



IVEY

NO SMOKE WITHOUT FIRE – AND VICE VERSA

Keystone XL and the Climate
debate

Julian Barg

When reading the news...

- 2022/2023 Heatwave in China
- 2022/2023 Flooding in Pakistan
- 2022/2023 Forest fires in Canada
- 2023 Maui fires

New Scientist

Environment

Heatwave in China is the most severe ever recorded in the world

A long spell of extreme hot and dry weather is affecting energy, water supplies and food production across China

By Michael Le Page

23 August 2022

CNN

Four million children in Pakistan have no safe water, a year after deadly floods

By Rhea Mogul and Michelle Toh, CNN

Updated 5:19 AM EDT, Fri August 25, 2023

The Washington Post

WEATHER

Canada's wildfires have doubled previous records and keep raging

The area burned and the amount of carbon pollution are about twice previous records, and the fire season has weeks remaining

By Ian Livingston

Updated August 4, 2023 at 1:52 p.m. EDT | Published August 4, 2023 at 1:24 p.m. EDT

BBC

Hawaii fire: Maps and before and after images reveal Maui devastation

14 August

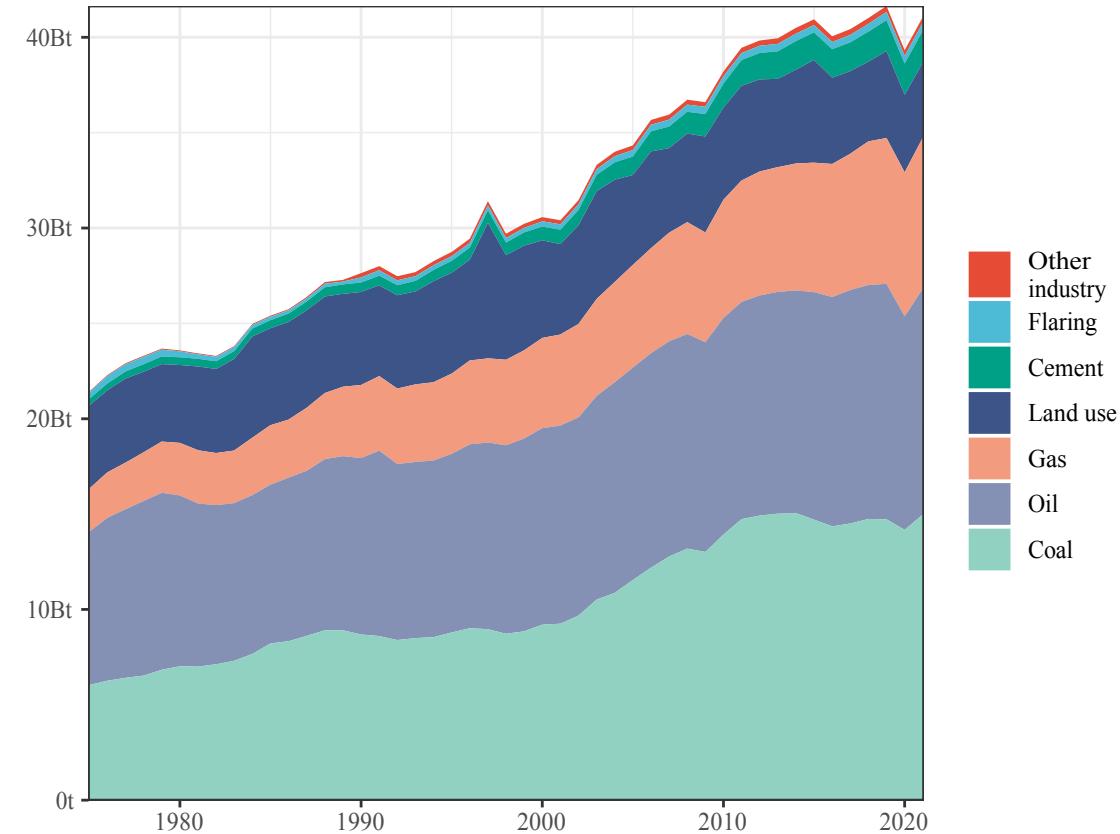
Hawaii wildfires 2023

When reading the news...

- 2022/2023 Heatwave in China
- 2022/2023 Flooding in Pakistan
- 2022/2023 Forest fires in Canada
- 2023 Maui fires
- ➔ I always come back to this: CO₂ accounts for ~75% of global warming, other gases (Methane, Nitrous Oxide) for 25%.

Global Carbon Dioxide Emissions by sources

In metric tonnes



Takeaway: Unexpected way of analyzing (climate) discourse

- Biggest hurdle: Connecting macro trends to *relevant* organizational practice in the field.
 - Example business sustainability: Successful discourse, visible practice changes, but overall emissions have not slowed.
- Sometimes, the action is where the respective discourse is *not* (decoupling within discourse). Discourse is organizational outcome *and* cause of change.
- That does not mean that the overarching discourse is irrelevant...
- I will give you today:
 - Specific example
 - Tools to work on it
 - Way of thinking about it



Introduction: *Why Keystone XL?*

What is the Keystone XL pipeline?

- Transporting oil sands almost 2,000 miles (about 3,000 km) from Alberta to refineries and export terminals at Gulf of Mexico.
- Follow-up on successful Keystone I project to increase exports.
- USD 7 Billion Cost estimate.
- Cross-border pipeline: Requires a “Presidential Permit”, issued by State Department + White House.

THE KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE



SOURCE: TRANSCANADA PIPELINES LTD.; USGS

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Keystone XL controversy

- Over ten years, three presidents, one failed presidential candidate
- What happened between 2010 and 2015?

The image displays four separate browser windows showing news articles from different media outlets. Each window has a title, author information, and a small thumbnail image.

- Top Left (Maclean's):** "Hillary Clinton: 'inclined to' okay Keystone XL pipeline". Author: Luca Ch. Savage. Date: October 20, 2010. Description: A headline from Maclean's magazine discussing Hillary Clinton's stance on the pipeline.
- Top Right (CNN Politics):** "Obama rejects Keystone XL pipeline". Authors: Elise Labott and Dan Berman. Date: November 6, 2015. Description: A headline from CNN Politics reporting on President Obama's decision to reject the pipeline.
- Bottom Left (CNN Politics):** "Trump administration approves Keystone XL pipeline". Authors: Elise Labott and Jeremy Diamond. Date: March 24, 2017. Description: A headline from CNN Politics reporting on President Trump's approval of the pipeline.
- Bottom Right (CNBC):** "Keystone pipeline officially canceled after Biden revokes key permit". Date: June 9, 2021. Description: A headline from CNBC reporting on President Biden canceling the pipeline project.

Keystone XL controversy

- Over ten years, three presidents, one failed presidential candidate.
- What happened between 2010 and 2015?
- Why wasn't this pipeline just approved?

Pipeline	Proposed	Capacity	Status	Border crossing	Presidential Permit
Trans Mountain	1940s	300k bbl/d*	Completed 1952	No	(Canadian)
Enbridge Line 3	1950s	380k bbl/d*	Completed 1968	Yes	Not required
Express-Platte	1990s	800k bbl/d*	Completed 2002	Yes	Not required
Alberta Clipper	2006	450k bbl/d*	Completed 2010	Yes	Granted
Keystone I	2006	600k bbl/d*	Completed 2011/2012	Yes	Granted
Keystone XL	2008	800k bbl/d*	Rejected 2014/2021	Yes	Rejected
Northern Gateway	2010	525 bbl/d*	Rejected 2015/2016	No	(Canadian)
Clipper Expansion	2013	800k bbl/d*	Approved 2017	Yes	Granted
Trans Mountain Expansion	2013	600k bbl/d*	Under construction	No	(Canadian)
Line 3 Replacement	2014	760k bbl/d*	Completed 2021	Yes	Not required

Diverse anti-Keystone XL coalition

Climate scientists

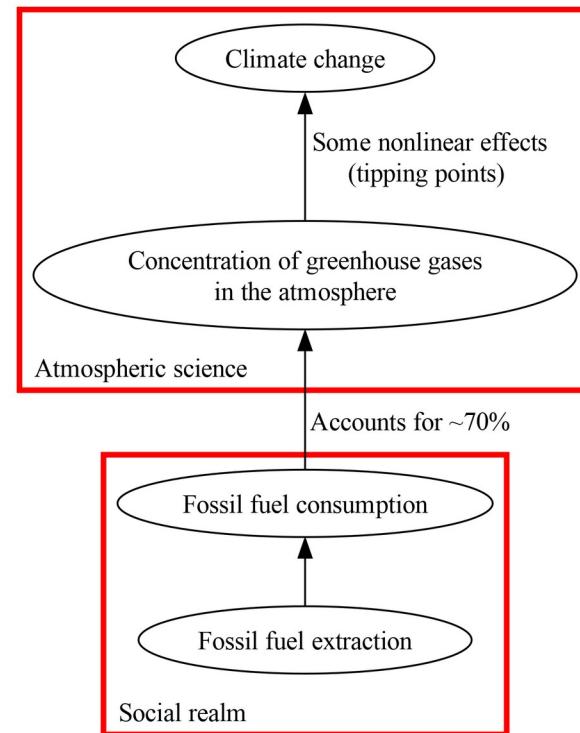


Grassroots activists



The social turn of climate science

- There is a specific, globally-agreed climate goal (1.5/2°C).
- Climate change is a function of greenhouse gas in the atmosphere.
- Whether goal is met depends on staying within “carbon budget” (Welsby et al., 2021), which would require cutting down on fossil fuel consumption (almost like an accounting problem).
- → International community cannot meet goal if certain “unextractable” (Welsby et al., 2021) sources of fossil fuel are extracted and consumed.



Literature:

(Re-)Turn to cross-level analysis of institutions

An old problem – Weber's *Verstehen*

Cross-level sociology of Max Weber (1864–1920)

- In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber, 1930)
 - Research question*: Why did Reformed Christians (in the United States) pioneer capitalism?
 - Background: Weber's 3-months "field trip" through the US from New England to Southern States.
 - 1) 16th century reformation yielded new denominations.
 - 2) Individuals join new denominations, adopt ascetic new lifestyle – the archetype being Dutch Calvinists.
 - 3) Ascetic lifestyle initially aligns with cheap, mass-produced goods; long, hard work leads to saving beyond subsistence, later consumerism sanctioned as "calling."
 - 4) Related – emergence of efficient bureaucracy gives rise to iron cage.
 - → Weber presents the *spirit of capitalism* through grounded understanding of actors.
- In *Economy and Society* (Weber, 1968) – national economy grounded in family/individual.
- In *Methodology of Social Sciences* (Weber, 1949) – describes grounded theorizing.
- (This is not a reading recommendation for Weber. Bourdieu, 1977 did it better.)

Verstehen – exemplary quotes

Grounding institutions

Through social-psychological research, with the knowledge of individual institutions as a point of departure, we will learn increasingly how to understand institutions in a psychological way. We will not however deduce the institutions from psychological laws or explain them by elementary psychological phenomena. (Weber, 1949: 89)

→ Research needs grounding to be accurate, but there is more to institutions than the individual experience.

⚠ Researchers should study institutions on the ground, but identify them from afar.

Questioning institutions

[T]he concepts are not ends but are means to the end of understanding phenomena which are significant from concrete individual viewpoints ...

[T]he construction of sharp and unambiguous concepts relevant to the concrete individual viewpoint which directs our interest at any given time, affords the possibility of clearly realizing the limits of their validity. (Weber, 1949: 106f)

→ Experience of individuals can invalidate macro-level constructs.

Examples from the literature

Phenomenon

- 1) DiBenigno (2018)
 - Researcher is embedded with mental health practitioners serving US army on US soil
 - → Close relations between mental health practitioners and army units necessary for good treatment outcomes.
- 2) Howard-Grenville et al. (2017) – “If Chemists Don’t Do It, Who Is Going To?”
 - Researchers interview green chemistry practitioners, read their work.
 - → In practice, pioneers in green chemistry use a pluralistic, dynamic approach to recruit new followers.

Context

- 1) de Rond & Lok (2016) – Some Things can never be unseen.
 - Researcher is embedded with military medics based in Afghanistan
 - → Futility of the conflict, inability to help locals negatively affect mental health.
- 2) Nelson et al. (2014) – Do innovation measures actually measure innovation?
 - Mixed methods, sample of ~5,000 green chemistry articles
 - → Green chemistry is prone to greenwashing; 30% of total papers, 50% of research by firms misuses the label.

Examples from the literature

More examples

- 3) Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring* changes the public's view of the pesticide DDT (Maguire & Hardy, 2009) – but it's a struggle because she has to overcome the sexist society of the 1960s (Smith, 2001).
- 4) Wright et al. (2012) vs. Augustine (2021) – professionalization of business sustainability gives rise to “career logics” which trumps personal convictions.
- 5) Microfinance is a self-organized remedy for poverty (Dorado, 2013) – but it cannot overcome gender inequality (Zhao & Wry, 2016).

Takeaway – proposed approach

- Grounded analysis, to check whether concepts align with lived reality “at the coalface” (Barley, 2008).
 - Without grounding, we risk taking organizational myths at face value, (Bechky, 2011).
- Then, consider broader context and trends.
- Not an issue of qualitative or quantitative methods, but of theoretical sampling, observing macro-level concepts through lived experience, and checking against macro-level processes.
- Which is what I will do next.

Terminology – what is the action of interest, what actors?

Climate action

- Activism/direct action related to climate change, usually as nonviolent resistance.
- In the news: Public protests and civil disobedience targeting car traffic, airports, luxury yachts.
- Anti-extractivism movement: Direct action against extraction companies, fossil fuel infrastructure (Sovacool & Dunlap, 2022).
 - Also referred to as “climatage” (climate + sabotage), “blockadia” (block + Arcadia).
 - Active in UK, Germany, Italy, Australia, United States etc., often targeting coal mines.
 - Range from protests, court fights, to blocking roads or equipment, occasionally destruction of property.

Changing the climate

- Focusing on the human action at the root of a changing climate, i.e., not nebulous unfolding process, but outcome of specific human action or organizational efforts that render possible the consumption of fossil fuel.
- Could be referred to extractivism (Brock & Dunlap, 2018).
- New business practitioners – e.g., ESG investing, efficient technologies – no impact unless carbon left in the ground.
- In the literature: shift or expansion of focus from the demand side to the supply side of carbon (Green & Denniss, 2018; Nasiritousi, 2017).

Research Setting:
Discourse about the “generational” climate victory

Keystone XL defeat celebrated as “generational” victory

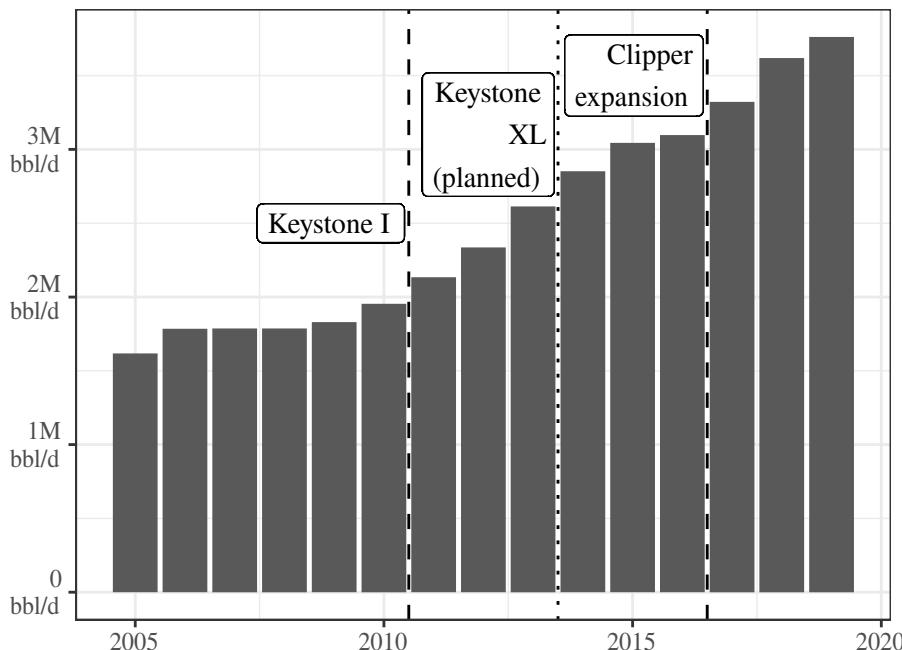
Bill McKibben on project’s significance, 2011

Um, we won. You won ... A done deal has come spectacularly undone ... There have been few even partial victories about global warming in recent years so that makes this an important day ... The President deserves thanks for making this call – it's not easy in the face of the fossil fuel industry and its endless reserves of cash. The deepest thanks, however, go to you: to indigenous peoples ... to the scientists ... to the environmental groups ... to the campuses ... to the faith leaders ... to the labor leaders ... to the Occupy movement ... and most of all to the people in every state and province who built the movement that made this decision inevitable.



Oil sands pipeline starter

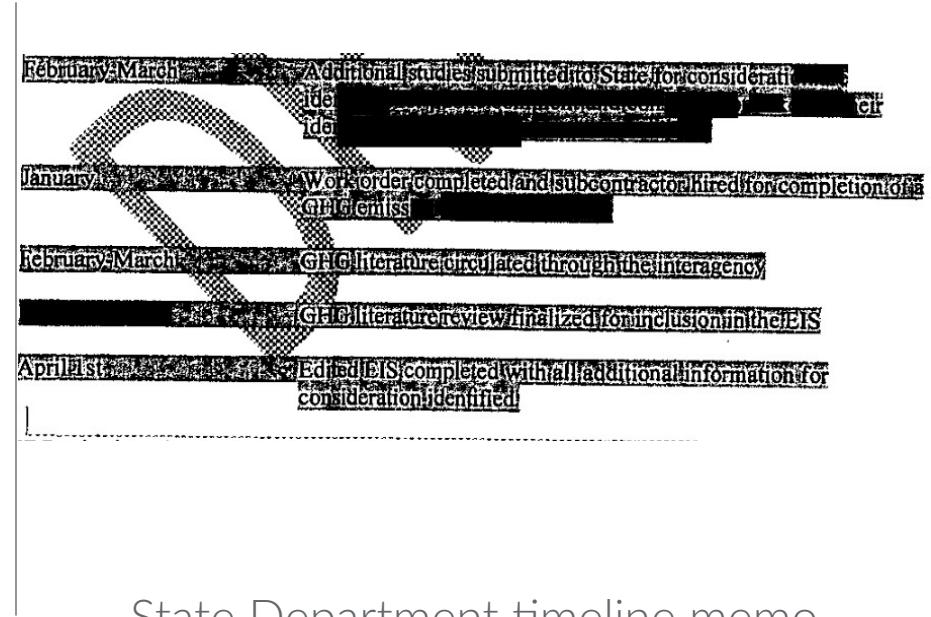
Canadian crude oil exports
In barrels per day (1bbl ≈ 159l)



- Mixture of highly viscous heavy crude and sand, requires extensive processing.
- Canadian crude exports account for 7% of world market, oil sands account for 2/3 of Canadian production.
- Higher emissions: Between 15–40% higher emissions than conventional crude oil (Swart & Weaver, 2012).
- Complicates clean-up. For instance, over \$1.2 B cleanup after Kalamazoo River oil spill.
- Landlocked in Alberta and bottlenecked (see image on left).
- Keystone XL completion in late 2013 would have mitigated 2015/2016 bottleneck.

“Done deal” permit application

- Oct. 2010:
 - Then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reveals State Department is “inclined” to approve Keystone XL.
- Late 2010/early 2011:
 - State Department drafts timeline for Keystone XL assessment climate change coverage (see right), targets year end permit decision.
 - Keystone XL aggressively acquires rights of way along pipeline route, threatening landowners with the use of eminent domain.
- Oct. 2011:
 - 24 out of 34 National Journal energy policy expert panel members belief that Keystone XL will be approved by end of year.



State Department timeline memo

11th hour change of trajectory

- What literature would call “earliest moments of change” (Smets et al., 2012), when project is first questioned.
- In 2010, national environmental organizations begin building capacity, networks along Midwest pipeline route.
- Outcry of affected landowners and farmers culminates in special session of the Nebraska Legislature in November, 2011 to address concerns including pipeline route over the Midwest’s most important aquifer, and TransCanada’s “bullying” of landowners through eminent domain.
- Perceived by national environmental organizations as the last chance to avert imminent approval.
- Special session results in decision to find new route.
- Subsequently, State Department announces two-year delay to evaluate new routes.

Decoupling within discourse

- Focus has moved from national level to specific step/cog in the process.
- Activists and scientists are meeting fossil fuel company on the “battlefield,” engaging with relevant local concerns, joining with local activists on the ground.
- ! The topic of climate change suddenly is *completely* absent from the conversation.



Decoupling within discourse – before and after

- 1) Appeal by John Hansen, president of Nebraska Farmers Union:
 - “At a time when CO₂ levels are at all-time recorded highs and climate change appears to be worsening, it does not make sense to expand this particularly environmentally destructive source of fossil fuel energy.”
- 2) Analysis by Lara Skinner, Cornell University:
 - “Four ways Keystone XL could be a job killer ... In this section, we show four ways that jobs can be destroyed or prevented by KXL — higher petroleum prices, environmental damage such as spills, the impact of emissions on health and climate instability, and the chilling effect KXL approval could have on the emerging green economy.”

- 1) Paltering (Rogers et al., 2017) by John Hansen:
 - SENATOR C.: Is Farmers Union against further development of fossil fuels?
 - JOHN HANSEN: Nope.
- 2) Single passing remark by Lara Skinner:
 - “Cornell’s analysis of Keystone XL has found that TransCanada’s numbers are unsubstantiated and that the project will produce far fewer jobs than they claim They’ve also failed to consider the negative employment and economic implications that result from inland spills, spills into freshwater supplies like the Ogallala aquifer and increases in greenhouse gases and other pollutants that incur huge human health and economic costs and job loss. To finish ...”

Nebraska Legislature as research setting

Rules

- Introduction of laws accompanied by public hearings.
- Any person can join public hearings.
- Any person can raise any topic related to proposed law.
- Five minutes speaking time, followed by *optional* Q&A.
- → Opportunity to observe interest in topics, and impact of interactions on discourse topics.

“Unconventional” contributions

- “I’m not just a tree hugger, I’m a globe hugger.”
- “The pipeline would be an easy target for terrorists as it is not guarded at all.”

Common ambiguous response by senators

- “Seeing no other questions, thank you very much. Appreciate your testimony. Further testimony as proponents.”
- Environmental expert being snubbed: “Good. Are there any questions for Mr. Swift? Seeing none, thank you very much. Well done ... Further testimony as a proponent.”
- Note that these responses signify unanimous disinterest!

Nebraska Legislature as research setting

“Unconventional” contributions

- “I’m not just a tree hugger, I’m a globe hugger.”
- “The pipeline would be an easy target for terrorists as it is not guarded at all.”

So anybody can raise any topic, yet barely anybody discusses climate change -- what does that mean? And how do we study this very ambiguous context?

Common ambiguous response by senators

- “Seeing no other questions, thank you very much. Appreciate your testimony. Further testimony as proponents.”
- Environmental expert being snubbed: “Good. Are there any questions for Mr. Swift? Seeing none, thank you very much. Well done ... Further testimony as a proponent.”
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Methods:

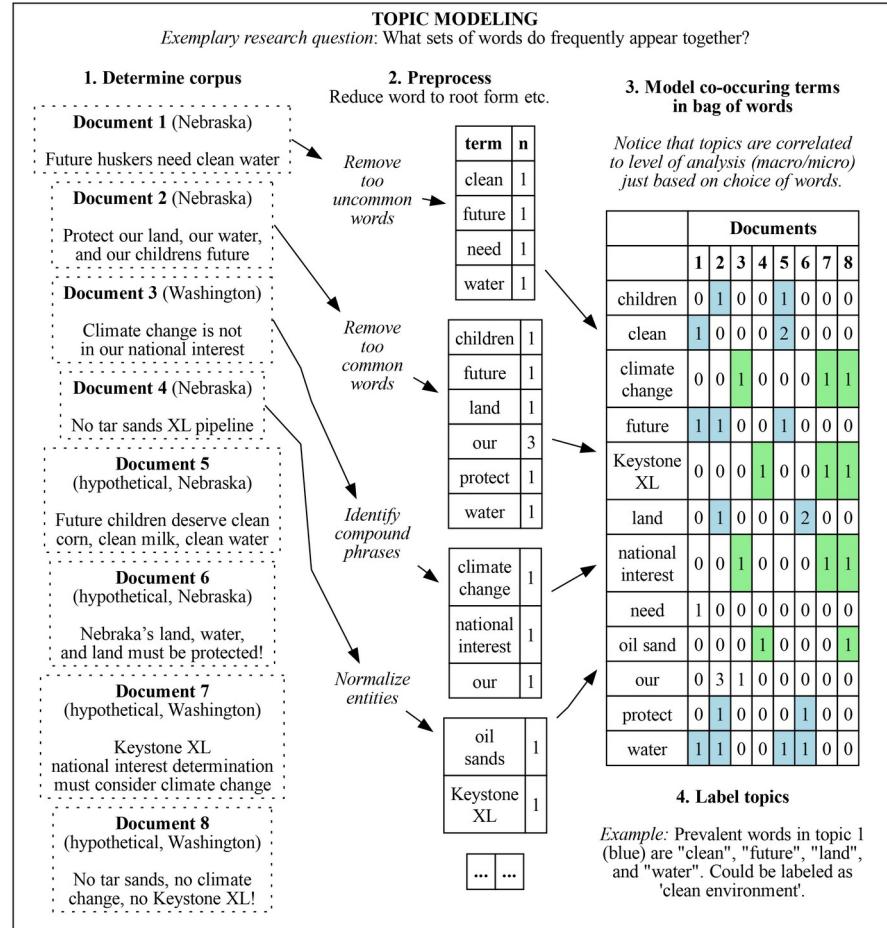
Crossing levels of analysis with mixed methods

Qualitative study – grounding

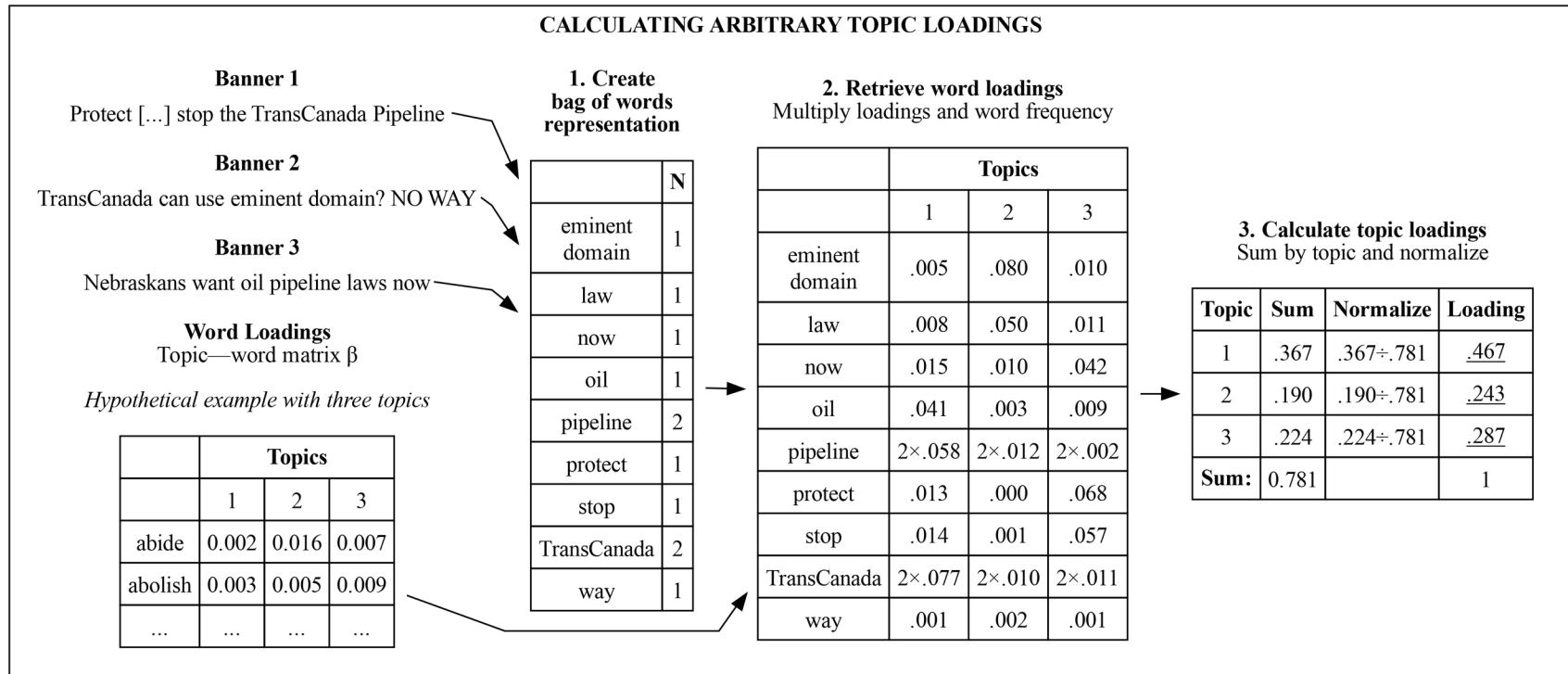
- 1) Overwhelming media coverage:
 - Over 2,000 stories on Keystone XL just by Wall Street Journal.
- 2) Gauge sentiment, project updates *on the ground* through hearings and meetings, identify those with minimal duplicates and wide coverage through news agency wires:
 - 2,922 hits on Factiva.
- 3) Gain grounded understanding of meetings, project trajectory. Stored for analysis:
 - 265 primary sources, 350,000 words
 - Honorable mention to diary-like activist site Bold Nebraska – 724 entries! – and FOIA'd State Department emails, memos, reports.
 - 26 secondary sources, 60,000 words.
 - 30 reports, 1.3 million words
 - State Department environmental impact statements up to 10,000 pages long!
- 4) Narrow in on key moment or “earliest moment of change” when project turned from foregone conclusion to fighting chance.
 - 11 hearings and floor debates by Nebraska Legislature between 2010–2012, about half a million words.

Topic modeling starter

- Presented as separate paper at EGOS 20223 (and not the focus of this talk 😞)
 - (Borrowing from banners)
- Researcher makes selection of input documents (corpus).
 - Preprocessing.
 - Algorithm autonomously detects words that frequently occur together (topics).
 - Researcher chooses number of topics.
 - Researcher labels the topics.



Underutilized for cross-level analysis (cf. DiMaggio et al., 2013)



What topic modeling can and cannot do

Features

- Can identify patterns in documents.
- Can then recognize patterns elsewhere.
- Provides normalized numeric values of association with topics.

Shortcomings

- Cannot by itself separate important from frequent.
- Cannot answer how to delimiter the corpus.
- Assumption that topics have roughly equal frequency.
 - *This is relevant next.*



Challenges with Midwestern Keystone XL discourse

Challenges

- 1) Climate change is a relevant topic, but only present in the margins.
- 2) Generally open discourse, but no resonance for some topics means no recorded stance.
 - What exactly do state senators think about climate change? When they just say “thank you for your testimony”, they do not tell us.
-  Concern: The main operating mode of discourse is the setting aside of topics, rather than genuine debate. Actors filter topics first, then discuss a selected few.
 - The “what is this a case of”–question in research.

Solutions

- 1) Leveraging grounded understanding:
 - Focus on Midwest, but include external documents to “seed” climate change topic.
 - Iterate by inspecting topics and considering documents to include for more parsimonious model.
 - 2) Instead of the content of the response, analyze at aggregate level the interactions around specific topics.
-  More in the next section.

Findings

Interactions shaping topics of discourse

What discourse is all about

This section

- Discursive interactions – model
- Step I: Interactions – steering
- Step II: Interactions – framing and dismissal
- Step III: Key topics
- Step IV: Validate qualitative findings
- Step V: Render findings observable
- Step VI: Interactions – steering
- Step VII: Outliers

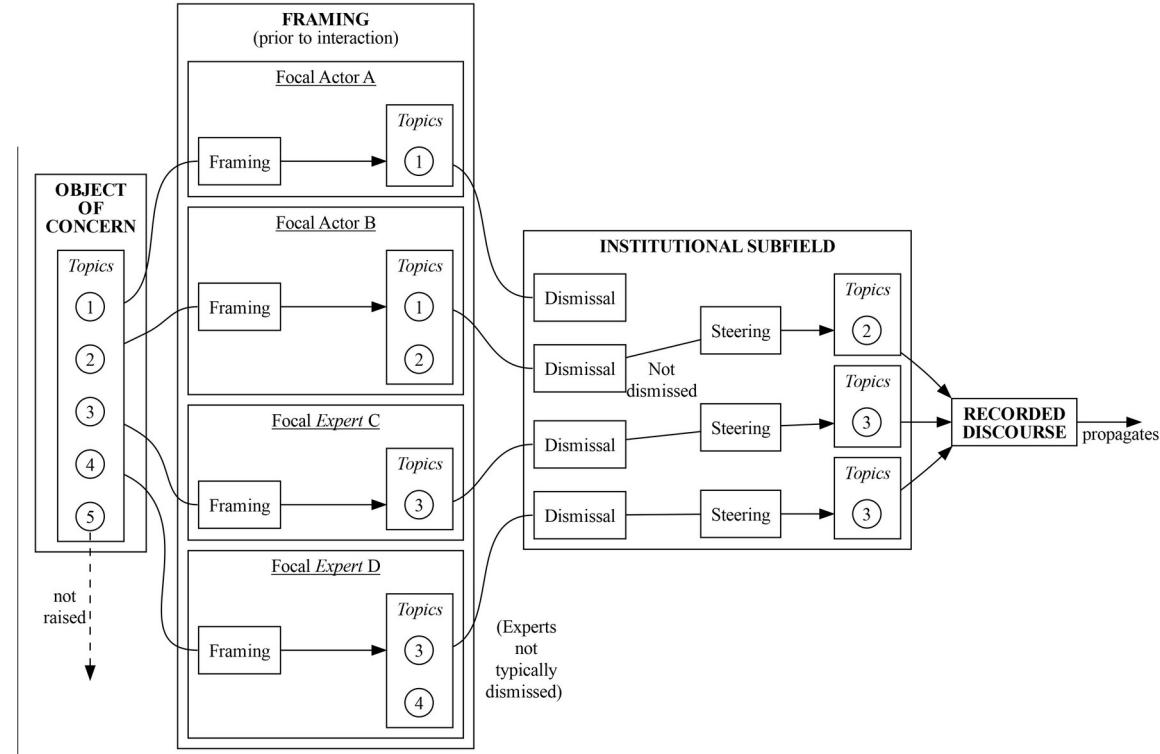


Discursive interactions – model

- Organizational setting and interactions determine textual contents:

 - Anticipatory framing – what topics are appropriate to raise?
 - Dismissal – who can enter the conversation?
 - Steering – which topic(s) do interactions turn on?

i Remember, discourse is also an outcome.



Step I: Interactions – steering

TERI T. (#613): ... I'm not a scientist, but no one knows my land any better than I do. I don't have to have a college degree to tell you that on my land we cannot support the Keystone XL pipeline; it can't be done. We have listened to our forefathers tell how hard it has been. They went through the dirty '30s and the Dust Bowl days, we're still working to reclaim land that was damaged ...

SENATOR L. (#614): Well done. Are there any questions for Ms. T.? Senator S..

SENATOR S. (#615): I have one. Thank you, ma'am, for coming in today. I was sitting here reading your testimony, your written testimony. (#616 – Yes) #617 – And you talk a little bit about the eminent domain. And the last line that I read here on the first page, it talks about people in the state of Nebraska need protection from this type of tactic and that I feel LB1 would provide that protection. Can you explain that? Are you...I guess, can you explain that a little bit further?

TERI T. (#618): Explain why I feel that LB1 will give us protection from eminent domain? Or explain... (#619 – Right) #620 – ...about the tactics? (#621 – Well, a little bit of both.) #622 – Okay. (#623 – Please.)

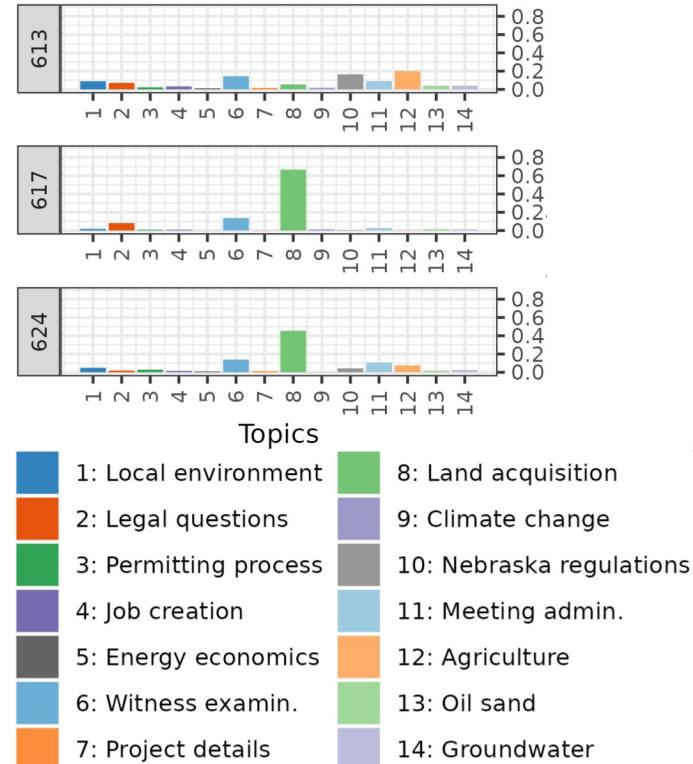
TERI T. (#624): My son, who testified before me, is much more of a conservative and much more of a gentleman. I'm a little bit hotter-headed. And he was very good with his remark about whether or not we have been intimidated...

Step I: Interactions – steering

TERI T. (#613): ... the dirty '30s and the Dust Bowl days, we're still working to reclaim land that was damaged ...

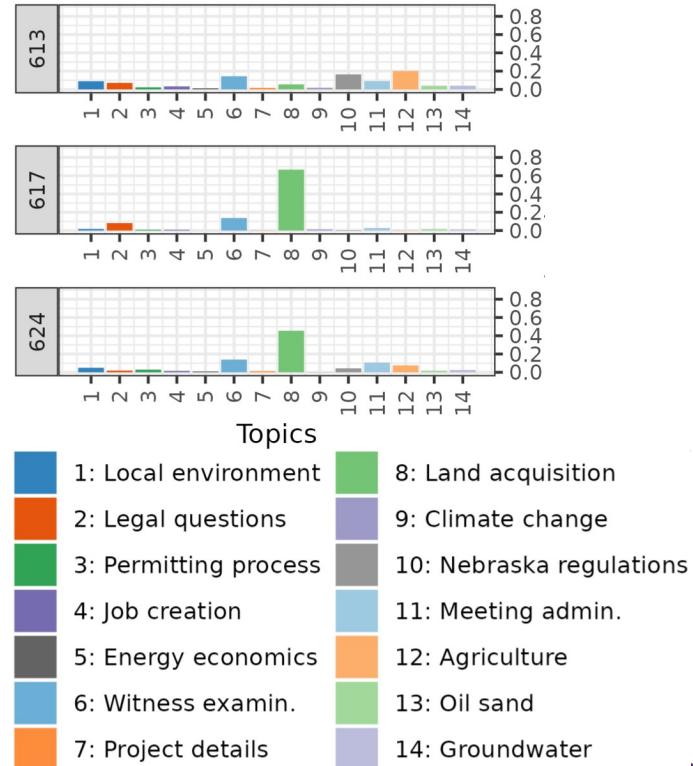
SENATOR S. (#617): And you talk a little bit about the eminent domain. And the last line that I read here on the first page, it talks about people in the state of Nebraska need protection from this type of tactic and that I feel LB1 would provide that protection. Can you explain that? Are you...I guess, can you explain that a little bit further?

TERI T. (#624): My son, who testified before me, is much more of a conservative and much more of a gentleman. I'm a little bit hotter-headed. And he was very good with his remark about whether or not we have been intimidated...



Step I: Interactions – steering

- Remark #613: Initial testimony – Powerful, emotional appeal, invoking family values etc., for regulatory action to protect agriculture and local environment.
- Remark #617: Question about TransCanada's negotiation tactics, use of eminent domain.
- Remark #624: Topics of initial testimony now absent from the conversation.



Step II: Interactions – framing and dismissal

MARK W: Because we must stop global warming caused by burning fossil fuels, I believe this pipeline may become obsolete within 30 years. If we don't, the Pentagon has said they are concerned for our security in and out of this country due to global warming and the climate changes that it will cause. Some people think the Third World war will be fought over water because of global warming and climate change. Thank you very much.

SENATOR A: Thanks, Mark. Questions of Mark? Seeing none, thank you. Next proponent.

 Framing – one of only seven remarks to *touch* on climate change. - The conundrum of showing dearth of something by showing it...

- Dismissal of Mark is more tacit, less active than steering steering process.
- But in this specific context – any single state senator could have continued the conversation.

 Observe what topics participants raise and the response – which topics lead to conversations, which do not. Which topics lead to swift dismissal?

Step III: Key topics

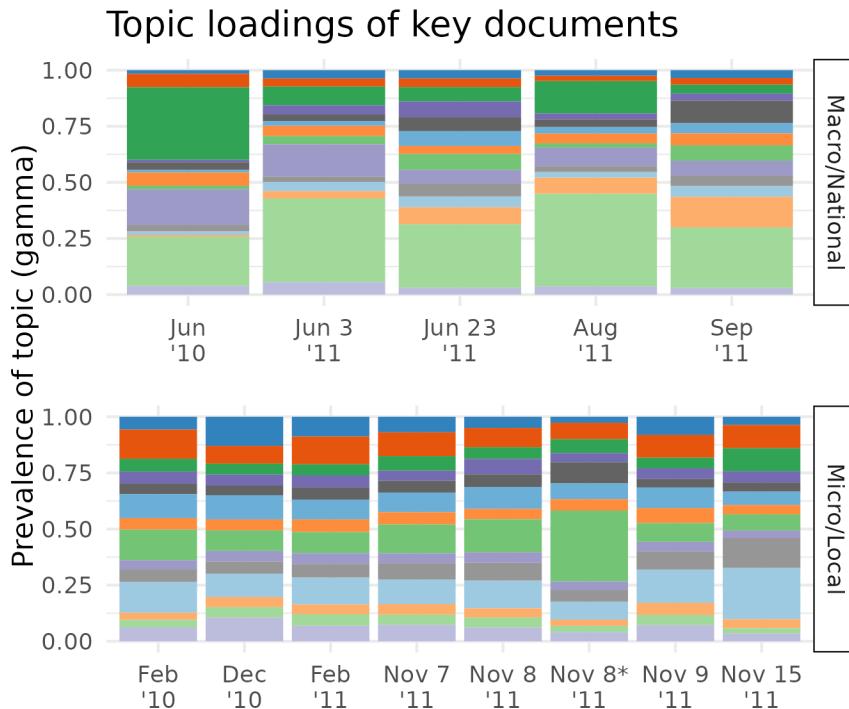
Important topics

- Topic 9 – climate change
- Topic 13 – oil sands
 - Concerns around extraction area and contents, e.g., carcinogenics.
- Topic 8 – land acquisition
 - Concerns around TransCanada's "bullying" land acquisition practices.
- Topic 1 – local environment
 - Concerns around specific environmental damages to area around pipeline.
- Topic 2 – legal questions
 - Legal challenges around regulating Keystone XL, particularly issues of jurisdiction.

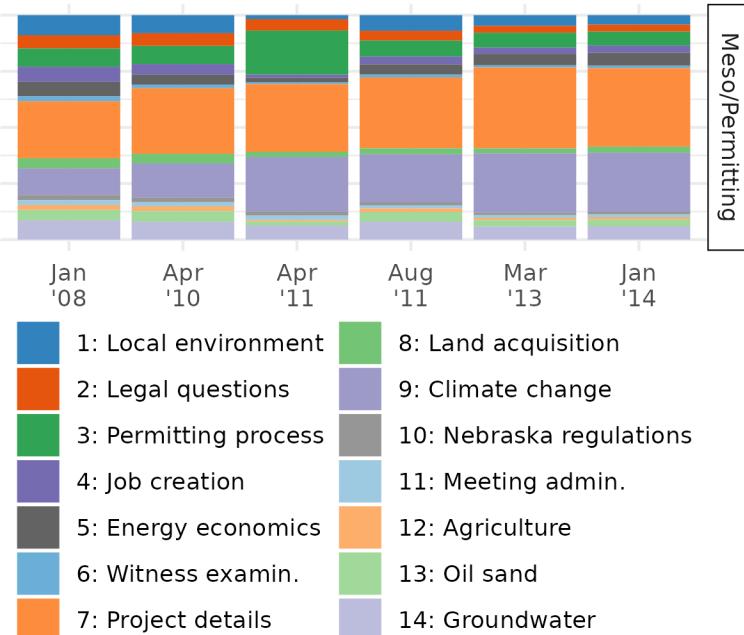
Other topics

- Topic 6 – witness examination
 - Descriptive action verbs (go, talk, think etc.) frequently employed in testimony.
- Topic 11 – meeting administration
 - Administration of the meeting, e.g., calling witnesses and taking questions.
- Topic 7 – project details
 - Descriptive accounts of pipeline route, pump stations etc.
- Topic 3 – permitting process
 - Discussions about the ongoing permitting process, timeline, prospects, and quality of assessment process etc.

Step IV: Validate qualitative findings

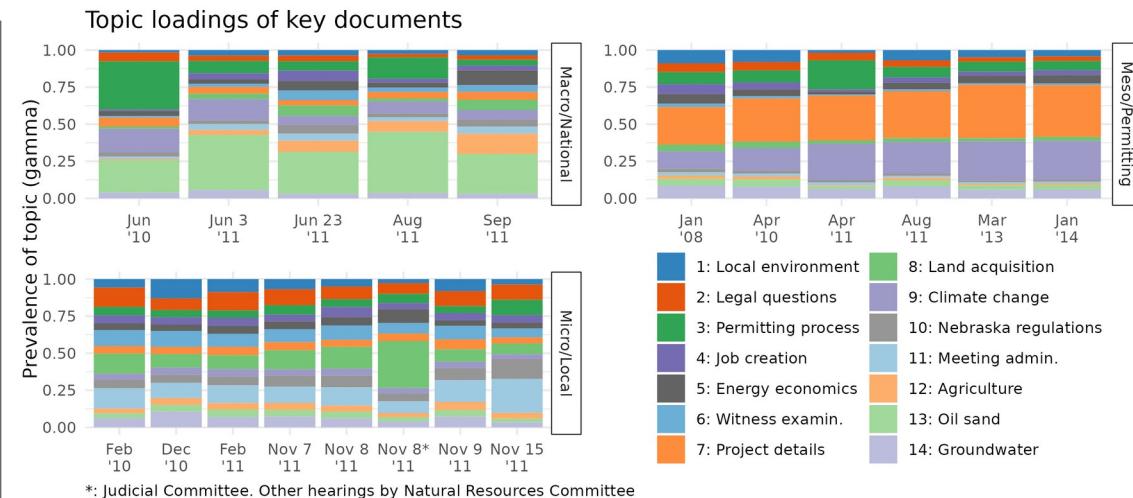


*: Judicial Committee. Other hearings by Natural Resources Committee



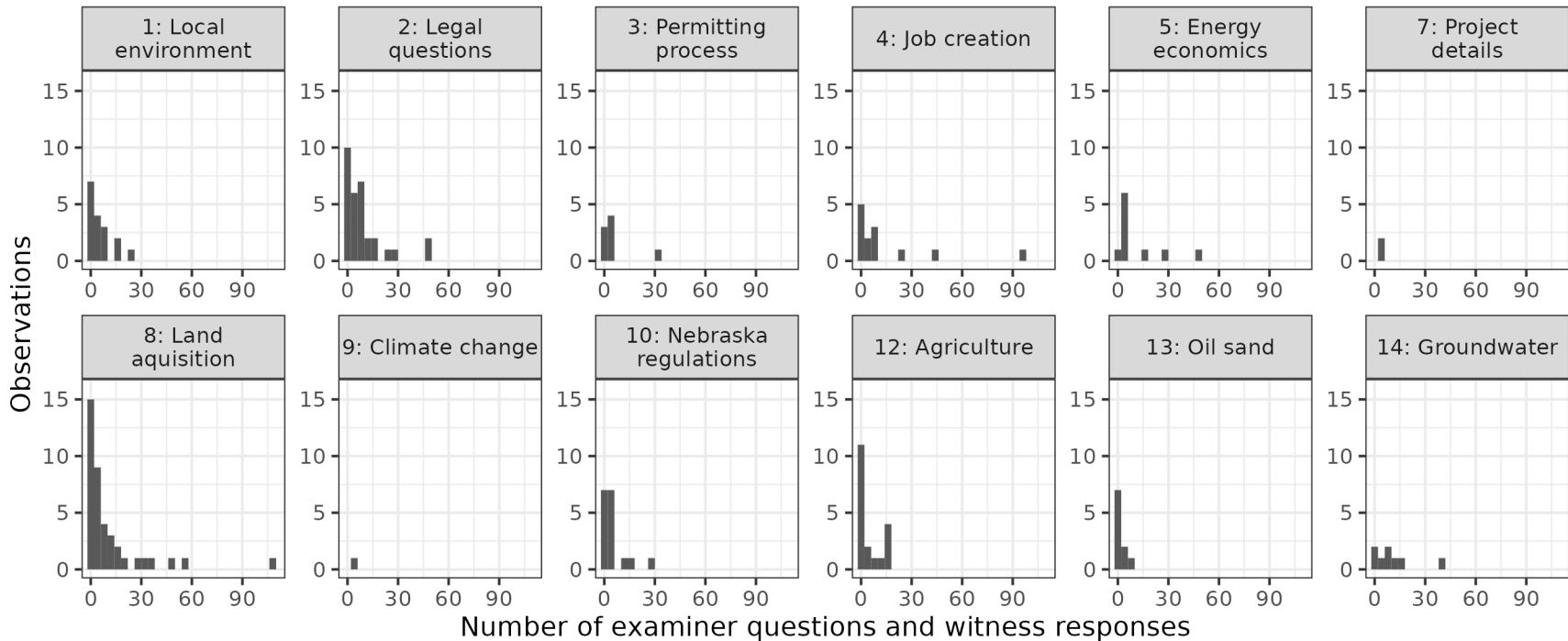
Step IV: Validate qualitative findings

- Visible discrepancy.
- 1) Topic of oil sand strong in national discourse, climate change also present.
 - Often simplistic references.
 - 2) Climate change strong in State Department documents.
 - But “neutered,” because decoupled from outcomes.
 - 3) Climate change and oil sands topics almost absent from local discourse.



Step V: Interactions – defensive framing and disregard

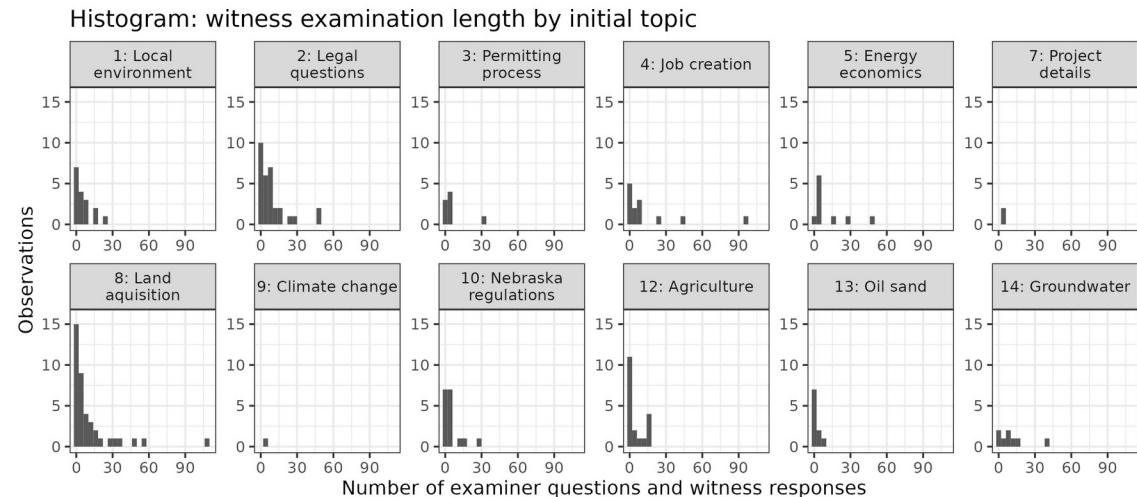
Histogram: witness examination length by initial topic



Step V: Interactions – framing and disregard

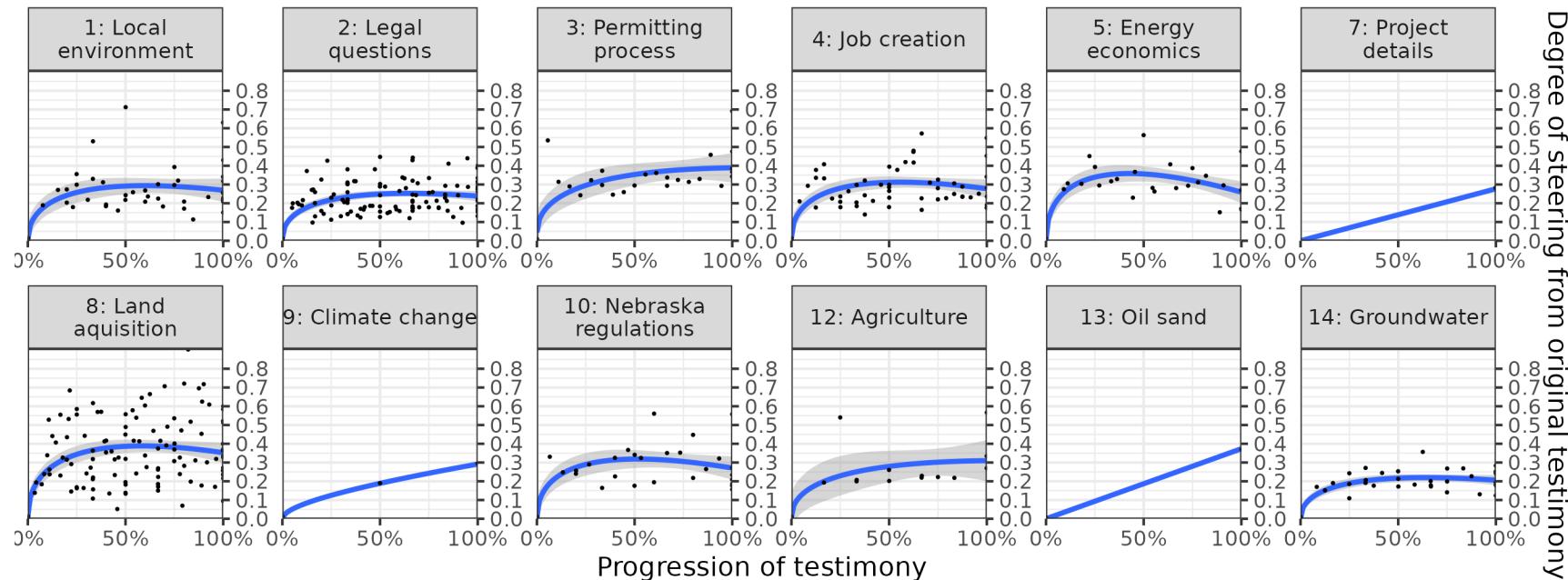
- Visible absence of climate change as primary framing – grassroots in attendance play by the rules.
- Oil sands topic still rare, witnesses swiftly dismissed, while other rare topics not dismissed (4, 5, 14)!
- Previous graph as outcome of interaction – topic needs to be raised *and* picked up in interactions to be present in discourse.

→ Again, discourse as outcome of social process.



Step VI: Interactions – steering

Steering of witness testimony by initial topic

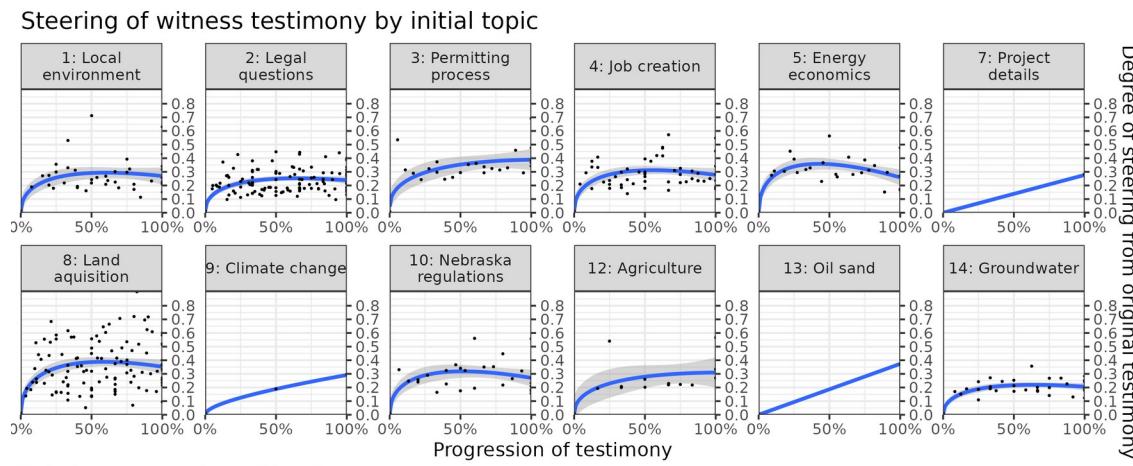


Topic change measured as euclidean distance
Smoothing: square root function

Step VI: Interactions – steering

- What I expected to see – steering as a revelation of preferences *against* something.
- What we observe instead – steering as a revelation of favoritism.
 - Individuals raising topic “land acquisition” are also asked about other topics.

→ Steering allows some actors to control who gets to talk about *what*.



Step VII: Outliers

Some testimonies much longer than others

- Experts (almost) always have more room to talk.
- More opportunity to make an imprint, but accompanied by more pushback.
- Unlike previous analysis, which focused on interactions → topics of discourse.
- Interactions also influence how we perceive contents of discourse, or can ex post change our interpretation.

“Divergent” experiences

- SENATOR M.: And how did you come to be here today? Were you asked to be here?
- SENATOR S.: It sounds like you... antidevelopment of those types of reserves. All right. Let me ask you, tell me your credentials again. Tell me your background, your education, and your experiences that lead up to your testifying here.
- SENATOR H.: You know, I had to go do some research too on the [Cornell ILR School] because I'd never heard of it before. Is...are you truly pro labor or are you socialist or what? (Laughs) I mean, it kind of has to get asked.

Discussion & Conclusion

Have we looked at discourse the wrong way?

Keystone XL's legacy, the field, and institutions

Epilogue

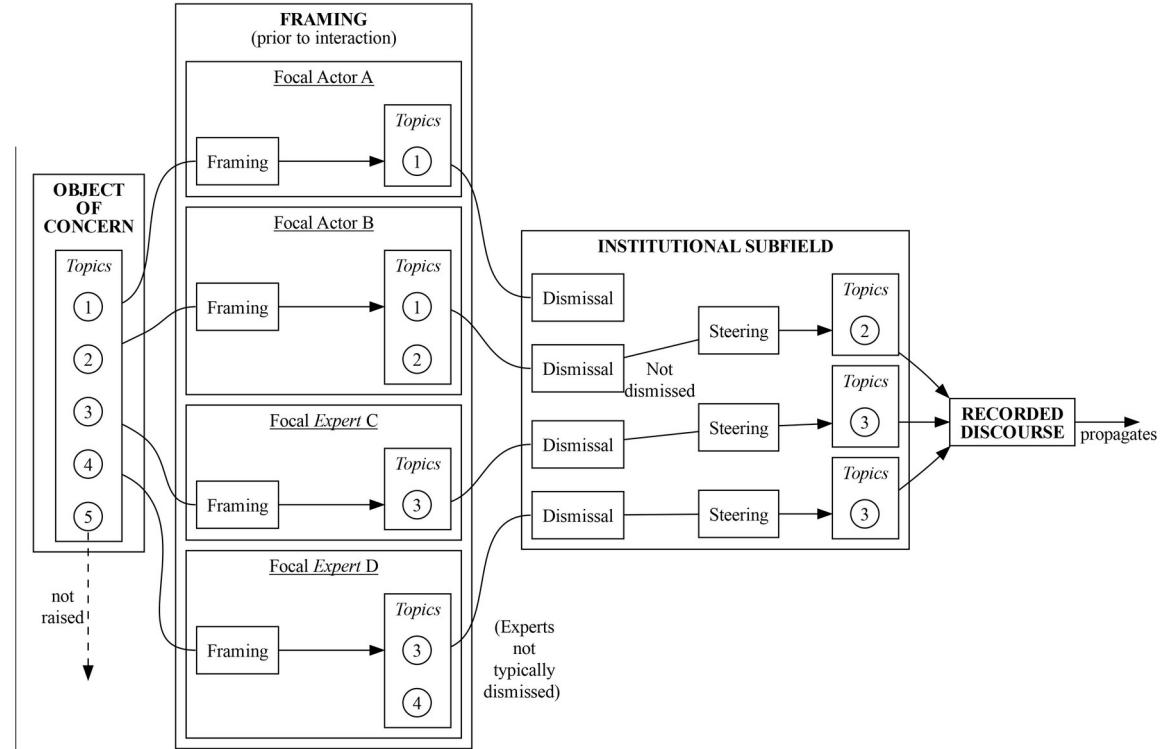
- Nebraska events snowball into Keystone XL permit denial.
- Directly lead to two-year delay, indirectly to three-year delay (“judicial trench warfare”).
- Environmental movement and climate scientists uses delay for more lobbying of public and State Department, media consent shifts from certainty to uncertainty.
- Obama denies permit ahead of Paris climate change conference.
- Trump briefly revives the project, Biden shuts it down again.
-  But again, contextualization is key!

Institutional legacy

- “Mastermind” behind anti-Keystone XL action, Bill McKibben, promised after permit rejection: “The fossil-fuel industry’s aura of invincibility is gone” (McKibben, 2015).
 - However, events *do not* snowball into envisioned overall shift.
 - Fossil fuels remain deeply entrenched, other pipelines built, Clipper “switcheroo” loophole.
 - McKibben’s organization, 350.org, credited with Keystone XL success but later goes bankrupt.
 -  Events need to be contextualized, too. Celebrated as landmark climate victory, but are they associated with overall shift in meaning, or only temporary change of dynamics?

Discursive interactions – model

- What we see or study is at the end (right side).
- Social interactions – often non-obvious! – determine what we see and study.
- Rather than a “hypermuscular” [institutional] entrepreneur” (Suddaby et al., 2017):
 - Numbers’ game – invested resources and efforts – for agenda setting.
 - Interactive (Reinecke & Ansari, 2021) and opportunistic framing.



Discourse meets field

Discourse analysis

- 1) Goal: Understand meaning of a topic.
- 2) Approach: Identify core themes.
- 3) Focus: Find and observe stances on a topic.
- 4) Sampling: Well-constrained case study determined by topic.
- 5) Outcomes: What are shifts in meaning?

Viewed through field lens

- 1) Observe action to understand aggregate field.
- 2) Practice determined by field interactions, not always in line with the rhetoric. Key issues may not be documented and veiled in euphemisms and silence.
- 3) Observe fields' (inter)actions around issue(s).
- 4) Who participates in what action, why and how?
 - May include marginalized actors who are otherwise invisible.
 - Yields contextual information.
 - *May inform us who or what is absent. (e.g., Temper, 2019).*
- 5) Where is the (inter)action?

Discourse meets field

Key contributions:

- Reallocate some attention to events outside neatly delimited formal discourse.
- Handle unexpected interactions between issues.
- Shed light on off-topic connections, decoupling/gaps within discourse.

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Summary

Takeaways

- Advantage of considering the field engaged in discourse: Connecting macro trends to relevant organizational practice, navigate decoupling within discourse.
- Sometimes, need to delineate discourse outside of topic – may pertain to topic (climate change) even if different label used.
- Natural Language Processing (NLP) seems like a good tool – but without grounding, researchers fly blind.

Limitations

- Who is entirely absent and why? Comparison to Dakota Access Pipeline.

Contributions

- A methodological approach to looking across levels of analysis.
 - Topic modeling worked great here, other Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques may also do, but grounding was key to *understand* dynamics around topics.
- Alternative view of discourse – take serious interactions and actors, but keep context in sight to scope significance and dynamics.
 - Consider the social setting, absence of topics and/or actors.

Planned work

- Empirical paper focusing on the Keystone XL discourse (this presentation).
- Methods paper:
 - New Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques, their shortcomings, and using mixed methods to address these.
 - Comparison with existing qualitative/mixed-method approaches to discourse analysis.
- Theory paper around topics, silence.

Thanks

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