

Framing the Pipeline Problem: Civic Claimsmakers and Social Media

Maria Bakardjieva, Mylynn Felt, & Rhon Teruelle
University of Calgary

ABSTRACT

Background *This article responds to the need for additional research into the role that social media play in the debate on energy transition in Canada.*

Analysis *Based on a qualitative case study of the most recent protests against the Kinder Morgan pipeline project, this article raises questions concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the contemporary communication opportunity structure for “claimsmaking” (as Joel Best defines it in *Social Problems*) and achieving public resonance by the civic grassroots in Canada.*

Conclusions and implications *This article investigates the ways in which social media have become a site for framing collective action by pipeline opponents. It documents how citizens and civic organizations combine online and offline tools and tactics to take part in the shaping of public understanding of pipeline projects in Canada and in the influencing of energy policy and decision-making.*

Keywords *Social media; Social movements; Collective action; Framing; Kinder Morgan pipeline; Facebook groups*

RÉSUMÉ

Contexte *Cet article répond au besoin de recherches additionnelles sur le rôle joué par les médias sociaux dans le débat sur la transition énergétique au Canada.*

Analyse *Cet article se base sur une étude de cas qualitative sur les manifestations les plus récentes contre le projet de pipeline Kinder Morgan afin de relever les forces et faiblesses de la structure d'opportunités communicationnelles contemporaines pour la formulation de demandes (telle que définie par Joel Best dans *Social Problems*) et la conscientisation du public par les mouvements populaires au Canada.*

Conclusions et implications *Cet article explore les manières dont les médias sociaux sont devenus un site important pour déterminer l'action collective que les opposants aux pipelines peuvent mener. Il documente comment les citoyens et les organismes civiques combinent des outils et tactiques en ligne et hors ligne afin d'influencer la perception*

Maria Bakardjieva is Professor of Communication in the Department of Communication, Media & Film at the University of Calgary. Email: bakardji@ucalgary.ca. **Mylynn Felt** is a PhD Candidate and Vanier Scholar in the program in of Communication and Media, Department of Communication, Media & Film at the University of Calgary. Email: jmfelt@ucalgary.ca. **Rhon Teruelle** is Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Communication, Media & Film at the University of Calgary. Email: rhon.teruelle@ucalgary.ca.

publique à l'égard de projets de pipeline au Canada ainsi que les politiques et la prise de décisions sur l'énergie en général.

Mots clés Médias sociaux; Mouvements sociaux; Action collective; Cadrage; Pipeline Kinder Morgan; Groupes Facebook

Introduction

The construction of pipelines intended to transport bitumen from the Alberta oil sands to potential buyers has been a controversial political issue in Canada for years. Presented as an economic imperative by interested corporations and different levels and stripes of government, it has been vehemently opposed by environmental groups and citizens. The positions of pipeline opponents, along with their claims and mobilization efforts, have reverberated throughout social media in Canada. Twitter hashtags and Facebook groups dedicated to the issue have proliferated and become a notable component of the anti-pipeline movement.

Some studies of social media use in relation to motivating energy conservation (Petkov, Kobler, Foth, & Krcmar, 2011) and the way social media are used for collective action by environmental groups (Porter & Hellsten, 2014) have started to emerge. At the same time, Imre Szeman, Ruth Beer, Warren Cariou, Mark Simpson, and Sheena Wilson in their 2016 report, *On the Energy Humanities: Contributions from the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Arts to Understanding Energy Transition and Energy Impasse*, have lamented the dearth of research on “the role that social media plays – or could play – in energy transition” (p. 16). In fact, they refer to the studies done on this subject as being “virtually nonexistent” (p. 16). The research presented here focuses on the utilization of social media by individuals and groups opposing the construction of the Kinder Morgan pipeline, and aims to contribute to the strengthening and diversifying of the scholarly work in this area.

The focus of this article is a pipeline-construction project with a particularly dramatic recent history, the Kinder Morgan pipeline extension project, also known as the Trans Mountain Expansion Project. The project involves the expansion of the existing 1,150-kilometre oil pipeline between Strathcona County (near Edmonton), AB, and Burnaby, BC, which will increase the nominal capacity of the system from 300,000 barrels per day to 890,000 barrels per day. Local, national, and international organizations have joined their voices in resisting the project and warning of the multiple risks it entails. Among those, the most prominent stakeholders are several First Nations such as the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, the Squamish Nation, and others on whose territories the pipeline is supposed to impinge in different ways.

For the purposes of this study, opposition to the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Expansion Project is approached as a case of civic mobilization, which allows the investigation of the specific role social media platforms and practices play in the construction of the collective action frames that underlay that mobilization process. The study is delimited within a relatively short and recent time period (January 2016 to April 2017), which saw some important developments in the Canadian national discussion and political sanctioning of the project. Further narrowing-down of the scope and the selection of particular objects of analysis within that period is elaborated in the Methodology section. The article proceeds by first reviewing some of the central

tenets of the models of framing developed in the sociological literature on social movements. In subsequent sections, we specify our multifaceted methodological approach and design and data analysis is presented under two main headings: quantitative and qualitative, each one of which considers the framing activities of pipeline opponents as they occur in different online spaces and intersect with mainstream media content.

Theoretical framework

The central conceptual anchor of the study is the notion of collective action frames. This is a concept proposed in the theory of social movements to account for the work that participants in social movements, mostly activists and activist organizations, perform as signifying agents. Collective action does not arise out of determining structural factors or configurations of available resources alone—explanations that have constituted the focus of preceding theorizing, such as class-based and resource mobilization models (Benford & Snow, 2000; Melucci, 1989, 1996). Another key driving force is the meanings produced in the process of interaction among participating actors. These meanings articulate the reasons, the goals, and the motivations that set individuals and collectives in motion in a common direction. Their production is a dynamic and contested process involving diverse actors, means of communication, and audiences. It is embroiled in the “politics of signification” (Hall, 1982, p. 64), and draws upon existing symbolic resources. It unfolds within a historically specific and evolving context of political and cultural opportunities and is shaped in a two-way interaction with them. Social movement scholars, as Robert Benford and David Snow (2000) summarize, use the verb “framing” to talk about this generative process. Thus, collective action frames can be succinctly defined as “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization (SMO)” (p. 614).

Research guided by the concept of framing has identified some characteristic functions of collective action frames, as well as typical patterns in the process of their production and dissemination. Snow and Benford (1988) discern three main types of frames related to the key tasks framing sets out to fulfill as part of the meaning-making work of social movement activists and organizations: “diagnostic framing,” “prognostic framing,” and “motivational framing.” Diagnostic framing involves problem identification and the attribution of responsibility or blame. Prognostic framing formulates a proposed solution to the problem and lays out strategies for bringing about that desired solution. Motivational framing addresses the question of why collective action is necessary and constructs appropriate “vocabularies of motive” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 617). Typically, these vocabularies articulate the severity of the problem, the urgency of the steps to be taken, the potential efficacy of collective actions, and the moral duty to act.

For the purposes of the analysis undertaken in this article, the “prognostic” framing task has been analytically subdivided into two distinct components. The first one has to do with the projected solutions to the diagnosed problem—what needs to be done to have it resolved in a manner satisfactory to the movement adherents. One such solution, for example, can be recognized in the concise demand raised by pipeline opponents: “Leave it in the ground,” referring to the oil in the Alberta “tar” sands. The

second component of the prognostic task pertains to strategies and tactics for achieving or pushing toward that desired solution. That type of framing is labelled here as *activational framing*, because its main products are prescriptions for concrete actions to be taken by individuals and collectives in specified space and time. This component is critically responsible for the actual mobilization, as it supplies potential participants with particular starting points and action recipes. Depending on the adequacy, practicality, and effectiveness of these recipes, collective action then unfolds on a smaller or larger scale, and succeeds or fails to make a difference in the social world.

William Gamson's (1992) conception of collective action framing similarly informs the theoretical framework applied here. The symbolic construction of collective action frames, Gamson has proposed, involves three main components: injustice, agency, and identity. The rational identification of a social problem (diagnosis) and the emotional and moral motivation to fix the wrong are mixed together in the notion of "injustice"; the logical projection (prognosis) of the means by which the problem could be solved along with the spirited belief of a concrete group of people that they have the power to bring about the solution constitute the notion of "agency." Gamson's third component, "identity" refers to the emergence of a collective "we" standing in opposition to a "them." This element adds an important new dimension to the model of collective action frames because it refers to the process of identifying, naming, and uniting those who will act in common. It is important to note that the construction of collective identity has been seen as a critical prerequisite for collective action by theorists of the "new social movements" of the 1980s such as Alberto Melucci (1989, 1996). In this analysis of the framing processes observed in Facebook groups dedicated to opposing the Kinder Morgan pipeline project, the question of whether and to what extent a collective "we," or a collective identity frame emerges in the framing activities performed by members, is explicitly addressed. The definition of "them," on the other hand, represents the "constitutive outside" (Hall, 2000, p. 17) of the collective identity being constructed. Therefore, these "adversarial frames" (Gamson, 1992, p. 11), which seek to distinguish friend from foe and to construct the movement protagonists and antagonists, are also important to attend to, as they could affect the potential for inclusivity, resonance, and diffusion of the problems, solutions, and motivations articulated by the movement.

We view the process of the construction of collective action frames as an open and fluid process of interaction among various understandings of the social world and specific phenomena within it, enunciated by differently positioned members of the movement; not only its organized entities such as SMOs, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and seasoned activists, but also by more marginal and casual participants. Contrary to the way the concept of framing has been employed in some academic discussions of journalistic framing of mass media content (de Vreese, 2005; Scheufele, 1999), the framing occurring in social movements is not necessarily a strategic, top-down process executed by trained professionals. This kind of strategic framing by experienced leaders and activists, and sometimes participating professionals, indisputably does take place in social media as well. However, social movements, especially those closer to the civic grassroots, rely to a greater extent on what Benford and Snow

(2000), in the context of social movement research, have labelled “discursive processes,” namely, “the talk and conversations—the speech acts—and written communications of movement members that occur primarily in the context of, or in relation to, movement activities” (p. 223). Discussions in public forums supported by social media platforms offer a window on the processes of collective action framing that are predominantly of this discursive type. As much as there are strategic efforts by organized groups and leaders to shape the discursive process, significant room exists also for members and marginal supporters to weigh in and influence the flow of the narrative and the emergent framings of the issues at hand.

Two main classes of discursive processes have been distinguished in the literature: frame articulation and frame amplification and punctuation. The first class, *articulation*, refers to the stitching together of statements that express a movement’s understanding of a problem, its solution, and the way to work toward that solution. The second class, *frame amplification and punctuation*, involves the symbolic elaboration of these frames aimed at greater clarity, expressivity, and resonance. These distinctions are useful for the upcoming analysis because they help assess the specific strengths and limitations of the social media platforms examined here.

Methodological design

The methodological approach taken in this study combines two distinct elements—one aligned with what has now become a dominant tradition in the research on social media, and the other, an innovative version of discourse analysis adapted to the study of 1) discursive processes of framing, and 2) discursive interaction as opposed to individual static texts. The first approach, known as “digital methods” (Rogers, 2013, p. 19), is mostly quantitative in nature and relies on the large-scale analysis of metadata gleaned from social media platforms. The second approach combines the methods of frame analysis with those of dramaturgical analysis. It endeavours to reveal 1) how framing processes unfold in the course of the interactions among participants in social media discussions, as well as 2) how these processes relate to collective action that occurs in physical space.

This study combines these two methodological approaches because there is value in first charting the macro landscape of social media engagement around a specific issue, and then purposefully selecting particular segments for in-depth qualitative examination. The quantitative approach has allowed us to reliably identify discussion groups and periods of intense social media activity directly related to collective action. Based on this picture, we have chosen instances of civic engagement via social media that represent good candidates for the qualitative investigation undertaken in the second stage.

Frame analysis, Lasse Lindekilde (2014) suggests, can be seen as “a particular causal-oriented and focused version of discourse analysis” (p. 222). The frame analysis performed in this study employed a coding scheme comprising categories that corresponded to the different types of frames discussed in the theory section. Some additional categories classifying the different functions of utterances in the interactive discourse were introduced during the coding process. The analysis highlights tactics

aimed at achieving greater effectiveness and resonance, such as frame alignment, bridging, extension, and transformation.

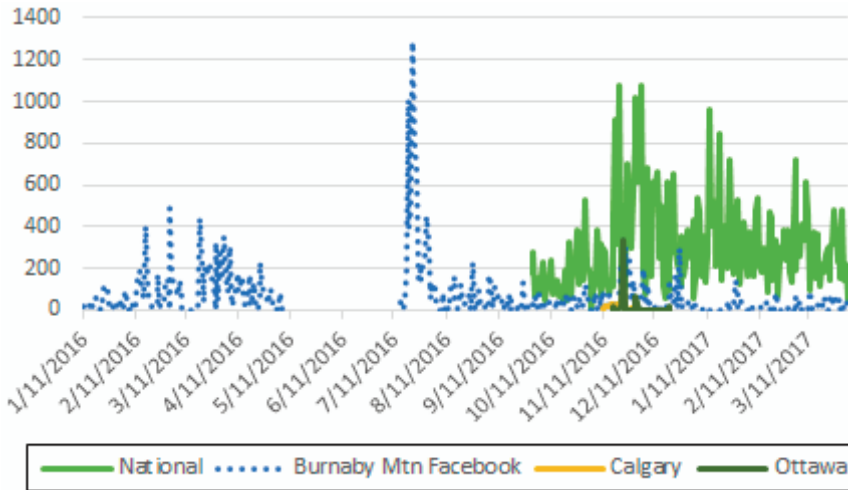
Similar to frame analysis, dramaturgical analysis has its roots in the work of Erving Goffman (Hare & Blumberg, 1988). While frame analysis focuses on language, dramaturgical analysis shifts attention to discursive action and to participating individuals as actors. It focuses on the pragmatics of communication—what participants are doing with their words. Dramaturgical analysis has most typically been applied to social interactions unfolding in specific situations (a ceremony, a corporate meeting, a doctor's visit) looking at the particular roles individuals take depending on their definitions of the situation and their strategic interests and goals. The main unit of dramaturgical analysis is not the individual, or the isolated text or utterance, but the cast of interacting persons (Hare & Blumberg, 1988). Closer inspection of this interaction—or of the drama that takes place on a particular scene of social life—and answering questions such as: What is going on? Who is involved? What roles are different performers taking? What are the relationships among these characters? offers valuable insight into the ways in which meaning is produced. Dramaturgical analysis is chosen here especially because it stipulates a more holistic view of the scene on which claims and frames are elaborated and on the interactive exchanges through which this happens rather than on isolated linguistic units. Since the scene (or “action area,” Hare & Blumberg, 1988, p. 4) in the case we are studying is a social media platform, this approach enables us to directly address our main research question about the role of these platforms in collective action framing. In addition, looking at exchanges on social media platforms in dramaturgical terms helps us to recognize them not simply as prerequisites for collective action but as integral parts of the action itself.

Facebook analytics: Method and findings

Using Netvizz (Rieder, 2013), a Facebook application programming interface (API), we collected posts, comments, and metadata from two particularly active Facebook group pages and two Facebook event pages explicitly intended as meeting forums for those opposing Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion plans. We selected these groups because their very titles expressed an orientation toward collective action against the pipeline project and, as such, promised to contain collective action framing. One of the groups was local, directed to developments occurring near the proposed terminal construction site at Burnaby Mountain in British Columbia. This group was titled “Stop Kinder Morgan on Burnaby Mtn” (hereafter SKMoBM) and had 5,711 members. It was among the early forums voicing opposition to the project. We focused our quantitative data analysis on the period of time associated with the “critical discourse moment” (Gamson, 1992), when debates over the future of the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion project became particularly heated in anticipation of a government decision about whether to green light the project. We analyzed metadata for this group from January 11, 2016, to April 3, 2017. The other group, “Stop Kinder Morgan Call to Action,” was created at a later stage and at the time of collection had 4,036 members. It appealed to a national audience. We collected data on this group from September 30, 2016, to April 3, 2017. The two event pages organized adherents of the anti-Kinder Morgan pipeline movement for vigils on November 21, 2016. The two vigils we focused on were

the one held in Ottawa, where Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made his announcement of federal approval for the project, and the one held in Calgary, where Kinder Morgan's primary Canadian office is located. The Calgary event page showed 39 confirmed attendees with an additional 80 interested in attending. The Ottawa page had 114 confirmed attendees and 191 interested. All posts and comments on both pages were collected for analysis. The following chart (see Figure 1) maps the engagement for each of the four groups. Engagement includes posts, comments, and reactions (such as likes) accumulated.

Figure 1: KM Facebook engagement overall



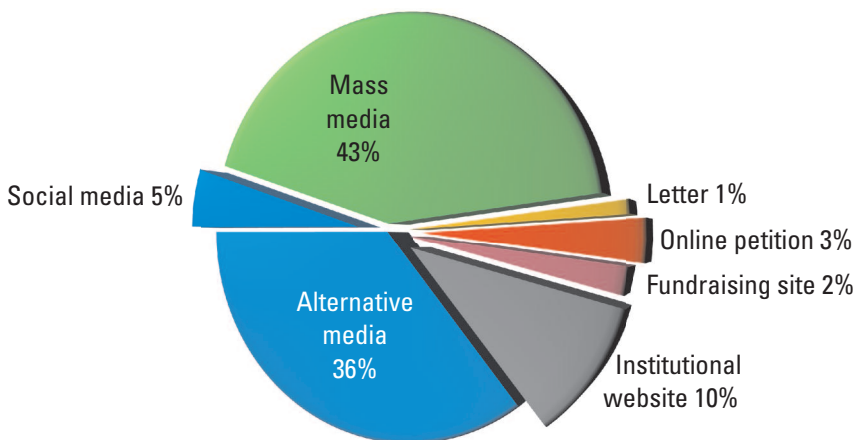
Note: Line graph portraying 16 months of overall engagement of posts, comments, and reactions (such as “likes”) for each of the four Facebook groups observed: Stop KM on Burnaby Mtn, Stop KM Call to Action (National), Kinder Morgan Ottawa Vigil, and Kinder Morgan Calgary Vigil from January 11, 2016–April 3, 2017.

Figure 1 presents an overview of the dynamic of Facebook engagement in our chosen groups over the period of January 11, 2016–April 3, 2017. The chart shows that the Burnaby Mountain Group was active early in that period and continued to serve as a platform for engagement throughout. The national group “Stop Kinder Morgan Call to Action,” joined the conversation in late 2016, about the time when the government decision regarding the approval of the project was expected. Many of the participants in the Burnaby Mountain group also contributed to the national group. The event pages for the vigils in Calgary and Ottawa, had limited lifespans and a narrower purpose and membership.

The chart (see Figure 1) allows us to distinguish the most heated moments in the discussions occurring in these groups represented by the peaks of activity. Clearly, something noteworthy was happening at the moments when these peaks occurred. We hypothesized that these would be the periods when the stated purpose of the groups—to mobilize people for collective action—would have been pursued with the most intensity. Therefore, we directed our qualitative in-depth analysis to the discursive processes unfolding during these periods.

In our quantitative analysis of the content appearing on the chosen group's page, we searched for connections between participants' posts and media publications in order to find how the two types of discourses intersected, and to identify the cultural resources pipeline opponents drew on. We conducted a content analysis of the 444 posts containing links to other media in our "Stop Kinder Morgan on Burnaby Mtn" data set. Each link was coded according to the following categories: mainstream mass media, alternative media, professional website, social media, online petition, fundraising site, or letter. Mainstream mass media typically operate under a public or for-profit model, address a broad, non-specified audience, and adhere to journalistic standards set by the Canadian Press (40% of links). Some examples of the publications we categorized as mass media include the following: the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), *Vancouver Sun*, *National Post*, *Maclean's*, and CTV News. Definitions of the term "alternative media" differ across the literature, often focusing on radical or critical intent uncharacteristic of mainstream media (see Atton, 2001; Bailey, Cammaerts, & Carpentier, 2007; Forde, 2011; Fuchs, 2010). The alternative media sites we identified operated (mostly, but not exclusively) on a nonprofit principle, advocated a specific position or ideology, and were usually oriented to a special-interest audience (39% of links) (see Figure 2). Some examples include the *Vancouver Media Co-op*, *350.org*, *Inside Climate News*, *Vancouver Observer*, *Georgia Straight*, and the *Common Sense Canadian*. Ten percent of the links pointed readers to institutional websites such as government and professional associations, or to corporate sites such as Kinder Morgan. Five percent of the links connected to other social media posts. Three percent pointed to online petitions. Two percent called for donations. Lastly, one percent connected readers to a political letter writing campaign.

Figure 2: "Stop Kinder Morgan on Burnaby Mtn" posts, 2016–2017



Note: Pie chart showing types of links from posts on the Facebook group "Stop Kinder Morgan on Burnaby Mtn" from January 2016–January 2017.

The high incidence of links to outside media in these posts, as well as the diversity of sources to which these links point, leads us to conceptualize Facebook group content

as a cross-media milieu, a collage of bits of information and interpretations purposefully curated and stitched together in the collective process of reality construction and issue framing that occurs on the group page. It vividly demonstrates the way in which available cultural resources are drawn into the framing process.

A peek behind the peak: Collective action framing as drama

This section delves into the content of the SKMoBM Facebook group page and applies dramaturgical and frame-analysis approaches to a fragment of it. The period selected for this analysis spans the two weeks of activity in January 2016 that generated the earliest peak represented on Figure 1. In the course of that period, group participants wrote 137 posts, 665 comments, registered 2,155 likes, and 4,433 shares.

SKMoBM is a public group that describes its goals as:

Opposition to the Kinder Morgan (KM) ‘Trans Mountain Expansion Project.’ Resistance includes all other pipelines, oil & fracking extraction, and terminals which would pose significant health and environmental risks to our communities, ecosystems, & wildlife while bringing very few benefits by way of jobs, revenue, or sustainability. (Stop Kinder Morgan on Burnaby Mtn)

The group appeals primarily to British Columbians sharing this position and “their allies from afar.” The adversary, or the constitutive outside, of the collective identity sketched in this profile is “large corporations that only care about their bottom line and not our ocean, streams, rivers, or creeks!!!” (Stop Kinder Morgan on Burnaby Mtn). Its explicitly recognized friends and allies are about 20 different Facebook groups and websites listed on the page, all of them dedicated to opposing pipeline projects in Canada and to the protection of other natural resources and areas. Already in this introductory profile, the group describes itself as part of a networked counter-public, a web of environmentalist formal and informal collectives that shares goals and, as we will see, allows information, commentary, and mutual support to flow across its interconnected online forums. The group page is open to posts from all members. At the time of writing, it is administered by 22 individuals. The following subsection will focus on the dramaturgy of the group’s performance in an attempt to discern its main compositional elements, plots, and patterns.

The scene and its elements

The action unfolds in an area (scene) representing a Facebook group page. As Burke (1968, cited in Hare & Blumberg, 1988) has noted, “all aspects of a stage or scene suggest limits for the action that will be appropriate in that setting” (p. 4). This includes features such as the predetermined organization of space, the props at hand, and the movements possible within it. The main elements of the Facebook group page as a scene are the posts, the comments, the “like” and “share” buttons, and the set of emoticons for expressing various reactions. Therefore, the typical pattern of interaction supported by the page is the thread formed by a post, usually introducing new content, often a new object of attention and/or theme, followed by comments containing verbal responses and elaborations on that content as well as standardized non-verbal reactions, such as likes, shares, and emoticons. This recurring pattern can be called an

episode in the dramatic performance. The post stands out as the main act undertaken by a participating character. Its content defines the meaning and direction of the ensuing episode. Characteristically, posts are the dramaturgical elements that carry most of the explicit work of framing of an issue. Comment-writers play the role of a validating audience. The comments that follow a post perform the task of frame amplification and punctuation, fine-tuning and personalization, but often also engage in frame alignment, bridging, extension, and transformation. In theory, comments could also engage in “counterframing,” i.e., they could question, challenge, or oppose the proposed framing, however, no instances of such a response were encountered during the period of the study with a few tentative exceptions. Likes and shares, clapping, smiling faces, and other emoticons determine the strength of the in-group resonance of the frame constructed or evoked in the post.

The design of the action area with its inbuilt affordances is also responsible for the way in which the content of the posts is produced. Two main modes of such production can be discerned—creating original, textual, or visual content, and importing content published elsewhere through links and quotations. The nature of the sources from which content is borrowed varies greatly as shown in the previous section and Figure 2. It should be noted, however, that one of the most frequent sources during the period under consideration were other Facebook groups included in the list of allies. This is an indication that at times of heated discussion, a significant volume of content travels across those groups and is shared by their networked publics. Thus, although these groups technically reside on different Facebook pages, they often are “on the same page” with regard to focus of attention and social reality construction. Both native and imported content play an important role in the collective action framing performed by the group. In this process, group participants collectively stitch together a shared picture of the world, interweaving various items of published and experiential material, their own reasoning, and the pronouncements of authorities and like-minded others.

The characters

The participants in the group make rather unequal contributions to this signifying work. They could be subdivided into main characters, those who play big and substantive parts that drive the action, and secondary characters whose main role is to react, sometimes making key clarifications, elaborations, and extensions to the frames proposed in the leading parts/posts, or simply echoing or approving it in the style of the chorus in ancient Greek theatre. There are also members who could be seen as an active audience—reacting through likes, shares, and non-verbal expressions. The role of that audience should not be underestimated because it registers the degree of the in-group resonance of specific claims and framings, and thus influences the framing performed by the main characters. In addition, the presence of these marginal participants boosts the sense of imagined collectivity and the potential for broader resonance. When people in this active audience share group content with members of their personal networks, the claims and frames articulated by the group gain wider diffusion through a two- or multiple-step flow.

Probing into the profiles of some of the participants, it can be surmised that a number of them are seasoned activists associated with NGOs, while others are unaffil-

iated citizens with different degrees of engagement with the issue at hand—from vehement opponents to pipelines ready to dedicate time and resources to oppositional actions, to sideline supporters of the anti-pipeline movement who may or may not participate with more than an occasional emotional reaction, clapping, or thanks.

The action

What indeed was going on? What were the events that produced the dramatic peak in the groups' activity? The search for answers to these questions pointed to the moments in which the discursive interaction unfolding online connected to developments offline. The first trigger of heated exchange was the original report posted by a Burnaby resident who noticed a barge in the vicinity of the Kinder Morgan Westridge Marine Terminal and concluded that exploratory work for the pipeline expansion was being done by the company. The post contains a grainy photo:

Larry Mayers: Photo of what appears to be a drilling rig that was towed into position just off the Westridge loading dock last night.¹

This post sets off a cascade of comments with the original poster proposing a frame for understanding how the appearance of the rig represents a problem:

Larry Myers: This activity (on the water) must be preliminary work on the much larger bitumen loading dock they want to build. ... Act first and seek permission after the fact! Is this acceptable to the indigenous peoples of the Inlet and the tax payers of Burnaby, BC, and Canada?

It is interesting to note how this comment aims to bridge an environmental diagnostic frame with a social justice frame in the style of what Dorceta E. Taylor (2000) has labelled “the environmental justice paradigm” (p. 508). It suggests that there is an injustice done by corporate developers to both the “indigenous people of the Inlet” and the “tax payers of Burnaby, BC;” as both groups are exposed to the risks related to bitumen transportation through their communities. By this gesture, the poster seeks to establish equivalency between the meaning of the pipeline for both groups and to construe them as allies against a common adversary. In the course of several episodes (posts and their tails of comments and reactions), members of the group collaboratively engage in frame amplification by sorting out the evidence and drawing on the expert knowledge of some participants to reduce the ambiguity and uncertainty about the meaning of the barge and the significance of its presence in the bay. Group members perform ambient investigation and reporting, each contributing their own description, photo, or video of the barge. Once the diagnosis that the barge is doing prospective work related to the Kinder Morgan project is confirmed, the call for protest action is sounded:

Xenoa Skinteh: Kinder Morgan is drilling in the salish sea with no consent!

The group page swiftly becomes a war room in which oppositional activities are proposed, planned, coordinated, and subsequently reported.

Kelly-Patrick Moore: We need to start organizing. Can someone please email or call all the local media outlets and let them know they are drilling even though the province doesn't support it? Call Mayor Corrigan's office. We should be thinking about getting to the entrance of Westridge terminal

to have a presence [and] let people know what they're doing. People with signs and banners to spread the word. Thoughts?

Notably, a local mainstream media outlet is immediately targeted as a springboard for gaining wider publicity for the group's claims:

Freyja Feral: I've just contacted Jennifer Moreau at the Burnaby NOW.

Before the end of the day, the reports of group members are validated by a publication in the online edition of the local paper *Burnaby Now* (Moreau, 2016). A participant posts a link to the article declaring: "It is happening!"

Kinder Morgan drilling around Westridge dock Jennifer Moreau / *Burnaby Now* – See more at: <http://www.burnabynow.com/news/kinder-morgan-drilling-around-westridge-dock-1.2151567#sthash.c3BCRWPW.dpuf>

This early act of media-bridging is indicative of a key tactic for gaining broader resonance of the group's framing efforts. The appearance of the story in a local mass-media outlet gives their diagnosis of a problem public exposure. As more close-up video documentation of the rig taken by members from boats on the bay continue to appear on the page, supporters chime in from the sidelines:

AJ Klein: Grateful to those of you who are out there keep an eye on the inlet and the mountain. Thank you. ♥

In the following stages of its discursive action, the group examines the legal grounds on which the observed drilling is supposed to take place (or not), and identifies the institutional authorities responsible for issuing consent, granting a permit, and enforcing the law. Port Metro Vancouver, the local RCMP headquarters, the BC government, and the National Energy Board gradually emerge as those to be held to account and appropriately targeted by various protest actions such as phoning and making inquiries, filing complaints, and open letters demanding intervention to stop the drilling. Other voices call for offline direct action going beyond discourse and mediated demands to the institutions:

Dan Wallace shared Kelly-Patrick Moore's video to the group: Stop Kinder Morgan on Burnaby Mtn.: I need a boat, canoe, kayak or even a swimming board to make it to the barge!!! If no one else wants to shut these fuckers down then help someone that will walk the talk!!!!!!

Yvon Raoul: Dan, I'm on if we get the kayaks or whatever ... email me. It would be even better if we can get a whole bunch of canoes ... but I don't mind starting with two ...

Thus, a number of proponents of direct action find each other through the group's page and mutually reinforce their resolve. Several people in kayaks eventually approach the barge and report back their experience. The group mobilizes to provide support in both moral and material terms. On January 17 a shared post originating from the allied Burnaby Mountain Updates Facebook group announces that hereditary chiefs of the Tsleil-Waututh nation (on whose territory—unceded land—the work is being carried out) have intervened, and their "warriors" have seized the barge. The group rejoices and praises the effectiveness of "direct action."

Burnaby Mountain Updates: Kinder Morgan Drill Barge at Westridge Marine Terminal Shut Down today since noon! Direct Action gets the goods! Grassroots all the way.

Hank Drysdale: Beautiful.

Members eagerly mobilize to provide “bodies” on the shore of the Salish Sea in order to help maintain the blockade. Posts and comments focus on practical details: what, where, when, who, and by what means.

Mike Rensmaag: If you want to help with your body: North Cliffe road tomorrow morning and then around the fence, down to the beach to a shuttle to join them.

Stephen Friesen: What I think this means for us: is if the gov can politically get away without proper consent then they will try. It always falls back on us to put bodies in the way and *force* the political issue to be properly resolved.

Another hike in the discussion and offline action planning occurs in relation to posts concerning the public hearings held in Vancouver by the National Energy Board on January 19, 2016. This time, the trigger of the action is an offline protest event. Protesters have surrounded the building with signs and chants voicing their opposition to the Kinder Morgan expansion project. Several women have been arrested by police. This high drama reverberates in the conversations on the group page, where members hustle to articulate a collective position on the events and to come up with appropriate actions in support of the protest. In the wake of these events, the discussion calms down.

The framing laboratory

Diagnostic frames

As noted earlier, acts of framing are involved in every turn of the discursive performance described in the previous section. The next task is to highlight the specific types of framing processes that the Facebook group scene supports most effectively. Returning to the group’s self-created profile, it becomes clear that a particular solid frame is imposed over the general problem of pipelines. They pose “significant health and environmental risks to our communities, ecosystems, & wildlife while bringing very few benefits by way of jobs, revenue, or sustainability” (Stop Kinder Morgan on Burnaby Mtn). Therefore, pipeline projects call for active opposition by citizens: “Stop Kinder Morgan on Burnaby Mtn.” This stance is a good example of the New Environmental Paradigm that has served as a master frame for the environmental movement since the 1970s (Taylor, 2000). It emphasizes the importance of natural ecosystems and warns against their overexploitation and destruction by industry and market forces. This frame is effectively the main gateway into the group’s space and a powerful self-selection filter for participants. Consequently, it is unsurprising that the discussion of the Kinder Morgan pipeline project found in the examined segment of the group’s activity rarely returns to this environmental frame. It represents a foundational frame that is taken for granted. The active frame construction the group preoc-

copies itself with is happening at a different level. It works in the direction of 1) bridging between the environmental frame and the social justice frame moving in the direction of what has been termed the “Environmental Justice Paradigm” (Taylor, 2000, p. 508), and 2) the amplification of the diagnostic framing of the pipeline problem through concretization, thus bringing it closer to home and to the operations of specific political and administrative institutions.

The frames most laboriously devised by group members along the line of diagnostic concretization, concern the legality of the process, fair law-enforcement, and public consultation. The effect of this kind of framing is twofold. These frames place the pipeline problem within the context of concrete decision-making and policy processes, and at the same time bridge it with significant social justice frames. Framed in this way, the problem is more likely to resonate with constituency groups beyond the Burnaby Mountain resident community, such as Native peoples and their allies and other disadvantaged populations with grievances about the fairness of the legal system. The gravity of the problem is emphasized by bridging two or more injustice issues: environment *and* Native rights; environment *and* fair law enforcement, et cetera.

A tendency pointing in the direction opposite to concretization is also observed. Some diagnostic framing pulls the problem upward toward more abstract levels of critical political-economic conceptualization, such as corporate profiteering, political institutions’ collusion with corporations, the historical injustice to Native people perpetrated by Canada, participatory democracy, and de-growth. This expansion of diagnostic frames ties the problems of pipeline regulation to more general ideologies and values, thus attempting to raise their status as worthy causes to fight for.

Andrew Smith: A radical departure from economic orthodoxy also means dropping the requirement of growth from the mantra and replacing it with economic de-growth and a guaranteed annual income.

Shannon Hecker, quoting the news release of hereditary chiefs: “These lands are unceded, these lands are Indigenous. We are putting an end to genocide, ecocide, capitalism, and the colonial process that continues to this day.”

Prognosis, motivation, and agency

As the very name of this Facebook group demonstrates, the fundamental prognostic frame, or the solution to the problem posed by the expansion of the oil pipeline by Kinder Morgan in the bay waters by Burnaby Mountain is to decisively “stop” these activities. The concretization of the problem described in the previous section generates a series of more concrete intermediate solutions: the barge drilling by the Westridge Terminal should be sent home; the permit obtained (or not) by Kinder Morgan for this operation should be cancelled; the “non-public” hearings held by the National Energy Board should be opened for wider participation, et cetera. These solutions emerge in the course of the group’s interaction. They are related to immediate unfolding events, and thus tied to motivational vocabularies such as urgency, responsibility, opportunity, and, importantly, agency:

Stephen Friesen: In any case the companies taking advantage of bad gov behaviour are the correct immediate targets of action. Like Mr Wallace keeps repeating, the drilling work must be stopped NOW.

Shirley Samples: If not now? Then when? If not us, then who? It is time. When the most vulnerable are at risk, we are all at risk. We must speak for those that have no voice.

Activational frames

Without question, activational framing constitutes the bulk of the content generated by the group. Activational framing refers to the discursive process that produces the particular decisions and instructions regarding what group members should actually do both as individuals and as a collective. The signifying work at the level of diagnostic and prognostic framing led to the concretization and operationalization of the pipeline problem and the working out of specific actionable solutions related to ongoing events. Activational framing pushes this work one step further toward the planning and coordination of specific steps to be taken both online (“share, share, share,” email), through other media, such as phone and news outlets, and in the body, through rallies and direct action:

Hanna Daber: ... call the RCMP, call the Port, call the drilling contractor, keep those phone lines ringing, just to be a pain in the ass! whoever answers the phone will go complain to their ‘superiors.’

Mike Rensmaag: See [the map] below if you want to help provide an additional body tomorrow at Westridge Terminal. Of course, support on the water with boats, food, and/or supplies would be welcomed.

Activational framing is also where some argument and contestation occurs between the proponents of two distinct approaches—the supporters of “direct action” that would forcefully bring about the desired effect, such as stopping the barge from drilling or entering the hearings hall, and the “reformers,” who emphasize the pressure to be exerted on politicians, administrators, and public opinion through institutional channels open to the public: emails, phone calls, letters, petitions, publications, et cetera. Important discursive work is done by members who intervene in this debate to assign value to diverse tactics, reconcile the fractions, and encourage the pursuit of both types of action.

An interesting pendulum movement between individual and collective agency that consolidates the “I” of the individual actors into the “we” of the group, can be noticed in posts and comments performing activational framing. It is the “we” that is called upon to phone, rally, or occupy to demonstrate collective presence and will. At the same time, these recommendations are broken down into concrete and manageable acts that individuals could take—from phoning specified numbers and asking scripted questions, to coming out with canoes on the bay. Activational frames are further reinforced by the reports of members who, alone or together, testify that these acts are possible, and are indeed happening. It is the specific strength of the social media platform to package these meanings and activities together across time and

space so that the individual act is assigned significance within the context of the collective action and maintains its connection to collective identity and meaning.

Dan Wallace: FLASH EMERGENCY! SHARE SHARE SHARE Burnaby RCMP : 604-294-7922 ref : File#2016 - 2109 Please call the RCMP and demand a stop work order against Kinder Morgan drilling. There is no consent given FROM SALISH PEOPLE and this includes preliminary work. here is the number. Burnaby RCMP : 604-294-7922 ref : File#2016 - 2109

John Reid: I just called the Burnaby rcmp as well. ... I asked for a call back. I encourage others to call too, the more calls they get the more likely km will get a cease and desist order. Have the file # ready. 2016-2109. Cheers

Shannon Hecker: BODIES NEEDED ON THE GROUND & WATER! If anyone is headed there NOW I'm located by Skeena & Hastings hoping for a ride share!

Conclusion

The processes analyzed above illustrate some of the key innovations that the creative use of a Facebook group page by active citizens introduces into collective action framing. Dramaturgical analysis allows us to see the group page as a scene on which discursive action dynamically unfolds. Different types of actors interact on that scene and play complementing parts in the construction of collective action frames. The peaks in their discursive activities often directly relate to embodied action undertaken by participants offline. Importantly, the group page is not an isolated scene, but represents a hub in a broader, symbolically productive network consisting of other similar groups as well as alternative media of different makeup: organizational and news websites, blogs, etc. Concepts and ideas, emotion, and motivation flow across this ecosystem and allow collective action frames to be constructed at various levels of involvement, unity, and solidarity.

The frame analysis conducted here using classical concepts of social movements theory leads to the conclusion that the construction of collective action frames can be usefully captured in a model that we propose to label “the collective action pentad.” It is reminiscent of Kenneth Burke’s (1945) “dramatism pentad,” but instead of serving as a tool to discover the motives behind an individual’s action, it helps the analyst determine what symbolic constructs set a collective into motion. The collective action pentad integrates the elements of collective action frames proposed by Snow and Benford (2000) on the one hand and Gamson (1992) on the other. It poses the questions: 1) What is the problem or injustice (diagnosis)? 2) What could be its solution (prognosis)? 3) Who is the “we” that is supposed to act (identity)? 4) Why is this collective able and bound to act (motivation and agency)? and 5) By what means, or what concrete action should be taken (activation)?

We showed that the Facebook group page constitutes a laboratory in which the answers of all these questions are worked out in a participatory fashion by testing multiple propositions against the response of a validating audience. In the case we studied, the discursive processes unfolding on the group page helped the amplification and

expansion of the originally set master frame by amalgamating the voices of differently positioned contributors and respondents. By being open to inputs from a diverse networked public, they led to the bridging of the original frame with elements concerning social injustice, Indigenous rights, and political-economic critique. Most notably, the dialogical exchanges on the page allowed the contours of a collective “we” to emerge through ongoing mutual recognition, confirmation, and feedback. Through what we called activational framing, that collective amassed a repertory of feasible deeds that gave its members a clear program for action. Finally, the build-up of collective reasoning, “hot cognition,” motivation, and solidarity led to participants’ undertaking of embodied action that spilled into public spaces of wider visibility, such as contested physical sites and news media.

As much as the foundational diagnostic and prognostic frame laid out in the group’s definition proved to be mutable, there were also clear limitations of its flexibility. Defining oil pipelines as a grave social problem and calling for the termination of all pipeline construction and expansion projects limits the possibility for differently positioned citizens to participate in the discursive process. Working-class people and entrepreneurs earning their living in the oil industry, for example, are more likely to fall in the adversary category than appear as counterparts to be taken seriously. In any case, no such voices and positions ever appeared in the examined segment. Inarguably, the drawing of a hard ideological line as a threshold for participation sanitizes the group’s discussion, channels its energy into the effective construction of a collective identity and motivational and activational framing. At the same time, it encloses the group into a filter bubble that feeds on mutual reinforcement. In-group resonance of the frames discursively elaborated in this way could make the search for a wider public resonance more difficult.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to acknowledge that this research was made possible thanks to an Insight Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada awarded to the project “Social Media and Civic Culture: Investigating Emerging Practices of Democratic Participation in Canada.”

Note

1. The original spelling and grammar of the quoted text is preserved.

Websites

350, <https://350.org/>
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), <http://www.cbc.ca/>
Common Sense Canadian, <http://commonsensecanadian.ca/>
CTV News, <http://www.ctvnews.ca/>
Georgia Straight, <https://www.straight.com/>
Inside Climate News, <https://insideclimatenews.org/>
Maclean's, <http://www.macleans.ca/>
National Post, <http://nationalpost.com/>
Vancouver Media Co-op, <http://vancouver.mediacoop.ca/>
Vancouver Observer, <https://www.vancouverobserver.com/>
Vancouver Sun, <http://vancouver.sun.com/>

References

- Atton, Chris. (2001). *Alternative media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Bailey, Olga G., Cammaerts, Bart, & Carpentier, Nico (2007). *Understanding alternative media*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Benford, Robert D., & Snow, David A. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 611–639.
- Best, Joel (2013). *Social problems*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Burke, Kenneth. (1969). *A grammar of motives*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- de Vreese, Claes H. (2005). News framing: Theory and typology. *Information Design Journal + Document Design*, 13(1), 52–62.
- Forde, Susan. (2011). *Challenging the news: The journalism of alternative and community media*. London, UK: Palgrave.
- Fuchs, Christian. (2010). Alternative media as critical media. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 13(2), 173–192.
- Gamson, William A. (1992). *Talking politics*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Gamson, William A. (1995). Hiroshima, the holocaust, and the politics of exclusion: 1994 presidential address. *American Sociological Review*, 60(1), 1–20.
- Hall, Stuart. (1982). The rediscovery of ideology: Return to the repressed in media studies. In M. Gurevitch, T. Bennett, J. Curon, & J. Woolacott (Eds.), *Culture, society and the media* (pp. 56–90). London, UK: Methuen.
- Hall, Stuart. (2000). Who needs “identity”? In P. du Gay, J. Evans, & P. Redman (Eds.), *Identity: A reader* (pp. 15–30). London, UK: Sage Publications Inc.
- Hare, A. Paul, & Blumberg, Herbert H. (1988). *Dramaturgical analysis of social interaction*. New York, NY: Praeger Publishers.
- Lindekilde, Lasse. (2014). Discourse and frame analysis: In-depth analysis of qualitative data in social movement research. In D. della Porta (Ed.), *Methodological practices in social movement research* (pp. 195–227). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Melucci, Alberto. (1989). *Nomads of the present: Social movements and individual needs in contemporary society*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Melucci, Alberto. (1996). *Challenging codes: Collective action in the information age*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Moreau, Jennifer. (2016, January 14). Kinder Morgan drilling around Westridge dock. *Burnaby Now*. URL: <http://www.burnabynow.com/news/kinder-morgan-drilling-around-westridge-dock-1.2151567> [June 30, 2017].
- Petkov, Petromil, Kobler, Felix, Foth, Marcus, & Krcmar, Helmut. (2011). Motivating domestic energy conservation through comparative, community-based feedback in mobile and social media. In 5th *International Conference on Communities & Technologies (C&T, 2011)*. June 29–July 2, 2011, Brisbane, Australia.
- Porter, Amanda. J. & Hellsten, Lina. (2014). Investigating participatory dynamics through social media using a multideterminant “frame” approach: The case of climategate on YouTube. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 19, 1024–1041.
- Rieder, Bernhard. (2013). *Studying Facebook via data extraction: The Netvizz application*. Proceedings of the 5th Annual ACM Web Science Conference. Paris, France.
- Rogers, Richard. (2013). *Digital methods*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Scheufele, Dietram A. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of Communication*, 49(1), 103–122.
- Snow, David A. (2004). Framing processes, ideology, and discursive fields. In D.A. Snow, S.A. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 380–412). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Snow, David A., & Benford, Robert D. (1988). Ideology, frame resonance, and participant mobilization. In B. Klandermans, H. Kriesi, & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *International social movement research* (pp. 197–217). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

- Stop Kinder Morgan on Burnaby Mntn. Groups. [Facebook group page]. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/558409607615700/> [October 28, 2017].
- Szeman, Imre. (2007). System failure: Oil, futurity and the anticipation of disaster. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 106(4), 805–823.
- Szeman, Imre, Beer, Ruth, Cariou, Warren, Simpson, Mark, & Wilson, Sheena. (2016). *On the energy humanities: Contributions from the humanities, social sciences, and arts to understanding energy transition and energy impasse* [Final report]. URL: <http://www.ideas-idees.ca/sites/default/files/sites/default/uploads/general/2016/2016-sshrc-ksg-szeman.pdf> [June 1, 2017].
- Taylor, Dorceta E. (2000). The rise of the environmental justice paradigm. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 43(4), 508–580.

