



GOING GREEN?

**historicizing enviro-labor relations
in the US energy transition**

CARRIE HAMILTON

[a methodological exploration]

congressional speeches (1873-2024)

[18.3 million]

**environmental
speeches**

[144k]

**labor
speeches**

[561k]

"conservationist"
"environmentalist"
"air pollution"
"env't conservation"
"natural resource"
etc.

"labor movement"
"organized labor"
"labor union"
"workers"
"jobs"
etc.

enviro OR labor speeches (1873-2024)

[674k]

enviro AND labor speeches (1873-2024)

[31k]

"Mr. Speaker, **education is both a social and economic goal** for this country. We will not be able to solve the complex problems of the 20th and 21st centuries without education. Economic studies have demonstrated the importance of education for **increased productivity**. Of the three traditional factors of **economic growth--capital, labor, and land--labor has become the most important**. For the most part, our economy has enough land and capital but it needs the **skilled workers and trained managers** that can make the **modern industrial state perform efficiently**. Unfortunately, this country only gradually recognizes the importance of **education for all...**"

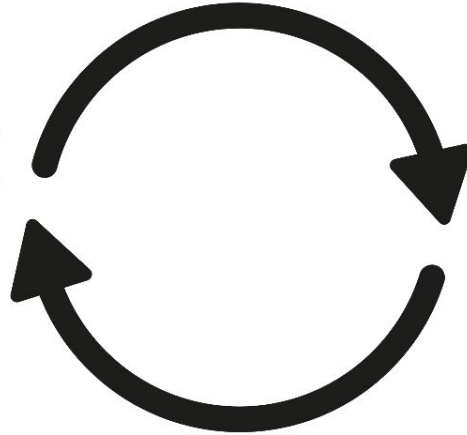
year	chamber	speaker	gender	state	party	environment	labor
1968	house	hathaway	M	maine	democrat	NA	yes
2011	senate	thune	M	south dakota	republican	yes	yes

"Madam President, I think there are a few things that many people across the country, and, hopefully, in the Congress, agree upon. One is that we need to **focus like a laser on creating jobs**. That is something I think there is universal agreement on here. I also think there is universal agreement that we ought to become **more energy independent as a nation**. We need to look for ways in which our country can lessen that **dangerous dependence we have on foreign sources of energy**...That is why it is such a mystery as to why the **Keystone XL Pipeline** project is running into such resistance from the administration...I want to read a few things for you that have been said by some of the folks across this country who think this is a good idea. **Many represent working people: the labor unions...**"

"CRITICAL SEARCH" (Guldi 2023)

**COMPUTATIONAL
TEXT ANALYSIS**

**CLOSE READING;
CRITICAL
INTERPRETATION**



20-year



10-year



5-year



2-year



1-year



6-month

PART I: CONFIRMING THE METHOD

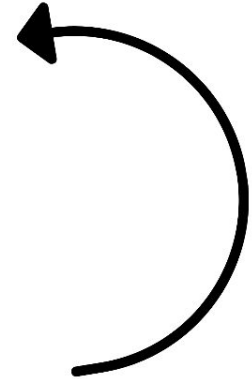
Do the high-level results broadly align with existing scholarly accounts of environmental/labor history?

computational approach:

tf-ipf, co-occurrences, &
DTM at 5-yr intervals

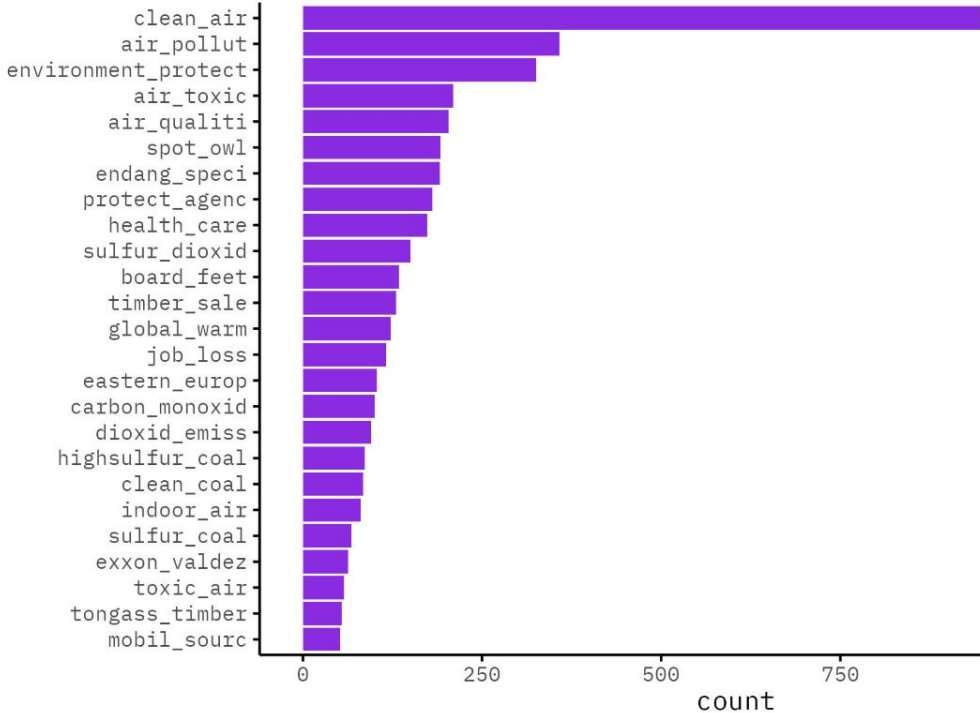
critical approach:

keyword selection;
speech subsetting;
technical fine-tuning;
initial interpretation

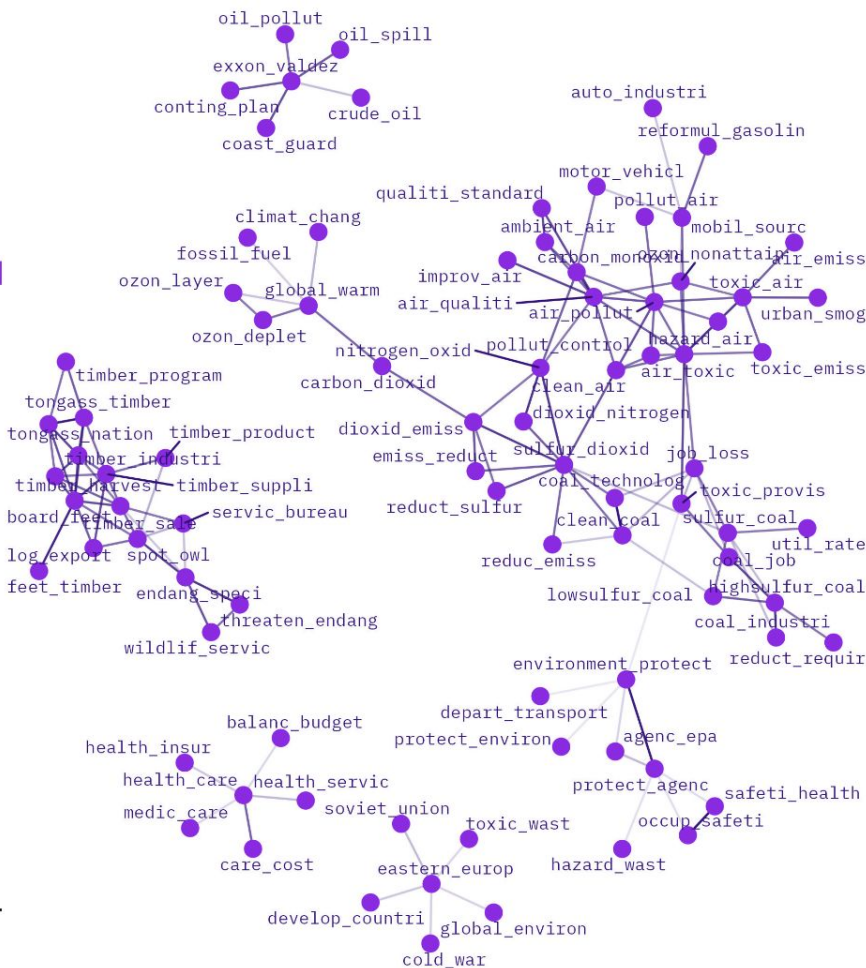


1989-1990:

top 25 most distinctive bigrams



TF-IPF



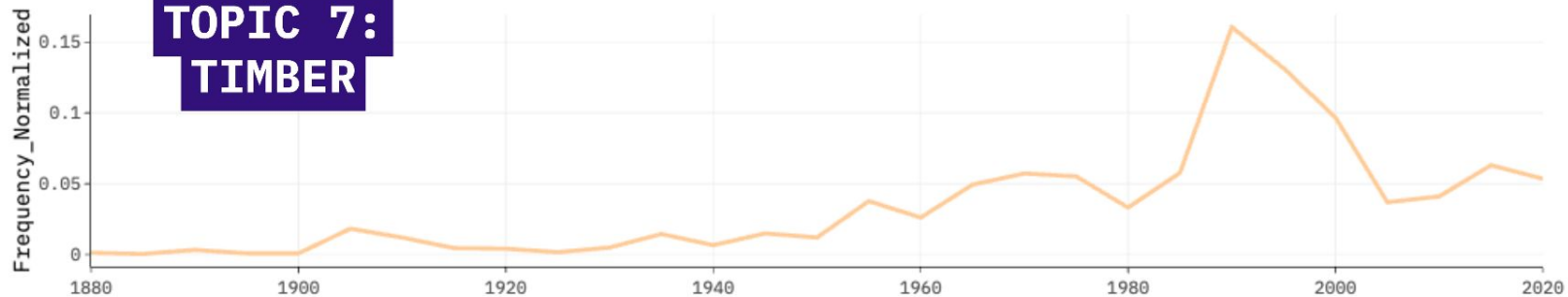
CO-OCCURRENCE NETWORK

TOPIC		YEAR
4 (AIR)		1989

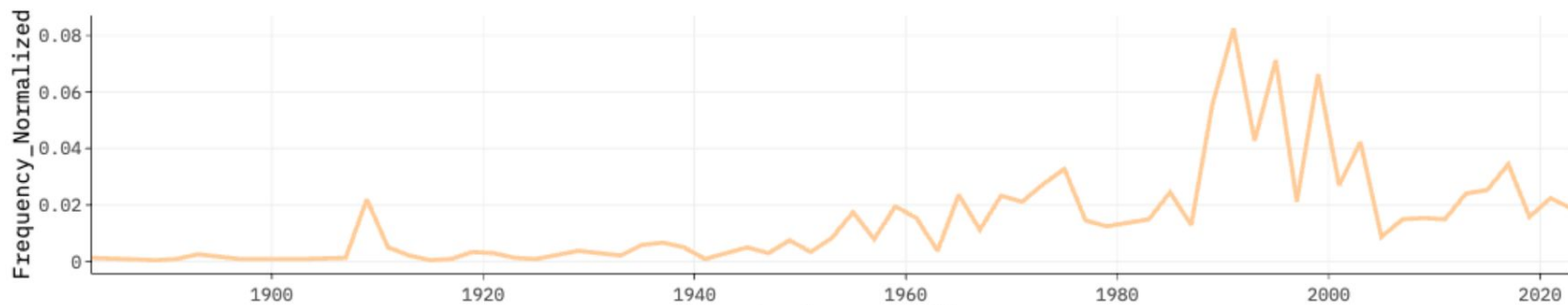
...whether they represent **industry or environmentalists** or anyone else I extend an invitation to work with us to develop such legislation. I am anxious to work with any and all who are committed to the development of such legislation. No doubt there will be some on both sides who will choose to continue to carry on **the old debate of clean air versus economic growth**. To them I say that there is now a third side to this debate. No longer will congress be limited to **choosing between clean air or jobs, clean air or growth, clean air or competitiveness**. As the 101st congress considers clean air legislation, we now have the ability **to choose both clean air and jobs, clean air and growth, clean air and competitiveness...**

TOPIC 7: TIMBER

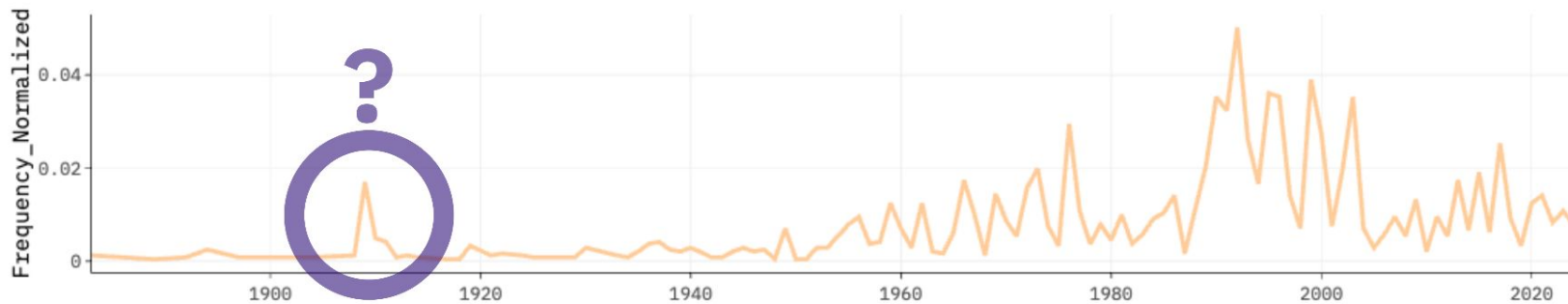
5-yr topics over time



2-yr topics over time



1-yr topics over time



TOPIC 7:
 LUMBER

"The inevitable result under present conditions, unless we speedily change our course, will be the **complete exhaustion of our forests**. The **restless energy** and **constructive genius** of the **Anglo-Saxon** has worked a **great transformation** in this country in the last century...The result of that energy and of that genius stands the marvel of all nations. His aggressiveness, however, is not only a potential **constructive force** but a **destructive one** as well. **With his ax he hews** a way through the forest and **with the product builds** the homes, the schoolhouses, the factories, and temples of his God, but at the same time in his wake he is leaving a **desolate wilderness** of **tangled underbrush** and **blackening stumps**. He is a **mighty builder in times of peace** and a **mighty destroyer in times of war**..."

PERIOD	FREQ	TOPIC REPRESENTATION
1909-10	53	lumber, forest, timber, tariff, duty, wood, destruction, trees, price, conservation, free, labor, paper, forest service
1935-36	14	forest, trees, fires, trails, forest fires, tree, soil, lookout, telephone, miles, truck, towers
1955-56	42	forest, forestry, foresters, item, state private, appropriation, forest service, facilities, timber, cooperation, national forests, land, small, pinchot
1975-76	79	timber, forest, national forests, national, wood, national forest, products, management, forest service, forestry, sustained yield, forest management, court, wood products
1993-94	103	timber, forest, management, forest service, northwest, timber industry, service, forest management, national forests, jobs, harvesting, pacific, industry, communities
2021-22	54	forest, wildfire, fires, wildfires, restoration, trees, forest management, management, smoke, drought, acres, thinning, catastrophic, forest service

TOPIC 7:
LUMBER

“...in the **protection of the industries and labor** of the country it sometimes becomes necessary in the first instance to look to the very foundation by **protecting the resource from exhaustion**...It therefore follows that the full statement of the Republican doctrine of protection **extends to resources as well as industries and labor**, and in the logical order of their importance **resources stand first because the industries and labor are dependent upon them**. Take, for example, the **timber supply**, which we all realize is so **rapidly disappearing in this country**...have we become so intoxicated by the **successes and bounties of the past** as to imagine that we can successfully **overturn the laws of nature and of nature’s God**? Are we laboring under the hallucination that **as Cadmus sowed dragons teeth in the ground** and produced an armed body of men in a night, we, the American people, can **sow seeds and raise a forest in a night**?”

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PART II: DIGGING INTO THE METHOD

What can this approach tell us beyond existing scholarly accounts?

possibilities

PART I: CONFIRMING THE METHOD

Do the high-level results broadly align with existing scholarly accounts of environmental/labor history?

computational approach:

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DTM at 5-yr intervals

critical approach:

keyword selection;
speech subsetting;
technical fine-tuning;
initial interpretation

PART II: DIGGING INTO THE METHOD

What can this approach tell us beyond existing scholarly accounts?

computational approach:

tf-ipf, co-occurrences, &
DTM at 6-month intervals

critical approach:

close read of speeches;
interpretation of 5-yr vs. 6-month periods

