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The Resistance Dilemma

Place-Based Movements and the Climate Crisis

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Preface

The ideas for this book began germinating in 2006. I was just beginning an intellectual shift in direction from a focus on controversies in forest conservation to climate change. A field trip that year to Fort McMurray and the oil sands mines near there in northern Alberta sparked my alarm about the growing environmental footprint of that sector. Early research identified the centrality of expanded pipeline capacity to the future of that carbon-intensive oil resource. I became fascinated with an alliance of Indigenous and environmental activists who, while brought together by the forestry conflicts I'd been studying, were turning their attention to contesting oil sands pipeline projects as a way to advance their causes.

At the same time, a significant fraction of the British Columbia environmental community was mounting a campaign in opposition to new “independent power projects,” small renewable energy projects being proposed by the private sector. That campaign spawned a rift in the environmental movement between those focused on combating climate change and those more focused on local environmental impacts. At first, I began analyzing these controversies separately, but by the early 2010s it became increasingly apparent that they were part of the same story. The climate crisis creates the imperative to move away from carbon-emitting sources of energy as quickly as possible. The process crisis—the challenges we face in getting social buy-in for significant new infrastructure projects—poses a direct challenge to the necessary solutions to the climate crisis. This book is the result of a scholarly exploration of this tension.

I should clarify my own positioning with respect to these conflicts. In 2011, as the alarming evidence of the threat of climate change grew, I abandoned my jealously guarded scholarly detachment and became engaged

as an activist. I cofounded a small environmental group to mobilize my university community to engage in provincial and federal elections to promote climate action. The first several campaigns of the group targeted the two oil sands pipeline proposals crossing British Columbia. As a result, I have taken public positions against the Northern Gateway Pipeline and the Trans Mountain Expansion Project because of their climate impact and spoke at two anti-pipeline rallies on Burnaby Mountain in November 2014. I also applied to be an intervenor in the National Energy Board (NEB) hearings to discuss the climate impacts of the Trans Mountain proposal but was rejected by the NEB.

By 2017, I'd stepped away from that activist group to focus on completing this book. Nonetheless, I believe this combination of activism and scholarship helps inform the work. The activism allowed me to have deep appreciation for the strategy of mobilizing climate action by focusing on opposing new fossil fuel infrastructure. The academic viewpoint gave me a clear sense of the limitations of that strategy and the risks it carried, which I've depicted in the concept of the "resistance dilemma."

Along the way, I've gotten an enormous amount of help from graduate students who have worked with me. Xavier Deschênes-Phillion played such a valuable role in chapter 7 that he is listed as coauthor of that chapter. I'm also indebted to Claire Allen, Sarah Froese, Alex Ash, Jessika Woroniak, Tracy Ly, Andrea Rivers, and Geoff Salomons. Guillaume Peterson St-Laurent has evolved from a student to a colleague during the process of writing this book and has been an invaluable source of support.

A number of colleagues, in and out of the academic sector, have supported, informed, or inspired me. Among them are Alasdair Bankes, Keith Brownsey, Angela Carter, Jennifer Ditchburn, Simon Donner, Monica Gattinger, Mark Jaccard, Andrew Leach, Shawn McCarthy, Keith Neuman, Martin Olszynski, Peter O'Neil, and Trevor Tombe. I was fortunate, for a portion of the project, to be supported by a Social Science Research Council of Canada Insight Development Grant led by Carol Hunsberger, whose support and collaboration contributed greatly to chapter 11. I gained invaluable insights from a number of conversations over the years with activists and advocates, many of whom are quoted in the book. I want to make special mention of Tzeporah Berman, Will Horter, Kai Nagata, Matt Price, and Keith Stewart. Beth Clevenger of MIT Press has been both supportive and patient throughout this process.

Earlier versions of some sections of this book were published elsewhere:

Hoberg, George. 2016. "Unsustainable Development: Energy and Environment in the Harper Decade." In *The Harper Factor: Assessing a Prime Minister's Policy Legacy*, edited by Jennifer Ditchburn and Graham Fox, 253–263. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Hoberg, George. 2018. "Pipelines and the Politics of Structure: Constitutional Conflicts in the Canadian Oil Sector." *Review of Constitutional Studies* 23 (1): 52–89.

Hunsberger, Carol, Sarah Froese, and George Hoberg. 2020. "Toward 'Good Process' in Regulatory Reviews: Is Canada's New System Any Better Than the Old?" *Environmental Impact Assessment Review* 82:106379.

My greatest debt is to my children. Their loving support has fueled me. Remarkably, over the duration of this project, they have evolved from youthful sources of inspiration to invaluable colleagues.

