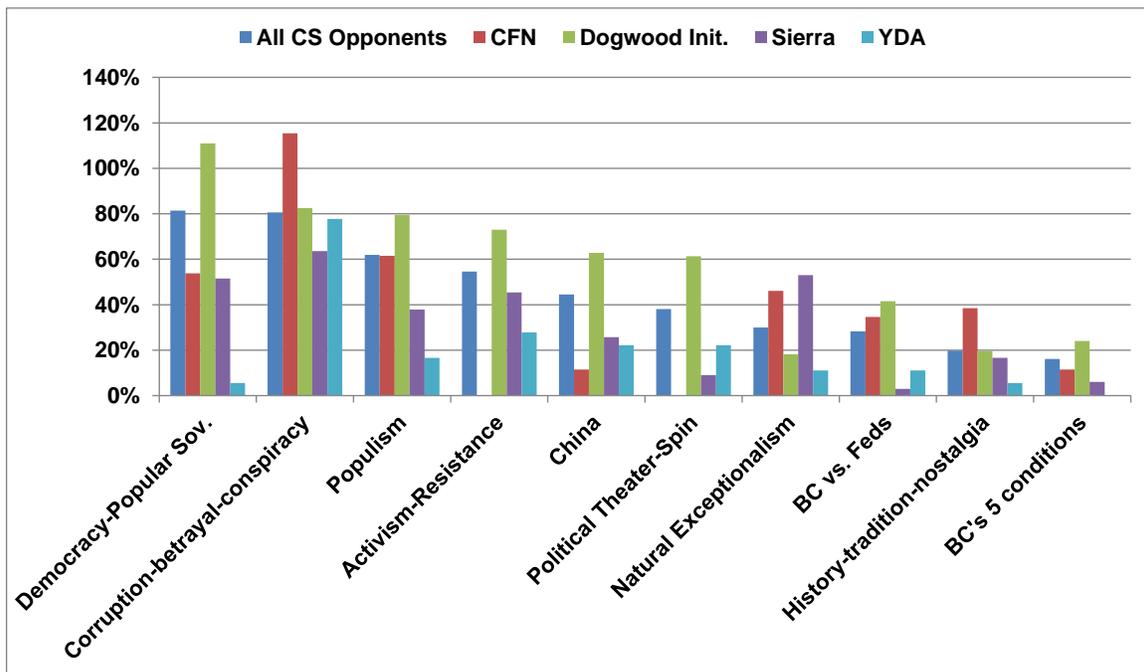
The social network analysis illustrates that the civil society groups in the sample were much more distanced from hegemonic state and industry actors than were their EPII-linked opponents (See Chapter 6). The Sierra Club sample recorded only 5 ties to the BC government, which generally consisted of membership or employment ties to the BC NDP or the provincial civil service (See Figures 34 and 35, Table 16). The SCBC sample registered even *fewer* ties with the Federal Government, nearly all based on Sierra members' prior work in federal civil service departments such as Parks Canada. No Sierra actor was recorded as having served in the federal cabinet of any prior sitting government. Dogwood actors registered even fewer ties to the Canadian state. 3 DI members *did* possess connections to the BC Government, but these included neither ministerial positions nor leadership roles in any major party. Finally, neither ENGO's sample possessed significant ties with organized labor.

CFN's subgraph was similarly disconnected from state, capital and labor (See Figures 34 and 35, Table 16). Only 2 CFN actors registered 4 ties with the BC government, with 3 of these 4 occurring through CFN director Gary Wouters, who had worked for the BC Treaty Commission. CFN sample actors did boast 6 ties with various charitable foundations, though these were all indigenous bodies operated by CFN member nations. Similarly, all recorded ties to industry were with local band- and nation-operated corporations.

In short, no civil society opponent possessed significant institutional ties with major state, labor, or industry groups. Yet it is precisely the capacity of industry backed New Right EPII groups like the Fraser Institute to bring together elite actors from across various fields that allows them to coordinate interfield political projects (Neubauer, 2011). The lack of analogous interfield ties among opponents was telling, especially when one remembers that the SCBC and DI samples possessed few ties to any major national or international environmental, left or indigenous organizations.

Yet the lack of interfield ties between opponents and corporate and state elites arguably aided these groups' regional-populist framing of the Northern Gateway controversy. "Social movement collective action frames", explains Taylor (2000), are fundamentally "injustice frames" which seek to counter "already existing, established, and widely accepted frames", often usually by assigning "blame or causality" for pressing social problems (511). Yet in environmental politics, causal relations cannot be directly

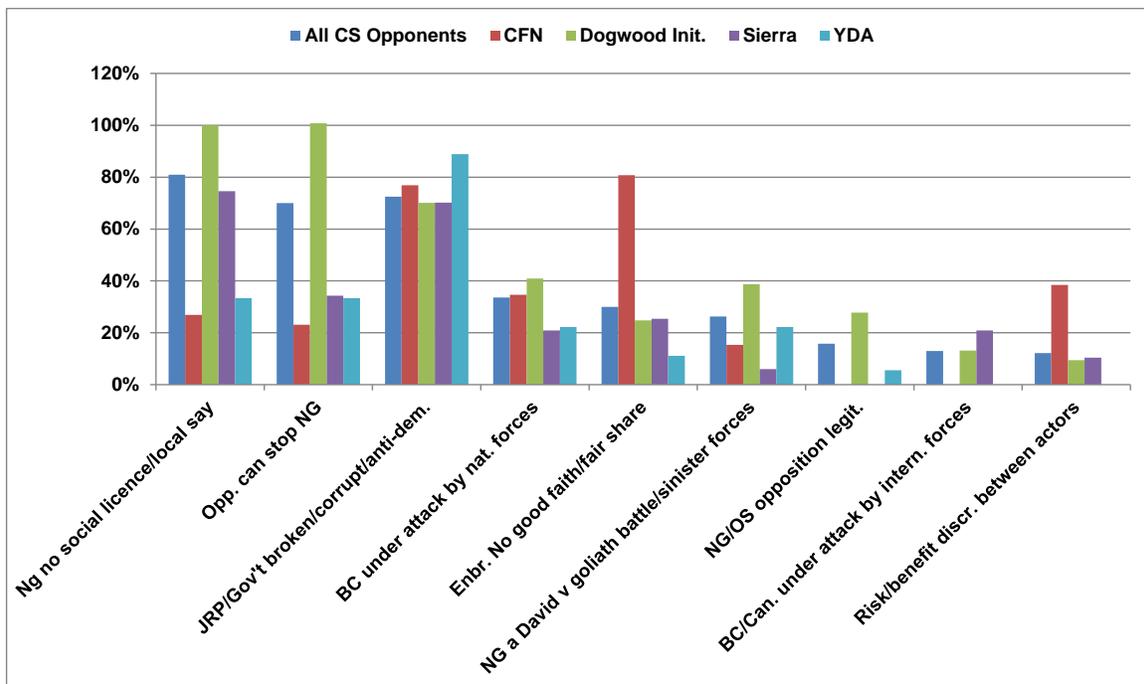
inferred from scientific findings. Nisbet and Scheufele (2009) note how numerous studies demonstrate that “science literacy only accounts for a small fraction of the variance in how lay publics form opinions about controversial areas of science” (1768). “Far stronger influences” are the “value dispositions” of a subject’s “ideology, partisanship, and religious identity.” For example, if self-described conservatives believe that climate change is a ‘liberal’ or ‘left’ issue, they will tend to disproportionately reject or ignore scientific information in support of it (Kahan et al., 2011; Nisbet and Scheufele, 2009). This relates back to Laclau’s (1977) argument that ideology constitutes not just a view of the social world, but a subject position from which that view is intelligible. Gateway’s opponents could thereby better mobilize support if the project could be described as the ploy of *outsider elites* working against the interests of a *regional popular* subject they identified with.



**Figure 38: Democratic, Populist and Regionalist Frames for CS Opponents (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

All civil society opponents drew on *left-populist* frames and claims (See Figures 38 and 39). Yet unlike the ‘foreign funded radicals’ discourse promoted by Minister Oliver, these did not refer to a *national popular* subject, but a *regionally-coded popular subject* made up of everyday communities, small businesses and First Nations. Positioned against the regional popular were a cabal of *hostile national and global elites* including precisely those actors opponents had few or no institutional ties with: provincial

and Federal Governments; domestic and international oil companies; out-of-province financial interests, and so on. Importantly, both Sierra Club and Dogwood deployed populist and regional-democratic arguments. For SCBC, this was in keeping with the grassroots theory of social change embraced by its US counterpart (Hestres, 2015). However, Dogwood was much more likely than SCBC to deploy populist frames denouncing elites and democratic frames encouraging direct political engagement. They were also much more likely to discuss Gateway’s Chinese backers. Perhaps, as a recently founded ‘internet mediated advocacy organization’, Dogwood was more oriented towards populist and democratic rhetoric which mobilized already-convinced supporters worried about their local communities and a lack of local autonomy.



**Figure 39: Democratic, Populist and Regionalist Claims of CS Opponents (weighted mentions per sample Corpi)**

All civil society opponents claimed that **BC was under attack by hostile national forces** (See Figure 39). In a May 2013 blog post explaining the results of the recent BC election, in which the BC Liberals won after issuing their ‘5 Conditions’ for Northern Gateway’s approval, Dogwood’s Will Horter (2013, May 17) framed Gateway’s proponents as an unholy alliance of out-of-province elites:

While the oil industry, Bay Street, Alberta and Harper’s Conservatives may want to believe Clark’s victory green-lights the two controversial proposals to ship crude oil through B.C. ports, British Columbians know

better. The overwhelming opposition to both projects still exists and people are even more resolute in making sure pipe is never laid on either project.

This framing related to another common claim: that **Enbridge did not operate in good faith or take on its fair share of project costs and/or risk** (See Figure 39). Enbridge was often described as fundamentally untrustworthy, with frequent reference made to its history of spills, minimization of project risk, and overstatement of project benefits. CFN was the most likely opponent to make this claim, likely in response to Enbridge's frequent statements that indigenous communities supported Northern Gateway. A June 2014 press release quoted JRP witness Brenda Gaertner to accuse:

Enbridge of over stating benefits by including benefits accruing to foreign owners as benefits to Canadians, contrary to Federal Government benefit cost guidelines. "Almost 50% of the oil and gas industry is foreign owned and the benefits to foreign shareholders should not be included as a Canadian benefit" said Gaertner...

[CFN executive director Art] Sterritt questions whether Enbridge's forecasts on the cost of oil spill are realistic. Enbridge claims that the total cost of all pipeline spills on the Northern Gateway to 2048 will be \$22 million. "Enbridge just spent almost \$800 million cleaning up one spill in Kalamazoo, Michigan and another \$48 million cleaning up another spill in Illinois. The Kalamazoo spill alone is more than 35 times its estimate for all spills to 2048."... "Enbridge has continually exaggerated benefits while under estimating or not even reporting the environmental and social costs of this project." (CFN, 2012, Sept 24)

Enbridge's supposed duplicity was often articulated in the context of their dealings with First Nations along the project route, as in a June 2012 CFN press release that directly accused the firm of misleading the public:

A claim today by Enbridge that the company has signed equity agreements with 60 per cent of the First Nations along the proposed B.C./Alberta route of the Northern Gateway Pipeline Project is a complete sham, says Coastal First Nations executive director Art Sterritt. "We have checked with all the First Nations on the pipeline route west of Prince George and only two First Nations have signed equity agreements," says Sterritt, in response to Enbridge's announcement earlier today (CFN, 2012, June 6).

A related claim was that **local popular forces were engaged in a David vs Goliath struggle with much more powerful outside forces** (See Figure 39). Dogwood was the most likely group to propagate this narrative, as in a blog post in which they rebutted the 'foreign funded radicals' claims of project proponents:

In the face of mounting pressure from the largest pipeline company in Canada, an undisclosed consortium of international oil companies funding Enbridge's Northern Gateway project, and a pro-oil sands, pro- Northern Gateway federal and provincial government, we have helped build a broad grassroots movement of working families, First Nations governments, businesses, chambers of commerce, municipal governments, tourism operators and fishermen willing to take action to prevent oil tankers from threatening our coast. ....

None of the ['foreign funded radical'] conspiracy theorists acknowledge that the fight to protect our coast from the threat of a catastrophic oil spill is a quintessential David vs. Goliath struggle – foreign-funded oil interests like Enbridge are outspending environmental groups working on this issue at least one hundred to one. (Horter, 2011, Aug 16).

As in the above account, the claim that BC was under attack by *national* elites was sometimes intertwined with a second, related claim that the province was under attack by *hostile global forces* [See Figure 39]. These two claims were usually linked via a **corruption-betrayal** frame in which BC had been sold out by a project-supporting Federal Government in league with Alberta, national and multinational oil companies, and Chinese investors. This was articulated in a 2012 blog post by Dogwood entitled "Harper's Big Bad Wolf Tactics No Fairy Tale":

Strangely, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's plans for West Coast oil tanker and pipeline projects to serve Chinese interests are starting to resemble my daughter's favourite nighttime fables. Headlines screaming, "Canada PM vows to ensure key oil pipeline is built" look like lots of huffing, and way too much puffing with the Prime Minister looking more like a Big Bad Wolf than the public servant sworn to protect the interests of all Canadians, not the interests of state-owned Chinese oil companies. (Horter, 2012, Feb 16)

To an extent, fears of China were conceptual shorthand for regional anxieties concerning neoliberal globalization. This was a kind of dystopic inversion of the 'China-as-infinite growth' narrative deployed by the project's state and industry backers. If proponents saw China as globalization's promise, opponents saw the nation as globalization's threat – of local economic insecurity, global competitive pressures, declining national sovereignty, democratic unaccountability, and global ecological decline. Yet concerns about China were also related to longstanding orientalist discourses in British Columbia that date back to white fears of growing Chinese immigration in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Crompton, 2012). During this period, racist backlash against East Asians resulted in the passage of numerous pieces of discriminatory

legislation and several race riots. This sinophobic racism has never fully disappeared from BC's political culture. In the context of Northern Gateway, the focus on China is particularly telling, since potential Chinese investment in the oil sands is much more significant to the Canadian economy than it is to Chinese planners. While the Canadian oil sands industry flails around desperately in search of new markets, China has spent decades diversifying energy imports through bilateral deals with various African, Middle Eastern, and Latin American nations (Jakobson and Daojiong, 2006; Lai, 2007). Focus on China may help white Canadians articulate their legitimate concerns about neoliberal globalization. But it does so in a mystified way, downplaying the fact that Canadian corporate and state elites are much more dependent on attracting foreign capital and reaching global markets than Chinese planners are on securing Canadian oil.

Despite the xenophobic coding of regional populist anxieties, opponents did not simply reject the global in favor of regional jingoism. CFN leveraged their connections with multinational ENGOs to articulate the fight for the Great Bear Rainforest with the environmental interests of global civil society. One 2013 press release “called on people who care about nature and social justice – across Canada and the world – to stand alongside the majority of British Columbians and First Nations communities in saying ‘no’ to oil pipelines and tankers in this globally important region” (Sterrit and Miller, 2013).

SCBC also sought to bridge regional and global interests. In a letter published in Rabble.ca, the alternative media website, Caitlin Vernon (2012, Jan 12) used populist frames to critique Harper's support of Gateway and his attack on its opponents as a betrayal of both regional *and* global publics:

Harper[’s] twisted logic... is that while foreign funding of environmental organizations is a bad thing, foreign investment in the Enbridge pipeline and in the Alberta tar sands is unequivocally a good thing. Oh of course, the international scientists are wrong and climate change isn't really a problem, so we can proceed full-steam ahead with expansion of the tar sands, Canada's number one emitter of greenhouse gas emissions. Never mind all the refugees around the world forced to leave their homes due to rising sea level. Never mind the wacky weather, beetle infestations, and predictions of water so warm by 2080 that salmon may not be able to survive on the B.C. coast. ...The twisted logic states that foreign investment in the tar sands is most definitely a good thing, especially when most of the benefits accrue to the international investors, not Canadians.

### 7.5.1. Of The People, By The People: Democratic Populism and the Anti-Gateway Discourse Coalition

The regional popular struggle against Northern Gateway was framed as an inherently democratic one, in which elite outsiders sought to unilaterally impose the project contra the popular sovereignty of British Columbians. One of the most common claims made by Dogwood and Sierra was that **Northern Gateway did not have social license and/or the project approval process did not respect local democratic sovereignty** (See Figure 39). These claims were often made with reference to various demonstrations, declarations by regional political and industry bodies, and provincial polls. One SCBC backgrounder noted that:

Between 75-80% of British Columbians are opposed to this project, according to multiple polls dating back to 2005. The Union of B.C. Municipalities is opposed, as are over hundreds of fishing organizations, tourism associations, and coastal businesses (SCBC, n.d.).

The two ENGOs amplified this populist-democratic framing in other ways, with Dogwood by far the organization most likely to directly quote various 'representatives' of the regional popular, such as activists, laypeople, and small business owners (see Table 3). These actors were usually described as 'average' British Columbians forced to take political action in response to the foreign assault on their rights. That Dogwood in particular deployed this tactic spoke to their status as an 'internet mediated advocacy organization (Hestres, 2015) that prioritized the mobilization of already sympathetic audiences. By demonstrating that local residents 'just like them' were taking action, Dogwood could cultivate a sense of political efficacy in audiences already opposed to Gateway but unsure how they could make a difference. One 2010 blog post interviewed members of a local quilting club that was fundraising for the No Tankers campaign:

The quilters reconnected in the late spring when [club member] Kristin Miller sent an email to other quilters. "The terrible mess with the BP oil well off the Louisiana coast has me sick at heart," she stated in her email. "(I'm) feeling the need to do something to help prevent a similar disaster on our coast." So the quilters gathered to raise public awareness and advocate for a permanent tanker ban.

"This project has really captured people's hearts," stated [quilting club member] Meadowcroft. "I believe that people truly want to make a difference, but often feel powerless to do so. My goal is to show them how." (Gilbert-Behn, Sept 16, 2010).

Dogwood was also the organization most likely to claim that **regional opposition was powerful enough to stop the project** (See Figure 39), heightening supporters' sense of perceived political efficacy. In doing so, they often referred to electoral politics and their organization's 'get out the vote' campaigns. In a May 2013 blog post, Dogwood's Will Horter (2013, May 17) interpreted the recent BC election – and the BC Liberal's abrupt policy shift – as a democratic triumph for the Anti-gateway forces:

And let's not forget: not a single pro-tanker MLA was elected on May 14. Ironically, although her "five conditions" were substantively weaker than the NDP's position, Clark's rhetoric was stronger. She repeatedly stated she would stand up to Alberta and Ottawa to fight for B.C.'s interests.

Regional populist and democratic frames were often articulated alongside the claim that **the JRP process and/or the government were corrupt and/or undemocratic** (see Figure 39). Opponents had recourse to a long list of complaints in this regard, including the JRP's narrow scoping phase; insufficient First Nations consultation; close ties between the Harper Conservatives and the oil industry; public statements in favor of the project by Harper and his ministers; the equivalency agreement waiving BC's right to conduct its own provincial review; the lack of regional representation on the JRP; and the C-38 and C-45 omnibus bills.

At times, the JRP's unaccountability was contrasted unfavorably with the democratic ethos of activism and mass protest, as in a 2010 blog post by Dogwood's Eric Swanson (2010, Aug 30) announcing an upcoming Vancouver rally:

Our current Federal Government supports Enbridge's oil pipeline and tanker project, and has given decision-making authority to a review panel comprised of three non-British Columbians. This rally will help send the message that the majority of people in this province have already made up our mind; and that our answer is no.

By delegitimizing the JRP, Northern Gateway's opponents could insulate themselves from the Panel's technical and scientific findings in anticipation of eventual project approval. Both CFN and YDA challenged the democratic and moral legitimacy of the JRP and the Harper Government. In doing so, they often gestured to the government's constitutional requirements to consult First Nations (See Figure 39), as in a 2012 YDA press release following Harper's public statements supporting the project:

The First Nations accuse the Harper Government of pre-determining the outcome of the National Energy Board review....

"Harper has shown his hand," said Chief Jackie Thomas of Saik'uz First Nation. "He has made it clear he's planning to violate our constitutional rights and push the Enbridge pipeline through no matter what the result of the hearings. We're not going to let that happen. We'll use all the lawful means we have – under Canadian, International and Indigenous law – to stop the Enbridge pipelines from putting our communities and our neighbours at risk from oil spills." (YDA, 2012, Feb 2)

Later, when the Conservatives' Bill C-38 conferred final approval of the project to federal cabinet, a CFN press release quoted Art Sterrit, who noted how CFN:

"had agreed to participate in this process on the basis that the JRP was going to be a decision-maker on whether or not the project would go ahead". Then the Federal Government unilaterally changed the decision-making process, he said. "This was blatantly unfair and smacks of double dealing – something we as First Nation have become accustomed to with this government." (CFN, 2013, Feb 4).

The rejection of the JRP's democratic legitimacy continued even after project approval, as in a February 2014 Dogwood press release announcing the results of:

the first poll released about Enbridge's oil tanker and pipeline proposal since the National Energy Board's joint review panel (JRP) recommended conditional approval in December. When asked whether they trust the review process, 51 per cent of British Columbians say they distrust the process, while only 32 per cent trust it.

... "These polling results bring home why the Enbridge tanker and pipeline proposal is going nowhere fast – despite the JRP recommendation," said Jessica Clogg of the West Coast Environmental Law Association. "Residents of B.C. continue to withhold 'social license' for the project, while multiple First Nations lawsuits threaten to derail it and the government of B.C. formally opposed the Enbridge project." (Dogwood, Feb 5, 2014)

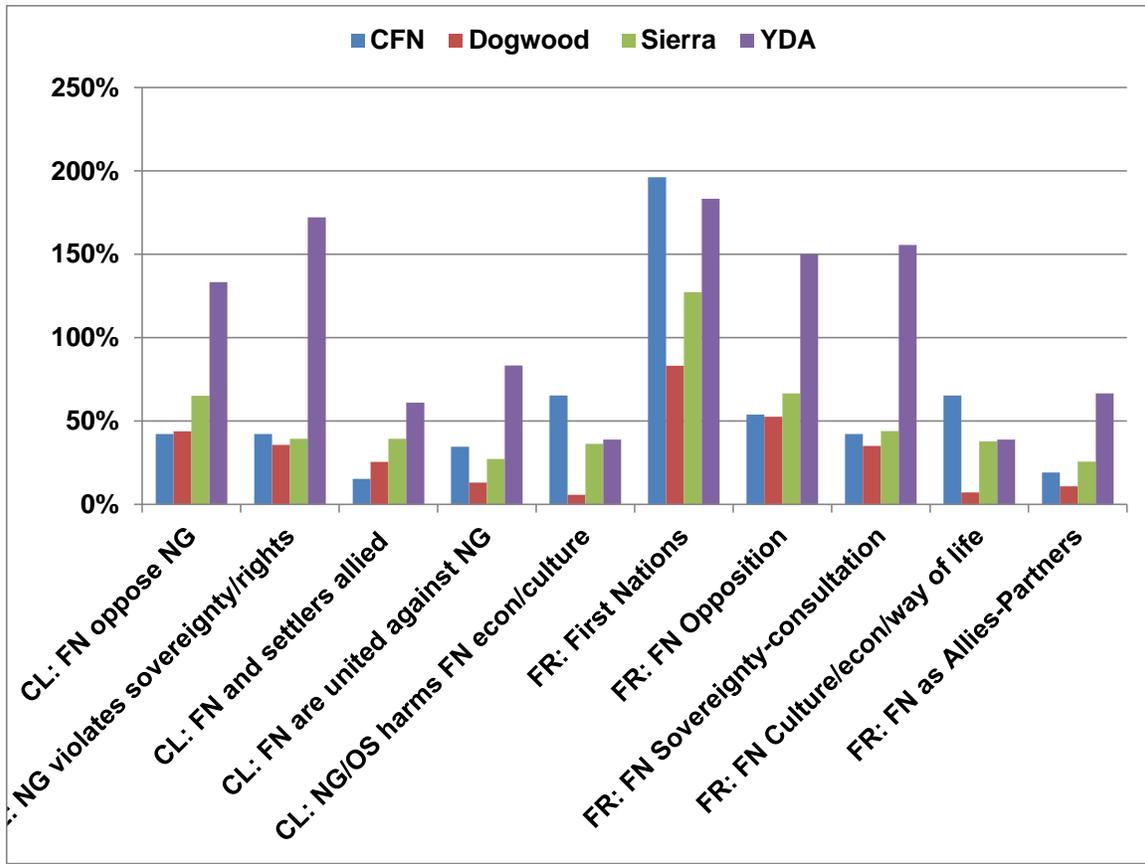
## **7.6. Arguing From First Principles: Framing Indigenous Resistance**

That First Nations groups and ENGOs deployed common narratives concerning local risks, regional interest, democratic sovereignty, and populist struggle indicates that they were engaged in a common discourse coalition emerging from their joint opposition to Northern Gateway. This interpretation is reinforced by the extent to which settler and First Nations groups deployed similar First Nations-specific frames and claims relating to

indigenous sovereignty, threats to indigenous culture, economy, and way of life, and political unity (See Figure 40).

As Dorceta Taylor (2000) explains, social movement “participation is enhanced by the existence of political opportunities” through which actors are “able to gain access to power or manipulate the system” (520). In the battle over Northern Gateway, both First Nations legal standing concerning rights and title and the burgeoning cross-Canada decolonization movement offered project opponents – settler and indigenous alike –with powerful means to do just this. Meanwhile, the timing of the 2013 BC election made green groups like DI and SCBC – who worked hard to mobilized BC voters – a powerful ally for First Nations groups whose small numbers made them less influential in the realm of electoral politics. Finally, the global networks and significant resources available to ENGOs was another valuable presented other valuable opportunities for the indigenous opposition.

Sierra Club was the settler organization by far most likely to deploy the First Nations-related frames and claims used by YDA and CFN themselves (See Figure 40). This was likely attributable to the long working relationship between SCBC and various indigenous allies, having spent years cultivating positive working relations with local indigenous peoples through programs like the Guardian Coastal Watchmen network. Regardless, both Dogwood and Sierra were more likely to deploy certain First Nations-related frames and claims than were the state opponents described in chapter 5. This was likely due to a number of reasons. For one, settler populations comprised the vast majority of BC voters. First Nations in BC, like the rest of Canada, tend to have lower levels of engagement with electoral politics at the provincial and federal level (Ladner and McCrossan, 2007). Also, indigenous peoples in BC tend to live either in rural, indigenous communities with small populations – making them less relevant to politicians in a first-past-the-post voting system biased in favor of larger, settler-dominated cities and towns – or in larger settlements in which they are an electoral minority. Yet the most relevant factor is likely the basic political economy of Canadian settler colonialism. Most current and future potential economic activity in BC takes or will take place on unceded indigenous territory (Coulthard, 2014). Championing indigenous rights and title is dangerous for state actors, including opposition parties that may one day be pressured to ensure growth via development on unceded indigenous territory.



**Figure 40: Common First Nation Claims and Frames of CS Opponents (Weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

Yet civil society groups need not suffer the burden of governance (Brulle, 2010), and are therefore freer to discuss politics on terms set by indigenous peoples themselves. This did not mean that both settler groups were equally likely to make certain claims, nor did it mean that they were collectively as likely to discuss First Nations issues as were indigenous organizations themselves. While Sierra was more likely than Dogwood to claim that **First Nations opposed Northern Gateway** and that **Northern Gateway violated indigenous sovereignty**, YDA was much more likely to make both claims (See Figure 40).

The heavy use of indigenous sovereignty claims was in line with the *regional subjectivities* generally referred to by project opponents. But for indigenous opponents, they were also informed by culturally-specific political ontologies that related sovereignty to traditional lands and territory (Coulthard, 2014). In a December 2011 press release announcing new signatories to the Save the Fraser Declaration, YDA described how “First Nations, whose unceded territory encompasses the entire coastline of British

*Columbia*, have formed a united front, banning all exports of tar sands crude oil through their territories, and effectively all of BC” (emphasis added) (YDA, 2011, Dec 1). SCBC made similar claims in a January 2012 open letter that noted how the Fraser Declaration was “based in [indigenous] ancestral laws, not to mention [indigenous peoples’] constitutionally protected rights as Aboriginal peoples to determine what happens on their lands and waters” (Vernon, 2012, Jan 12).

The reasons given for First Nations opposition were also fundamentally place based, in line with Coulthard’s (2014) description of decolonial resistance as being rooted in local communities’ historical, spiritual, cultural and economic relationships with traditional territories. CFN and YDA frequently claimed that the **Gateway project would undermine First Nation’s culture, economy, or way of life** (See Figure 40). While Sierra frequently made this claim, Dogwood rarely did. This gave the impression that the latter group was more interested in referring to the *legal power of First Nations opposition* – which benefited their own resistance – than it was in normalizing indigenous concerns as a moral or political basis for that resistance. Once again this seems indicative of Dogwood’s status as an ‘internet mediated advocacy organization’ concerned with mobilizing its political base (which was generally composed of settlers) (Hestre, 2015). SCBC, meanwhile, may have seen the struggle as part of a concerted long-term attempt to strengthen their connections with regional indigenous stakeholders.

While opponents had discussed the ecological interests of future generations in ways that countered the future-oriented projections of national interest made by Gateway’s proponents, indigenous place-based ontologies allowed these intergenerational responsibilities to be extended *backwards into the past*. This is in keeping with recent indigenous scholarship connecting contemporary sovereignty claims to historical relationships with territory (Corntassle and Bryce, 2011; Coulthard, 2014). One CFN press release written by Heiltsuk Chief Marilyn Slett (2012, Sept 5) bridged political opposition, indigenous sovereignty, and historical ties to local ecosystems:

Prior to contact with non-Aboriginal peoples, we participated in an elaborate system of trade and barter with other First Nations along the Pacific Coast. The existence of pre-contact trade and barter was recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada in the Gladstone decision that dealt with our Aboriginal Right to sell herring spawn on kelp. The decision affirmed that we engaged in intertribal trade of spawn on kelp and that this practice is integral to our culture.

Our people's health is directly linked to the health of our marine resources. We are ocean people... Our territory still holds a rich abundance of many of our traditional marine foods, but declines in the fisheries have forced us to rely increasingly on the expensive, unhealthy food that is flown into our community.

SCBC's Caitlyn Vernon made a similar point in a March 2012 blog post denouncing the JRP for not taking into account the Gitga'at people's ancient relationship with their traditional territories:

If [the JRP] really wanted to understand what is at stake with the proposed super tankers, the Panel members would come back... in the late spring, when the Gitga'at people travel to their seaweed camp to harvest seaweed and halibut....

But the JRP is not taking this kind of time. The Gitga'at people have only 2 days with the Panel, to describe their connection to the land and waters that dates back thousands of years, their systems of governance and stewardship, their dependence on surrounding waters for food, culture, livelihoods and recreation. (Vernon, 2012, March 1).

Not only were Sierra texts more likely than Dogwood's to discuss indigenous claims related to sovereignty and ecological, economic, and cultural risk, but they were also much more likely to feature First Nations describing the threat posed by Gateway in their own words (See Table 14). One 2011 blog post by Sierra's Caitlyn Vernon (2011, Dec 11) directly quoted a CFN representative:

"We will not sit idly by as our cultures and our lands are threatened," said Harold Yeltatzie, president of Coastal First Nations, reiterating that their ban on crude oil tanker traffic is maintained. "The consequences of a catastrophic oil spill on our people and our culture cannot be calculated or compensated."

Other common opponent claims related to the **unity of First Nations opposition** – both amongst themselves and with their settler allies (See Figure 40). This was potentially a response to Gateway's backers, who had made much of the supposed openness of First Nations along the project route to resource development in general and Enbridge's equity offers in particular (See Chapter 5). A December 2011 YDA press release announcing new signatories to the Save the Fraser declaration displayed this focus on unity:

Several new First Nations signed the Save the Fraser Declaration in a Vancouver ceremony, expanding First Nations opposition in Western Canada to more than 130 Nations. These First Nations form *an unbroken*

*wall of opposition from the U.S. border to the Arctic Ocean.* (YDA, 2011, Dec. 1) (emphasis added).

More relevant to the emergence of a potential settler-indigenous bloc was the extent to which all civil society opponents drew on the argument that **First Nations and local settlers were united in their opposition to the project** (See Figure 40). The YDA was the organization most likely to make this claim, as they did in a May 8, 2013 YDA op-ed published in The Calgary Herald describing a delegation to Calgary for Enbridge' annual shareholder meeting, at which it was joined by various settler allies. A December 2012 press release lauded the City of Vancouver's official declaration of support for the Yinka Dene Alliance. The YDA, the release stated, had:

*"always said that we are not just fighting to protect our own First Nations communities from oil pipelines and tankers, but rather that we are fighting to protect every woman, man and child in B.C., no matter where they live,"* said Chief Jackie Thomas of Saik'uz First Nation. *"The Enbridge project puts our food sources and water at risk from the threat of oil spills that can never be cleaned up. We will not allow that to happen and we are glad to know that cities and towns in BC are standing with us against this threat. Together, we will stop these pipelines and tankers."* (emphasis added) (YDA, 2012, Dec 13).

In a blog post the following day, Sierra's Vernon described the City of Vancouver's proclamation of solidarity in similar terms:

Yesterday, in Vancouver, I stood as a witness as the Tahltan Central Council, the Tahltan Band Council, and the B.C. Métis Federation signed on to the Save the Fraser Declaration....Also present were Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson and Smithers Mayor Taylor Bachrach, in support of the First Nations declaration and standing together with First Nations in opposition to Enbridge Northern Gateway and the proposed Kinder Morgan new pipeline. Mayor Robertson declared December 13th to be Save the Fraser Declaration Day in Vancouver. The City's Proclamation states that oil pipelines and tankers pose unacceptable risks to Vancouver's economy and environment, and that citizens and First Nations will benefit from working together to protect communities from oil spills. (Vernon, 2012, Dec. 14).

## 7.7. Conclusions

The social network analysis adds credence to the claim that Dogwood and Sierra Club BC were members of a common discourse coalition oriented around halting the construction of bitumen pipelines to the West Coast. Both group's SNA samples shared

numerous ties with other Green and left advocacy groups. Yet these ties seemed much thinner than those identified in the previous chapter linking elite-backed think tanks and advocacy groups to neoliberal extractivist discourse coalitions. There were no large central hubs – large think tanks, major political parties, organized labor groups, advocacy groups, policy discussion forums – with which significant numbers of either group’s social network sample were formally associated. While the boards of elite-backed advocacy groups, think tanks, and policy discussion forums are key coalescing mechanisms for interfield neoliberal discourse coalitions, the ENGOs in the opponent sample seemed to lack analogous network hubs.

First Nations groups appeared to be even more institutionally isolated from green groups than the ENGOs in the sample were from each other. Given the centrality of First Nations resistance to the anti-Gateway struggle, and the willingness of settler groups to leverage indigenous resistance in their own fight against the project, the lack of ties between Coastal First Nations, Sierra Club, and Dogwood seems insular. That neither settler group possessed board nor staff ties with Coastal First Nations is not a problem in itself. Yet decades after the rise of the environmental justice movement, is it unfair to expect *some* level of formal indigenous representation on the boards of ENGOs whose success increasingly depends on the legal standing and political mobilization of their First Nations allies? And while both groups took on indigenous concerns, made common cause with groups like CFN and YDA, and made much of indigenous opposition in their own materials, neither group’s social network sample shared any directorate or staffing ties with any prominent indigenous political organization.

That said, as grassroots social movements there exist a number of informal settings in which coalition building takes place that the social network analysis in this project does not take into account. Multiple events helped constitute the discourse coalition by providing different actors with political opportunities around which they could collectively mobilize. These included events related to previous or contemporary pipeline spills, like the anniversary of the Exxon Valdez disaster and Enbridge’s catastrophic 2010 leak into Michigan’s Kalamazoo River. Similarly, the Harper Government’s C-38, C-45, and C-51 omnibus bills were at least partially designed to undermine and isolate the anti-Gateway – and broader extractivist – opposition. Yet they had the opposite effect, uniting different ENGO’s and First Nations activists in common cause against three pieces of repugnant legislation that quite clearly worked against the interests of all

actors concerned. The Idle No More movement, emerging partially as a response to C-45, brought the settler green and indigenous wings of the anti-Gateway bloc closer together by driving home to ENGOs the capacity of the decolonization movement to hamper extractivist export schemes on the West Coast. Even Minister Oliver's 'foreign funded radicals' letter and Gateway's eventual approval by the JRP seemed to further unite the opposition by offering them an unambiguous common enemy.

These political opportunities often enabled collaboration between different organizations. Dogwood and Sierra often promoted the same protests and demonstrations, and both groups collaborated with First Nations opposition in different ways. This was especially the case for Sierra, which had been cultivating stronger working relations with indigenous stakeholders for over a decade. SCBC sent numerous delegations into First Nation's territory to document and publicize indigenous opposition and their relationship to local ecologies. These often involved collaboration with the Guardian Watchmen program, which SCBC has supported since its founding in 2005. Both Dogwood and Sierra held joint demonstrations with CFN and YDA members and in 2014 Sierra co-launched the Pull Together campaign to raise funds for First Nation's legal challenges to Northern Gateway. Meanwhile, the YDA's Save The Fraser solidarity accord afforded settler ENGOs like Sierra and Dogwood the opportunity to strengthen lines of solidarity between indigenous and settler opponents in such a way that both factions benefited.

Sierra, Dogwood, CFN and YDA all – to varying degrees – deployed common frames and claims in their fight against Gateway. Yet both groups also deployed somewhat different discursive strategies, which may indicate differing long term priorities that may undermine the possibility of a broader counterhegemonic struggle against neoliberal extractivism. As the only so-called 'legacy' ENGO in the sample, only Sierra discussed climate change to any significant degree, and was generally more likely to discuss ecological risk in general than was Dogwood. Yet climate change was arguably the environmental issue most oriented towards the development of a broad social movement against neoliberal extractivism. Dogwood, meanwhile, was less willing to delve into First Nations concerns – or to quote First Nations themselves - than was Sierra, even while they were more likely to use populist and democratic frames that amplified the perceived political efficacy of movement supporters. This seemed to relate to Dogwood's position as an 'internet mediated advocacy organization' whose theory of

social change involved mobilizing already-convinced publics rather than educating those publics about ecological risks or indigenous concerns.

Yet it was beyond a doubt that both settler and First Nations groups were engaged in a common discourse coalition. Green groups publicized First Nations resistance, spoke in many of the same frames and arguments as First Nations groups themselves, and frequently referred to the legitimacy and rationale of indigenous resistance. It is worth noting that all this is in keeping with the potential emergence of a common approach to local sustainability in which some local environmentalists are increasingly pulled into the conceptual orbit of indigenous ontologies. Certainly, in recent years prominent regional environmentalists (and avid anti-Gateway campaigners) like David Suzuki (Suzuki and Moola, 2010, Feb. 5) and Ben West (2012, March 30) have discussed the importance of indigenous experiences and ontologies to the evolution of their own environmental ideas, values, and organizing. And there does appear to be a clear affinity between some of the indigenous political, social, and economic ontologies promoted by groups such as CFN and YDA and the contemporary environmental discourse of Dogwood and, to an even greater extent, SCBC. These include the interconnection between ecologies, economies and culture; the framing of local ecosystems and the cultures which depend on them as fundamentally unique and irreplaceable and the services provided by local ecosystems as beyond price; even the political understanding of resource extraction projects as exploitative operations imposed upon oppressed locals by elite outsiders. All of these tropes are foundational to both regional indigenous ontologies and the burgeoning decolonization movement in Canada (Coulthard, 2014), and all seemed to inform the political communications of ENGOs and indigenous groups alike. As such, it is worth speculating on whether increased collaboration between some ENGOs and indigenous groups are affecting not just the politics, but the ontological and normative assumptions of BC's green movement.

All civil society opponents, to varying degrees, framed their resistance as a regional populist response to hostile foreign forces. In doing so, they amplified regional subjectivities from whose vantage points the arguments of opponents became intelligible. This generally involved articulating the struggle as a defense of regional place-based ecological, social, political, and economic interests in a way which cut to the bone of nationally-coded proponent narratives. This helped opponents create compelling

political scripts which could motivate collective regional movements to block extractivist expansion – a phenomenon that Naomi Klein (2015) has described as ‘Blockadia’.

The saliency of proponent claims often required that subjects think of themselves as ‘Canadians’ who would all benefit more-or-less equally from the pursuit of a reified ‘national interest’. Yet by drawing on regional place-based subjectivities and interests, opponents had recourse to democratic populist tropes that directed anger towards hostile out-of-province elites. These were variously described as oil companies, Albertan and Federal politicians, Bay Street financiers, international investors, or Chinese planners, all of whom who were accused of invading local spaces and communities from the outside. Unequal distributions of risk and benefit could therefore be simultaneously articulated with region *and* class. In doing so, opponents targeted the spatial-vulnerabilities of export market diversification projects, in which resistance at key transport nodes along the project route threatened to cut Canadian bitumen off from tidewater and the global markets that wait beyond (Klein, 2015). And it is this emergent ‘blockadia’ which presents one of the most promising means of challenging neoliberal extractivism and mitigating catastrophic climate change.

Opponents also counteracted proponents’ economic claims by linking local ecological sustainability with healthy regional economies, and to a lesser extent articulated the possibilities of sustainable regional economic production models. Yet the myopic focus on local ecological and economic risk seemed to undermine the capacity of these actors to articulate their fight as part of a broader struggle against both the tar sands and the neoliberal extractivist regime that generates projects like Northern Gateway. The lack of discussion about both climate and a novel economic paradigm that could obviate the perceived need for tar sands expansion seemed related to an inability to relate local subjectivities to global ecological threats, systemic economic imperatives, and the broader inequalities of neoliberal extractivism as a class project.

This criticism, however, can easily be inverted. The environmental left’s incapability of gaining public legitimacy for dismantling the tar sands industry – either as a response to climate change or in the name of socio-economic equity – may have left Northern Gateway’s opponents with little choice than to use narratives related to those regional subjectivities and risks that *were* salient. In this sense, the local focus of opponents was dictated by the exigencies of the political situation, both because climate

campaigners have so far failed to successfully frame the issue in a way that resonates locally, and because a focus on the local *works* to mobilize regional publics. By discussing regional ecosystems, cultures and economies, opponents mobilized diverse regional actors whose understandings of common dependence on shared local resources was less mediated than the mutual dependence of globally dispersed populations on a stable climate system. Importantly then, it was arguably the focus on local risks that enabled this particular discourse coalition of First Nations, ENGOs, municipal governments and local communities to emerge in the first place. By leveraging local subjectivities and constituting new political coalitions around them, opponents built the type of highly mobilized political coalition that Canadian climate activists have so far failed to generate.

Yet absent any attempt to bridge the local with the national and global – or the conjunctural with the systemic – this pragmatic short term strategy represented a strategic long term limitation which sooner or later will need to be overcome. Local works in the immediate term, but absence this bridging it may condemn tar sands opponents to a kind of parochial status that is difficult to ‘scale up’. The claims of opponents did at times point to possible alternatives to neoliberal extractivism. Sierra in particular was able to bridge local concerns with the issue of climate change, and CFN made frequent reference to local sustainable economic initiatives that at least implied local alternatives to neoliberal extractivism. But generally speaking, opponents rarely connected the fight against Gateway with any broader critique of the neoliberal extractivist status quo.

In many ways, the Northern Gateway conflict was a perfect opportunity to bridge an understanding of the local ecological risks from bitumen transportation with the looming global danger of catastrophic climate change – which will affect coastal and marine regions with particular severity (EPA, n.d.). Similarly, it was an excellent opportunity to bridge British Columbians’ anger at the unequal distribution of project risks and benefits with the regional, national, international, and class inequalities that structure the broader tar sands industry under neoliberal extractivism.

Yet opponents rarely discussed these broader injustices. Not the undermining of manufacturing through the Dutch disease effect. Not the staggeringly low taxation and royalty rates that ensure Albertans receive only a tiny fraction of resource rent in state revenue, and without which the industry would likely be unprofitable. Not the low rate of

employment intensity and high rate of corporate compensation that ensures high prices produce windfall corporate profits while workers receive a pittance of increased sector revenue in wages or other forms of remuneration. Not the neoliberal trade treaties that make increased value-added refining activities difficult to pursue. Not the increasing financialisation and foreign ownership of the industry which ensure that over 50% of sector revenues accrue to international firms and investors. And little mention of the fact that national elites increasingly benefit from the internationalization of the industry in ways which position their interests against those of Canadian workers and taxpayers. For an anti-Gateway movement oriented around the injustice inherent in the unequal distribution of risk and benefit and the discrepancy between the interests of the regional popular and political and economic elites, this could have been low hanging fruit. Yet while the discourses of Gateway's opponents gesture to the possibility of making these kinds of linkages in the future, to a large degree this fruit was left to wither on the vine in the context of the anti-Gateway movement itself.

As the previous chapter demonstrated, some civil society proponents were also happy to make place-based and populist arguments, echoing their state and industry allies in their focus on a reified national interest and conservative populist denunciations of environmentalists. While failing to win over the BC public, they did seemingly succeed in articulating the need for tar sands expansion, export market diversification, and regulatory 'reform' as the 'common sense' policy trajectory of the country. As of writing the Liberal Trudeau government is ratcheting up its support for tar sands expansion, having just approved the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion. And recent attempts by NDP activists to promote the Leap Manifesto, a blueprint for a national post-carbon transition, has been met with extreme hostility in the press, broad segments of the public, and much of the NDP establishment itself. It is therefore fair to wonder to what extent the anti-Gateway resistance succeeded in winning the regional battle while failing to position themselves for the larger war to come.

In the following and final chapter, which deals with how the Gateway controversy played out in the national press, we will ascertain to what extent they were successful. Were these groups cited as legitimate civil society sources unaffiliated with the project's state and industry backers, as well as the nation's New Right discourse coalitions? To what extent did sections of the media replicate the very arguments deployed by these groups? And finally, did the national press – in whole or in part – disproportionately

frame the controversy in the terms set by the pro- or anti-Gateway coalition? Only in such terms can the success of coalition strategy be tested.

## Chapter 8. Gateway to the Press

This dissertation has proceeded according to the Gramscian insight that it is often from within social institutions that ideologies are developed and eventually circulated throughout the public sphere. Civil society groups are clear examples; it was only with the aid of New Right EPII Think Tanks and other groups that neoliberal and neoconservative epistemic communities could finally gain the economic, cultural and social capital necessary to replace the ailing Keynesian-Fordist ideological consensus. Yet the ability of powerful or hegemonic groups to frame projects like Northern Gateway as in or against a reified 'national interest' is not entirely within their control. This is especially so during times of crisis. As Lakoff (2010) argues, people are generally more likely to challenge their previously established beliefs following a traumatic experience. This reconfirms the Gramscian argument that it is when the established social order is shaken that oppositional forces have the greatest opportunity for ideological praxis (Frank, 2012; Gramsci, 1996; Hall, 1988; Hall et al., 2013).

For instance, the development of neoliberalism as a philosophy and policy regime emerged from the attempt of economic elites and market fundamentalist intellectuals to exploit the crisis of stagflation undermining growth, profitability, and employment in the Keynesian-Fordist West (Harvey, 2005). In subsequent decades, neoliberal policy entrepreneurs and state reformers have often responded to political, economic, and social crisis by imposing and/or entrenching neoliberal policy regimes (Klein, 2007). In this study, the Conservatives' and MLI's 'Global Energy Superpower' discourse was a similar attempt to sell extractivist development as the means to mitigate the ongoing global crisis, sometimes referring to worsening conditions in the United States and Europe as a sign of things to come were Canadians to ignore their warnings.

Analyzing the frames and arguments deployed by actors in their own communications materials allows us to identify their *ideal* discursive response to crisis. Yet few groups can present their *ideal* ideological formation in the public sphere unchallenged. Much as economic capital must be *realized* through investment, commodity production and sale for it to *remain* economic capital, *economic capital* can only be successfully *translated into cultural, symbolic, and social capital* through its *investment and realisation in non-economic fields*. Like the proverbial tree in a forest, a

press release or research report that no one reads has no discursive power or ideological heft, no matter how elegantly constructed.

To explore a discourse coalition's degree of success, one must therefore analyze how their discourses actually circulate throughout society. As environmental communications scholars such as Max Boykoff (2009, 444) and Lisa Antilla (2008, 241) argue, the way in which news media frame scientific and environmental stories socially constructs environmental issues in the public sphere. According to Antilla (2008), the news media's agenda-setting power means that even the "*selection* of stories by journalists" can have this effect (241). Also important are media frames, which Jamieson and Capella (2008) define as the fundamental discursive and conceptual "organizing structures" that help audiences interpret a given social issue "through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration" (141).

The 'crisis of journalism' facing much of the mainstream press due to declining advertising rates, readership and audiences, the rise of social media, conglomeration, downsizing of staff and budgets, and the closure of numerous outlets means that these institutions possess less agenda setting power than they once did (Curran, 2010). Yet they still play a critical role, partially because a significant proportion of news content distributed through social media derives from mainstream news outlets (Newman, 2011). Furthermore, the mainstream press continues to play a central role in both mediating and legitimating civil society communications (Gutstein, 2014; Oreskes and Conway, 2010; Raso and Neubauer, 2016).

Yet the press is not a politically neutral terrain upon which civil society opponents compete to set the agenda and frame the issue. The rise of the Harper Conservatives was aided not just by the rise of New Right EPII-groups, but also by the concurrent rightward drift of Canada's mainstream press (Gutstein, 2009). When conservative media mogul Conrad Black consolidated his Hollinger empire in the 1990s, he brought in numerous right wing thinkers to work as editors and columnists, many of them possessing connections to EPII-linked think tanks and foundations (212). The trend continued when much of Hollinger's Canadian newspaper holdings were sold to the Asper family's CanWest media conglomerate in 2000 (Canwest Receives, 2009, March 12). For instance, the Fraser Institute's one-time director of regulatory studies, Fazil Mihar, joined Hollinger's (and later Canwest-Global's) Vancouver Sun as a columnist in

1999, and today serves as the paper's Associate Editor (Fazil Mihlar, n.d.). The Thompson family-owned Globe and Mail also shifted to the right over the same period, hiring numerous EPII-linked think tank scholars and policy entrepreneurs (Gutstein, 2009, 214-220). Before founding the Macdonald Laurier Institute, AIMS-founder Brian Crowley had worked at the Globe and Mail (Gutstein, 2009 217). Both the Globe and CanwestGlobal/PostMedia have financially supported EPII groups such as Fraser, and there are multiple examples of their corporate managers sitting on these group's boards of directorate over the past two decades (2009, 170-220; 2014, 67-68).

All this has led to a greater willingness to feature the research and opinions of New Right eco-skeptics, and a growing hostility to the industry's critics (Gutstein, 2009, 170-220; 2014). Increased ties, ideological affinities, and financial interdependence between EPII groups and industry on one hand and sections of the press on the other only heighten the growing reliance on third party information subsidies as a response to Canada's journalism crisis. Though this crisis has affected news media throughout the West, it is particularly acute in Canada. From the mid-1990s through the mid-2000s, conglomerates such as Canwest/Global took on huge amounts of debt in the process of consolidating their holdings through a frenzy of buyouts and mergers (Winseck, 2011). When the financial crisis hit in 2008/2009, a sharp decline in advertising revenue devastated the finances of these now heavily-indebted conglomerates. Not only did this lead to the bankruptcy of CanWest Global and the sale of its newspaper assets to Postmedia in 2010, but it also left many debt-ridden papers in Canada facing declining advertising revenue. In fact, Canadian newspapers have been facing steep declines in print subscriptions, daily circulation and advertising revenue over the past decade (Erret, 2016, April 19), with PostMedia posting a \$99 million loss in the fourth quarter of 2016 (Craig, 2016, Oct 26).

The result has been a media sector increasingly desperate to strike deals with major corporate sponsors, making outlets even more vulnerable to advertiser pressure. The apex (nadir?) came in 2014, when The Vancouver Observer published a leaked Postmedia presentation proposing a sponsored content deal with the Canadian Association of Pipeline Producers that would guarantee the industry more positive coverage (Uechi and Millar, 2014, Feb. 5). The implication was obvious – Postmedia papers were already defending the oil sands, so why *not* be paid for it?

Yet no discourse, no matter how socially dominant, can completely structure news coverage in its favor. For one, journalistic norms of balance provide avenues for oppositional actors to challenge dominant discourses. To argue that the press is a hegemonic institution is not by any means to argue that media systems are closed systems of power insulated from critical rhetoric or oppositional social forces. If this were the case, capitalists and their neoliberal allies would never have felt compelled to develop networks of sympathetic think tanks and advocacy groups to begin with. Why would capitalist elites work to develop the institutional capacity for interfield political projects if those fields were *always already* subservient to their interests?

Counterhegemonic resistance can and does influence fields and institutions which are *on the whole* integrated into a hegemonic bloc of actors and institutions. More importantly, and as argued previously, neoliberalism and its Canadian extractivist variant are currently in crisis, and can no longer be defined as hegemonic as such. Partially, this relates back to the broader global crisis of neoliberalism resulting from decades of heightened financial instability, economic insecurity, income and wealth stagnation, and heightened inequality facing much of the working and middle classes in the developed West (Harvey, 2005), including Canada (Broadbent Institute, 2014; Carrick, 2017, Jan. 15; Gutstein, 2014; Heisz, 2015). The result has been a general erosion of popular consent for neoliberal politics and a renewed public desire for feasible alternatives, as evidenced by the revival of both economic leftism and authoritarian, cultural and right wing populism throughout both North America and Europe. The extent to which popular consent to neoliberalism – to whatever degree it ever existed – has been eroded can be witnessed in Gateway’s proponents’ – some of whom have been prominent neoliberal proselytizers in the past – general unwillingness to make market fundamentalist arguments. Some, like the neoliberal Harper Government, have even argued for extractivism as the basis to defend and enhance the Canadian welfare state.

Other crises have fed into and reinforced this broader crisis of neoliberal extractivism. The global ecological crisis emboldened an increasingly coordinated regional, national, and global challenge to Northern Gateway from ENGOs, First Nations, regional state actors, and settler communities. Similarly, actors associated with the decolonisation movement had increasingly targeted Gateway and similar projects as 21<sup>st</sup> century colonial land grabs threatening indigenous sovereignty, local economies, and traditional cultures.

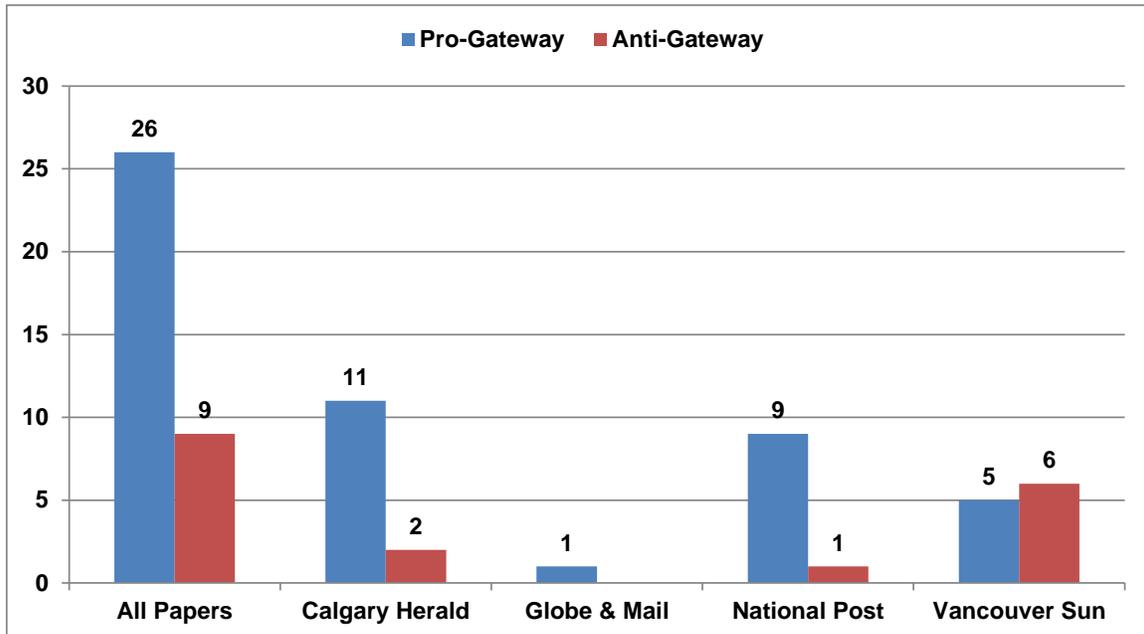
These challenges to neoliberal extractivism do not necessarily indicate that the hegemony of extractivism per se – to say nothing of capitalism more generally – is in terminal decline. Heightened economic insecurity and inequality seems to have only increased the popular support for extractivist expansion in some quarters – most notably in Alberta and Saskatchewan (Grenier, 2016, Nov. 30). Furthermore, extractivism remains immensely popular among key sections of the Canadian elite. This is especially true for those industry, state, civil society, and media actors associated with the neoliberal petrobloc. These actors continue to promote extractivism as the cornerstone of 21<sup>st</sup> Canadian capitalism – as evidenced by their strident support for Northern Gateway and export market diversification. Finally, most of Gateway’s defenders continued to promote an extractivist development model that replicated the sector’s neoliberal features: low royalty and taxation rates, high rates of internationalisation and financialisation; a corresponding focus on international exports of raw resources, attracting foreign capital, and the downplaying of domestic value added activities; emaciated regulatory regimes; and extreme inequities in the division of risk and benefit.

The point being that during the time period covered in this study, extractivism and neoliberalism were in a state of flux. This is significant precisely because the ability of oppositional coalitions to impact public discourse through the press is greatest in times of hegemonic crisis. This is not only because such crises imply the erosion of popular consent, but also because of the basic functioning of journalistic norms and practices. The socio-political manifestations of crisis – in this case, the organized resistance to Northern Gateway from local settlers, green groups and First Nations – are eminently *newsworthy*. The continuous stream of declarations, protests, and emotionally-charged JRP testimonies provided journalists with a series of dramatic confrontations between opposing forces, satisfying a journalistic preference for conflict-based stories with a high emotional impact (Yopp et al., 2009). At the same time, the material reality of resistance throws the current regime’s accumulation strategies into disarray, making resistance objectively newsworthy. Conflict and crisis make great copy.

## **8.1. Who You Gonna Call? Opinion Pieces, News Sourcing, and Discourse Coalitions**

The ambiguity concerning the role of the press could be seen in the division between hard news and opinion content within the news sample. On one hand,

journalistic norms of balance meant that the broad outlines of the opposition case were covered in hard news content, and (certain) opponents were frequently cited. Yet generally speaking, various contextualising claims of opponents which helped justify their reasons for opposing Northern Gateway tended to be under-reported in the news sample, even while analogous claims of proponents were broadly featured.



**Figure 41: Opinion Pieces for and against Gateway**

The opinion pages of the four sampled papers seemed to be more biased in favor of Northern Gateway’s proponents *on the whole*. Every paper except the Vancouver Sun published more opinion pieces in favor of approval than against – usually by an order of magnitude (see Figure 41). When excluding stories from the Sun, the opinion subsample included only 3 pieces arguing against the project, compared with 21 pieces in support. The Sun’s propensity to publish more anti-Gateway pieces than the other sampled outlets is a useful reminder of the extent to which editorial cultures embedded in local media markets and regional political dynamics may affect a paper’s capacity to circulate oppositional discourses.

The influence of regional political cultures and social movements relates to another political ambiguity of opinion writing. While the opinion pages in the news sample generally biased in favor of Gateway’s proponents, the paper’s opinion sections also presented opponents with one of their most open platforms in which they could

make their full arguments, with more force and with greater detail. This ambiguity seemed to stem from two interrelated features of opinion content.

One of these involves the relative autonomy of regular columnists. On one hand, the numerical dominance of conservative and industry supporting columnists – especially at the Post Media outlets – resulted in most opinion pieces in the media sample being in favor of Northern Gateway. Opinion pieces were also where the most strident claims attacking or discrediting opponents – for instance, **that Canada was under attack** or **ecoskeptic claims positioning opponents as elite ideologies or foreign funded radicals** – could be made most frequently and in greatest detail.

Yet the very existence of more moderate-, left-, or environmentalist-leaning columnists – such as the Vancouver Sun’s Stephen Hume – created space for contextualising claims of opponents that were less likely to be featured in the hard news. Claims that **Northern Gateway was a David v. Goliath struggle between legitimate local actors and powerful outside forces** or that **the JRP and/or government were broken, corrupt, or anti-democratic** were much more likely to be featured in opinion content than in hard news.

Similar ambiguities arise from the ability of opponents to make their case directly in guest op-ed pieces. Pieces penned by the Yinka Dene Alliance and Sierra Club offered another space in which the underreported, contextualising claims of opponents could be made forcefully and at length. Op-eds thereby offered project critics a rare opportunity to serve as primary definers of news discourse. Yet op-eds penned by members of the Fraser Institute and MLI offered analogous opportunities to proponents.

Despite the capacity of opinion pieces to serve as spaces in which Northern Gateway’s critics could challenge the extractivist status quo, generally speaking sourcing choices broadly reinforced a pro-Gateway bias. This is not necessarily surprising. As Oreskes and Conway (2010) note, industry PR representatives, think tank scholars, and advocacy groups tend to target journalists and editors most ideologically sympathetic to their views. And as Rich and Weaver (2000) demonstrated in their American study, the likelihood of an ideologically partisan think tank being featured in a media outlet tend to correlate with that outlet’s political bias, even when controlling for an institute’s size, budget, and volume of publications (92). Moreover, the capacity for official sources to

influence news coverage via information subsidies has increased in recent decades as declining circulation, falling ad revenue, layoffs, downsizing and consolidation further incentivize the use of content from external groups (Hoggan with Littlemore 2009, 164; Lewis et al, 2008).

Generally speaking, pro-Gateway sources were cited more often than anti-gateway or neutral sources over the two sampling frames<sup>7</sup> (See Table 17). While this *could* be due to editorial bias among the four outlets, the divergence between pro and anti-Gateway sources was mostly attributable to a preponderance of pro-Gateway sources within the news pieces during the December 2011-2012 sampling frame, during which Minister Oliver released his ‘foreign funded radicals’ letter. Because this story dominated coverage on Northern Gateway over much of this sampling frame, Oliver and his supporters were disproportionately quoted and discussed relative to other sources, and this accounts for at least part of the sourcing discrepancy. Perhaps more interesting, then, is not just the total numbers of pro- and anti-Gateway sources, but also the breakdown of different types of sources cited within the press sample.

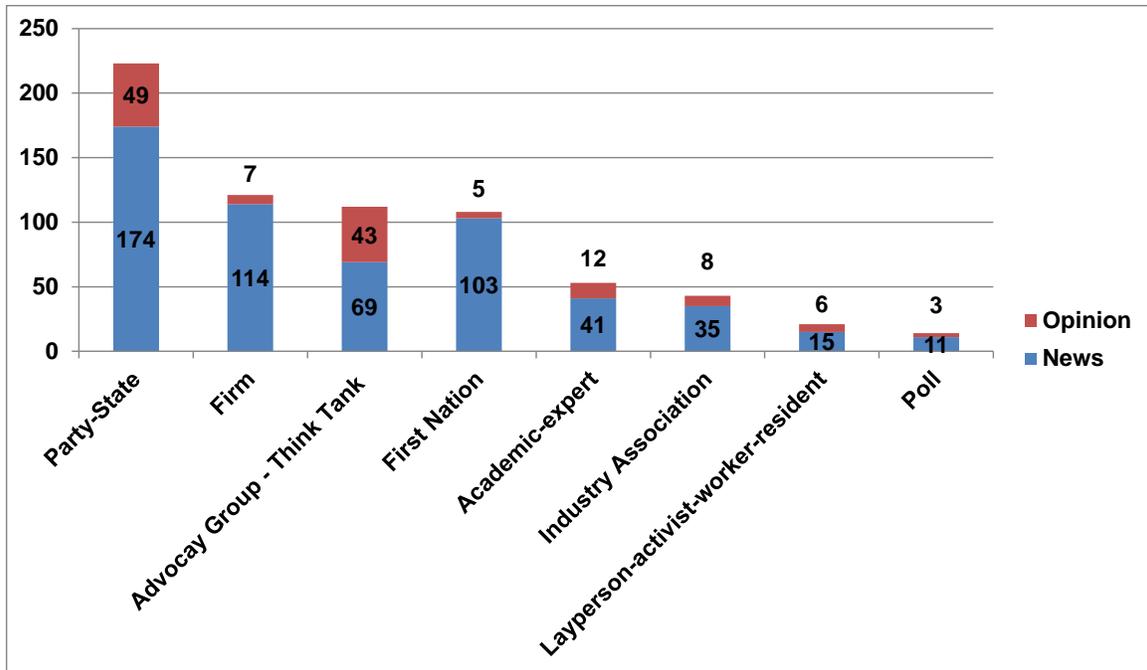
**Table 17: Citation of Sources by Position, Press Sample**

	Total	News Dec 2011 - Feb 2012	News Dec 2013	Opinion Dec 2011- Feb 2012	Opinion Dec 2013
<b>Neutral</b>	105	59	26	10	10
<b>Oppose</b>	217	127	34	38	18
<b>Support</b>	316	213	43	37	23

Sourcing in the news sample confirms the findings of previous research demonstrating that newspapers rely heavily on ‘official sources’ from state and industry, giving these actors disproportionate power in setting news agendas (Hall et al., 2013; Lewis et al, 2008; Raso and Neubauer, 2016). State and party actors were by far the most cited sources, appearing 223 times across both sampling frames (See Figure 42).

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<sup>7</sup> ‘Pro-Gateway source’ is defined here as a source which either is openly supporting project approval, or which is being cited by a journalist, columnist or other actor to argue in favor of project approval. The same applies to the definition of ‘anti-Gateway source’



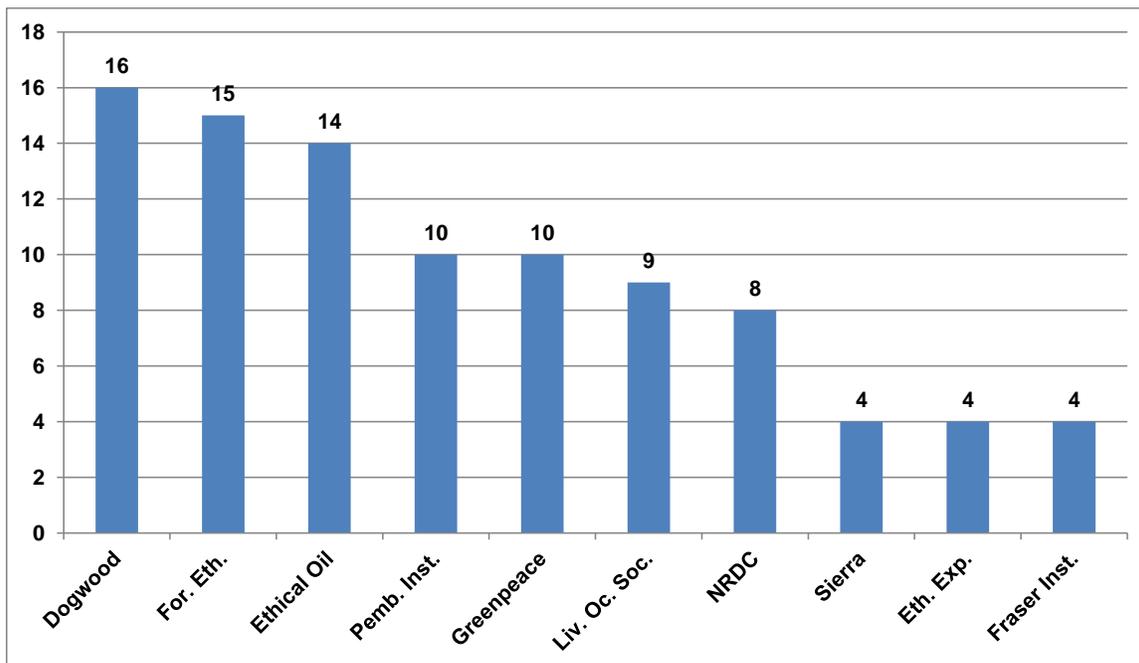
**Figure 42: Common Source Types for News and Opinion Samples**

**Private firms** were the second most cited source, with representatives of firms garnering 121 citations in the news sample (87 of these being from Enbridge) (See Figure 42). **Industry and Business Associations** were also well represented, with 43 citations (15 from CAPP, the most cited Industry or Business Association source). Importantly, prioritizing industry sources over civil society opponents aligned with the extractivist coalition’s articulation of Northern Gateway as primarily an *economic* issue, as opposed to an environmental or social justice concern.

Yet journalistic norms of balance precluded the absolute dominance of elite official sources, and oppositional actors were often cited in the press sample. Of these, the largest category was **Advocacy Groups and Think Tanks**, the third most common source category at 112 citations (See Figure 42). Most of these citations were of project opponents such as Dogwood Initiative (16 citations), the Pembina Institute (10 citations), Greenpeace (10 citations) and the Sierra Club (4 citations) (See Figure 43).

Yet Ethical Oil, a seemingly industry-backed Astroturf group with deep connections to the Harper Government (see Chapter 6), garnered 14 citations in the press sample (See Figure 43). This made it the third most-cited Advocacy Group or Think Tank, and a more common news source than Greenpeace or the Sierra Club. Meanwhile the Fraser Institute, which produced little relevant research on Northern

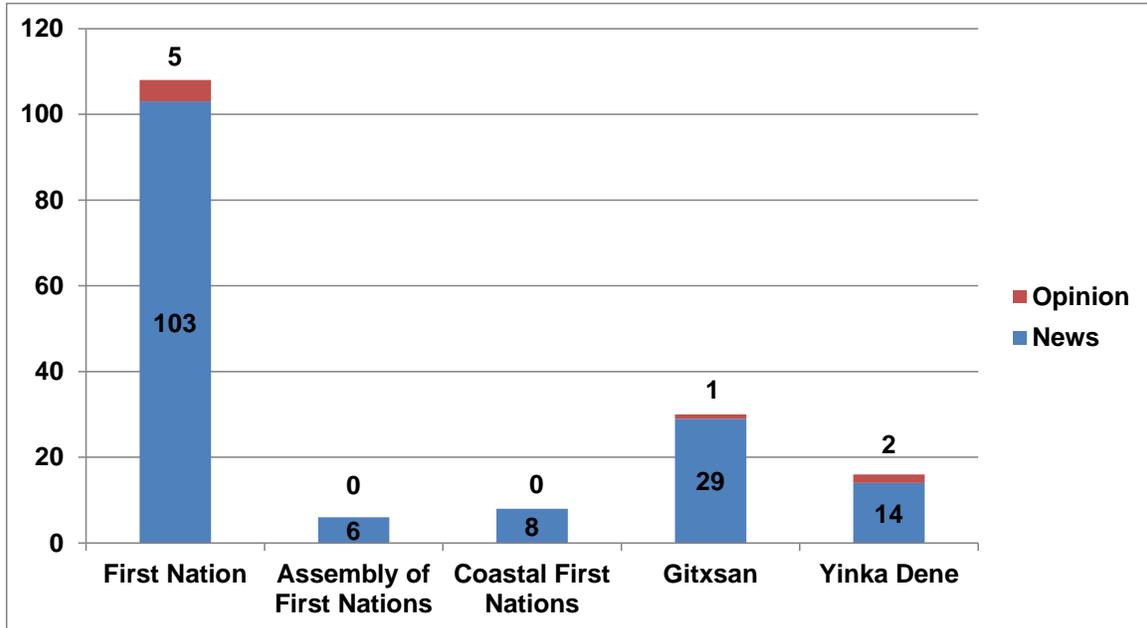
Gateway during the news sample, was featured in the press 4 times – including in an op-ed written by longstanding climate change denier and Fraser scholar Ken Green. The MLI, one of the most prolific researchers on the Gateway issue, and a key civil society voice concerning First Nations’ role in resource development, was not featured as a source in either of the two sampling frames. However, this was largely a matter of timing. The Institute did not publish any of its major research on Gateway within either the December 2011-February 2012 or December 2013 sampling frames. However, their research was prominently cited and discussed, and its members featured as op-ed writers, in stories related to pipelines and tar sands expansion *before, between, and immediately after* the two main sampling frames. For instance, the release of one MLI report disputing the arguments of pipeline opponents concerning ‘Dutch Disease’ was covered in 19 separate stories in news outlets across Canada – including 3 of our 4 sampled newspapers – *in just two days* following its publication (MLI, 2012, May 31). Dozens more examples are available, republished, on the MLI’s website (Archive for Energy, n.d.).



**Figure 43: Most common Advocacy Group and Think Tank sources in the press sample**

**First Nations** individuals or groups were the fourth most common source category, and were cited 108 times within the press sample. These included 16 citations of representatives from the Yinka Dene Alliance and 8 from Coastal First Nations (see

Figure 44). Yet First Nation sources – whether in favor or opposition to the project – were almost entirely featured in the hard news subsample, and rarely were featured in opinion pieces.

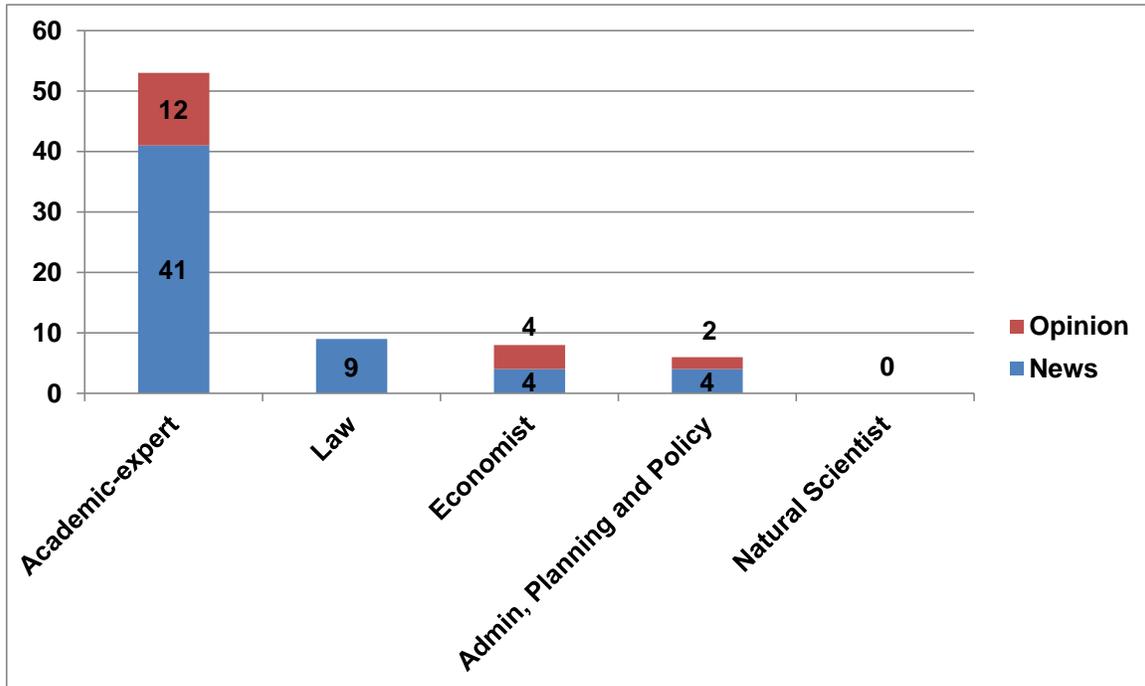


**Figure 44: First Nations Sources in News Sample**

Even in the hard news subsample, the most commonly cited indigenous source was representatives from the Gitksan nation (see figure 44), which had briefly signed an equity agreement with Enbridge in January 2012. This agreement was quickly framed in the press as evidence that indigenous opposition to Northern Gateway was not universal (a core claim of project proponents). Interestingly, YDA or CFN had spearheaded the indigenous opposition, represented many more communities located along the proposed project route, and governed territory representing a far larger proportion of the proposed project route. Yet their representatives were quoted far less frequently than representatives of the single, relatively unrepresentative and politically isolated Gitksan nation.

After civil society groups, academic and technical experts were the next most cited source category, with 53 citations (See Figures 42 and 45). Most came from fields in the social sciences, such as Political Science (11 citations), Law (9 citations), Economics (8 citations), and Administration and Policy Planning (6 citations). Academic experts in the *natural* or *environmental* sciences – who would have been well positioned to confirm or debunk claims made by project proponents concerning environmental risk

– were not featured *even once* during the two press sampling frames. Although it is beyond the scope of this project, it is worth speculating on the extent to which the Harper Government’s muzzling of federally funded environmental and climate scientists contributed to this lack of natural scientists as news sources.



**Figure 45: Academic Expert Sources in Media Samples**

Regardless of the cause, these sourcing patterns reinforced the framing of the Northern Gateway conflict as primarily a *political crisis* concerning an *economic issue*, as opposed to a *social movement* animated by legitimate *environmental* concerns. For instance, the JRP’s conditional approval of the project in December 2013 was often taken at face value by journalists and columnists as proof of the scientific illegitimacy of ecological risk-based arguments against the project. This inference was likely buttressed by the erasure of independent scientific voices from the press discourse.

The order authority bias towards official sourcing, in which journalists are generally more likely to cite ‘official’ sources than laypeople (Raso and Neubauer, 2016), amplified the voices of elites relative to those of everyday citizens and served to undermine the news audience’s capacity to ascertain the full extent of local opposition. Notably absent were laypeople of any sort (See figure 42). While ENGOs, citizens’ groups, and First Nations were often cited, polls were referred to just 14 times in the

sample. This is significant given that regional polls taken during or before the sampling frames indicated majority opposition to the Northern Gateway project and/or increased tanker traffic on the North Coast (Das, 2014, Feb. 5; Hoekstra, 2012, April 13; Justason, 2012, April 3; Hoberg, 2013). Similarly, laypeople, activists, workers, small business owners and/or residents were rarely cited in the press. Both absences reinforced the pro-Gateway coalition’s framing of the opposition as an elite cabal of job-killing (and often foreign funded) ideologues detached from local communities and the body politic. The opposition as ideological construct – ‘foreign funded radicals’ and ‘celebrity environmentalists’ – was symbolically delinked from the opposition as material-social phenomenon (a powerful coalition of First Nations, ENGOS, and local governments with broad public support).

A closer look at the most common sources by paper indicates that local conditions, priorities and editorial cultures seemed to alter sourcing patterns across outlets (See Figure 46). For instance, the Calgary Herald, located in the financial heart of the Canadian oil industry, was more likely than other papers to cite representatives of private firms, while the Vancouver Sun was more likely to source advocacy groups (many of whom were based in British Columbia).

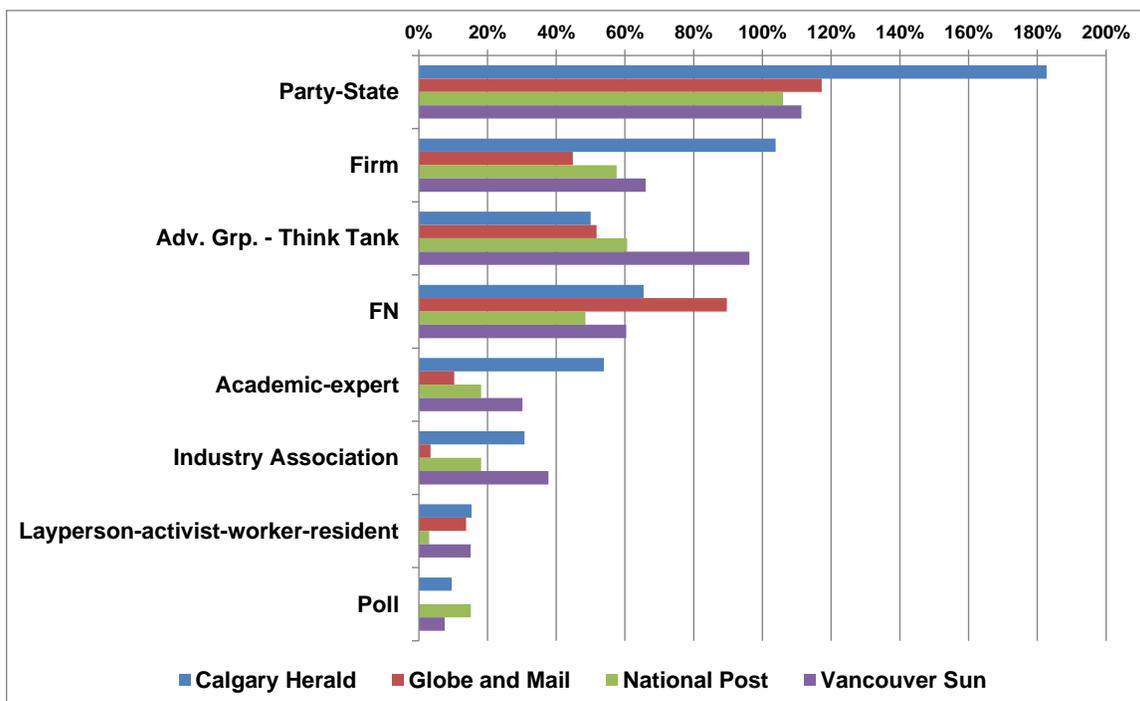


Figure 46: Source Type By Outlet (weighted mentions per sample corpi)

National papers also had distinct sourcing patterns indicative of unique editorial cultures. While the Toronto-based *Globe and Mail* was the outlet most-likely to cite First Nations organizations and individuals, the Toronto-based *National Post*, with an editorial culture particularly favorable towards the oil and gas industry (Gutstein, 2009; Hoggan with Littlemore, 2009), almost never cited indigenous sources. Without this counterexample, the *Post*'s erasure of regional indigenous voices could be seen as resulting from its geographical location. Yet when compared with the *Globe*, the *Post*'s sourcing seems more plausibly explained by an ecoskeptic editorial culture oriented towards erasing First Nations opposition while framing project opponents as foreign funded environmentalist (ie. white and privileged) radicals.

## **8.2. The Revolution Will Not be Contextualized: Anti-Gateway Arguments in the Press**

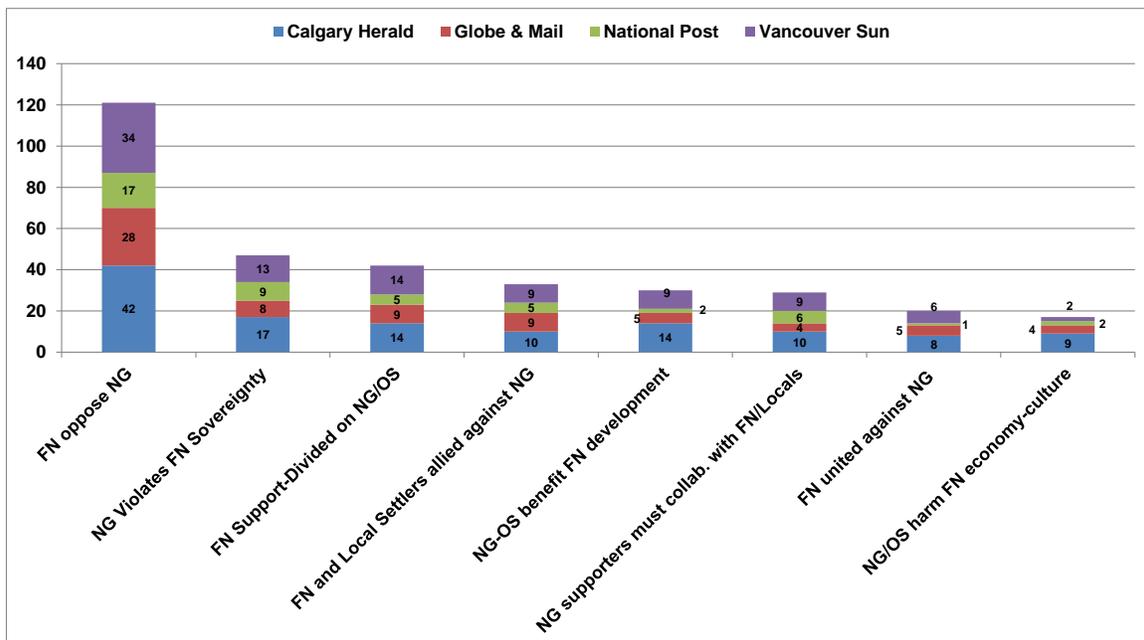
### **8.2.1. First Nations, Second Gussed: The Subtle Undermining of Indigenous Opposition**

By far the most commonly featured opposition claim related to First Nations in the press sample was that **Gateway would face insurmountable or significant opposition from local First Nations** (See Figures 47, 48, and 49). Yet much less common than the admission that indigenous opposition threatened the project was any meaningful discussion of indigenous sovereignty as the *source* of this threat. The claim that **Northern Gateway and the JRP violated indigenous sovereignty** was featured less often in the hard news subsample, and was almost never featured in opinion pieces. One of the few times this claim was found in an opinion piece was when First Nations were given the opportunity to speak on their own behalf. One May 2013 *Calgary Herald* piece prepared by the Yinka Dene Alliance framed indigenous rights and title as an insurmountable obstacle for Enbridge and its supporters:

Our lands are precious to us. We will rely on our constitutionally protected title and rights and on our own laws to protect our lands from desecration. That means that the legal impediments you face in getting this project approved are potentially insurmountable (YDA, 2013, May 8).

The YDA piece, with its mention of the 'precious' nature of traditional territories, was also one of the few mentions in the press sample of the **threat to First Nations' economies and traditional ways of life presented by Gateway** (See Figures 47, 48,

and 49). While this was a central claim of project opponents (see Chapters 5 and 7), it was the First Nation claim least likely to be mentioned in the press sample. Interestingly, the Vancouver Sun was the paper that was least likely to feature this claim. If concepts like *newsworthiness* and *newsroom resources* were fundamental drivers of news discourse in this context, the Sun should have been the paper most likely to feature this claim. As the only BC-based paper in the sample, it had *the most opportunity* to cite local opponents, and was the outlet for which such claims were *most newsworthy*.



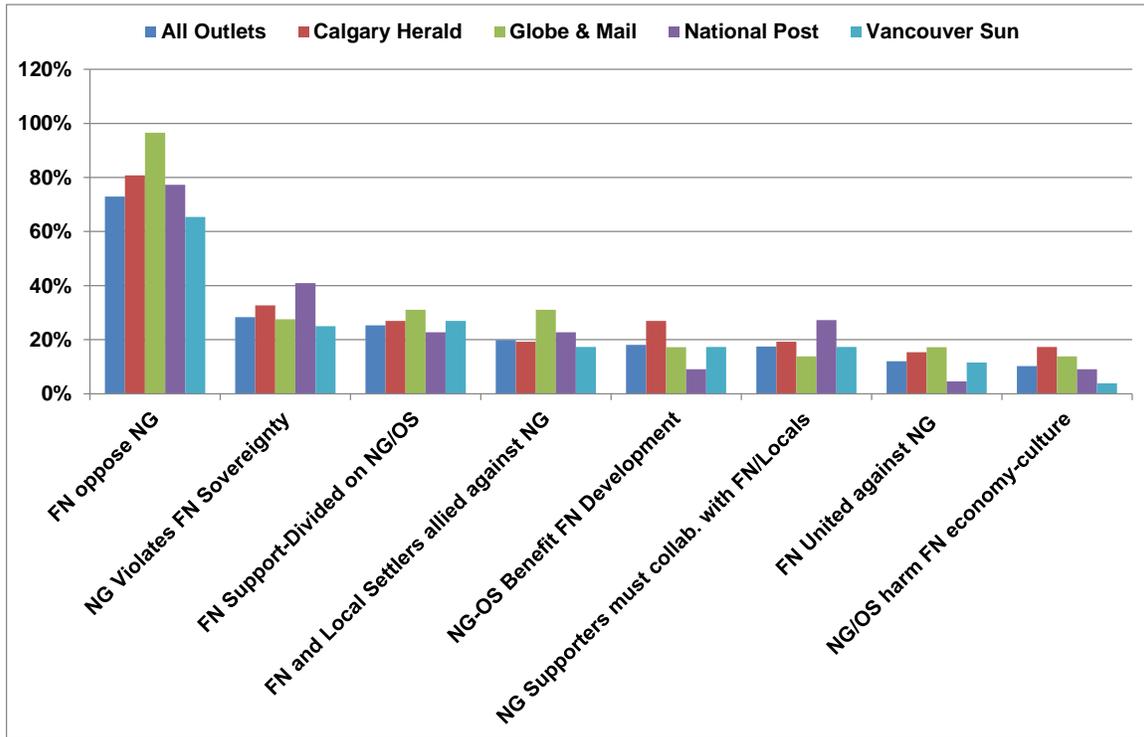
**Figure 47: First Nations Claims by Paper**

The May 2013 YDA piece also represented a relatively rare occasion in which the interrelated claims that **First Nations peoples are largely united in their opposition to Northern Gateway** and that **First Nations and Local settlers are allied in their opposition to Northern Gateway** were featured in the press (See figures 47, 48 and 49):

More than 160 First Nations have signed the Save the Fraser Declaration and are standing together with us to say no to the Northern Gateway project, based on our indigenous laws.”...

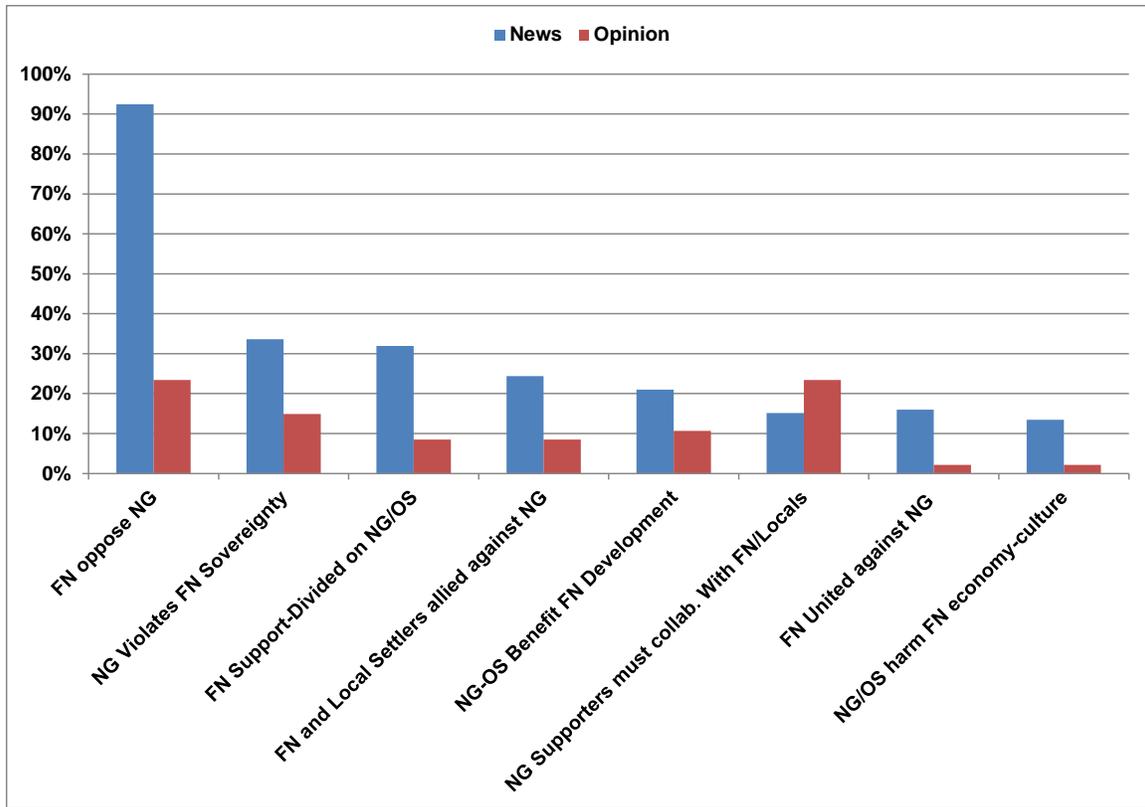
With the Yinka Dene peoples in the lead, First Nations voices of opposition are joined with those of oil sands workers, local governments, and citizens of every walk of life - from economists to environmentalists - across the country...

The people of British Columbia and Canada have stood shoulder to shoulder with us to support us in our struggle. More than 100,000 people across Canada have signed petitions that recognize our decision to ban this project from our territories. B.C. mayors have stood on stage with us to condemn the Enbridge project as one that puts too much of our common future at risk... (YDA, 2013, May 8)



**Figure 48: FN Claims by Paper (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

However, the YDA piece was written in May 2013 outside of the two press sampling frames, within which the *First Nations are united* and *First Nations-Settler unity* claims were rarely featured (See Figures 47, 48 and 49). This was significant because of the overwhelming nature of regional indigenous opposition and because First Nations-Settler and pan-Indigenous unity were fundamental to the claims made by indigenous and settler opponents in their own communications materials (see Chapter 7). In short, it seems that the newsworthiness of political conflict and First Nations sovereignty led claims related to those phenomena to be more heavily featured in the press. Yet claims which *normalized* and *democratically legitimated* indigenous opposition – such as the reality of First Nations unity, the alliance between indigenous and settler opponents, and the threat posed by Gateway to indigenous economies and traditional ways of life – were downplayed in both the hard news and opinion piece subsamples.



**Figure 49: FN Claims in News and Opinion (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

Yet articles frequently featured pro-Gateway coalition claims that a ‘moderate’, development-friendly First Nations bloc was ready to play ball if presented with the right project, regulatory structure, or financial incentives (see Figures 47, 48 and 49). That **First Nations supported or were divided on the Gateway project** was the third most commonly featured First Nations-related claim. This was surprising given that regional indigenous opposition to the project was near unanimous. No large inter-Nation indigenous body had come out in favor of Gateway. The Yinka Dene Alliance and Coastal First Nations had both implemented territorial bans on the project, and had been publically supported by dozens of other Nations and inter-Nation bodies throughout the country. The claim that **First Nations stood to benefit economically from Northern Gateway or similar projects** was also frequently featured in the press sample.

Official sources were key propagators of both these pro-Gateway coalition claims. In a May 31 piece published between the two main sampling frames, MLI’s Brian Crowley laid out a vision of First Nations resource development as part of a new Nation-building project, echoing the arguments of Gateway’s state and industry backers. In

doing so, he reproduced the Harper Government's 'Responsible Resource Development' talking point:

Most First Nations are supportive of development, provided it proceeds on their terms and with appropriate returns in the form of jobs, revenue and business creation. There are dozens of major projects underway across the country in real partnership with First Nations, bringing substantial benefits to local communities, Canadian business and the national economy...

Northern Gateway could, with political will and openness to new arrangements, be transformed from a symbol of the new-found power of aboriginal people to stop vital national projects into a model of the real partnerships that henceforth will be the indispensable key to responsible resource development in Canada. (Crowley, 2013, May 31).

Ravina Bains, associate director of the Fraser Institute's Center for Aboriginal Policy Studies, made similar points when quoted in a Dec 2013 Herald article. Bains conceded that:

"It is a given that First Nations communities revere and demand protection of their environment, and do not want to see their landscapes ravaged or their ecosystems degraded...But it's also a given that First Nations communities want to see gainful employment for their young people, and prosperity for themselves, their families, and their friends. Partnering with resource developers, not protesting against them, is the way to achieve these ends. (First Hurdle Cleared, 2013, Dec 20).

There was one prominent First Nation's source making the claims that **First Nations economically benefit from Northern Gateway and/or the Oil Sands** and that **First Nations supported the Northern Gateway and/or Resource Development** in the press. This was Gitksan Nation Chief Derrick Elmer, who in December 2011 signed a controversial equity deal with Enbridge. The deal quickly fell apart when it was revealed to other Gitksan chiefs and community members, who argued that Elmer had negotiated the deal without appropriate legal authority. Though the deal was shortly rejected by the majority of other Gitksan chiefs, in the brief period between its signing and dissolution Chief Elmer became a prominent public advocate for collaboration between First Nations and industry. In one December 2011 op-ed in the Vancouver Sun, Elmer framed the **First Nations economic benefit** and **First Nations support the project/industry** claims in the context of indigenous sovereignty and independence:

The Gitksan are positive people with a clear vision towards economic prosperity... We also wish to be self-sufficient, and we intend to do this

through joint ventures in oil and gas, logging, ecotourism and run-of-river power projects. Yet we do not measure progress by the number of economic projects alone. All decisions we make in pursuing business on Gitxsan land will remain faithful to the laws of our people. Those who wish to do business in Gitxsan territory will be held to Gitxsan standards (Elmer, 2011, Dec. 8).

These arguments fit nicely with the articulations of Gateway's state, industry, and civil society proponents, (some of whom, like Fraser's Bains and MLI's Crowley, helped circulate them through the press). More to the point, the idea that First Nations were divided on or would benefit from Gateway was ideologically compelling precisely because it was likely what extractivist supporters – including many working class people – *wanted* to hear. Not only did these arguments underplay the severity of the political crisis by erasing any perceived unity between First Nations, Greens, and local settlers, they also obscured the normative foundations for resistance. Perhaps most importantly, they helped maintain settler colonial discourses of 'reconciliation', in which improved relations between aboriginal people, the state, and industry often aligns with further extractivist development on indigenous lands. As Coulthard (2014) notes:

"in settler-colonial contexts such as Canada... [discourses concerning] reconciliation tend to ideologically fabricate...a transition [away from colonial relations] by narrowly situating the abuses of settler colonization firmly in the past. In these situations, reconciliation itself becomes temporally framed as the process of individually and collectively overcoming the harmful "legacy" left in the wake of this past abuse, while leaving the present structure of colonial rule largely unscathed" (22).

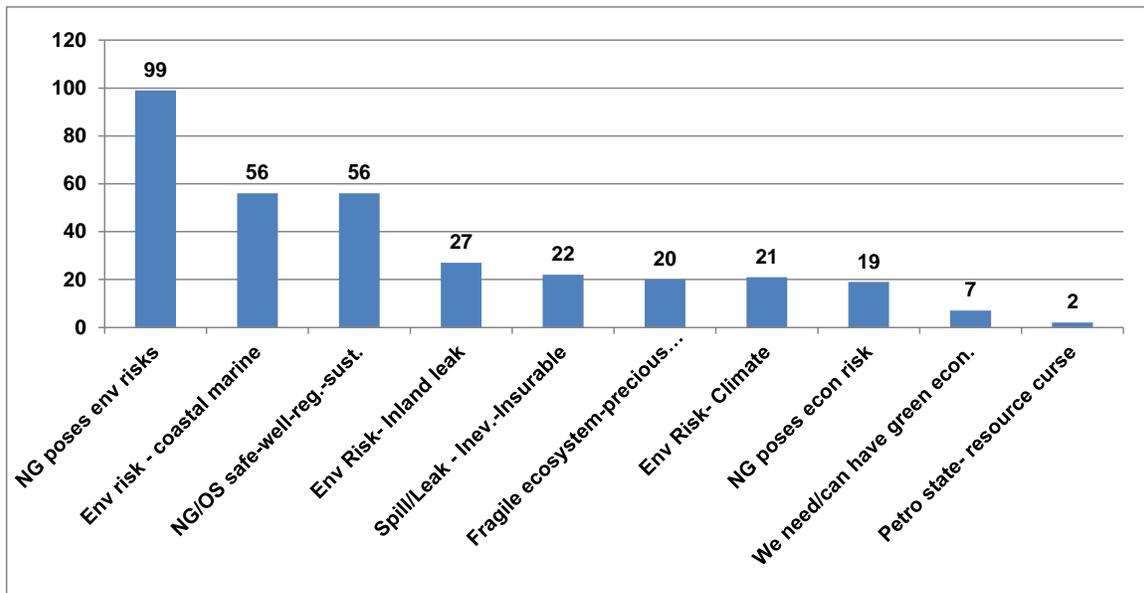
The coverage of First Nation's opposition in the press sample contributed to this process by obscuring the rationale, scope, and intensity of local opposition. Simultaneously, they promoted projects like Northern Gateway as the means to overcome a *past legacy* of colonialism, as opposed to being *current manifestations* of contemporary colonial strategy.

### 8.2.2. Framing Risk and Reward in the Press

As the preceding section indicates, oppositional discourse coalitions did succeed in getting the broad contours of their arguments into the press. The claim that **Gateway presented unacceptable levels of environmental risk** appeared 99 times in the press sample – the third most common pro- or anti-Gateway claim (See Figures 50 and 51). 56 of these focused on the risks associated with a potential spill or leak in coastal or marine

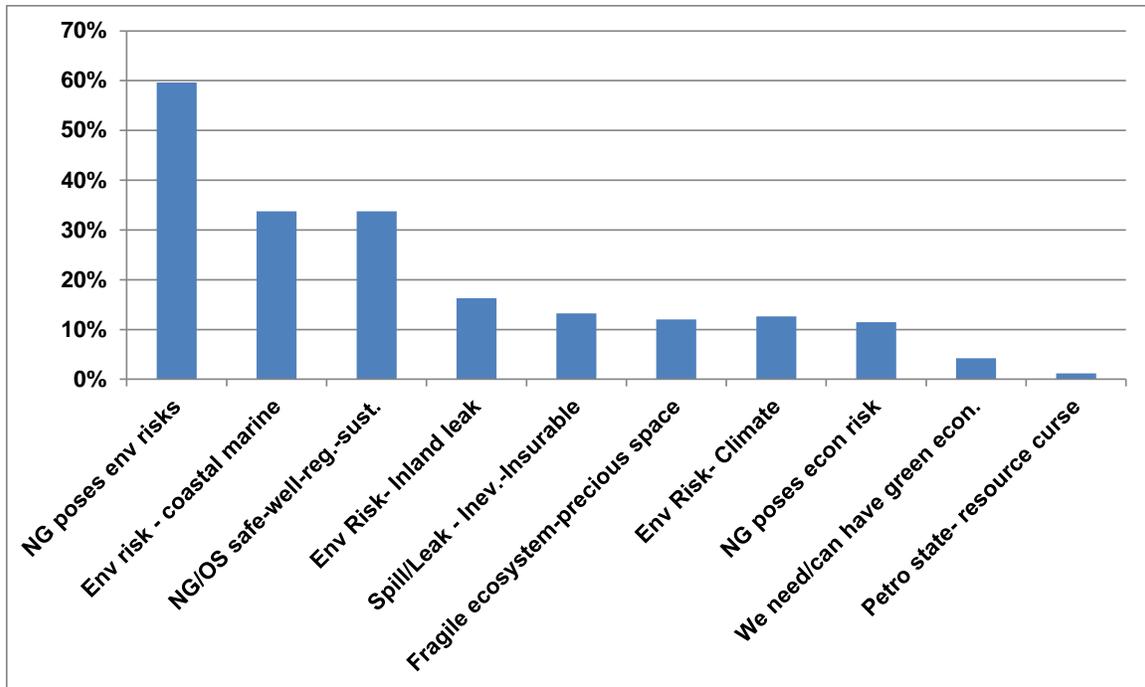
areas. For instance, though a January 2012 Vancouver Sun editorial urged opponents to wait until the JRP’s findings before condemning Gateway, it conceded that there was:

no getting around the fact that a major oil spill on land or water would be an environmental catastrophe. It would be harmful to plants and wildlife, difficult and expensive to clean up. (Vancouver Sun, 2012, Jan 10)



**Figure 50: Risk and Sustainability Claims in press sample**

Yet as with First Nations-related issues, there was a general paucity of the contextualizing risk-oriented claims frequently made in opponents’ own materials (see Chapters 5 and 7). The claim that **the project’s proposed route through economically, ecological, or culturally precious-yet-fragile ecosystems and difficult-to-navigate waters made Gateway an exceptionally bad project** was only mentioned in the press sample 20 times. Yet this was a core claim of project opponents. When such claims *were* featured in the press sample, it was often in pieces penned by opponents themselves. A January 2012 guest column in the Sun by Sierra Club’s George Heyman criticized the Harper Conservatives’ ‘foreign funded radicals’ claims, noting how “[t]hose who warn about dire and lasting environmental consequences from oil spills off British Columbia’s spectacular coastline or in its northern fish- spawning rivers are vilified by Harper and Oliver as ‘ideologues’ blocking needed development and job creation” (Heyman, 2012, Jan 16).



**Figure 51: Risk and Sustainability Claims in press sample (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

While risks from a local spill or leak were often discussed in the news samples, climate risks were rarely mentioned. Partially this was because Northern Gateway’s opponents themselves were less inclined to discuss these risks than they were potential spills or leaks. Still, when climate risks were discussed in the press, they tended to be mediated through the claims of opponents, reducing such risks to the status of a contentious political claim as opposed to scientifically-based fact. In a December 19, 2013 Sun article published shortly after the project’s conditional approval, journalist Jason Fekete noted that:

The Alberta oil sands are the fastest-growing source of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada and account for approximately eight per cent of Canada's total GHGs. *Environmental groups say new oil sands pipelines will increase development of the resource and produce more GHGs.* (Fekete, 2013, Dec 19). (emphasis added).

Similarly, a January 5, 2012 Sun article by Barbara Yaffe noted how the ENGO “ForestEthics... objects to the fact the [JRP] lacks a mandate to examine ‘broader greenhouse gas emissions and climate change implications of the project and the land, water, air and health impacts of tar-sands expansion facilitated by the pipeline.’” (Yaffe, 2012, Jan. 5).

Finally, the press sample articles rarely translated ecological risks of the project into either the narrow economic risks from a catastrophic spill or leak, or the broader negative economic externalities of oil sands expansion and neoliberal extractivism. Despite economic risks from the project being frequently mentioned by project opponents in their own communications (see Chapters 5 and 7), they were rarely mentioned in the press sample (see Figures 50 and 51). This absence reinforced the strategies of the pro-Gateway coalition. Proponents had often framed the Gateway controversy as a trade-off between (likely nonexistent or overblown) ecological risks versus (all too real) economic benefits, amplifying the ‘jobs versus environment’ frame that informs ecoskeptical discourse (Jacques et al, 2008; Lakoff, 2010). A greater focus on economic risks would have undermined this framing. However, proponents were generally able to monopolize economic concerns in the public sphere, a notable advantage during a time of global economic crisis and uncertainty.

When present, economic risk claims were often limited to a handful of pieces penned by opponents and sympathetic columnists. In a December 2013 guest column in the National Post published shortly before the release of the JRP’s decision, World Wildlife Federation president David Miller looked back to previous oil spills as a harbinger of what was to come:

A generation ago, the Exxon Valdez ran aground and foundered, off the coast of Alaska. The resulting oil spill was an ecological, economic and social disaster that crippled coastal communities and deprived a generation of its livelihoods. The loss of the herring fishery alone cost the economy US \$400-million. Many communities have not yet fully recovered. In fact, some never will. It’s a fate that we have the power to prevent in the Great Bear region, by pragmatically acknowledging that the risks of this proposed oil pipeline outweigh the benefits. (Miller, 2013, Dec. 17).

A few columns focused on the broader economic risks of Tar Sands expansion as a corrective to the ‘national economic interest’ narrative favored by pipeline proponents. These sometimes focused on the work of ex-ICBC Chief Economist Robyn Allan, whose investigation into the economics of Northern Gateway disrupted the industry-friendly storyline. Allan’s findings were seized on by Vancouver Sun columnist Stephen Hume, who used her research to argue that a project presenting itself as in Canada’s national interest actually benefited foreign investors and global capital:

Allan's assessment should properly return discussion to the pipeline's role as a foreign-controlled instrument for exporting jobs to other jurisdictions where labor codes are poor and environmental standards are low...

In fact, Allan says, the Canadian economy already shows signs of the "Dutch Disease," in which the exploitation of natural resources without adding value causes decline in labour-intensive manufacturing output; in other words, a hollowing out of Canadians' historic source of sustainable, well-paying jobs....

"Foreign national oil companies recognize the opportunity inherent in value-added refining of crude oil and distribution of petroleum products," Allan says... "Northern Gateway is a means to an end for foreign nationals - ensuring access to Canadian crude oil in order to feed their offshore refineries and distribution networks in years to come," Allan argues. (Hume, 2012, Feb 4).

Later that month, Allan herself wrote a guest column explaining how Enbridge's own data indicated:

that Northern Gateway will bring about an increase in the price of every barrel of oil produced in Canada by \$2-\$3, every year, for 30 years, over and above what it would be without Northern Gateway...

When this occurs, prices for Canadian and U.S. refineries rise and are passed on to consumers and non-oil producing businesses. The impact of higher prices - given that real incomes for most Canadians have not increased in any meaningful way in over 30 years - is a transfer of income from consumers and non-oil producing businesses to oil producers. The impact of this transfer is of negative consequence since it will lead to a decline in domestic demand for other goods and services and lead to down-sizing and layoffs within Canada, not to mention the added pressure higher oil prices have on the competitiveness of Canada's refining industry. (Allan, 2012, Feb. 23).

Other arguments that framed Gateway's risks in economic terms were similarly underreported (see Figures 50 and 52). The claim that **Gateway would further entrench the development of Canada as an oil-dependent petro-state** was almost entirely missing from the news sample, as was the claim that **Canada can/must transition to a Green economy**. These absences were telling. First, economic risks associated with Gateway and the need to transition to a green economy were core claims of the oppositional discourse coalition. Second, a lack of discussion of Green economies furthered the 'jobs versus environment' framing that positioned neoliberal extractivist strategy - 'mine it and ship it' - as the common sense option for prosperity.

### 8.2.3. Popular Front Operation: The Erasure of Regional Populist Arguments

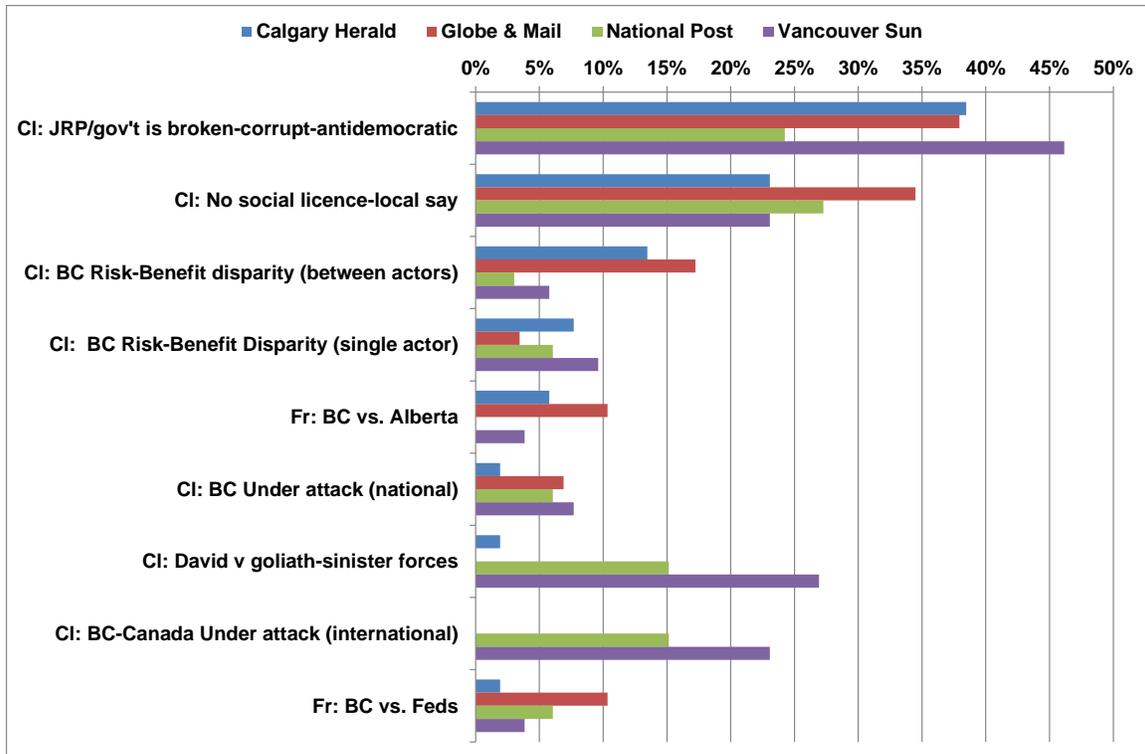
As noted in previous chapters, the regional populist claims of Northern Gateway's opponents amplified the salience of BC-oriented political subjectivities whose internalization by regional audiences might undermine proponents' national interest frames. Yet most of these claims received infrequent coverage in the press sample (See Figure 52), especially hard news pieces (see Figure 53). One exception was the claim that **the Northern Gateway project had no social license and/or was being pushed through by undemocratic means**, which appeared much more frequently than other regional populist claims. For instance, in his December 2013 National Post op-ed, WWF's David Miller linked the defense of precious local ecosystems and economies to the legitimate exercise of democratic sovereignty:

What is at risk is very clear. Just talk to the people who live in this region, and they will tell you. It's their jobs - the fishing and tourism industries - and their cultural identity. And it's the spectacular ecosystem upon which all of that depends. A place that is as unique a global treasure as the Great Barrier Reef or the Amazon rainforest. It is no wonder so many Canadians exercised their democratic rights by participating in the review process for this project. More than 9,500 people wrote to the Joint Review Panel, 96% against the pipeline. The overwhelming majority of the 1,000+ people who provided oral testimony were also opposed. There is no question that the concerns raised by this project are the legitimate concerns of Canadians who value their livelihoods. (Miller, 2013, Dec 19).

At times, proponents fought back by criticizing the democratic credentials of the opposition. A May 2014 Globe and Mail piece by MLI President Brian Crowley mocked the very notion of social license, arguing it was just a code for undemocratic mob rule that compared unfavorably with the democratic and institutional legitimacy of the formal regulatory and review regime.

The need for "social license" before major development projects can proceed seems increasingly accepted as self-evident despite the fact that it is either meaningless or a polite term for mob rule...

What, for instance, is the address to which you need to write to obtain it? What form must be used? Who are the authorities entitled to decide if your application meets the rules and to whom are they accountable? In fact, what are the rules? (Crowley, 2014, May 2).



**Figure 52: Regional-Populist Frains and Claims in Press Sample (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

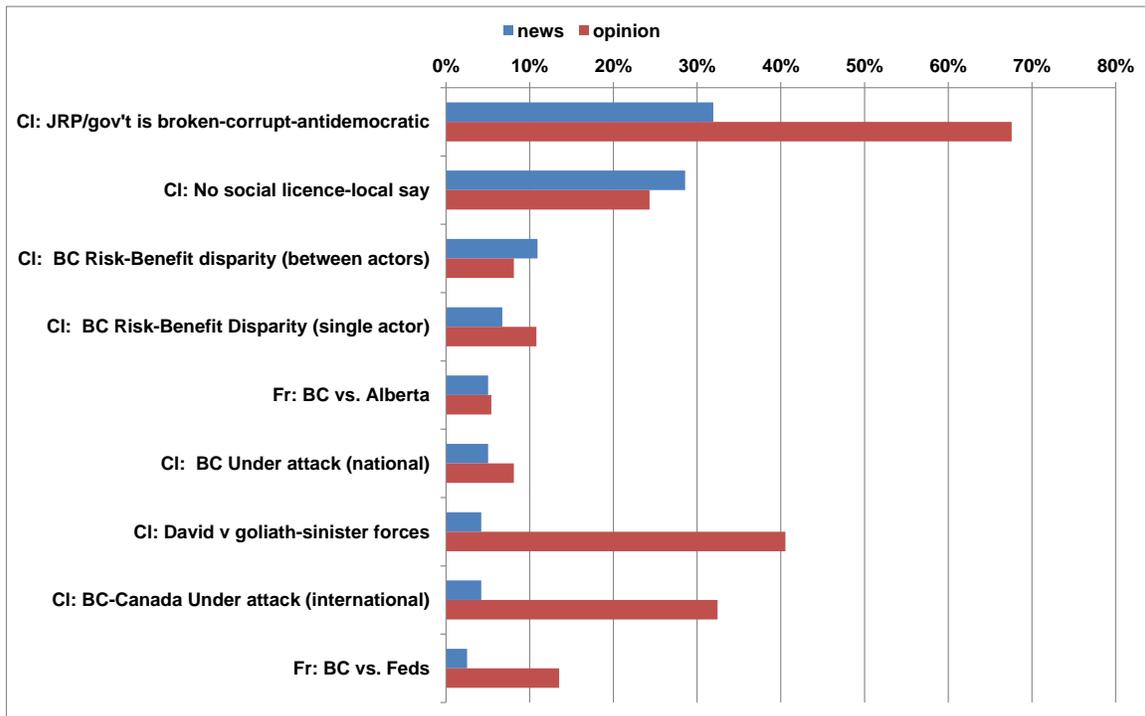
Interestingly, the most commonly featured regional populist claim of opponents – that the **Review Process and/or Federal Government was undemocratic, broken, and/or corrupt** – was much more likely to appear in opinion pieces than in hard news (See Figure 53). This was partially due to the capacity of project opponents to directly pen their own op-eds. A Jan 2012 Calgary Herald guest column penned by the Pembina Institute’s Nathan Lempher linked the Harper Government’s support of Gateway to the democratic deficiencies of the JRP process:

But recent statements from the Harper Government indicate it is not interested in listening to the concerns of more than 4,000 Canadians who have signed up to speak at the hearings. Forget the democratic process and ignore the obligations of due diligence and harm prevention inherent in Canada's environmental review process - as Oliver states, "For our government, the choice is clear." In fact, the minister's letter makes one wonder if he spends any time at all listening to those Canadians who care about environmental protection and responsible resource development...

Canadians deserve a government that is willing to listen to their concerns about our current course of energy development and take those concerns seriously. Interfering in due process (particularly for a project of this magnitude, and one in which so many Canadians have a legitimate

interest in the outcome) risks more than the integrity of our natural resources - *it undermines the basic principles of a democratic society* (Lempfers, 2012, Jan 22). (emphasis added)

Yet other claims and frames which *contextualized* regional opposition as a populist response to outside elite aggressors were generally downplayed in the press sample (see Figure 52). The claim that **BC would take on inordinate levels of risk but receive very few benefits relative to other actors** rarely appeared. Neither the **BC vs. Federal Government** nor the **BC- vs Alberta** frame – both central to the claims of different opponents – was mentioned with any frequency. And the claim that **BC was under attack by hostile National actors** – another main opposition claim – was rarely featured. Such absences systematically undermined the salience of the regional political subjectivities upon which many opposition arguments were based.



**Figure 53: Regional Populist and Democratic Claims and Frames in Press Sample, news and opinion (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

However, two regional populist claims that were rarely covered in the hard news subsample received much wider coverage in opinion pieces (See Figure 53), most notably in the Vancouver Sun (see Figure 52). The first was that **project opponents were engaged in a David vs. Goliath struggle against powerful forces**. This claim often went hand in hand with another: that **BC was under attack by hostile**

**international elites.** Opinion pieces featuring these claims frequently quoted project opponents, often as a rebuttal to Minister Oliver's 'foreign funded radicals' discourse. A January 2012 column by Doug Ward noted how:

foreign companies have poured \$20 billion into the oil sands between 2007 and 2010. "So clearly the Conservative government's opposition to foreign money is a red herring," said [Dogwood Initiative's Emma] Gilchrist. "It's absurd and hypocritical to say that foreign money is okay if it's in agreement with Conservative policies but it is not okay if it is in disagreement."

NDP MP Nathan Cullen similarly criticized the Harper Government for raising alarm about anti-pipeline money from the U.S. while being mute about the \$100 million being spent by Chinese and American oil companies for the public relations effort behind the project. "Beijing is running a PR campaign against Canadian interests and this government is not concerned," said Cullen... (Ward, 2012, Jan 10).

Sometimes these arguments were used to expose the connections between so-called independent civil society groups like the Fraser Institute and a largely international oil industry. In one scathing Sun column, Stephen Hume used the **BC-Canada Under attack by international forces** and **David vs. Goliath** claims to systematically dismantle the nationalist 'foreign funded radicals' and 'national economic interest' claims of project proponents:

But wait a minute, if this crude nationalism applies to a few environmental groups, shouldn't it also apply to other organizations that receive funding from "foreign billionaires?" Enbridge, for example, says it has organized about \$100 million in backing from oil industry interests, some of them foreign-owned corporations. Are they trying to hi-jack the regulatory process?...

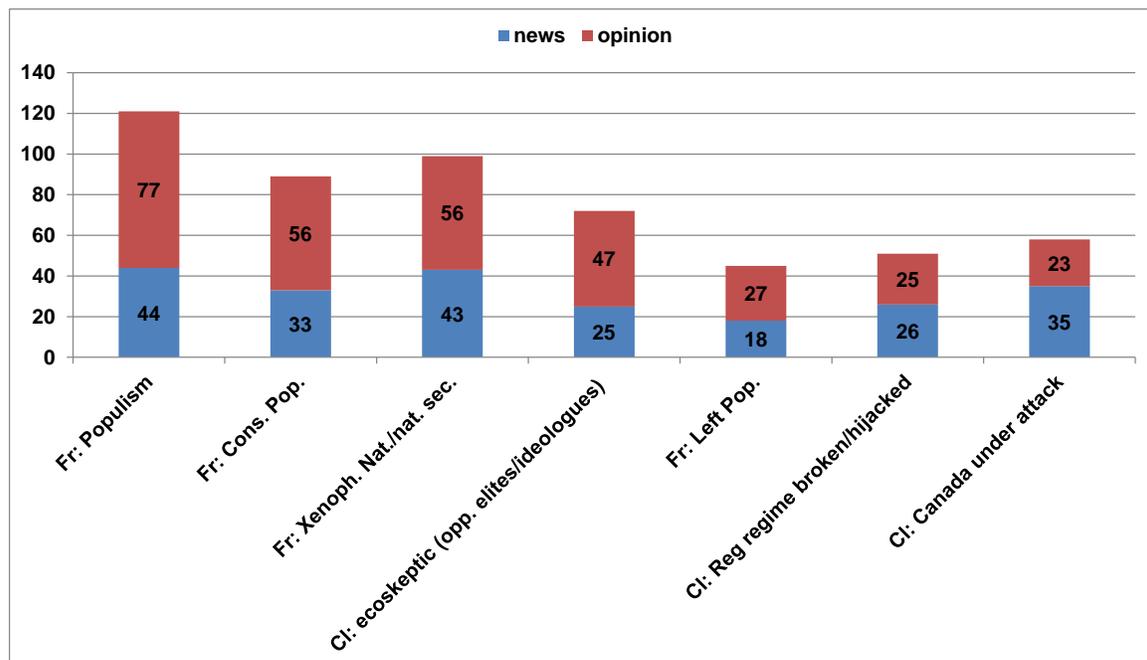
The Fraser Institute reports nine per cent of its funding from non-Canadian sources - about the same amount of non-Canadian funding reported by the Pembina Institute - although exactly who the foreign donors to the Fraser Institute might be isn't listed in annual reports. However, according to a report by Green-peace using U.S. sources, some comes from American foundations. Another puppet?...

If foreign control is a genuine concern for EthicalOil. org, should it turn its attention to Canada's oil industry? More than 35 per cent of all the assets and more than 40 per cent of the profits from oil and gas extraction and related activities in Canada are under foreign control... (Hume, Jan 10, 2012).

## 8.3. Playing National Defence: Pro-Gateway Claims in the Press

### 8.3.1. Conservative National-Popular Arguments

As the preceding account implies, nationalist frames were deployed by proponents and opponents alike. Much of this framing was overtly populist, with the **'Xenophobic Nationalism-National Security'** frame the most common nationalist frame observed in both news articles and op-eds (See Figure 54). It is tempting to read the predominance of national-populist frames through the lens of journalistic norms privileging conflict or sensationalism. Yet **conservative populist** frames appeared twice as often as **left populist** ones.



**Figure 54: Nationalist and Conservative Populist Frames and Claims in the Press Samples**

Conservative National-Populist framing of pipeline opponents was particularly common in the opinion piece subsample, where it was often articulated alongside *eco-skeptic frames and arguments*. In such cases, opponents were not coded as democratically significant coalitions of environmentalists, First Nations, regional governments, and local settler communities, but as *Liberal Elites* and *radical environmental ideologues* furthering their radical agenda at the expense of the Canadian

national-popular (See Figure 54). At times, civil society proponents – often connected with powerful political and economic elites themselves (see Chapter 6) – were key propagators of these narratives. A Dec 2013 Sun column written by Fraser fellow Kenneth Green, a noted climate change denier, argued that JRP approval:

does not mark the end of the process. It is merely a first step in what is shaping up to be an extremely adversarial process driven by environmental extremists [who will continue to oppose Gateway] regardless of law, regardless of public opinion, regardless of the fact that Canada stands to benefit from energy production in Alberta...” (Green, 2013, Dec 27).

An earlier piece by Fraser director Fazil Mihlar (who was not identified as such in the column) made similar linkages between ecoskeptical arguments and economic nationalism. Mihlar’s piece utilized conservative populist tropes to paint project opponents as foolhardy elites whose dogmatism threatened the nation:

As long as Canadians allow Subaru socialists, limousine liberals and Chanel conservatives to stand in the way of prospecting on Crown land, the Prosperity mine, the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline, the Kinder Morgan pipeline, oilsands development, Kitimat LNG, onshore natural gas drilling, offshore oil and gas exploration, wind farms, shopping malls, commercial developments at our universities, cruise ship industry, Jumbo Glacier resort, Site C hydroelectric project, GMO food industry, aquaculture, nanotechnology, "gentrification" of blighted urban areas, and the expansion of Port Metro Vancouver/Vancouver airport among many others, the [Canadian economy] that we all rely on will hit the wall. (Mihlar, 2012, Jan 27).

While the regional-populist ‘foreign invasion’ claims animating much oppositional discourse were rarely featured in the news samples, analogous claims of proponents – that **Canada was under attack by foreign funded radicals who had hijacked the approval process** – appeared regularly in both news articles and op-eds (see figure 54). Several columnists repeated Minister Oliver’s ‘foreign funded radical’s’ argument, often quoting his infamous public letter in detail.

The paper most likely to deploy this argument was the National Post, arguably the most right leaning daily broadsheet in the Postmedia empire, and possibly the nation. One column by Terence Corcoran endorsing Minister Oliver’s “war on green ‘radicals’” linked foreign invasion claims with eco skeptic and conservative populist denunciations of ‘liberal elites’:

What a welcome war this is. Never before has a Canadian politician challenged the hitherto saintly protectors of the environment in such direct language. More importantly, Mr. Oliver took straight aim at a troubling trend in Canadian environmentalism - the foreign funding of Canadian green activist groups with the express purpose of shutting down Canadian resource development - first documented in the National Post by Vancouver investigative writer Vivian Krause.

"These groups," said Mr. Oliver, "seek to exploit any loophole they can find, stacking public hearings with bodies to ensure that delays kill good projects. They use funding from foreign special interests to undermine Canada's national economic interest. They attract jet-setting celebrities with some of the largest personal carbon footprints in the world to lecture Canadians not to develop our natural resources."

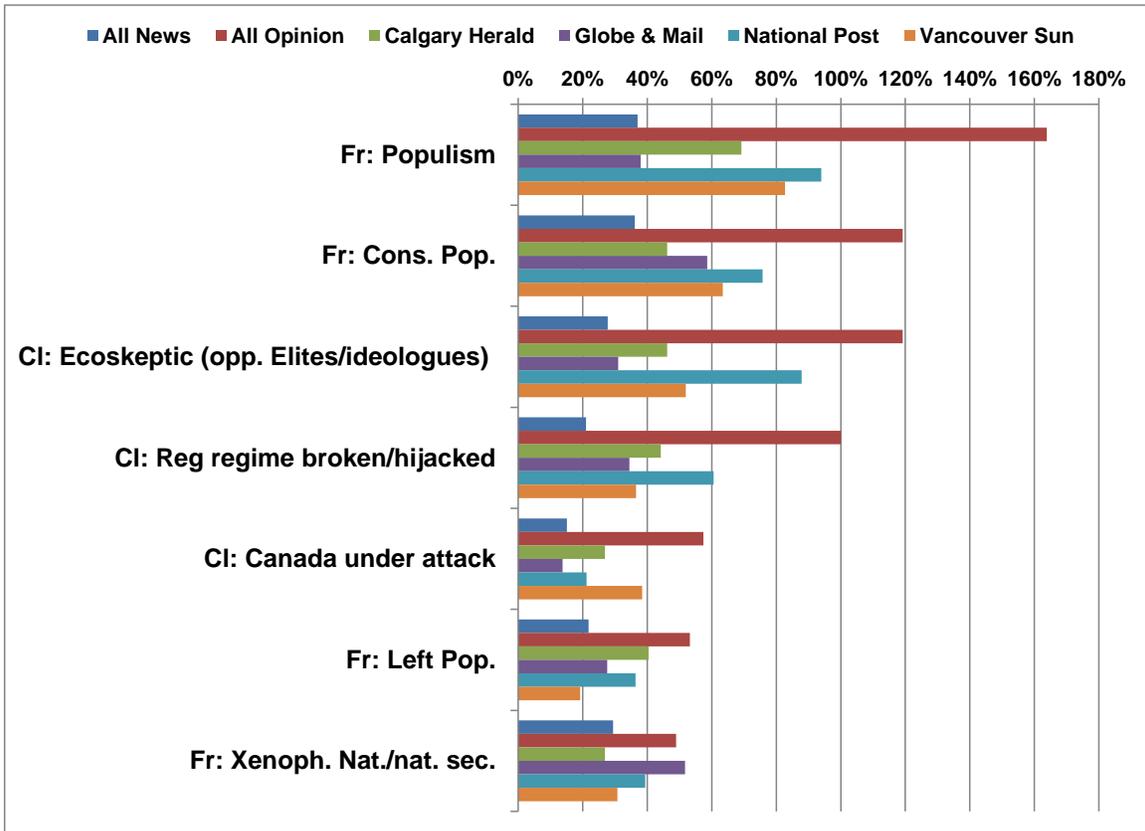
Not many Canadian politicians would dare lock horns with Hollywood's best scene stealers and myth makers - the likes of veteran director Robert Redford, Avatar creator James Cameron, mermaid Daryl Hannah and superstar Leonardo DiCaprio, all of whom have lent their personas to various movements aimed at shutting down large portions of the Canadian economy. (Corcoran, 2012, Jan 10).

Sometimes this framing was reinforced via references to Ethical Oil. In a January 2012 Vancouver Sun article, Barbara Yaffe explained how:

the lobby group EthicalOil.org... is trying to discredit the environmental crusaders, announcing an ad campaign this week highlighting donations the activists have received from U.S. sources... "Whether or not Canada decides to build this pipeline is a Canadian decision, based on Canadian interests, not the political interests of foreigners or their Canadian puppets," asserts EthicalOil.org's Kathryn Marshall. (Yaffe, 2012, Jan 5).

If newspapers were unlikely to circulate left populist claims nominating state, corporate, and transnational elites as the enemy of the populace, they seemingly had no such qualms about reproducing analogous arguments articulating the opposition as foreign funded ideologues betraying the nation. Such accounts ultimately articulated the 'meaning' of the current crisis with conservative populist, ecoskeptic and nationalist discourse already long established by EPII groups (Neubauer, 2011), and recently honed in Albertan press discourse (Gunster and Saurette, 2014). These narratives generally ignored the central role played by First Nations, local governments, communities, labor organizations, and businesses in the campaign against Northern Gateway. At the same time, the 'foreign invasion' frame heightened the salience of the national subjectivities proffered by project proponents. Conversely, by framing opponents as foreign invaders from outside the nation, they undermined the core

regional-populist claim of project opponents: that Northern Gateway undermined BC's interests and was being forced on the region by antidemocratic, out-of-province elites.



**Figure 55: Nationalist and Conservative Populist Frames and Claims, All News, All Opinion, and by Paper (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

All papers in the sample circulated Conservative National-popular claims of proponents while generally underplaying analogous regional popular claims of opponents (See Figure 54). At times, the Vancouver Sun's common editorial cultural with other papers in the Postmedia newspaper chain seemed to override concerns related to regional newsworthiness. The Sun was the most likely paper in the sample to feature claims that Canada was under attack. Yet it was just as *unlikely* as those papers to feature BC-centric arguments that focused on inequitable regional allocation of risk and benefit or framed the province as under attack by Ottawa, the Alberta oil industry, or other national actors (see figure 52). Because these BC-centric populist claims were central to the concerns of many regional opponents, these conflict-oriented frames arguably should have satisfied the 'newsworthiness' criteria that informs journalistic practices. They also worked in favor of the Sun's availability bias concerning news sources; surely a Vancouver-based paper would have been the *most able* to feature the

claims of regionally based project opponents. The Sun's failure to do so indicates that broader pro-oil sands editorial cultures of the Postmedia chain – informed by heavy reliance on oil and gas for advertising and sponsorship revenue – partially overrode concerns of newsworthiness, norms of balance, and availability bias.

Finally, the way national conservative-populist arguments circulated throughout the press, most notably by conservative columnists in Post Media daily papers, was a classic case of the echo chamber effect. The 'foreign funded radicals' narrative initially emerged from the work of blogger Vivian Krause, only to be picked up by Ethical Oil, numerous journalists, and conservative pundits. Once introduced into the public discourse, Minister Oliver and Prime Minister Harper repeated these claims, creating a 'newsworthy' event that could attract still more media coverage. Subsequently, Ethical Oil – itself intimately linked to the Harper Cabinet – was able to further amplify these claims by supporting Oliver's 'foreign funded radicals letter', while simultaneously referring to Oliver's statements as evidence for Ethical Oil's and Krause's original argument. This then allowed Ethical Oil to emerge as a key source for both hard news journalists and conservative columnists.

### **8.3.2. The Technocratic Republic of Canada**

Despite the overall predominance of Conservative-Populist claims over Left-Populist ones, the most common pro-approval claims in the press sample were technocratic-nationalist. While technocratic claims of the opposition concerning economic risk or green economies were rarely featured in the press, analogous claims of proponents received significant coverage.

Only one common technocratic claim in support of Northern Gateway concerned ecological risk: that **Gateway and/or the Canadian oil industry were safe, sustainable, and/or well regulated** (See Figure 56). This claim often appeared in opinion pieces following the JRP's conditional approval of the project in December 2013. In such cases, climate risk and other environmental claims of critics were brought up solely to be dismissed, with the JRP's approval taken as sufficient evidence that climate-related concerns were overblown or disingenuous. These pieces generally ignored the opposition's criticisms of the JRP, which were foundational to their broader critique of project risk and the dangers of regulatory capture. This was likely facilitated by the

general lack of discussion in the press of the JRP's controversial scoping phase, which had largely excluded both upstream and downstream increases in greenhouse gas emissions from the panel's regulatory purview. What's more, the shut out of natural scientists as news sources let the JRP's ruling go unchallenged by independent technical experts – especially climatologists – who may have criticized the climate change implications of Gateway and similar projects. Absent such consideration, the JRP's technical findings were simply accepted as conclusive evidence of project safety (and sometimes of the opposition's ignorance and/or duplicity). If opposition concerns were framed as irrational or indecorous, the JRP's findings – and by extension the claims of proponents – were framed as rational and factual. Often these claims directly quoted the panel's final report, as in a December 21, 2013 National Post editorial entitled "The facts favor Northern Gateway":

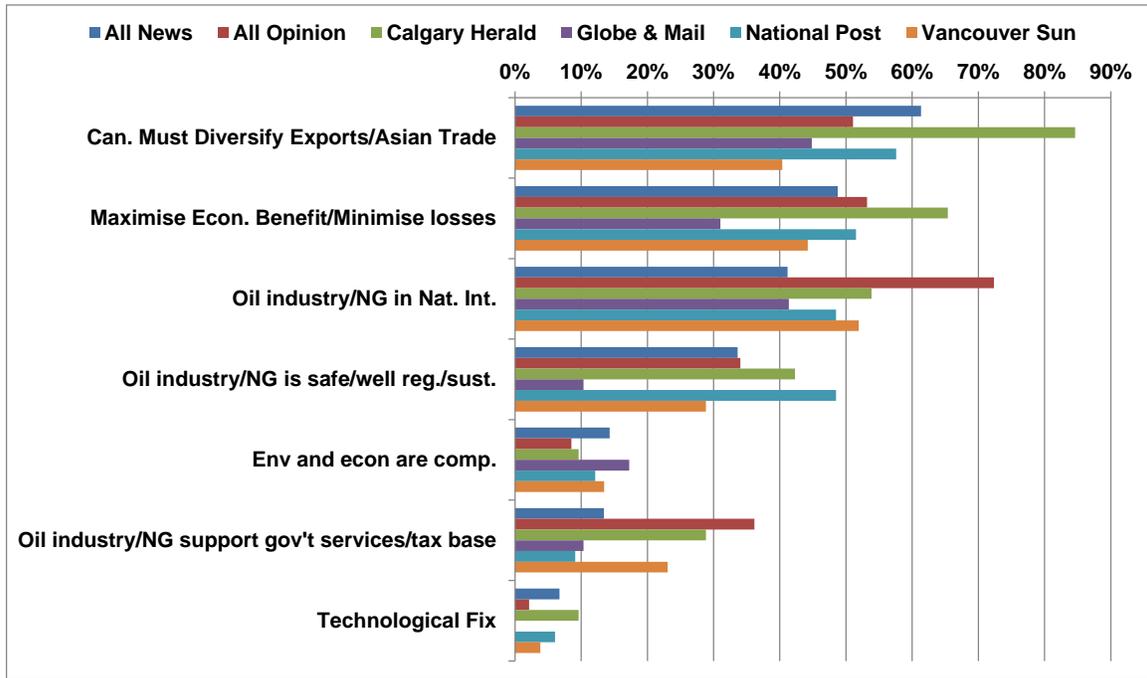
"Many people said the project would lead to increased greenhouse gas emission and other environmental and social effects from oilsands development," the panel said. However, "we did not consider that there was sufficient direct connection between the project and any particular existing or proposed oilsands development or other oil production activities to warrant consideration of these activities."

It concluded that "the environmental burdens associated with project construction and routine operation can generally be effectively mitigated, and ... continued monitoring, scientific research and adaptive management could further reduce adverse effects."

The findings shoot down the notion that the pipeline represents an overwhelming environmental threat that would rain down disaster on pristine forests, lakes and rivers. (National Post, 2013, Dec. 21).

This line of argument bordered on the tautological. Opponents had chastised the JRP's scoping process for refusing to consider upstream and downstream climate impacts of increased tar sands development that the Northern Gateway project was openly designed to facilitate. That the JRP "did not consider that there was a sufficiently direct connection between the project and any particular existing or proposed oil sands development" was irrelevant. It was not the connection between Gateway and any new *specific* upstream extraction project that opponents objected to. Rather, opponents' concerns about climate change reflected the fact that Gateway had been endorsed by industry *specifically* to accommodate a planned increase in upstream production *more generally*. Beyond reducing the price spread, industry's stated goal in reaching tidewater – as elucidated in numerous presentations and reports by CAPP, CERI, and the Fraser

Institute – was to secure new markets that could absorb predicted increases in tar sands production by the major industry players.



**Figure 56: Technocratic and Nationalist Claims in News, Opinion Pieces, and by Paper (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

By framing the JRP’s findings as impartial and legitimate, these discourses aided the complementary conservative-populist framing of opponents as elite ideologues. One Post editorial published shortly after Northern Gateway’s conditional approval used the panel’s findings to frame project opponents as immune to facts and reason, even invoking unsubtle comparisons with Islamist Jihadists:

Unfortunately, [JRP approval] is unlikely to dissuade the environmental camp from continuing its obstructionist efforts, which, if anything, are likely be ratcheted up to new levels of fervour. *Scientific fact intrudes on the all-consuming sense of self-righteousness that fuels oil industry opponents only when it is convenient....*

Nonetheless, *activist spokespeople* were already denouncing the report as it was released, *pledging an all-out jihad against the project*, including legal challenges, political action and street-level protests... If Canada ceases to build pipelines, the oil will move anyway, by way of road or rail and with greater risks, but *such realities have yet to breach the ideological fervency that drives eco-activists*. (National Post, Dec 21, 2013). (Emphasis added)

However, most technocratic claims of proponents within the press sample concerned not ecological risk but economic benefits to a reified national interest that symbolically nationalised project benefits. Most prominent were a cluster of technocratic economic arguments oriented around three interrelated claims: 1) that **Canada needed to diversify its oil and gas exports**, preferably to East Asian markets; 2) that **the Gateway project and/or the oil and gas industry were vital to Canada's national interest**; and 3) that **Gateway should be approved to maximize the nation's economic benefit and/or minimize potential economic losses** (see Figure 56). All three claims were on display in a December 2011 Sun op-ed penned by Frank McKenna (2011, Dec 2), the "former premier of New Brunswick and ambassador to the United States" who was now "deputy chairman of the TD Bank Group and member of the board of directors of Canadian Natural Resources Ltd". In it, McKenna related the economic gains from export market diversification to a reified 'national interest':

The bulk of our oil exports currently go to the U.S. Midwest, a market that is now oversupplied with crude, resulting in lower prices than elsewhere on global crude markets. The spread has come close to \$27 a barrel this year...

This differential is creating a staggering transfer of wealth from Canada to the United States of America. Indeed, the Canadian Energy Research Institute reveals that Canada could forgo more than \$630-billion in additional GDP over the next 25 years. *Approximately \$230-billion of that amount would have accrued to Canadian tax-payers* through royalties, corporate taxes and taxes on dividends... It is through diversification that we will extract the best prices for our resources and in turn derive the greatest public benefit. (emphasis added).

Such claims mostly ignored the arguments of opponents that costs and benefits of the project – and tar sands expansion more generally – were not equally shared by a collective Canadian 'nation', but distributed inequitably along regional, international, provincial, and class lines. Yet over and over again, columns and editorials in support of the project referred to a reified 'national interest'. In his piece celebrating the government's "War on green 'radicals'", Post columnist Terence Corcoran explained how it was "in Canada's interests... to extract the best possible price for our resources, which ultimately serves the Canadian public good by providing the necessary revenues to fund cherished public programs" (Corcoran, Jan 10, 2012).

As that quote implies, national economic benefit was often described in the context of royalties, taxation, and social services (see Figure 56). A December 2013 editorial in the Calgary Herald drew on both the JRP's recent ruling and analysis from CAPP to reify project benefits in *national terms*, allowing tar sands expansion to be framed as a vital *nation-building project*. The editorial claimed that:

There's no denying that endorsement of Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline by the independent federal review panel is great news, confirming as it does that the project - now estimated to cost \$7.9 billion - is of clear economic value to Canada. Despite the heartfelt misgivings of the pipeline's opponents, it's been widely acknowledged that Canada needs greater capacity to get Alberta bitumen to the West Coast, where it can be shipped to lucrative Asian markets that will pay a higher price than the Americans will. Indeed, the United States is destined to very quickly become an exporter of oil, rather than an importer, making initiatives such as Northern Gateway true nation-building pursuits. The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers estimates the oilsands will provide 900,000 jobs and about \$800 billion in taxes and royalties between now and 2035 - money that governments can use to support social services, education, health care and other programs. (First Hurdle Cleared, 2013, Dec 20).

Like with discussions of ecological risk and the JRP, these technocratic nationalist claims were often articulated with Conservative Populist denunciations of left-wing opponents, who were sometimes described as hypocritical in rejecting Northern Gateway while supporting tax-funded social services. That opponents were in favor of 'green' economic development as an alternative to neoliberal extractivism was generally ignored, as claims about the need for a green economic transition were rarely featured in the press sample (see Figure 50). A Jan 2012 column by the Vancouver Sun's Michael Den Tandt (2012, Jan 11) lambasted NDP MP Nathan Cullen:

"There's nothing ethical about climate change or what's happening in northern Alberta," [Cullen] fumed in a news release on the weekend. Really? The oilsands are all bad?...That would make the tax revenue from oilsands development - projected to be \$307 billion across Canada over the next 25 years, with \$187 billion accruing to the Federal Government - bad too.

And it would make the recent near-parity of the Canadian dollar with the greenback, a phenomenon tied to high oil prices and Canada's status as home to the world's third-largest oil reserves, odious as well. Following the thread, anything paid for even in part with oilsands tax revenue should be tainted, too. That includes the Canada Pension Plan, Medicare and

education (via federal-provincial transfers), roads, the military, and the national parks, among other baubles.

Importantly, the preceding argument was predicated on the erasure of arguments in support of a green economic transition as well as those related to economic risk. After all, the high value of the Canadian dollar had been seized on by some project opponents as a key driver of the ‘Dutch Disease’ phenomenon which had undermined manufacturing in Ontario. By ignoring this economic risk argument, Den Tandt was able to frame the oil boom’s effect on the dollar as a *national benefit to ‘Canadian consumers’*, as opposed to something that had *disproportionately benefited certain regional workers at the expense of others*.

### **8.3.3. A More Perfect Union: News Media and the Techno-Popular Front**

As noted in previous chapters, most proponents tended to couch their claims in populist or technocratic frames respectively. The complementary nature of these two lines of argument – sometimes made by civil society, industry and government actors with close ties to one another – allowed for the emergence of a broader meta-discourse in favor of expanded tar sands production. This ‘techno-populist’ discourse represented the petrobloc’s emergent ideological front in response to neoliberal extractivism’s legitimacy crisis.

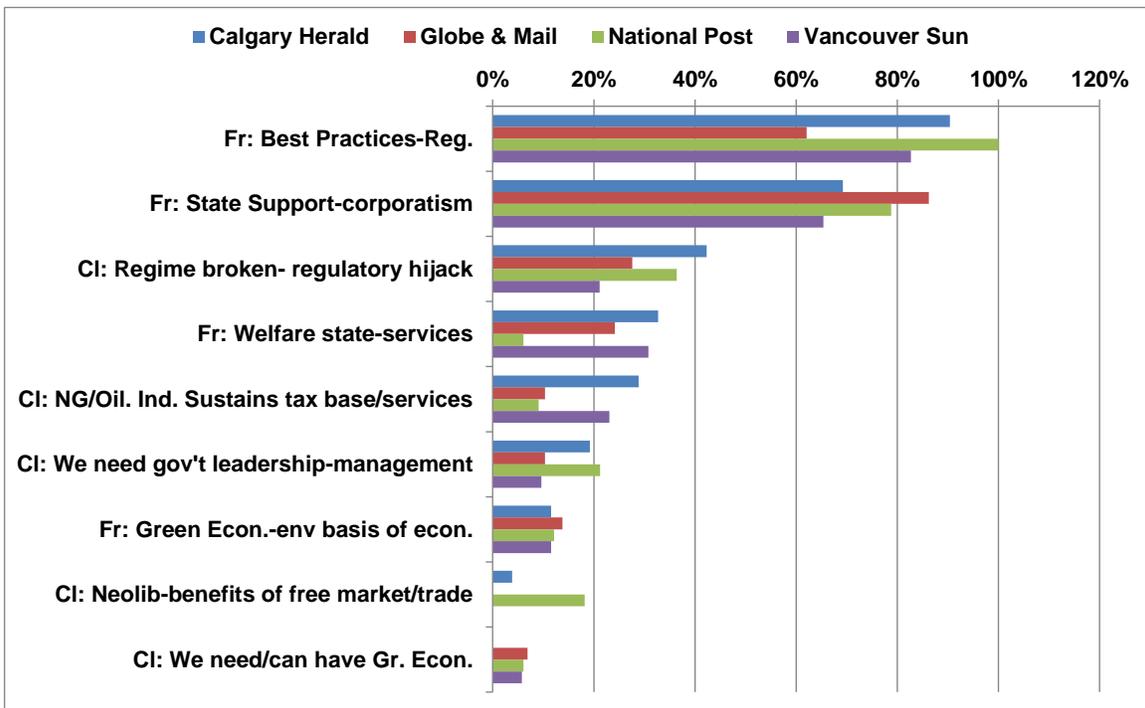
Without the newspapers, technocratic and populist frames would mostly be found in separate sources – for instance, with populist claims found in the blog posts of Ethical Oil and technocratic arguments found in the press releases and research reports of MLI<sup>8</sup>. Yet all papers in the sample frequently circulated technocratic claims focusing on the potential economic benefits to the nation *and* conservative national-populist denunciations of opponents as foreign funded green radicals. The proponent-friendly framing of the papers thereby allowed the pro-Gateway coalition’s fuller ideological formation to take shape in the public sphere, with technocratic arguments in service of a reified national interest justifying the populist denunciation of project opponents threatening that interest.

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<sup>8</sup> As noted in a previous chapter, one exception was the ‘foreign funded radicals’ discourse of Minister Oliver, in which both technocratic and populist claims and frames were united in a broader petro-nationalist argument.

### 8.3.4. Look! In The Sky! Corporatism to the Rescue of a ‘Hijacked’ Approval Process

Finally, all papers reproduced the corporatist claims of proponents, who argued that **sustained and coordinated action by Ottawa was necessary to guarantee the completion of projects like Northern Gateway, secure oil sands expansion, and serve the national interest** (See Figure 57). Although such claims were not featured as regularly in the press sample as in the communications of proponents themselves, they circulated in the context of a relative absence of arguments in favor of a green economic transition or discussion of extractivism’s economic risks. As such, oil sands expansion was implicitly positioned as the only reasonable economic policy on offer, with government action to secure pipelines generally conflated with state support for economic development *as such*.



**Figure 57: Corporatist Frames and Claims by paper (weighted mentions per sample corpi)**

Interestingly, news coverage and opinion pieces generally downplayed the more overt neoliberal claims that once underpinned the ecoskeptical arguments of climate deniers such as the Fraser Institute and conservative CanWest/Postmedia columnists. Arguably, ecoskeptical narratives describing environmentalists as financially self-

interested ideologues *imply* a fundamentally neoliberal worldview hostile to democratic intervention in so called ‘market forces’ (Neubauer, 2011). Yet while ecoskeptic claims were commonly featured in the press sample, most papers eschewed *overtly* neoliberal arguments concerning the sanctity of ‘free trade’ or ‘market forces’ (See Figure 57). Only the National Post, the epicenter of free market fundamentalism in the Canadian press, frequently circulated these more nakedly neoliberal lines of argument.

Overall, however, neoliberal claims were much less common than *state corporatist* arguments that presumed the necessity of heavy state intervention in the service of tar sands expansion. I argue this reflects two key socio-political shifts. First, the decline of public consent for neoliberal governance – especially after the crisis of 2008 and the intensification of longstanding trends towards economic insecurity, immiseration, and inequality – means that naked appeals to ‘market forces’ possess less ideological currency than previously. Second, the shift towards a more corporatist posture by project proponents (and supportive journalists) reflects the brute realities of neoliberal extractivist development. While all capitalist development – including the neoliberal variant – presupposes sustained state intervention to safeguard and expand market operations, extractivist development is particularly state-dependent. Extractivism as a regime of accumulation is simply incommensurate with the free market fantasies of neoliberal ideologues. The regime requires a strong state presence to subsidize research and development; navigate jurisdictional issues; shepherd strategically valuable projects through politically fraught project approval processes; market energy exports abroad; rationalize the regulatory apparatus in favor of controversial megaprojects; and, increasingly, undermine organized political resistance. In this sense, the switch over from the free market fundamentalism of previous ecoskeptic campaigns to a corporatist discourse validating heavy state intervention is practically required if state and industry actors are to gain social license for tar sands expansion – or secure such expansion in its absence.

All papers – following Ethical Oil and Minister Oliver’s’ infamous open letter – frequently featured the argument that **the regulatory regime was broken and/or hijacked by illegitimate foreign interests** (see Figure 57). The circulation of this claim paved the way for columnists and op-ed writers to support ongoing state intervention, such as the Conservative’s omnibus bills C-38 and C-45.

For instance, a National Post article reporting on Harper's comments concerning regulatory capture (by foreign environmentalists, *not* an internationalized Canadian oil industry), noted that:

Public hearings into the contentious \$5.5-billion oil sands line to the West Coast start next week, and supporters have complained that opposition groups funded from outside Canada should be barred from the process, saying they only want to disrupt and clog up the proceedings. Mr. Harper, an enthusiastic promoter of new markets in Asia for the country's vast oil sands crude, said in Edmonton he wants to make sure that the regulatory process protects the environment and community interests. "We have to have processes in Canada that come to a decision in a reasonable amount of time, and processes that cannot be hijacked," he said. "In particular, growing concern has been expressed to me about the use of foreign money to really overload the public consultation phase of regulatory hearings just for the purposes of slowing down the process." That is bad for the Canadian economy and the government will take a "close look" at ways to make sure decisions on such developments are made in reasonable time, Mr. Harper said." (Jones, 2012, Jan 7).

Arguments for corporatist intervention were frequently featured in op-ed pieces. Frank McKenna's Dec 2011 Vancouver Sun piece argued that:

Governments have a critical role to play. They must examine their role to determine whether they have instruments available to them to create better economic returns from value-added projects, such as royalty reform, changes in depreciation allowances, access to bitumen in kind, and fast-tracked assessment procedures, low interest loans or loan guarantees, etc. This again would maximize the economic rent to Canada and provide greater flexibility in the distribution system. Governments and industry should be looking at these options with urgency in view of the value destruction that we are currently experiencing.... Let's be clear: Diversification comes with some significant investments, including public monies. (McKenna, 2011, Dec 2)

#### **8.4. Conclusions: Canadian News Media on the Ideological Front Lines**

Findings from the press sample indicate that key claims of the pro- and anti-Gateway coalitions were regularly featured in daily papers during the two sample periods. For instance, claims concerned with environmental risk from a potential tanker spill or the threat posed to the project by First Nations opposition, were consistently featured in the press coverage. This bolsters liberal pluralist claims that newspapers are

not simply closed systems of power, and that norms of balance and newsworthiness open up spaces in which oppositional discourses can flourish.

Yet despite the presence of some key opposition claims, the overall bias in favor of proponent arguments makes it difficult to argue that journalistic norms of balance and newsworthiness were the fundamental drivers of press discourse. Core opponent claims that contextualized the opposition, increased the saliency of regional subjectivities, and framed the opposition as a democratic populist struggle were often underrepresented. While First Nations opposition was discussed frequently, claims concerning threats to First Nations economies and traditional ways of life; First Nations unity; and the alliance between First Nations and settler opponents were conspicuously absent. The relative absence of such claims increased the salience of the 'foreign funded radicals' discourse which symbolically split indigenous opponents from their settler allies.

There was also a relative absence of many proponents' BC-centric regional populist claims, such as the claim that the province was under attack by out-of-province Canadian elites. This amplified the salience of the national interest frames utilized by proponents while furthering the marginalization of opponents as a handful of elite actors (as opposed to a robust democratic movement with broad popular support). The absence of economic risk claims performed a similar function by amplifying the salience of the 'economy versus environment' frames used by proponents. The rationale for opposition was framed as mostly ecological, and therefore less 'real' or 'pressing' than economic concerns in a time of rising economic insecurity and global capitalist crisis. This effect was heightened by the near complete absence of claims concerning a green economy. Admittedly, this may have been at least in part a consequence of the failure of environmentalists to develop a more compelling vision of a green economy themselves. Regardless, without any meaningful economic alternative to neoliberal extractivism discussed in the press it became much easier for proponents (and sympathetic columnists) to argue that economic necessity demanded export market diversification.

Liberal pluralist understandings of the press can only partially help us understand these findings. Journalistic norms of balance should indicate a greater willingness to feature *both* sides of the debate. Norms of newsworthiness could have compelled journalists to cover underrepresented opposition claims that fit journalistic criteria for melodramatic, emotionally charged, conflict-driven narratives (Yopp et al., 2009). What

could be more melodramatic, emotional or conflict-driven than the argument that British Columbia and First Nations were under attack from hostile invaders?

Generally speaking, proponents were much more successful at having their various claims reproduced in the press sample. If left populist narratives amplifying the salience of regional subjectivities were underrepresented, nationally-framed conservative populist and ecoskeptical discourses slandering opponents as 'foreign funded radicals' attacking the nation were frequently featured, along with constant appeals to the 'national interest'. This imbalance undermined oppositional discourses drawing attention to the unfair distribution of risk and benefit between different regions, classes, and actors *within* the nation as well as *between* national working classes and international investors. Similarly, the far greater propensity to draw on conservative populist frames than left populist ones helped frame opponents as elite, foreign funded ideologues out of step with national working people, while undermining accounts describing Gateway itself as the duplicitous scheme of elites. This framing was aided not only by the relative absence of contextualizing First Nations-related oppositional arguments, but also by the disproportionate deployment of arguments claiming that First Nations stood to economically benefit from or even supported the project; this despite the near-unanimous rejection of the project by First Nations along the project route. Similarly, the near complete absence of opposition arguments concerning economic risk and/or the need for a green economic transition was counterpoised with a preponderance of technocratic arguments in favor of diversification.

Yet there were some major ambiguities in the position of the press vis-à-vis Northern Gateway, especially when it came to the writing of opinion pieces. On one hand, such pieces offered a space in which right leaning columnists, editorial boards, and project proponents could make their most strident claims in depth. Yet they also offered greater space for the development of oppositional claims and narratives. The relative autonomy of opinion writers meant that columnists such as Stephen Hume and opponents such as the Yinka Dene Alliance and Robyn Allan could launch powerful, detailed attacks on Northern Gateway and its backers. This did not occur to the same extent in the hard news material.

Similarly, differences in editorial cultures altered news discourse from outlet to outlet. The Vancouver Sun was much more likely than other Postmedia papers to

reproduce *some* of the regional populist arguments of opponents, and it was the only outlet that printed more opinion pieces in opposition to Gateway than in favor. Yet even the Sun generally ignored some key opposition central claims, even though the regional basis of most opposition groups should have made their claims more newsworthy and easier to report on.

Similar biases could be seen in sourcing patterns, partially explained by the order-authority bias that structures journalistic practices. That ENGOs were less likely to be cited than official state and industry sources aligns with previous studies in Canada (Raso and Neubauer, 2016) and other countries (Lewis et al, 2008) demonstrating a greater willingness on the part of journalists to use state and industry sources than civil society organizations and laypersons.

That said, ENGOs and First Nations were often cited as sources in most papers; only the Post largely excised indigenous sources from their coverage. Yet representatives of the Gitksan nation – a lone, politically isolated and unrepresentative community which (very briefly) supported Gateway – received far more coverage than the more representative Coastal First Nations and Yinka Dene alliance combined. Ethical Oil, a fairly obvious front group for an alliance of Harper Conservatives, oil interests, and Fraser Institute associates, was cited as or more regularly than far more credible grassroots environmental groups which opposed the project. The Fraser Institute, despite having produced little relevant research on the matter during the sample periods, received several direct quotes in the press and was able to have a column published by noted climate denier Ken Green. Even the absence of MLI in the news sample was largely a matter of timing; as the organization ratcheted up its research output on ‘Dutch disease’ and First Nations development, it began receiving frequent coverage in the press and was a regular contributor of op-ed columns in multiple papers outside of the two press sampling frames. Finally, the complete absence of natural scientists as sources in the two sample periods was telling. Authority order bias should lead to a heightened reliance on sources possessing the relevant cultural capital to weigh in on newsworthy issues. Arguably, few actors’ cultural capital was more relevant to ascertaining the levels of environmental risk associated with the project than natural scientists. Yet not only did the absence of such sources undermine the claims of opponents, but it allowed the JRP’s controversial findings to be interpreted as objective proof that ecological concerns about the project were without scientific merit.

In some ways, the frames, claims and sourcing patterns in the press were illustrative of a classic echo chamber (Jamieson and Capella, 2008, 77), in which ideologically aligned media personalities recirculated claims from each other and various civil society sources – such as Ethical Oil, The Fraser Institute, or Blogger Vivian Krause – to whom they were politically sympathetic (Gustein, 2009; 2014). The decentralized, relatively autonomous nature of ‘discourse coalitions’ indicates that none of this involved conspiratorial collusion. As Lisa Antilla (2008) argues, one of the most powerful sources of journalistic bias is so-called “self-censorship”, in which journalists and columnists tend to avoid stories and perspectives that run counter to prevailing values and editorial cultures, and promote those stories and perspectives which align with those cultures (246). Such self-censorship “is sometimes... unspoken company policy but might also be done in tacit cooperation among news organizations – leading to blackouts of important information” or viewpoints. In the case of the PostMedia papers in the sample there was strong evidence of a common editorial culture that at least partially affected both media framing and sourcing patterns at individual outlets. At the very least, there are some columnists whose opposition to environmentalism and support for the oil sands are so overt and unshakable that they could quite reasonably be considered extractivist coalition ‘members’ in some sense.

One thing seems clear. Despite the openness of all four papers to the circulation of at least *some* oppositional claims, and the space opened up within opinion pieces for oppositional discourses, the press coverage analyzed in this chapter was broadly supportive of Gateway and generally less accepting of its critics. With the predominance of ecoskeptic denunciations of opponents, the relative lack of circulation of regional populist arguments against the project, and the complete shut out of claims related to a green economic transition or economic risk, the daily papers largely – even if inadvertently – reproduced the old Thatcherite bromide in a contemporary Canadian context. Within the media coverage analyzed in this chapter, there seemed to be few plausible economic alternatives to tar sands expansion.

Yet if the goal of project proponents was to fundamentally restructure British Columbian public opinion, then the mainstream press coverage did not help them achieve these aims. Regional opposition to the project remained quite high, even following its approval by the JRP (Das, 2014, Feb. 5). In fact, in his successful 2015 campaign against Stephen Harper, Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau made much of his

supposed desire to respect indigenous sovereignty (Mas, 2015, Dec. 8; Souza and Sparks, 2017, Jan. 18), enhance public consultation on major resource projects, ban tanker traffic on BC's North Coast, and pursue further extractivist development in an environmentally sound manner (Do, 2015). These overtures seemed to have had some effect, if the Liberals' subsequent electoral gains in British Columbia were any indication (Hume et al, 2015, Oct. 19). I argue that the incapacity of proponents to turn the tide in BC relates at least partially to the ongoing crisis of neoliberal extractivism in Canada. Fears of regional calamity, anger at economic inequality, frustration at 21<sup>st</sup> century settler colonialism, and alarm at ecological crisis has proven difficult for extractivist coalitions to overcome – at least at the regional level. As such, in the final chapter I present some final thoughts as to the future of extractivism in Canada and prospects for resistance.

## **Chapter 9. Conclusion**

### **9.1. Place is the Space: Ideology, Place and Populism**

The findings in this study build on previous work linking ideological power to the interpellation of particular types of subjects by illustrating the importance of conceptions of place in the mediation of political discourse and conceptions of self-interest. Groups in the pro-Gateway sample consistently referred to a reified national interest, amplifying the salience of nationally oriented subject positions from whose vantage points their claims could appear intelligible. These nationalist frames helped distract from maldistributions of risk and benefit, whether by privileging national economic measurements like GDP growth; downplaying regional risks; ignoring the high rate of corporate compensation in the sector and the export of profits out of country; distracting from the low share of resource rent captured by taxpayers; dismissing the ‘Dutch Disease’ phenomenon; and so on. Nationalist claims were also used to downplay the temporal contradictions of neoliberal extractivism by effacing the vulnerability of both state finances and local employment to the extreme price volatility generated by globalized financial markets.

This symbolic nationalization of the sector stands as an excellent example of frame bridging, with proponents bridging their arguments with nationalist frames in an attempt to align the perceived interests of potential constituents with the broader goals of the Petrobloc. Frame bridging was also used to articulate nationalist technocratic claims with conservative populist and national security frames. Proponents railed against the ‘hijacking’ of the approval process by ‘foreign funded radicals’ who had betrayed the nation, justifying the Harper Government’s drastic reforms.

The anti-Gateway coalition also leveraged place-based understandings, articulating the project’s local risks with a narrative in which regional popular forces were engaged in a democratic struggle against invading elites (multinational oil companies, Alberta, the federal government, Bay street financiers, and China) and their domestic collaborators (The BC Liberals). Settler and indigenous opponents bridged this narrative with analogous ones concerning indigenous rights and title and threats to indigenous territories, economies and ways of life. They thereby attempted to align the populist movement of environmentalists and local settlers with a parallel decolonial movement.

All this illuminates the complicated relation between ideology, subjectivity, and interest. Whether one thought of oneself as primarily a British Columbian or Canadian in the context of the Northern Gateway issue might fundamentally alter one's willingness to engage with various regional and nationalist narratives. Ultimately, this is only possible because ideology relates to people's lived experiences, which themselves are mediated through one's position within particular relations of production. Because British Columbians would receive so few economic benefits from Gateway, and because they would absorb so much risk, opponents could more easily mobilize regional opposition. This was even more obvious for First Nations along the route. Project risk could be interpreted as an example of ongoing settler colonial encroachment because such encroachment has grounded many First Peoples' experiences of Canadian capitalism throughout history.

Those outside of BC who absorb few of Northern Gateway's risks, while being economically dependent on tar sands expansion, might be much more likely to accept the symbolic nationalization (or provincialization) of the industry. This applies both to the economic claims of Gateway's proponents and the obfuscation of environmental science by industry-funded ecoskeptical coalitions – many of whose members worked hard to secure Gateway's approval. On a related note, a study conducted by University of Montreal researchers in 2016 demonstrated that Alberta and Saskatchewan were the only two provinces in which the majority of citizens did not believe in the scientific consensus concerning anthropogenic climate change (Canadians Divided, 2016, Feb. 22). People from those provinces are not inherently less scientifically literate than those from other provinces. They simply have a lot to lose from taking climate science seriously, especially when not presented with information about the inequitable nature of neoliberal extractivist development. Similarly, while nationalist framings of export market diversification have failed to sway many British Columbians or regional First Nations, new pipeline proposals retain significant support nationally and are extremely popular in Alberta, especially after the 2014 oil price crash (Grenier, 2016, Nov 30).

## **9.2. Playing the Fields: The Emergent Coordination of Discourse Coalitions**

The capacity of actors to deploy convincing discourses was facilitated by their ability to coordinate – often in an emergent, unplanned way – within and across fields,

with allied groups deploying common or complementary frames to amplify their respective coalitions' broader political messaging. Sometimes this took the form of an echo chamber effect, as when ENGOs cited each other's reports of when opposition parties, ENGO's and First Nation groups largely focused on local spills and leaks to the relative exclusion of climate risk. Similarly, claims made by CFN and YDA related to indigenous concerns were frequently circulated by Sierra, who regularly cited their indigenous allies.

This coalition did not seem to possess the network density previously identified in neoliberal networks oriented around groups like Fraser. ENGOs and First Nations groups possessed few ties to state actors, political parties, or organized labor. There were also no ties found between the CFN and ENGO samples. There were also no ties between either settler group and any major indigenous organization, and few between CFN and any major left or green organization. Yet the emergent context of organizing provided numerous opportunities for interfield collaboration, from the issuance of the Save the Fraser Solidarity Accord; to joint statements between CFN and multinational ENGOs like WWF; to Sierra raising money for First Nation legal challenges.

This coordination across fields was valuable precisely because different actors possessed unique and potentially complementary cultural and social capitals. The BC NDP, if electorally victorious, could launch an independent provincial project review. First Nations could launch legal challenges and leverage an increasingly mobilized decolonization movement, represented by Idle No More. ENGOs and settler communities had a larger base of constituents and greater financial and institutional resources. And all these actors benefited from the large resource base and global scope of the ENGOs and foundations of the global environmental movement.

Yet the emergent interfield and interorganizational coordination of the pro-Gateway coalition benefited from much stronger institutional networks. Minister Oliver's 'foreign funded radicals' discourse combined both technocratic appeals to a national economic interest and populist denunciations of project opponents which threatened that interest. Yet his statements were generally the only place outside of the press where *both* framing techniques could exist side by side in a unified narrative. However, Oliver's civil society and industry allies *together* were able to reproduce his broader arguments in full, with each organization reproducing the aspects best suited to their particular cultural

capital. CAPP, CERI, and MLI, for instance, could make technocratic arguments which symbolically nationalized the project and the larger tar sands industry, with MLI actually reproducing the Harper Government's 'global energy superpower' talking point. Blogger Vivian Krause helped establish the narrative that pipeline opponents were using foreign funding to take over the JRP. When Oliver reproduced Krause's argument, Ethical Oil and conservative columnists repackaged his claims and amplified them through columns, news articles, and blog posts. They also publically endorsed C-38 and C-45 as a means to counter the 'foreign funded radical' threat. Ethical Oil even went so far as to help launch and then support the targeted audits of Gateway opponents.

The social distance between these various actors and their respective fields was not simply a convenient fiction. MLI's work on First Nations was both a critique of Harper and Enbridge's ham-fisted attempts at indigenous consultation, and also an intervention in debates already happening in the conferences of Civitas, the book launches of Tom Flanagan, the reports of the Fraser Institute, and articles in c2c. But this is by no means evidence against coalition coordination. Precisely the opposite. Coalitions are powerful because they provide space within which politically aligned actors from across fields can debate broad coalition priorities. More to the point, the very existence of such a space was a result of interfield coordination. The prior development of ecoskeptic and conservative populist discourse by industry-backed think tanks informed the tactic of portraying Gateway's opponents as anti-science ideologues and corrupt elites. This strategy was also informed by regional attempts to discredit oil sands opponents as foreign interlopers, as manifested in previous Calgary Herald coverage.

The capacity of different groups to deploy distinct yet complementary discourses was aided by their respective cultural capitals, such as MLI's self-presentation of objective expertise and Ethical Oil's (celebrity mediated) representative populism. In both cases, these groups' capitals were dependent on their perceived social distance from economic and state elites. Yet their social capital linking them to state and industry elites helped coordinate the coalition across fields. The samples of MLI, Ethical Oil, and Fraser shared numerous ties with the Canadian and international corporate sector, with Fraser and Ethical Oil possessing strong links to Canada's oil and gas industry. Ethical Oil and MLI were founded and run by actors who had worked for the Harper Cabinet immediately prior to founding/joining their respective organizations. Yet the pro-Gateway coalition was embedded in broader coalitions exceeding the boundaries of the pipeline

issue. The MLI sample had significant ties not just to Conservative, PC, Reform and Alliance parties, but also the Federal Liberals. Both MLI and Fraser samples had numerous ties with various components of the neoliberal transnational state apparatus – from the World Economic Forum to the World Bank. Such ‘multi-partisans’ ties are indicative of the broad hegemony of the neoliberal project and its national and transnational scope.

Interfield coordination applied not just to the state, but also to civil society. MLI and Ethical Oil were heavily linked to groups and actors which have helped coordinate the neoliberal extractivist coalition in Canada. Both groups’ samples were closely associated with Fraser, and all three were linked to Donner Canadian-funded groups (with MLI and Fraser both Donner recipients), Civitas, and c2c. The conferences, executive boards, and author’s lists of Civitas and C2C brought together a stunning assortment of New Right actors from the state, think tanks, media and academia fields – not just in Canada but the US as well. Meanwhile, both MLI and Fraser were members of the transnational Atlas Network, and their samples shared many ties with other US and Canadian Atlas groups, including prominent climate change deniers.

Finally, it was clear from the discourse analysis that the press, at least during the two sampling frames, was not some even playing field upon which the pro- and anti-Gateway coalitions could compete. Across both sampling frames, the press recirculated a far broader range of key proponent claims than it did opponent ones. This was particularly noticeable for frames related to First Nations, with some of the most common claims made by CFN and YDA barely featured in press coverage at all. This was especially the case in the op-ed sub samples, where First Nations and their concerns were essentially shut out altogether. When the JRP did eventually approve the project, columnists took this as scientific proof of Gateway’s sustainability, with no space offered to natural scientists that could contextualize the inadequacy of the JRP’s review. Similarly, key oppositional arguments concerning the JRP’s scoping phase – like its refusal to include upstream and downstream climate risks – were ignored.

That 3 out of the 4 papers in the sample were Postmedia operations – a company with a long history of promoting the tar sands, publishing the work of industry backed ecoskeptic groups, and demonizing environmental opponents (Gutstein, 2009; 2014) – likely played into this coverage. This was particularly significant since the

Vancouver Sun ignored some of the most common claims made by regional opponents, even though it was the paper with the greatest capacity to interview these actors and listen to their various claims. They were also the paper for whom such coverage should have had the most newsworthiness, given their servicing of the regional market.

### **9.3. It's A Small World After All: Global Dimensions of Regional Struggles**

The Gateway conflict was articulated not just with national and regional senses of place, but continental and global ones as well. It was the global networks of neoliberalism – embodied by the Atlas Network, for instance – which helped coordinate not just neoliberal reform in Canada but also subsequent campaigns of eco skepticism. Canadian neoliberal think tanks receive a good deal of funding from US and European sources. Donner Canadian is the local branch of the US, neoconservative Donner foundation, and Fraser has been funded by the Koch brothers, the US oil billionaires and Tea Party supporters, for decades. Both MLI and Fraser are Atlas groups, and the Civitas conference has invited American guest speakers like Bush White House adviser and GOP pollster Frank Luntz. Fraser and MLI's list of fellows, advisors and directors includes many US policy entrepreneurs, academics and business elites. Yet as this account implies, the 'globality' of Canadian neoliberalism seems heavily biased towards North America. This follows Bill Carroll's findings demonstrating that the upper echelons of the emergent transnational capitalist class and its policy networks remain deeply American and European (Carroll et al., 2010).

Yet the broader dimensions of the Gateway conflict were clearly global. Rising world oil prices – largely attributable to Chinese demand – made the tar sands boom possible. And it was the inability of the US to absorb future Canadian capacity, coupled with rising East Asian demand, which informed the Petrobloc's desire to build Gateway and similar projects. In fact, the petrobloc's broader accumulation strategies are increasingly based on the transnationalisation of economic flows. Contemporary Canadian extractivism is neoliberal not just because of its maldistribution of risk and benefit, its enriching of elites, or even its prioritization of private profit over public benefit. But also because extractivist export market diversification plans are in some respects the localized inflection of globalized neoliberal regimes which have taken root all over the world. These regimes, notes Robinson (2004), tend not to be oriented around

servicing domestic markets, increasing incomes for domestic workers, or maximizing domestic value added activities. Instead, they are geared towards the attraction of foreign capital and the servicing of global markets, as seen in the lengths the extractivist coalition went to articulate Canadian identity with transnational economic integration. The tar sands industry is increasingly internationalized, with foreign firms and investors acquiring a majority of sector revenue. And similar to Robinson's transnational capitalist class thesis, there are many segments of the Canadian capitalist class and economic elites in general whose economic interests – mediated by their growing dependence on financial equity - lie primarily in attracting this foreign capital. This is most obvious with Canadian finance, which has been a major backer of export market diversification, and whose firms underwrite the tar sands and thereby profit by maximizing exports and attracting foreign investors.

Finally, today's ecological crisis is global in scope. Though opponents were forced to prioritize local environmental concerns, they by no means ignored climate risks. And it was these global risks which mobilized the global environmental movement to fight against Northern Gateway, whether through foundation funding, mobilization of international supporters, or partnerships with local groups like Dogwood, Sierra and Coastal First Nations. The decolonization movement has reacted to contemporary settler colonialism with its own transnationalisation. Of course, alliances and movements like CFN, YDA, and Idle No More are technically international in a decolonial sense. Yet increasingly these movements are linked with North American counterparts fighting their own pipeline battles, such as the campaign against the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock. In 2016, over 50 indigenous groups in Canada and the United States signed the Treaty Alliance Against Tar Sands Expansion, which pledged the signatories to "jointly fight proposals to build more pipelines to carry crude from Alberta's oil sands" (Canadian First Nations, 2016, Sept. 22).

These global dimensions manifested in coalition strategies. The JRP took pains to ignore climate concerns in its scoping phase, knowing that if such globalized risks were taken into account Gateway would be almost impossible to approve. And the pro-Gateway coalition consistently positioned Canada's interest and identity as dependent on transnational economic integration, most notably with the markets of 'rising' China and India. The Conservatives and MLI even described Canada as a potential "Global Energy Superpower". Most proponents went to various lengths to distract Canadians

from the reality of global price volatility and the risk of a rapid price crash. This was the only way that the Conservatives could gesture to the global financial crisis as justification for their plans to double down on staples exports, given the vulnerability of staples economies to commodity price volatility in a globally integrated and financialized world.

At the same time, Gateway's proponents argued that Canada could only take its rightful global place if it could protect itself from international threats. By ignoring regional First Nations and focusing on 'foreign funded radicals', they could mobilize nationalist sentiment while symbolically splitting indigenous actors from the emergent anti-extractivist bloc. Opponents made similar overtures when they railed against multinational oil companies, foreign investors, and China – in some cases straying dangerously close to old racist discourses concerning 'yellow peril'. All of these maneuvers illustrate the political gains made by helping local actors make sense of the transnational economic, cultural, and political flows of neoliberal capitalism in ways that align with coalition priorities.

#### **9.4. Crisis Identity: Political Discourse and Mobilization in Uncertain Times**

Importantly, it was the intersecting economic, ecological, political and constitutional crises facing Canada which made these maneuvers potentially compelling, as it is in a crisis, that the ideas, narratives, and identities which subjects take for granted may become decentered. The global economic crisis, combined with the slow moving crisis of neoliberalism's propensity toward economic insecurity and inequality, seemingly validated the petro bloc's push for intensified resource extraction. This is why Conservatives pointed to the crisis in Europe and the United States as evidence of the need for export market diversification. It is also why we saw extractivist development positioned as the means to support tax revenue and state social services by neoliberal actors who have previously worked hard to shrink the tax base and gut the welfare state. We can expect these claims to hold increased ideological saliency for many Canadian lower and middle income people, especially in a post-crash Alberta where economic insecurity is the new reality. The same can be said for Conservative populist appeals that deflect and mobilize class resentment against so-called liberal elite environmentalists, celebrities, and so on. Yet those same factors of insecurity and inequality arguably increased the regional salience of opponents' claims, who could

similarly mobilize fears of local economic destruction and resentment at ‘foreign’ elites. Ecological crisis also heightened the salience of anti-Gateway arguments, as the ecological and economic necessity of *not* building pipelines became a major motivating force. Crisis, in other words, may provide opportunities for an environmental, decolonial left to mobilize constituents in favor of a more sustainable and just economic system.

The intersection of these crises left the Harper Government with a political crisis, as plans for export market diversification – sold as necessary to save the national economy – were thrown into disarray as they ran up against an unshakeable wall of resistance. Also dangerous to the petrobloc was a potential constitutional crisis resulting from a mobilized decolonization movement empowered by legally enshrined rights and title. Going forward, extractivists will have to increase their political support among indigenous leadership if their project is to succeed. This was made clear in 2016 when the courts nullified the findings of the JRP on the grounds that it had failed to properly consult indigenous communities along the proposed Gateway route (Hume, 2016, Jan 13).

## **9.5. Ad infinitum. Ad Nauseum. Ad Mortem? From Harper to Trudeau and Back again**

It is difficult to predict what lays in store for Canadian society over the next decade, but there are at least two potential outcomes. One is that growing economic insecurity will only heighten the salience of the petrobloc’s conservative populist appeals and their symbolic nationalization of the industry. In such a scenario, the planet’s climate will continue to destabilize, while vulnerable regions and populations will bear the brunt of extractivism’s local and global ecological devastation. The nation’s wealth will continue to be squandered – and indigenous territories plundered – with much of this wealth shipped overseas or siphoned off by an increasingly financialized Canadian elite. Canada and Alberta will continue to reap a laughable share of resource rent, depriving public coffers of the necessary income to both make an ecologically sustainable transition to a new economy and reverse the tide of inequality, immiseration, and economic insecurity facing Canadian workers and indigenous communities. Eventually a far right populist leader may come along promising to help, if only Canadians agree with the necessity of crushing the environmentalists, natives, unions, Muslims, or whoever.

An alternative is to move away from neoliberal extractivism to some new economic formation which can protect the climate, respect indigenous rights and title, protect local communities, ecologies and economies, create sufficient state revenues to maintain and enhance social services, and reverse the tide of economic insecurity and inequality. Yet this must occur not just in BC, or in Ontario's manufacturing heartland, or the East Coast, but also – eventually at least – in Alberta and Saskatchewan, where despite extractivism's inequitable distribution of economic gains, absolute gains in income and employment continue to make it an overwhelmingly popular proposition. To do this, some kind of left-environmental-indigenous coalition would have to break the power of the petrobloc. The anti-Gateway coalition did show some signs this could be possible, with its powerful alliance between First Nations, environmentalists, settler communities, and local governments.

Yet the coalition did not succeed, or really even attempt, to challenge the broader neoliberal extractivist order. Opponents rarely mentioned Dutch disease, resource rent, the vulnerability of workers and government revenues to global price volatility, the internationalization of the industry, and so on. Leveraging local subjectivities and interests was a stunning success in terms of stopping Gateway, but it did not necessarily scale up in terms of developing a broader political challenge to extractivism. Climate was rarely mentioned. And there was little attempt to link the fight against Gateway with a positive vision of a sustainable and more equitable economy which would obviate the perceived need felt by many Canadian workers to take such profound ecological and economic risks – to take what they can get.

Today we may be seeing the limits of such a strategy. On one hand, Northern Gateway was defeated. Despite the omnibus bills, the attacks on opponents, the bogus consultations with First Nations and regional settlers, and the eventual approval of Gateway by both the JRP and Cabinet, the project is dead. What's more, the 2014 price crash devastated the oil sands industry and shrunk the price spread to the point that such projects currently make even less economic sense than they once did. The Harper Conservatives and the Alberta Progressive Conservatives were, finally, driven out of power in 2015 (Hume et al, 2015, Oct. 15), shortly before the BC Supreme Court overturned the JRP's Gateway ruling due to insufficient consultation with First Nations (Hume, 2016, Jan 13).

Yet despite the election of the Trudeau Liberals and Alberta NDP, the crisis persists. The Liberals have vowed to secure export market diversification (whether via Kinder Morgan to the west, Energy East to the east, or Keystone XL to the south) (Taber, 2016, Jan. 22), tackle climate change (do, 2015, June 29), and respect indigenous rights and title (Mas, 2015, Dec. 8). But this is likely impossible.

Trudeau did reject Gateway, but only after the project had already been rejected in court (Tasker, 2016, Nov. 29). And the new government has made it clear that the road to a Canadian post-carbon transition runs through the Athabasca region. In making the claim that somehow, by doubling or trebling tar sands emissions even while failing to secure a larger portion of resource rent, we will somehow generate the income to fight climate change in the future, both Alberta's Notley Government and the Trudeau Liberals repeat the scientifically dubious political messaging of their predecessors. Climate scientists have made it clear that global emissions must begin dropping immediately just in order to keep future warming trends to a non-catastrophic level. Yet Trudeau has already approved the Kinder Morgan Transmountain expansion, and seems hopeful to do the same for Energy East. And with the recent election of Donald Trump in America, the Keystone pipeline is back on track for approval, a move that has been heartily welcomed by Trudeau (Tasker, 2017, Jan. 24). If there is one lesson to be learned from this debacle, it is that the Canadian petrobloc is as malleable and liquid as, oh, let's say petroleum. Harper may have been the oil industry's best friend, but he wasn't a particularly useful ally. His government did not succeed in building a single major bitumen transportation project in its decade in power. Trudeau may secure the approval and construction of three in half that time.

What's more, ongoing economic insecurity – especially in post-crash Alberta – threatens to intensify the appeal of conservative populist and extractivist ideology. The populist rhetoric of Ethical Oil is back. Conservative media columnists continue to repackage the denunciations of liberal elites and the case for export market diversification in myriad ways. More ominously, new online-facing oil-backed and oil-supporting advocacy organizations have exploded onto social media, where they repurpose the Ethical Oil and 'foreign funded radicals' theses in viral form. Some of these groups, like Canada's Energy Citizens and Oil Respect, are directly supported by industry associations like CAPP (Libby, 2015, May 30) and the Canadian Association of

Oil Drillers (Morgan, 2016, Feb. 17). If social media metrics are any indication, their supporters number in the hundreds of thousands.

## **9.6. A Bridge Too Far? From Symbolic Nationalization to Ecological Socialization**

Given the unpalatable alternatives, it is worth considering what a viable anti-extractivist bloc may look like. And on this front, there is much to learn from the anti-Gateway movement. Despite the alliance of powerful elites from across the country in support of the project, the overall bias in press coverage, the omnibus bills and targeted audits, Northern Gateway's supporters lost. Regionally, opposition in BC remained high (Grenier, 2016, Nov 30), and the project was eventually rejected—first by the courts, then by the Liberal government. What can extractivism's opponents learn from this?

Firstly, it is possible that the mainstream press – facing declining circulation, revenue, and public prestige – may not have the same framing power that it once did. Without lapsing into techno-utopianism, it is clear that digital media platforms – from blogs to social media – offered an invaluable means for opponents to circulate their own frames and narratives directly to potential supporters. While the opponent groups faced an uphill battle in circulating their most populist-inflected and contextualising claims in the news sample, this was not the case with their blog posts and, assumedly, social media content. Their ability to directly communicate with and mobilise supporters as a supplement to the provision of traditional information subsidies to media allowed them to directly mobilise regional constituents for a series of offline activities – protesting, voting, speaking at the JRP. This was a large part of their success and should inform any future anti-extractivist politics.

Another success was the opposition's ability to replicate the interfield coordination of the neoliberal extractivist coalition. By building an alliance of environmental NGOs, First Nations, local settler communities, labor groups, and municipal, provincial, and federal governments and opposition parties, the opposition could leverage the unique capitals and resources of its constituent members. Local NGOs ability to mobilise large numbers of activists, voters, and financial contributors; the financial resources and global networks of multinational NGOs; and the grassroots support, inter-nation solidarity, and increased legal standing of First Nations all became

invaluable resources for the larger movement. While the ties between these actors emerged more from the contingencies of organizing than the types of formal linkages which bind New Right networks, the interfield networks arising from collective struggle could certainly be increasingly formalised in this way moving forward. This may create a more resilient and coordinated interfield project – from movement to bloc.

Local greens and the settler left should work to ensure more formal indigenous representation and alliances, such as the campaigns to raise money for First Nations legal costs. As the Gateway conflict demonstrated, indigenous peoples will be critical actors in any politically meaningful counterhegemonic bloc opposing extractivism. This is why the extractivist coalition has worked to split the green-settler-first nation's bloc, whether through MLI's corporatist overtures or through the sole targeting of settler environmentalists as 'foreign funded radicals'. And though one should be wary of cultural appropriation, it is clear that various indigenous epistemologies and ontologies are influencing some regional environmentalists in profound ways. This can be seen in the recent statements and activism of prominent regional environmentalists like David Suzuki (Suzuki and Moola, 2010, Feb 5), Ben West (2012, March 30), and SCBC. Yet for such bonds to be strengthened, settler opponents of extractivism cannot stop at joining indigenous peoples in common fights against individual projects they don't like, or bridging indigenous frames with their own. They will have to take decolonization seriously. And this, notes Coulthard (2014), requires understanding decolonial praxis as the movement for alternative forms of political economic organization.

Yet pursuing such alternatives would be necessary regardless, if only to further integrate labor and working class people more generally into any interfield anti-extractivist coalition. While numerous labor groups *did* oppose Northern Gateway, objecting to the infringement on indigenous rights, the threat to regional coastal economies, and the shipping of value-added refining activities overseas, it is likely that any attempt to further this alliance will require extractivist opponents to take the economy much more seriously. One of the most successful manoeuvres by project opponents across all fields was their ability to connect to people's lived experience and economic wellbeing by focusing on regional *economic risk*. By bridging economic and ecological risk, they undermined the extractivism's symbolic splitting of economy and ecology – jobs vs. environment – as two conceptually separate frames. As economic insecurity intensifies for many under late neoliberalism, the ability to point to concrete

ways extractivism threatened local economic wellbeing was crucial in building the type of broad coalition necessary to oppose the Gateway project.

Yet opponents generally stopped short of *envisioning what an economic replacement* for extractivism – a decarbonized or green economy – would actually look like. The Northern Gateway conflict demonstrated that there was a lot of political potential to be mined from extractivism’s inequities and instabilities when it came mobilising local opposition to projects which largely benefit actors in other provinces or countries. Yet attacks on the *relative* distribution of economic benefit will only motivate a broader movement against extractivism if opponents can offer up a meaningful alternative to that regime’s *absolute* economic gains for many working people. To scale up the local resistance to Gateway, Greens, as well as socialists and social democrats, will have to develop and put forward a convincing economic alternative which can respect indigenous sovereignty, decarbonize the economy, ensure local ecological and economic sustainability, and reverse the deleterious economic effects of neoliberalism which currently fuel the far right populism gripping much of the global west. And this will mean taking on capitalism, or at the very least its neoliberal extractivist variant. If this does not occur, not only will it be extremely difficult to scale up popular support for any national opposition to tar sands expansion, but the destabilization of the climate alone will be enough to bring about irreversible catastrophe. And because this catastrophe’s effects AND causes are as national and global as they are local, regional Nimbyism is unlikely to do the trick.

But this does not mean rejecting the local and regional for the global – climate activists and other opponents of extractivism should take note of how successful the regional and local framing of the anti-Gateway movement was. The nationalist reifications of the petrobloc’s organic intellectuals were unsuccessful in BC because they ran against many people’s lived experiences with local ecosystems, economies, and cultures. For many BC residents, claims about national GDP gains or person-years of employment were abstract. The potential collapse of Salmon fisheries or coastal tourism or the liability of local taxpayers for spill cleanup was much more concrete. Even for those who lived or worked far from Kitimat or the Great Bear, memories of the Exxon Valdez or the recent disasters in the Gulf or the Kalamazoo made local risk a powerful motivating factor helping to unite regional environmentalists, First Nations, settler communities, and state actors. What is unclear, however, is the capacity of regional

actors to scale up this focus by bridging frames – and political activities – relating to local ecologies, economies and democracy with those concerning global sustainability and economic justice.

Yet if one looks carefully, the seeds for such a movement can be glimpsed in another of the movement's strengths: its willingness to make strong populist critiques that highlighted the diverging interests of 'popular forces' and elites. The strong focus on inequality and inequity was undoubtedly one of the most powerful elements in opponent communications. In some ways these regionalist discourses contained and leveraged a nascent class discourse, and it is the seeds of this class discourse which hold the most potential for scaling up the anti-extractivist movement. Opponents' populist denunciations of 'elite outsiders' – multinational oil companies, autocratic federal governments, global financiers, and Chinese planners – could be built upon to articulate a meaningful critique of the globalizing class power that lies at the heart of neoliberal extractivist regimes. While xenophobic scapegoating of China should be resisted, there is no reason populist impulses could not be articulated with a coherent explanation of how the interests of much of the Canadian capitalist class are aligned with transnational elites and capital fractions for whom the wellbeing of Canadian – and global – workers is increasingly inconsequential.

In some ways, the petrobloc has prepared the grounds for their own demise by symbolically nationalizing the benefits of extractivist development. If opponents could better expose some of the key inequities that structure the oil sands – the lack of resource rent accruing to taxpayers, the high rate of corporate compensation and low rate of employment intensify, the shipping of profits out of Canada (and indigenous territories) – *and* offer a meaningful economic alternative, then the nationalist claims of petrobloc actors might be exposed for the historic boondoggle they most certainly are. And remember; if the oil sands are truly a national patrimony whose seemingly divine purpose is to enrich the nation (or Alberta), why not nationalize the resource? Better yet, why not socialize it, halting its unsustainable expansion while using revenues during its phase out to fund a just and sustainable transition?

There are, of course, problems with this plan. Alberta's constitutional right to develop its natural resources means that, sooner or later, any plan to phase out the oil sands will require some degree of consent from regional political actors. And so this

positive economic vision must offer Albertan labour and First Peoples *something*. In some ways, this is the perfect time for just such a Hail Mary. After the crash, it should be apparent that the volatility and inequities inherent to the current mode of resource development is not in the long term best interest of working Albertans. But making this point convincingly is an uphill battle, to put it mildly. This is partially because of the public mediation of the industry's structure by industry associations, corporate media, think tanks, state elites, and so on. The economic hardship currently facing many Albertans has already been blamed on the environmentalists, the NDP, the Trudeau Liberals, and so on. And opponents of the sector should not fool themselves. In the absence of a more holistic understanding of the industry's actual structure, the inequity structuring the industry will only *increase* the incentive to maximize fossil fuel production not just for wealthy elites, but for regional workers who know firsthand the capacity of the sector to provide income and employment for themselves and their families. If presented with no viable economic alternatives, it will simply be more comforting to believe that global warming is a sham meant to exploit them or that pipeline protesters are paid cronies of George Soros or the Rockefellers or whichever liberal elite boogeyman has been conjured up this week to haunt their imaginations and give meaning to their crisis. All the more reason to get working now.

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