Environmentalists' Mediawork for Jumbo Pass and the Tobeatic Wilderness, Canada: Combining Text-Centred and Activist-Centred Approaches to News Media and Social Movements

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Environmentalists' Mediawork for Jumbo Pass and the Tobeatic Wilderness, Canada: Combining Text-Centred and Activist-Centred Approaches to News Media and Social Movements

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ABSTRACT *For social movements, the mass media are a key means of reaching potential supporters, engaging public and political debate and reshaping cultural interpretations of relationships with the non-human environment. We examine how outdoor sport becomes the object of environmental movement mobilization and media claims-making in conflict over the Jumbo Pass ski resort, British Columbia, and Off-Highway Vehicle use in the Tobeatic Wilderness Area, Nova Scotia. We use provincial and national news coverage and interviews with key movement actors to examine how activists interpret the success or failure of their media work. We find that environmentalists are generally successful at translating claims on behalf of nature to a general audience through newspaper coverage. Using an activist-centred approach to media and social movements, interviews with core activists provide insight into barriers that persist and characterize environmental movement relationships with the media.*

KEY WORDS: Environmental movement, social movements, mass media, Canada, outdoor recreation, sport

Environmental movements use the mass media as a key site to reach potential supporters, to engage governments and opponents in debate and to shift public values and attitudes. Research on environmental movement relationships with media typically focuses on resource use conflicts (such as forestry, fishing or mining), or on global environmental issues (such as climate change or ozone depletion) but few, if any, look at recreation. We address this gap by examining environmentalists' media work during conflicts over the proposed Jumbo Glacier ski resort in British Columbia and off-highway Vehicle (OHV) use in the Tobeatic Wilderness area in Nova Scotia, Canada.

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We hone in on news media representations of environmental campaigns that target outdoor recreation. We also examine core environmental activists'interpretations of their media work. Research on social movement interactions with the media typically defines movement success in terms of quantity of coverage (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Caliendo, Gibney, & Payne, 1999; Earl, Martin, McCarthy, & Soule, 2004; Oliver & Maney, 2000), or through evidence that media coverage is consistent with movement claims (Brockington, 2009; Dauvergne & Neville, 2011; Ryan, 2004; Smith, McCarthy, McPhail, & Augustyn, 2001). This work typically uses media texts as the units of analysis. Given the volume of research conducted on media representations of social movements, there is a surprising lack of attention to activists' interpretations of their media work (c.f. Lester & Hutchins, 2009; Mattoni, 2012; McCurdy, 2011). By focusing on core activists' interpretations of their media work, we add an 'activist-centred' layer of analysis that goes beyond more common 'text-centred' approaches.

Our analysis engages two key questions: how successful are environmentalists at using the media to target outdoor recreation as an environmental problem and how do core environmental movement activists interpret media coverage of these conflicts? By engaging these questions,we gain a better understanding of how the media–environmentalism relationship unfolds when the ecological legitimacy of outdoor recreation is brought into question. By linking textual analysis with activist interviews, we discover how activists view their own media efficacy. We also see whether activists' interpretations of their issues are consistent with the discourses articulated through media coverage. This mixed-method approach suggests that environmentalists often define their media success in ways that account for barriers inherent to the mass media. This relative definition of media success differs from measures of success typically used in text-centred analyses of social movements and media. Also, in contrast to most scholars of social movements and media, movement activists do not always interpret media access as a key indicator of successful campaigning on behalf of the environment. Our analysis of interviews with core activistscomplements other research that goes beyond textual analyses of environmental news to examine the social relations of environmental news production (Berglez, 2011; Cottle, 2004; Lester & Hutchins, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

News media access is crucial to the success of social movements. As Castells (2004, p. 370) observes, 'Outside the sphere of the media there is only political marginality'. Social movements rely on the media for several reasons. Media access allows activists to reach potential supporters and recruit individuals to movement campaigns (Andrews & Biggs, 2006; Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986). The media also provide sites for movements to engage opponents and governments in public debate (Gamson, 2007; Hansen, 2010). In addition, through media coverage of movement campaigns, activists' worldviews circulate to the general public and open the possibility for broader cultural shifts in social values (Andrews & Caran, 2010; Dauvergne & Neville, 2011; Rochon, 1998). For many social movement scholars, a successful social movement receives high volumes of news coverage and receives coverage that accurately reflects movement discourse.

Internet-based 'mass self-communication', including websites, e-mail lists, blogs, Facebook and You Tube, plays an increasingly important role in social movement

communication strategies (Castells, 2009, p. 55; see also Earl & Kimport, 2011; Lester & Hutchins, 2009). However, Castells, a key scholar of new media, argues for the persistent importance of general news outlets:

> [In] a world marked by the rise of mass self-communication, social movements [. . .] have the chance to enter the public space from multiple sources. By using *both horizontal communication networks and mainstream media to convey their images and messages,* they increase their chances of enacting social and political change. (Castells, 2009, p. 302; italics in original; see also Mattoni, 2012).

While social media offer new tools for social movements, news media coverage remains important because television and newspaper coverage (whether accessed via print or online formats) reach broad general audiences, which may lack sufficient 'motivation' to seek out and engage with movement-produced web content (Schroder, 2000). Furthermore, news media coverage may work to direct audience attention to more specialized, social movement-produced material (Owens & Palmer, 2003). As such, in this study, we focus on major provincial and national newspaper coverage of the two conflicts, rather than social media use during these campaigns.

Environmental movements, like most social movements, rely on mass media for exposure to a greater degree than media relying on environmentalists for content. This leads social movement scholars to refer to the movement–media relationship as one of 'asymmetrical dependency', wherein journalists and editors hold power as gatekeepers to media visibility for movements (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993). To increase their chances of successfully accessing and using the media, social movement activists often engage in spectacular action, such as large-scale protests and civil disobedience, which is frequently accompanied by the risk of arrest for activists (Oliver & Maney, 2000; Smith et al., 2001). Although these tactics help gain access to media, as they provide dramatic images of conflict, they often come at a cost. Confrontational tactics such as blockades and protests may be successful insofar as they result in significant amounts of coverage. However, the resultant news media coverage often focuses on the spectacle of social movement action, while paying little attention to the substantive issues activists wish to raise (Gitlin, 1980).

More radical movements, such as the Earth Liberation Front, that use sabotage and property damage in order to make 'a space within mainstream media for the expression of their anti-corporate ideology'face the prospect of being criminalized (Joosse, 2012, p. 81). Their actions are often interpreted as vandalism or terrorism rather than activism. Through coverage of spectacular forms of protest and radical actions, media audiences may be left with the sense that activists are concerned, but have little understanding of the issues they are concerned about. Thus, movements may be successful at producing media coverage, even while they are unsuccessful at conveying their claims to the public.

Despite the large volume of research on social movement engagement with the media, relatively little research has focused on activists' own interpretation of their media work. Gitlin's (1980) classic study on Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), *The Whole World is Watching*, is a partial exception. His combination of analysis of media coverage with accounts from SDS members, however, is a work that is largely focused on the need to gain media attention rather than perceptions of success. It should also be noted that his work focused on movement–media interactions in the 1960s, which was a drastically different media landscape from that of today.

More recently, Lester and Hutchins (2009) interviewed members of wilderness protection movements in Tasmania, Australia. Their research showed that activists treat mainstream media coverage as a key indicator of movement success, much like the rest of the established literature on movement–media relationships. However, by working within the logic of mainstream media, activists usually fail to gain space for more radical environmental critiques. Lester and Hutchins also find that new media technologies are used less to circumvent mainstream media outlets than as another way to grab the attention of its journalists.

Elsewhere, McCurdy (2010, 2011) carried out ethnographic research with protesters against the 2005 G8 meetings in Scotland. He explores activists' 'lay theories of media'. His focus is on activists' assumptions and expectations about their interactions with journalists and the coverage they expect to get. He found that they internalize mainstream media emphasis on spectacle and drama and tailor their actions accordingly. Most activists subscribed to a 'pragmatic media perspective' (McCurdy, 2010, p. 44). Mattoni (2012) arrived at similar conclusions by researching mobilization of precarious workers in Italy. Her research highlights how activists engage with mainstream and alternative media as complementary tools to make their issues visible to a wide range of audiences.

As a whole, most scholars of social movements, environmentalism and media tend to consider movement success as either gaining access to mainstream media or having activists' messages relayed by it. Most researchers examine this by the quantity of media coverage generated by a movement or by the reproduction of activist claims on television or in newspapers (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Caliendo et al., 1999; Earl et al., 2004; Oliver & Maney, 2000; Wilkes, Corrigall-Brown, & Myers, 2010). We call this a 'text-centred' approach to studying movement–media relationships. We begin our analysis by following this tradition and look at national and provincial news coverage of environmental conflicts at Jumbo Pass and the Tobeatic Wilderness. However, we also add to it by looking at the ways in which core activists interpret media coverage of their issues to gain a more complex understanding of how they perceive media access, portrayals of their work and successful environmental media politics.

Context of the Cases

The proposed Jumbo Glacier Resort ski development, in British Columbia, and OHV use in the Tobeatic Wilderness Area in Nova Scotia are two Canadian cases where outdoor recreation becomes the subject of eco-politics. Scholars of social movements and the media focus disproportionately on national and transnational environmental organizations, such as Greenpeace and the Sierra Club. This focus has shaped how we look at and understand social movement success in relation to the mass media. Locally oriented social movements are more typical and prolific, but they are given less attention (McAdam, Sampson, Weffer, & MacIndoe, 2005). Major environmental groups, such as the Sierra Club and World Wildlife Fund, appear to a limited extent in news coverage of these cases. These are well-established organizations with large international memberships, which have significant expertise working with the mass media and with politicians. However, both the Jumbo and Tobeatic conflicts are largely driven by local environmental organizations. Environmentalists mobilized to protect Jumbo Pass, and the Tobeatic Wilderness received provincial and national news media attention despite their local orientation. As such, these cases are worthy of study.

British Columbia has a long history as a site of environmental movement mobilization. Greenpeace was initially formed in Vancouver in 1970. Intense conflict over forestry practices throughout the 1980s and 1990s brought the old-growth forests of B.C. to international attention and resulted in the largest mass arrests for civil disobedience in provincial history (Wilson, 1998). If built, the Jumbo Glacier Resort would be located in the Purcell Mountains of south-eastern British Columbia. Conflict over the development has been ongoing for over 20 years, involving resort developers, environmental organizations, the Ktunaxa and Shuswap First Nations and a succession of provincial governments. A major point of conflict is the resort's potential impact on local grizzly bear populations. Another point of conflict is the desire for local community control over new development in the region. Other issues include impacts on glaciers and glacier-fed creeks and rivers, Ktunaxa land claims, as well as the economic cost of road building and infrastructure to support the resort. Jumbo Pass is currently used by hikers, backcountry skiers and commercial heli-ski operators, who risk being displaced by the new resort.

While the Nova Scotia environmental movement has not had the same international impact as environmentalism in British Columbia, it is also a worthy subject of analysis. Elizabeth May, a prominent environmentalist who has served as the president of the Canadian Sierra Club and is the first elected Green Party MP for Canada, is from the province. Nova Scotia is also the site of the most infamous Canadian case of environmental injustice at the Sydney Tar Ponds, a toxic waste site produced by mining (Ali, 2009). The Tobeatic Wilderness Area has long been a popular destination for canoeing, hunting and fishing, with professional outfitters operating as tourist guides. Unusually for the east coast of Canada, it contains remnants of old-growth forests. The main target of environmental mobilization has been OHV use because it risks damage to soil and vegetation and it contributes to air and water pollution. Noise pollution from OHVs may also disrupt local wildlife, including endangered species such as mainland Nova Scotia moose and Blanding's turtles.

The political outcomes of the two cases are quite different, which makes comparisons between them useful. The Jumbo Glacier Resort has been the subject of debate for over 20 years without construction beginning on the resort. In this sense, environmentalists have been successful at delaying the resort development. However, In March 2012, the provincial government granted approval for the resort. This spurred a new set of protest rallies and a renewed letter-writing campaign based on environmental organization and Ktunaxa claims that the conflict is not yet over. By contrast, the Tobeatic was protected through a Protected Areas Management Plan in 2006, which prohibited motorized recreational access by OHV riders and also demanded the removal of semi-permanent camps in the area.[1]

Social movement outcomes are not only limited to policy change at the political level, but also involve attempts to provoke social and cultural change (Giugni, 1998, 1999). Both cases allow us to gauge environmentalists' success at accessing the media to make claims about the ecological harms of outdoor recreation. The two conflicts also provide comparable cases for investigating how core activists interpret their media work on behalf of the environment. As such, our findings provide insight into the tensions between text-based evaluations of social movements' media success and the ways in which media work is understood by activists.[2]

Methodology

To answer our research questions, we use a mixed-methods approach that combines textual analysis of mass media coverage and semi-structured interviews with core

members of environmental organizations. We begin with an analysis of news articles published in major national and provincial newspapers until the end of 2009, in order to gauge environmentalists' success at gaining attention for Jumbo Pass and the Tobeatic Wilderness. We look at two national Canadian newspapers: the *Globe and Mail*, which is viewed as centrist in political orientation, and the *National Post*, which is viewed as more conservative (Halpin, Phillips, & Oliffe, 2009, p. 157). Both the *Globe and Mail* and *National Post* have wide circulation (with average daily print circulations of 315,272 and 156,646, respectively). In addition, we examine two regional papers, the *Vancouver Sun* and Halifax *Chronicle Herald* (with average daily circulation rates of 175,572 and 107,353, respectively) (Canadian Newspaper Association, 2009). All four newspapers are also available in online editions.

The Factiva database was used to sample 132 articles from the four newspapers. Keywords were selected in order to return the broadest range of articles possible. A keyword search of the terms 'Jumbo Pass', 'Jumbo Glacier' and 'Jumbo Resort' produced a sample of 25 articles about Jumbo Pass (16 from the *Globe and Mail* and 9 from the *National Post*), published between 1983 and 2009 (23 of these were published between 2003 and 2009). A similar keyword search for the term 'Tobeatic' produced a sample of only nine articles (eight from the *Globe and Mail* and one from the *National Post*), published between 1992 and 2005. Factiva was also used to produce a sample of 10 articles on Jumbo Pass from the *Vancouver Sun* published between 2002 and 2005, and the search yielded 88 articles on the Tobeatic in the Halifax *Chronicle Herald*, published between 1999 and 2009. All the articles were checked to confirm that they dealt with land use in the Jumbo Pass and Tobeatic regions, and all relevant texts were analysed. Our analysis was based on a comprehensive sample of coverage of the Jumbo Pass and Tobeatic conflicts in these news outlets.

The newspaper articles were imported into NVivo software for qualitative analysis, in which they were manually coded and analysed by the first author. We used a semi-structured approach to coding media texts, moving back and forth between coding and analysis and periodically revising the coding categories and their relationships with each other (Mason, 2002; Silverman, 2001). Thematic coding categories oriented around news sources, definitions of the recreational landscape, negative impacts of outdoor recreation, outdoor recreation and pro-environmental values, protest tactics, political process and tourism and economic development. Top-level categories were subdivided into more precise second-level and third-level categories. For example, in the Jumbo Pass case, 'outdoor recreation and the environment' is a top-level coding category that contains a second-level coding category for the 'negative impacts of outdoor recreation'. Third-level coding categories within this theme include fragmentation of wilderness, grizzly bear impacts, too much development and water pollution. Analytical memos and annotations were written throughout the coding process to build descriptive conclusions about discursive themes. Throughout the coding and analysis, the Jumbo Pass and Tobeatic Wilderness texts were coded to separate sets of categories. After each case was examined separately, qualitative comparison tables were used to synthesize the results.

Drawing upon social network analysis, the mass media analysis involved quantifying qualitative themes and treating them as elements within 'discourse networks' (Mohr, 1998). Our discussion of the results uses discourse network diagrams, produced using Visone software, to trace the prevalence of qualitative themes and to link these to the

social actors who appear as news sources. The discourse network analysis focuses on the key themes and news sources that appear most frequently in the news coverage, based on the number of articles. Mapping relationships between discursive themes and social actors as two-mode networks allows us to visually assess how successful the two environmental movements have been at articulating their claims through the media. News sources make up one mode of network data, and are represented by square nodes. Discursive themes make up the second mode of network data, and are represented by circular nodes. The size of nodes reflects the centrality of sources and themes within the media, while the thickness of ties between the nodes illustrates how often news sources are linked to particular themes. While the application of social network analysis techniques to discourse is not new, this approach has rarely been used in the substantive area of mass media and social movements (though see Malinick, Tindall, & Diani, 2013).

All the environmental organizations cited in the news media coverage were contacted by mail and e-mail and asked to participate in interviews. This included five organizations involved in the Jumbo Pass issue and seven organizations involved in the Tobeatic. Interviews were carried out with five Jumbo Pass activists and three Tobeatic activists. Although this is a small sample, all the interviewees are 'core' activists, such as directors or campaign coordinators, who dedicate a significant amount of time, effort and emotional investment to these organizations, rather than 'rank and file' members whose participation is often limited to financial donations or occasional participation. The interviews were semi-structured and used an interview schedule, but departed from it where appropriate to pursue points of interest, or respond to the flow of conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The interview schedule was formulated based on the analysis of 132 news articles. Interview questions were also informed by a separate 'internet ethnography' of 12 websites produced by the environmental organizations cited in media coverage of the two cases, which was carried out between November 2009 and February 2010 (Hine, 2005). Interview questions focused on the following areas: participants' histories of activism on their issues; participants' experience of engagement with the media and opinion of the media coverage of their issues; protest tactics and appropriate and inappropriate forms of land use at Jumbo Pass and the Tobeatic. Questions about the media were as follows: Was the environmental movement successful at putting the Tobeatic/Jumbo Pass on the media agenda? What do you believe were the key news hooks that got media coverage for the Tobeatic/Jumbo Pass? Participants were also asked to provide their opinions on the dominant themes in the media coverage. Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, and were carried out between March and May 2010. A summary report of the interview analysis was shared with participants to elicit feedback on the accuracy of our findings. Pseudonyms are used throughout the discussion of our results in order to protect the confidentiality of research participants.

Results

Our analysis of environmentalists' media work is broken down into two parts. First, we examine environmentalists' ability to gain media exposure and convey substantive claims in conflicts over outdoor recreation. Second, we shift from a text-centred to an activist-centred analysis to examine environmentalists' interpretations of their media work on behalf of Jumbo Pass and the Tobeatic Wilderness.

Media Access and Environmentalist Discourses

Much of the existing social movement literature presumes an asymmetric relationship between movements and media. In this section, we examine whether this is the case or not, through an analysis of news articles and following the methodological conventions of most social movement and media scholars who measure movement success through the volume of coverage and content conveying activists' claims.

Figures 1 and 2 are discourse network diagrams that visualize the relationship between news sources and media discourses. They show that the Tobeatic conflict receives more provincial coverage, through the Halifax *Chronicle Herald*, than the Jumbo Pass conflict receiving in the comparable daily newspaper in BC, the *Vancouver Sun*. While the Tobeatic conflict receives more in-depth and sustained coverage at the provincial level, the Jumbo Pass conflict more successfully breaches the national media spotlight, with stories running in the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*. There are also differences in the constitution of environmentalist news sources in the two cases. In media coverage of the Tobeatic conflict, environmentalist news sources include a mix of rural, regionally based organizations, as well as provincial organizations such as the high-profile, Halifax-based Ecology Action Centre. Reed and Gill (1997) suggest that rural environmental organizations are more successful when their political claims are amplified by allied urban organizations. This seems to be the case with the Tobeatic and might help explain its greater volume of provincial news coverage. Media coverage of the Jumbo conflict, by contrast, is driven by local and regional organizations, with less political amplification from provincial environmental organizations based in Vancouver or Victoria.
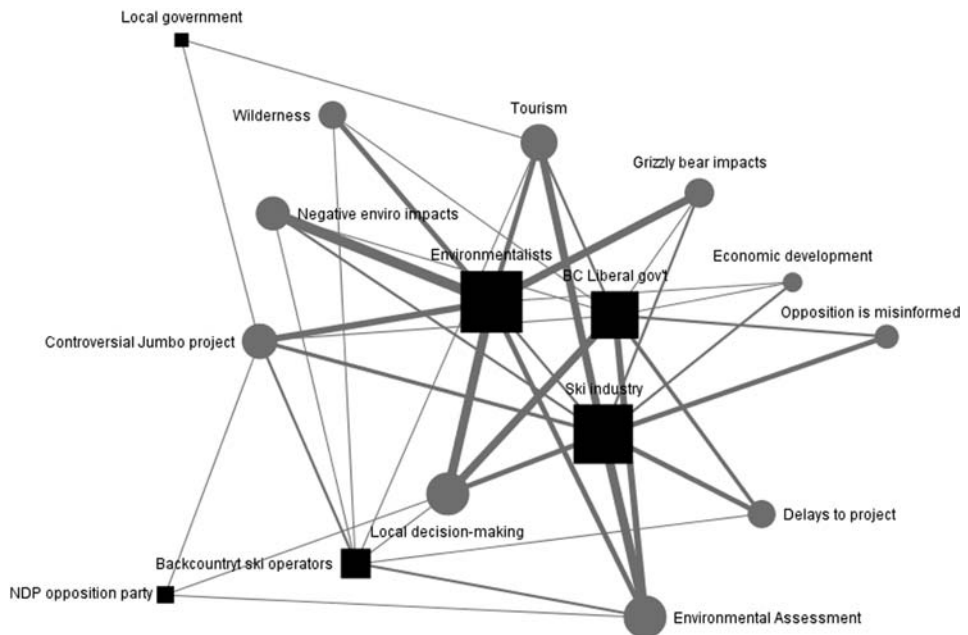
Figure 1. Two-mode network, news sources and dominant themes, Jumbo Pass (generated using Visone).
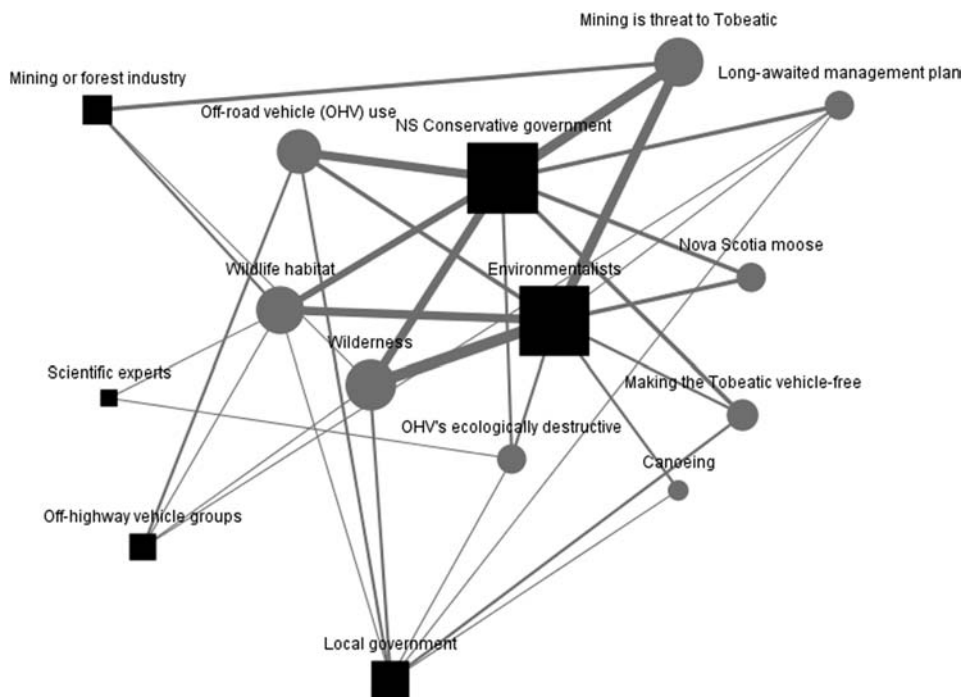
Figure 2. Two-mode network, news sources and dominant themes, Tobeatic Wilderness Area (generated using Visone).

The network diagrams also show that environmentalists appear as key news sources who speak on behalf of nature at both Jumbo Pass and the Tobeatic Wilderness. Dominant themes articulated by environmentalists in the Jumbo Pass conflict include the negative environmental impacts of the resort, with a focus on risks to local grizzly bear populations, as well as the transformation of the Jumbo landscape from a wilderness environment into a place for mass tourism. Another key environmentalist discourse focuses on local democracy, with repeated calls for local decision-making over the development. The dominant discourses articulated by environmentalists in the Tobeatic conflict centre on the wilderness and wildlife habitat values of the region, which are threatened by OHV use. Environmentalist claims also focus on the environmental risks of a proposed mining development near the boundaries of the Tobeatic. In both cases, environmentalists are key news sources. They are also successful at conveying key ecological and social critiques through the mass media.

The tactics used in the two conflicts may explain differences in how successful environmentalists were both at achieving media coverage and at conveying key claims. In the Jumbo Pass campaign, protest tactics include 'low-cost' strategies that involve little time or commitment from supporters, such as letter writing to politicians, petitions to the provincial government and mobilizing supporters to comment within public feedback processes. In August 2008, when developers began temporary roadwork, activists mounted blockades of the access road to the area, expanding to a higher cost form of protest.

The Jumbo Pass campaign likewise received support from celebrities such as Scott Neidermayer, an National Hockey League (NHL) all-star, Stanley Cup winner, and Olympic gold medallist from British Columbia. Such celebritization helps movements gain media visibility for their issues, but media coverage typically focuses on musicians or movie stars as powerful individuals promoting 'conspicuous redemption' through green consumerism (Boykoff & Goodman, 2009, p. 404; see also Brockington, 2009). Yet, critics warn that this encourages individualized responses to environmental problems, rather than promoting collective action or structural understandings of environmental degradation. It also risks tying environmental issues to the fads of popular culture, which emerge and vanish quickly. Blockades and celebritization appear to be particularly useful tactics for transforming the conflict from an issue of local concern to an issue worthy of national media attention. While blockades gain national media exposure, the resulting news stories devote little attention to the specific substantive claims of environmentalists, beyond informing readers that the ski development is controversial. This is consistent with the research that describes how disruptive protest helps gain media exposure, but risks failing to convey substantive arguments to the public (Hutchins & Lester, 2006). By contrast, news stories about celebrity support for the campaign include claims about the negative ecological and wildlife impacts associated with the resort, as well as demands for local control over decision-making at Jumbo Pass.

In the Tobeatic conflict, the tactics are narrower and less confrontational than those used in the Jumbo Pass conflict. Like the Jumbo conflict, there is an emphasis on letter writing. There is also an emphasis on participation in government-structured public input processes. This collaborative and conventional approach to eco-politics successfully generated a great deal of provincial coverage in the Halifax *Chronicle Herald*. However, the Tobeatic conflict, which lacked blockades and celebritization, did not gain national media coverage as successfully as the Jumbo conflict did. The difference in the two movements' tactics may help explain this difference in national media visibility and the greater success of Jumbo Pass activists at raising their issue for a national media audience.

If we were to draw conclusions based on the text-centred analysis of the two movements' media coverage, then we would argue that both movements were successful because they gained coverage and their messages were conveyed.

Environmentalists' Interpretations of Media Work

Interviews with core activists add another layer of depth to our understanding of the relationship between environmental movements and the media. Activists focused on several dimensions of their media work, including their access to the media, media framing of environmental issues and barriers to success.

Access to the Media

All the core activists involved in the Jumbo Pass conflict have experience interacting with journalists. Among Jumbo Pass activists, there seems to be more direct and ongoing interaction with local journalists than provincial or national journalists, with whom contact seems more occasional and sporadic. For most participants, interactions with media are interpreted in positive terms.

When asked about main news hooks covering their campaigns, all the Jumbo Pass activists pointed to celebritization. The support for the campaign from athletes and musicians, including Scott Neidermayer, Bruce Cockburn and Olympics medallist Becky Scott, is repeatedly identified by activists as something that permits media success. For activists, celebrity support can amplify the voice of environmentalists in a culture more interested in celebrity than in social movements. Hillary elaborates on this theme:

> Well . . . nobody listens to [our organization], everybody's interested to hear what the NHL's MVP [most valuable player] has to say. It also changes opinion. I mean they're seen as leaders in our society. They're viewed as icons and if they stand behind a cause publically their momentum is massive. I mean they can garner a hundred times more media than we can in one day. (Hillary, Jumbo Pass)

Other key hooks identified by Jumbo Pass activists are grizzly bears and the blockade, which are also important themes in the media discourse network. Two interview participants also point to climate change as a key news hook. However, while climate change and the changing landscape of Jumbo Pass are featured on environmental organization websites, our media analysis suggests that this theme did not successfully translate into provincial or national news coverage. This illustrates a gap between some of the core environmentalists' understanding of the issue and media representations of it—pointing to how relying on textual analysis alone can lead to inaccurate conclusions.

Tobeatic activists also talked about their interaction with the media, though this is described in more general and abstract terms than in the Jumbo Pass case. As Jessie, a Halifax-based activist says, 'Mostly it's [media coverage] been on a provincial scale, and provincial issues [. . .] I find journalists are usually fair. They don't nail you or spin things, they kind of report on what the issue is' (Jessie, Tobeatic Wilderness). Matthew, a Tobeatic activist with a smaller, rural organization, notes that media coverage was not a particularly high priority for his organization. '[We] didn't go out to get media attention, we were concerned about representing our constituency, our members' (Matthew, Tobeatic Wilderness). Elsewhere, Matthew talks about using media, particularly letters to the editor, to gain issue visibility. However, Matthew does not see media exposure as a particularly important marker of success or failure of his organization. In juxtaposition to social movement scholars' assertions of the vital importance of media coverage for social movements, core activists involved in the Tobeatic conflict view media coverage as less important than engaging directly in deliberative dialogue with members of government, opponents and other key actors to achieve movement goals. However, even though core activists did not prioritize spending time pursuing media access for their issue, the Tobeatic received a significant amount of provincial news media coverage.

For Jessie, a core activist involved in the Tobeatic campaign, the ecological characteristics of the region were sufficient to drive media coverage. He says, 'I think that the biggest selling point was just that it was the best, the best in the province, the best in the Maritimes in terms of wilderness' (Jessie, Tobeatic Wilderness). Other key news hooks identified by Tobeatic interviewees are the conflict between environmentalists and OHV users, as well as the grievance claims of OHV users' groups regarding loss of access to the Tobeatic. As Sofia puts it:

> I think the *Chronicle Herald* probably covered more of the difficulties and the strife that occurred with the ATVers [All-Terrain Vehicles]. We had some local coverage but I think it was more matter of fact, trying to present the facts, like what was going on. I think that the local media tried to stay a bit more neutral than that. (Sofia, Tobeatic Wilderness)

In both cases, activists access media and the news hooks identified by activists are broadly consistent with the discourse networks produced by media coverage of these conflicts. Activists are generally attuned to the tactics and cultural frames that will translate into news coverage. This is consistent with McCurdy's (2011) notion that activists cultivate 'lay theories of media' through which they internalize media norms and shape their action to increase the odds of media success. Yet, activists were also critical of how issues were framed.

Media Framing of Environmental Issues

For social movements, it is not only important to gain media coverage for their issues. Successful media work also depends on whether media coverage conveys the substance of movement claims (Snow & Corrigall-Brown, 2005). In other words, it is not only quantity of coverage, but quality of coverage, that counts (Brockington, 2009; Ryan, 2004; Smith et al., 2001). As such, activists involved in both conflicts were asked about the dominant media framing of their respective issues.

In the Jumbo Pass case, the dominant media discourse positions the environment and wildlife in binary opposition to skiing, tourism and economic development. Only one interview participant concurs that this is an accurate description of the issue, while the others critique it. The most frequent counter-discourse articulated by activists is that media coverage inaccurately and narrowly characterizes opponents only as 'environmentalists'. Instead, participants describe the movement as composed of environmentalists, as well as non-environmentalist community members. The latter includes opposition to the project from the members of the tourism industry and ski industry, as well as local real estate developers. For example, Jamie is critical of media coverage that constructs a binary between environmental values and economic development:

> Okay, first of all, I don't think the division is nearly as clear as you put it because I know many people in the tourism industry, real estate industry, locally, who do not support the Jumbo resort and the reason being ... because we have quite a tourism business, [that] is encouraged because it leaves the outdoors ecosystems [more] than direct building does. (Jamie, Jumbo Pass)

In this excerpt and elsewhere, core activists challenge the dominant narrative of Jumbo Pass produced by media coverage. Instead, activists tell another version of the story that aligns environmentalists with tourism and recreation interests against one particular ecologically illegitimate project. However, this interpretation of the conflict has not successfully entered the media discourse network. In this instance, combining text-based and activist-centred approaches highlights a disconnect between environmental activists' understanding of their conflict and the way the conflict is represented by the media for the general public.

In general, Tobeatic interview participants are less reflexive and critical about dominant media framing than activists in the Jumbo case. They do not highlight any particular gaps between their interpretations of the issue and the media's representation of it. However, Tobeatic participants distinguish between local and provincial media coverage of the issue. Local media is perceived as focusing more on the facts of the Tobeatic Advisory Group, an environmental governance process that incorporated key local stakeholders. By contrast, provincial media is interpreted as focusing more on the drama of the conflict between environmentalists and OHV users. Scholarship on social movements and media often finds that coverage of social movements depends on drama, conflict and spectacle (Oliver & Maney, 2000; Smith et al., 2001). Tobeatic activists' interview talk suggests that this image of media–movement dynamics may be a more accurate description of larger scale national or provincial media outlets than of local media that are closer to social movement conflicts. If this is the case, activists' media work may be shaped by the type of news outlets activists hope to access (local, regional, national or international).

Barriers to Media Success

Most activists involved in both conflicts believe that they have been successful at gaining media attention for their issues. However, Louisa articulates a common sentiment among Jumbo Pass activists, as she judges her organization's success relative to the genre limitations of news media:

> Have we been successful? Yes, in a media environment that is not really that capable of telling a complicated story, um, that is really not willing to move beyond oversimplified characterizations. So in that context, where true success is probably impossible, I think that we have been as successful as we could be. (Louisa, Jumbo Pass)

The quote from Louisa set out a relative definition of media success that accounts for the barriers built into the structure of the mass media. Rather than judging media success only on the number of articles published, she asserts that the movement has been able to get good exposure within a media system that environmental movements are inherently disadvantaged within.

One of the barriers to media coverage is geographical marginalization, as the East Kootenay region is at the periphery of a provincial media gaze that is predominantly focused on metro Vancouver. Jamie describes this geographical barrier to media access as follows:

> The East Kootenay seems to be, you know, when you get beyond [the town of] Hope in British Columbia, you don't get much coverage because it seems that issues here in the East Kootenay are not important to the Vancouver media. For example, if there's a gathering of a hundred people on the steps of the legislature in Victoria you'll see it on the evening TV news out of Vancouver. We can have a gathering of five hundred people here and it's not even mentioned. (Jamie, Jumbo Pass)

The bulk of research on social movements and the media tends to focus on larger, more central social movements. By turning our attention to local organizations, we illuminate barriers to media success that are not faced by large, well-resourced social movement organizations.

Another barrier is discussed with specific reference to the blockade of 2008. Louisa describes the blockade and juxtaposes it with the stories that emerged from Canadian folk musician Bruce Cockburn's support of the campaign:

> But our Bruce Cockburn concert sure did get some media (laughs). You know, this issue is no different than any other issue, the sexy pieces get picked up. Nobody got shot on the blockade, so there was no media, it was just a bunch of hippies out in the woods. When in fact we ran a six week blockade that successfully managed to halt construction in the backcountry, not really a very sexy story. (Louisa, Jumbo Pass)

Although this protest tactic was successful in halting road construction in the area, it lacked the spectacle and drama that typically makes blockades newsworthy. There were no court injunctions, police, arrests or direct conflict between activists and workers. For environmentalists who are reflexive about their media work, an understanding of barriers to media exposure is key to gauging media success.

Tobeatic interview participants similarly assert that they were successful at putting the issue on the media agenda. While Jumbo Pass participants often adopt a relative interpretation of media success, which accounts for the inherent limitations of the mass media, self-reflection on these media barriers is less evident in the Tobeatic case. However, Matthew observes that there was decent print media coverage in the *Chronicle Herald*, but 'it's not usually on television unless something blows up, people don't get information' (Matthew, Tobeatic Wilderness). Jessie similarly asserts that environmentalists were relatively successful at getting media coverage for the issue. However, he downplays the importance of media exposure in comparison to letter writing and public pressure on government as tactics to gain protection for the area. When asked if the campaign was effective at gaining media exposure, he replies:

> Yeah I think so. I think the media stuff shouldn't be over, you know over stated, like it was important but there's I think the just the constant pressure of writing letters and phone calls and that sort of thing probably had more to do with it than the media coverage. (Jessie, Tobeatic Wilderness)

Social movement researchers often emphasize the centrality of media coverage to social movement success (Andrews & Caran, 2010; Castells, 2009; Hutchins & Lester, 2006; Smith et al., 2001). What we found by listening to activists is that some core movement members may not judge their efficacy in terms of media attention. For some activists, getting into the media is not a priority in and of itself. As a consequence, media work may be less valued than engaging directly with supporters and politicians.

Conclusion

Much research on environmentalism and the media focuses on texts, such as newspaper articles, magazines, press releases or television programmes. From this text-centred approach, media success can be defined quantitatively by the number of times environmentalists appear as media sources, or it can be defined qualitatively through media coverage that accurately conveys the key claims of movement actors. Our analysis of national and provincial newspaper coverage of environmental conflict over outdoor

recreation in British Columbia and Nova Scotia is broadly consistent with previous research findings that environmentalists are not excluded from mass media and play a key role as environmental news sources (Cottle, 2008; Hansen, 2010). Our analysis of media texts illustrates that environmentalists who mobilized against ski resort development at Jumbo Pass were successful at generating national media exposure for this conflict. By contrast, environmentalists who mobilized against OHVuse in the Tobeatic Wilderness were successful at gaining provincial media exposure, but were less successful at shifting their issue into national media. From a text-centred approach, both movements were successful—though to varying degrees—at making claims to provincial and national news outlets.

Our analysis, however, goes beyond such an approach through interviews with core activists involved in these two conflicts. This activist-centred approach, which has not often been used in the scholarship of social movements and the media, provides a more nuanced picture of the ways in which activists understand their media work and interpret media success. Interviews with core activists indicate that they believe that they have been successful at gaining media coverage for their issues and that their experience with media workers has generally been positive. Rather than defining success only in terms of numbers of articles or in media coverage that reflects their claims, core activists often adopt a relative definition of media success that accounts for the barriers and asymmetries that characterize environmental movement relationships with the media. Activists' talk also suggests that media work may be approached differently depending on the specific type of media coverage (i.e. local, provincial, national and international) that they hope to access. Through adopting an activist-centred approach, our research findings suggest a gap between activists' interpretations of media success and the definitions adopted by scholars of social movements and media that deserves further empirical research and theoretical consideration. If activists' interpretations of their media work shape their engagement with journalists, and subsequently the ways in which news media represent environmental conflicts, then text-centred approaches would neglect an important dimension of the relationship between social movements and the media which deserves further attention.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1. While the different outcomes of the two cases are one of the reasons for selecting them for analysis, we are not claiming that the processes analysed here are decisive for creating these divergent outcomes.
2. Results of the website analysis are not discussed here, but are reported elsewhere.

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