

The mobilizing power of the territorial threat in the opposition to pipelines: diverse networks emerging from the urban fringe

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Movements against fossil fuels' extraction and the building of pipelines exhibit unlikely networks and new sites of protest emergence. This communication presents two case studies of networks emerging from urban fringes in the North, in which activists have radically distinct relations to place and land ownership. In these networks operate processes of ambiguous meaning overlap between the grievances of dispossession and the fear for security (Harvey 2003, Jasper 2007, Willow 2014). But what links actors together is not a joint message (a "collective action frame", Benford and Snow 2000, Snow et al. 2014). It is rather the *mobilizing sentiments* (Gould 2009) of specific actors, the brokers, in relation to the experienced territorial threat, that are conducive to the building and sustainment of new relations between diverse actors. The site from which these movements emerge - the urban fringes - also deserve attention. Although a part of member activists are based in the central city (ecological anarchists, climate justice groups), much of the mobilization is displayed from a de-centered position in relation to typical metropolitan politics emerging from the center - not from the dense central urban neighborhoods which would provide the hot-beds for social movements (Mayer 2012, Nicholls 2008).

Using two case studies of pipeline opposition (one in Quebec, Canada and the other in Massachusetts, US), I argue that the urban fringe is a now privileged site for diverse coalitions changing urban politics, with the growing landscapes of vulnerability created by the extraction and transport of unconventional fossil fuel (Willow 2014). The first pipeline mobilization studied concerns a pipe planned to transport "fracked" gas from the fields in Pennsylvania to New England (project debated since 2014, but abandoned by the company in 2016). The subregion I concentrated my fieldwork on is at the far edge of two urban areas in Massachusetts (Worcester and Boston). The activists' network was organized around local groups in each town connected in loose regional and state networks. The second pipeline mobilization studied concern the overlapping oppositions to two pipelines projected to transport tar sands oil from the West of Canada to the East, with plans for exportation. I concentrated my fieldwork on the Montreal metropolitan region (especially the north-west fringe). The mix of activists is very diverse - young anarchists, suburban residents, farmers, first nations -and is not very integrated except for key brokering relations. The analysis is based on participation to walking rallies with activists, on 8-12 informal interviews and 12 formal semi-structured interviews in each case, press coverage and document analysis.

In both cases, the activists shared territorial threats create new convergence against fossil fuel infrastructure. In the first case studied, the territorial threats - attack on private property, on conservation land, on safe living environment, on undisturbed landscape, etc. - acted like a cohesive glue, allowing to overcome political differences and the feeling of powerlessness. The mobilizing sentiments concerned the development of solidarity with others affected (even after the change of route, activists

stayed active for that reason), albeit political divergences, different levels of environmental commitment and diversity in status. Also, the parallel experience of the territorial threat and of disempowering federal procedures fostered place-based resistance, on the material sites which were to be affected. This place-based resistance legitimized by the territorial threats was key in sustaining the opposition and encouraging radical action (civil disobedience) from residents with no history of activism.

In the second case studied, the territorial threats actually contributed to overcome tensions in factions opposing pipelines. Some resident groups in the urban fringes developed new relations with their neighbors affected heavily by the territorial threat – farmers and first nation communities – who traditionally did not have good relations (either excluded or self-retreated) with environmentalists networks. This allowed individual residents, brokers, to build better understandings of farmers and first nations experiences and territorial claims and translate these to other mobilized groups, to foster collaborations.

In both cases, activists have used the strategy of multiple local access points, privileging resolutions through town meetings (in New England) or through convincing their local elected officials, in addition to state and federal targets. Yet, they reach the central cities as a cumulative and converging site for claim-making, with pressure from town local authorities giving them support in front of metropolitan, provincial and federal officials and regulatory procedures. But the mobilizing power of place did not rest in the central cities, but in the urban 'operationalizing landscapes' : the places (globally scattered) from which resources and production sites for dense urban quarters lie (Brenner et al. 2013), and where actors experienced the territorial threats of the pipelines. These movements against pipelines hence transform urban politics through their challenging of the network segmentation and power concentration in city centers (Uitermark, Nicholls and Loopmans 2012) – giving greater room to first nations, farmers, conservationists, and local authorities in the fringe – with ties developed in the periphery.

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