Infrastructural Unrest

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'Infrastructural Unrest' characterizes a growing nexus of knowledge, awareness, participative and activist practices that indicate how people are waking up from the contemporary logistical nightmare of infrastructure and global logistics. It is a wake-up that newly resonates with theories of infrastructure by provoking a systems-level, decentralised field of awareness and action, revealing the interconnections of ecologies of "invisible" systems, ways of life, work and people. The wilful, unwitting and projected invisibility of infrastructures, which modes of technological progressivism (e.g. "ambient computing") attempt to disappear, prove available to rifts and interruptions in the smooth operations of infrastructural globalism. The specific ways in which infrastructures are (made) invisible, to whom and for what purposes, remains an ever more important consideration in the Technosphere, during the Anthropocene, and under conditions of planetarity. The 2020 Canadian pipeline and railway protests, the Wet'suwet'en blockades, a series of blockades across Canada in solidarity with indigenous land defenders, are an example of 'infrastructural unrest'. Actions like this are hopeful examples of a growing, situated awareness of how scaled infrastructures are (made) *un*-invisible and impactable, as sites where the localized effects and defects of colonial logics of extractive capital can be traced, diagnosed, subverted and halted.

Infrastructure. Environmentalism. Invisibility. Pipeline. Ecology. Technology. Systems. Planetary. Activism.

1. INTRODUCTION

As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has written, our current condition is on of "planetarity": a sense of alterity, of an always-on-the move, contradictory sense of distant attachment to one another and the Earth (Spivak, 2015). Interconnections between beings abound yet they are experienced as heavily mediated and in isolation. Overlapping crises and rifts to ecological systems, temporal ecologies, and human knowledge from one perspective appear simultaneously as smoothly operative and pervasive infrastructural systems, operating at planetary magnitudes. Planetarity "smoothly 'translates' into the interest of globalization in the mode of the abstract as such" (Spivak, 2015) while "logistical nightmares" (Rossiter, 2016) and 'broken worlds' (Jackson, 2014) intertwine with a continued sense that information and goods flow, relentlessly. More and more human interactions are experienced through, and more deeply integrated into, the kinds of "robust, reliable, widely accessible systems and services that are beginning to look in form and centrality like... the canonical infrastructures of telephony, electricity, and the rail network" (Edwards *et al.*, 2009). A problem with the proliferation of scalar technological systems, of touchpoints and designed interfaces that obscure the in/visible work that takes place for, against and through infrastructures is that these give rise to specific kinds of alone-togetherness (Turkle, 2017). They are un-convivial systems that provoke a lack of mutual understanding and context, obstruct solidarity, moderate action, squelch motivation and forestall alternatives.

Pronouncements and projections of pervasive infrastructures as "invisible" are problematic and the stakes of such pronouncements are high (e.g. Anand 2017, Greenberg 1998). Such pronouncements stem from both wilful and programmed blindness to the effects and agencies people have toward the reconstitution, reconstruction or deconstruction of infrastructures. As with concepts like the 'Technosphere' (Haff *et al.*, 2019), which can naturalize infrastructures and distract from conceptualizations of alternate pathways for development, 'invisibility' is a projection of incapacitation, limiting human agency and creativity in the face of technological 'spheres' (Zalasiewicz *et al.*, 2017). There are direct links between the avid and frequent pronouncements of politicians and policy pundits that infrastructures are merely 'unsexy' and 'boring' to their creation and elaboration as a "means to transfer public money into private hands" (Larkin, 2018 citing Mbembe & Roitman, 1995).[i]

In the book "How to Blow Up a Pipeline," Andreas Malm writes of the necessity to reinvigorate our sense of localised possibility against infrastructural globalism (Malm, 2021). It is possible to 'speak to' and interrupt globalized infrastructural systems through direct, concentrated actions. These systems of planetary sensing and logistics, driven by the abstractions of market finance, are in reality themselves neither abstract nor invisible, and continuously impinge on the lives of human and nonhuman beings. A role of infrastructural unrest as civil disobedience is to equalize this impingement by turning qualities like omnipresence and ubiquity back on themselves.
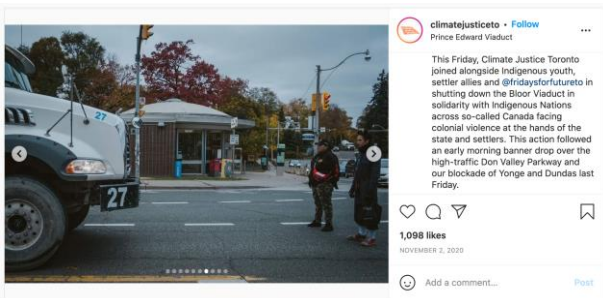

Figure 1: An Instagram post by @climatejusticeto, affiliated with @fridaysforfutureto, staging a blockade of the Bloor Viaduct, a heavily trafficked bridge system in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

2. SOME IRONIES OF INFRASTRUCTURE STUDIES

In 2009, adding to and precipitating a blossoming of scholarship, media and creative work that would become known as the "infrastructural turn," (e.g. Shafiee, 2019) four white male academics penned the introduction to a special issue of the Journal of the Association for Information Systems. The title of this article was "An Agenda for Infrastructure Studies" (Edwards *et al.*, 2009). Along with introducing the themes and topics in the special issue, the "central lines (and wicked problems) of the necessary field of infrastructure studies," were sketched out. The authors contended that such a study would need to bridge "three kinds of scales — global/local, large/small, and long-term/short-term" as central challenges for the theory and practice of infrastructure and its study. Further, Infrastructure Studies would help counter the "lingering functionalism that continues to mark efforts to build, but also too often to understand, infrastructure."

Much of this agenda continues to be elaborated through the work of various academic disciplines, media, arts, design and civic technology, activist and advocate communities. Science and Technology Studies scholars, anthropologists,

artists, media makers, citizen scientists, and information activists compose what could now be called the quasi field of Infrastructure Studies. Sensitively inaugurated and given its methodological underpinnings by people like Susan Leigh Star (Star, 2002) and Geoffrey Bowker (Star & Bowker, 2006), the areas and styles of investigation have been further elaborated conceptually, in different directions, by people like Brian Larkin (Larkin, 2013) and Lauren Berlant (Berlin, 2016), pointing toward the poetic, affective and intimate resonances of infrastructure (Wilson, 2016). These ideas are also empirically studied through a host of fieldwork, field trip and arts-based investigations, including the "Logistical Worlds" project by Ned Rossiter and Brett Neilson (Neilson & Rossiter, 2018) and the *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* in Berlin's research procession "Mississippi, An Anthropocene River" (HKW, 2019). Since the early 2000s, the interests of these studies and activities have elaborated similar claims of tensions between how large-scale technical systems support, enable and connect while also separating, alienating, constraining, dividing, conquering and killing. They include technical, material, human, informational, political and mythic aspects — somewhat explaining the breadth of interest in their analysis. There are broader, philosophical fora for and specific, situated discussions of "The promise of infrastructure" (Gupta & Appel, 2018) and "Chemical infrastructures" (Murphy, 2015). Shannon Mattern, Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski have created brilliantly elaborated sensory and visual perspectives to an inspiring litany of infrastructural reveals and reveries (Parks, 2007; Starosielski, 2012; Mattern, 2018).

Initiatives like Critical Infrastructure Studies (https://cistudies.org/) revive and revise the Infrastructure Studies mandate, taking up how infrastructures "reinforce and reshape the stresses between dwelling and work, centre and margin, high and low, and local and global" (Critical Infrastructure, 2020). These are stresses that re-emerge continually as central problems of modern, racial, colonial, globalized capitalism. Maan Barua (Barua, 2021) and Sandra Jasper (Jasper, 2020) call out the importance of abandoned, disused infrastructures and their relationships to human and nonhuman existences and exigencies. Nelson and Bigger question the casting of nature and ecosystems *as* infrastructures as an ontological trick of and problem in development conservation and green capitalism (Nelson & Bigger, 2021). The white-supremacist, racist and colonial making of urban modernity and metabolizing of nature are part of the "The Coloniality of Infrastructure" initiatives of Nick Axel, Kenny Cupers, Nikolaus Hirsch (Hirsch, 2021) and others, along with Davies' work on the coloniality of engineering (Davies, 2021).

It is no coincidence that Infrastructure Studies flourished in the post-millennium technocentric milieu of the early 2000s, in which the world's most extensive and complex infrastructure, the Internet, was feverishly being built and proselytized. The call to better understand the function, affordances, limitations and mythologies of these large-scale interconnected systems is, in some senses, ironic. These systems that "we" have built around "us" are, of course, made by "us." Perhaps "we" could or should be able to just go to a local library, a civic or public office or an infrastructural engineering or technology planning bureau (which also should, but often does not, exist) and look up how, or if, these public-facing and socially-structuring systems function. Who we presume this "us" and "we" to be in such a scenario, who it includes and excludes, is of central importance, as is the way that these problems or tensions, are expressed in oculocentric terms: the binary of visibility and invisibility, words and metaphors that stand in for the kinds of awarenesses, understandings, and accesses that the becoming-infrastructural of technologies have long forestalled.

The phenomenon of "placebo buttons" (Luo, 2004), used for crosswalks and elevators, is an example of a paradoxical gap between knowledge, context and affordances in and with infrastructures. These interface elements have no technical function in these infrastructural assemblages. Still, they are put in place to give people a sense of control, communication and interface with centrally controlled systems that control their action and agency; that have power over them. Although infrastructural modernity begins with the romance of an equalizing, civic utility 'for all,' these power disparity evoke how infrastructures have also inevitably created inequality of knowledge and access, throughout history.

Placebo buttons are infrastructures that 'work' as technological systems "to the extent that [their] models or representations are imposed successfully back upon the social systems they describe" (Monahan, 2016). Placebo buttons bring into relief the disempowering "dual functions of infrastructural management and infrastructural neglect, both depriving the body and controlling its basic functions and mobilities" (Sherman, 2021). These simple cases of urban crosswalk and elevator placebo buttons reminds us of the everyday systems to which we entrust our personal safety or even life-and-death decision making in public spheres. Numerous scholarly works and creative approaches characterize such "apocryphal technologies" (Allen, 2016; Bernico, 2018) and the relationships between expectation, trust, deception, surveillance and control resident in complex technological systems (Monahan, 2016). There are just as many, if not more, popular articles asking the more straightforward question, "Do 'WALK' Buttons Actually Do Anything?" (Gan, 2015; Winkless, 2017). That this question gets asked, and that it is somewhat challenging to answer—requiring external, empirical studies and reverse engineering—indicates the unequalizing power to obscure and alienate that is resident in even the most seemingly banal of infrastructural systems.

The slight irony of Infrastructure Studies is that we have built technologies that build a world, or worlds, in which the lines between invisibility-visibility, understanding-obfuscation and power-incapacity become darkened and controlled. Modern infrastructural globalism comprises and impose rituals toward "the maintenance of society in time" and "the representation of shared beliefs" (Carey, 1992), which continuously require and desire new mythologies and imaginaries through which to model them (see, for example, the rise and prevalence of conspiracy theories; Gray *et al.,* 2020).

Infrastructure Studies that seek to understand these somewhat ironic mechanisms bring significance and urgency to how technological exclusionism begets other forms of separatist and eliminative politics. Recognition of this exclusionism tempers projections of universalism or naturalness in technology discourses and practices (e.g. "natural" user interfaces; Norman, 2010) and provides evidence for how infrastructures cut across and erase racial, gender and class differences. (Watkins, 2021).

Infrastructure Studies and its motivations can at times feel as if they come too late, and from positions of privilege—initiated as they often are by those who suddenly realize the externalities of and damage done in "the interest of globalization in the mode of the abstract as such" (Spivak, 2015). People in advantageous positions of security can expect and safely demand (whether successfully or not) that systems be open, convivial, explainable and emancipatory (Allen, 2019). There are far more instances, places and peoples who experience and understand infrastructures as firstly, necessarily and forcibly un-ironic, as delusions of technological invisibility are impossible when geographic, psychic and social spaces are being directly displaced, dominated or destroyed by these technologies. The division of publics and the dismantling of ways of life through ambient incursion, omnipresent exclusion and continuous confrontation, are aspects that make infrastructural colonialism insidiously brutal. Those who have not been listened to or who have less power to act, have perhaps always and better understood how infrastructures are "deeply implicated in not only the making and unmaking of individual lives, but also in the experience of community, solidarity and struggle for recognition." (Amin, 2014).

The condition that infrastructures should be 'invisible' or 'mute' is a condition chosen by some and enforced upon others. Infrastructure theory-become-lore holds that pervasive technologies are mute and invisible, only present to human awareness as they break down, decay or pose a risk. The activities of activists, artists and other critical, creative practitioners have, in contrast, have been in the direction of point out and opening out these sealed systems, of cajoling them to speak, in hopes of being able to talk back to them (Allen 2014). Much of the past years' scholarly work, particularly in Anthropology, has likewise tended to re-assert the "mundane visibility" (e.g. Barry 2020) of seemingly omnipresent technical systems.

3. A VERY SHORT HISTORY OF INFRASTRUCTURAL UNREST

The American elder statesman of nature writing and natural living, Henry David Thoreau, was an early proponent and practitioner of Infrastructure Studies. In his often-cited journal entries about early installations of telegraph wires, he writes, "How much the ancients would have made of it! To have a harp on such a great scale, girdling the very earth and played on by the winds of every latitude and longitude" (Thoreau, 1851). We might speculate that his poetry of scalar systems also gave to the individualist, liberal Thoreau ideas for disobedience against such systems. In his characteristically romantic way, Thoreau espoused the prowess and advancement of human infrastructures while holding fast to the autonomy and responsibility one could address to these systems. This contradiction is what, for Thoreau, gave to these systems their awe-striking beauty, ferocity and potential. Thoreau's famed essay from 1849, "Civil Disobedience" (originally published as "Resistance to Civil Government"; Thoreau, 1993) called for a direct protest of the U.S. government through the withholding of taxes by citizens, most specifically to curtail aggressions and spending in its war against Mexico. These writings would come to influence Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King (Scherhaufer *et al.*, 2021). Civil disobedience is a primary form of protest and practice which often attempts to address scalar systems and technologies of infrastructure through direct action. Civil disobedience methods include blocking roads to production facilities, the occupation of private and industrial lands, "abseiling from cooling towers of nuclear power plants, chaining oneself to railroad tracks to stop transports with nuclear waste, tree-sitting to avoid deforestation for (coal) mining" (Scherhaufer *et al.*, 2021). The risks and stakes of enacting civil disobedience in these ways are much different for people of different classes, colours and backgrounds. As has become a topic related to the Extinction Rebellion movement and its tactics, for example, black and brown bodies are much more likely to suffer much harsher consequences for engaging in what are ostensibly illegal activities (Bell & Bevan, 2021).

4. THE 2020 WET'SUWET'EN BLOCKADES

Wet'suwet'en territories exist in the northern part of British Columbia, in the Western part of Canada. These territories are part of the Wet'suwet'en nation, a part of north-western North America that is 'unceded' land. Wet'suwet'en lands have never been part of Canada, as its people have never signed any treaties or otherwise acknowledged the dominion presumed by colonists. A series of blockade camps, erected at the initiation of Wet'suwet'en hereditary leaders, has since 2009 been installed to create checkpoints within these lands, controlling who comes in and out and for what reasons. The main concern of those blockading has been to monitor the activity of a 670 km pipeline link, a pipeline designed to move natural gas from the north-eastern part of the province to shipping ports and transport boats on the Pacific coast, bound for Asia. It is called the "Coastal GasLink pipeline".

After more than ten years of build-up of contestations and injunctions, in February 2020, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police moved to physically enforce a court order to remove Wet'suwet'en blockades from the pathway of pipeline construction. The RCMP scaled the central blockade, intimidated protesters, threatened violence and arrested tribal leaders to ensure progress on "the largest private sector investment project in Canada".

Disacknowledgements of indigenous claims were emboldened by declarations that "Canadian energy security" was under threat and that "critical infrastructures" were in danger of a kind of pre-emptive sabotage or even domestic terrorism (Van Rythoven 2021). Immediately following these actions, solidarity protests started to spring up across Canada, like other tribal territories, as well as concerned settler citizens in urban and rural regions alike, creating public spectacles and interruptions that drew international attention to this remote locale halfway up the western coast.

These distributed, swift and responsive national actions took place nationwide as localized and targeted port, rail and policy office blockades. They included one obstruction near Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, which halted traffic along major Canadian National Railway lines between Toronto and Montreal, five provinces and over 4500 kilometres away from contests in the Wet'suwet'en region. These actions, in turn, led to a shutdown of passenger rail service and rail freight operations in

much of Canada, employment layoffs and contentious general economic shutdown about which there is still much ambivalence and debate amongst the majority population of white, settler Canadians. There was even a Wet'suwet'en action in my hometown of Windsor, Ontario. Windsor is a city that borders Detroit, Michigan and which has its own unfortunate catalogue of social and economic challenges and indigenous rights violations. It was nonetheless a heartening sign of an arising infrastructural awareness that links a struggling automotive manufacturing town to the actions of an oil and gas pipeline company on the other side of a continent.

Figure 3: A schematic map of the Canadian National Railway system. Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory blockades, near Toronto, right of centre on the map, caused a temporary shutdown of most rail systems to the east.

Although their significance, resonance and import are much in excess of their framing as such, the actions, strategies, protests and interruptions which arose in media and against transport and energy infrastructures spurred by the Wet'suwet'en blockade in Canada in 2020, are an example of something we could call 'infrastructural unrest'. Through the attempt to run a 200 km pipeline called the Coastal GasLink Pipeline (CGL) through unceded Wet'suwet'en First Nation territory in Western Canada, the national and supra-national connections that such projects require were revealed to many: From the steel pipeline cylinders that need to be shipped from sites of manufacturing and fabrication, to other support, supply and engineering industries in Canada and the world over that are set to action to the finance and capital flows that become mobilized.

As a reaction to this mobilisation of infrastructural expansions, the Canadian protest blockades evince awareness of and action on human and nonhuman infrastructures. Blockades forcibly strip these systems of the muteness and invisibility projected upon them by abstracting 20th Century Western, colonial, privileged and racialized epistemologies. Outstandingly, the Wet'suwet'en pipeline solidarity blockades took place nationwide, all across Canada, through semi-autonomously organized, localized, distributed industry cities like Hamilton, Ontario (a steel manufacturing town 4374 km from

the proposed pipeline site) and Halifax, Nova Scotia (a fishing, petroleum and trade port almost 6000 km away from Wet'suwet'en territory). The campaigns, which did not resemble the traditional actions of localised activist groups, developed awareness of one another through social media hashtag use. They were grassroots, decentralised and seemingly quite spontaneous, developed by trusted local and regional networks to provoke blockades in solidarity with Wet'suwet'en territory-based supporters and hereditary chiefs.

Figure 2: The Instagram account @therealtown charting a history of the solidarity protests that emerged in Kingston, Ontario, a petrochemical manufacturing town on the shores of Lake Ontario, 4000 km east of the initiating site of The Wet'suwet'en blockades.

The phenomenon of the 2020 Wet'suwet'en blockades in Canada is in line with other modes of contemporary, distributed, networked civil disobedience against the technological somnambulism (Winner, 2014) that renders technological systems invisible to those privileged enough *not to have to* encounter them directly. Modern civil disobedience of this kind adopts appropriately complex, intersectional approaches and procedures that create counter-infrastructures. The *Ende Gelände* (a German phrase meaning "here and no further") protests in Europe similarly employ contradictorily simple-seeming yet sophisticated organizational strategies, combined with a systems-understanding of energy infrastructure. Such movements understand infrastructural systems as at once accessible and abstract, secured yet vulnerable, pervasive yet still localizable, as Star and her colleagues also wrote. Infrastructural sites, activism and blockades, like issues of class, race and gender, "cannot be understood comprehensively or properly assessed as independent entities" (Morris, 1992).

5. AS CANADIAN AS INFRASTRUCTURE (A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE)

It is a tradition amongst many native peoples in North America for a person to introduce themselves, before a discussion, along the lines of

who they are, where they come from, who their people are. It is a gesture that helps determine a person's 'stake' in said discussion. And so: I am a white, male media researcher and artist, whose current work is attempting to construct and engage with softer infrastructures of metabolism and sustenance — food, cooking and baking, for example. I think of these projects, as ever, as Infrastructure Studies by other means. By 'study' here, I mean not just an analytic or critical regard, but also the development of creative and resistive forces that would otherwise seek to homogenize technological and other kinds of landscapes. How can we approach infrastructures not only as oppressive and unapproachable examples of technological lock-in, but also, as Shannon Mattern writes, as "generative structure", as "framework for generating systems and environments and objects and cultivating individuals and communities, that embody the values we want to define our society." (Mattern, 2016) This turn from repeated reveals of the material consequences and bases of globalism to their direct (de)construction seems to me to signal a kind of small victory, or at least progress, for those of us whose battle cry has for some time been 'we need to understand infrastructural systems better'. In some sense, the ensuing year of infrastructural critique looks like it may have, in certain ways, achieved some of its goals. In no way do I claim that Infrastructure Studies is directly responsible for or often even aware of the openings and changes actions like the 2020 Wet'suwet'en blockades advance, but it may be that these these crucial, necessary and urgent reorganizations and conceptualisations are in resonance with one another.

I was spurred to write this contribution and reflection after my interests in Infrastructure Studies changed focus and style, during a few years spent back in the place I was born, a place white settler colonialists at some point started to call "Canada". While stationed in the fairly remote, maritime port city of Halifax, Nova Scotia (the Mi'kmaq name for Halifax is *K'jipuktuk*, pronounced "che-book-took"), it became apparent to me, again, through involvement in labour organizing and student activist campaigns, how vastly distributed and infrastructured, yet regionally divided Canada is. There is a specific, regional form of Canadian alone-togetherness that Canadian economic theorists Mary Quayle Innis (Innis, 1935) and Harold Innis (Innis, 1999) have well elaborated. Its regional politics are organized primarily around the geopolitics and political ecology of the specific resources that each region supplies. These resources result from colonial appetites and the provision of staple goods, themselves "integral to the infrastructure and logistics" (Young, 2020) of North America. It has become increasingly clarifying and helpful for me to read the history and

present of colonial governance of the "Canadian" portion of Turtle Island (an indigenous name for Earth or North America) as having created a nation that is, through and through, *infrastructural.*

Canada-as-infrastructure is a perspective that has more lenses than we would have apt space to address here. Darin Barney similarly argues how infrastructural systems, like pipelines, materialize nationalism despite being owned by and for the profit of private interests. There are, according to Barney, "pipeline nations" and Canada is most definitely one of them (Barney, 2017). The vast and ample natural resources that attracted Canadian settlers to Canada over past centuries, and the brutal and rapacious way that the people who already lived there were moved around and killed to take advantage of these resources, is part of the modern expansionism and desire for interconnectivity at-all-costs that underlie technologies of infrastructure (Davies, 2021). As a reckoning with the nation of my own birth and my upbringing in the highly industrial, economically faltering landscape of the Windsor-Detroit area in the late-1980s and early 90s, this framing has shifted my sense of home and how I can act on and against the brutalities of infrastructural colonialism. This is part of 'the work' that I believe to be the responsibility of the white settler colonial and European cultures and individuals who benefit from this extractive technological expansion, regardless of where they live. As Brian Holmes writes, "As the global shift advances, with its train of threatening and disruptive effects, individuals will increasingly be called upon by conscience to participate in complex projects to repurpose or dismantle industrial energy systems that resist even the slightest transformations" (Holmes, 2017).

Recent incursions into the lands of the Wet'suwet'en have provoked an emergent awareness of the 'infrastructural unrest' both created by and now needed to address the modes of complex, slow violence that indigenous, displaced and disappeared peoples have experienced and understood for centuries. Of course, these dynamics of dispossession and colonial supremacism can be seen today in Canada, but they are also manifesting themselves, in importantly different and similar ways, in many other places.

6. WELCOME TO BLOCKADIA

Our thinking about and encounters with infrastructures manifests a continuous unease in our inability to access their endpoints or account for entire systems and their externalities. The political stakes of this kind of space-time compression — that squeezes some things through and some things out — are part of David Harvey's Marxist critique of

the effects of capitalism as an infrastructure (Harvey, 1989). Within this compression is the bringing into proximity of principles of the commons, of public goods and rights of use, with issues of 'critical infrastructure' and proclamations of 'domestic terrorism' posing risks to national security. The socio-spatial arrangements and dynamics that contemporary energy and communications infrastructures afford also provoke illegal attacks and sabotage, as well as legislation and protections at the very limit and intersection of civic duty, activism, civil disobedience, public good, government and private interests.

Energy and transport infrastructures are increasingly sites where the pressures and anxieties of climate and energy politics play out, showing how far from agreement about 'public works' for the 'common good' local and global communities have become. The building of pipelines, roads and communications networks is still often unquestioningly considered a normative public 'good' in business, governance and development communities (Sheng, 2020), as these align with notions of progress and modernization that privilege speed, access, exchange and commerce.

As Anne Spice elaborates in her excellent writings on "Fighting Invasive Infrastructures" (Spice, 2018), pipeline technologies are not simply "sites" that "support the flow of goods, people and ideas over space". They are protracted events that are a strategy of colonialism, enabling the "material transit of empire" (Spice, 2018). Now, as when they first arrived on the scene, telecommunications and transport networks, pipelines and railways, are hailed as inevitable and necessary pathways to progress, a charitable bringing of the periphery closer to the centre, whether it likes it, wants it, or not. And none of these issues can be solved merely through analyzing 'drivers of conflict' or by continually re-designing 'better' planning processes or providing offset-concessions for infrastructure projects' social or ecological impact (e.g. Boudet, 2011).

The 2020 protests against the Coastal GasLink pipeline, in what could be called an 'intuitive' way, provoked people to target Canadian national and industrial infrastructure sites. Seemingly unrelated and not directly connected to the pipeline itself or even the oil and gas industry, these uprisings are promising evidence of infrastructural awareness, understanding and unrest. They are undoubtedly an instance of what Naomi Klein has called and called for with the term "Blockadia" (Klein & Wright, 2019).

7. INFRASTRUCTURAL UNREST

The blockade actions have been successful in many senses. They have raised awareness of the existence of the Wet'suwet'en people, nation and rights. They have precipitated the dropping of charges against arrested protesters. They have driven evaluation of government and police action toward the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, highlighting pipeline politics and practices as a violation of indigenous persons' right to free, prior and informed consent. Canada, a place that we white, settler, colonialists had been taught to think of *simply* as a 'country', has been revealed again also as an extractive, colonial, white supremacist infrastructure, exposing unequal distributions of knowledge, accesses, benefits and detriments. These inequalities aligns with the messaging of Wet'suwet'en solidarity movements and activism, whose powerfully incisive online mantra, ambition and hashtag is: #shutdowncanada. Protests against the Coastal GasLink pipeline in the winter of 2020 physically shut down Canada's nation-as-infrastructure. For many white settler Canadians, this would be the first time this logistical, resource extractive and racial-capitalist operational layer of the country would halt for long enough for it to be seen for all its illusory 'invisibility' and actual violence.

The Wet'suwet'en Blockades are both products of and a response to an increased understanding and feeling—intimacy even—developing for and against the interconnected networks, strata and industries of infrastructures. As a moment in histories of civil disobedience and against presumptions of 'utility' and 'progress' that often underlie indigenous rights violations, the 2020 Canadian pipeline and railway protests and the #shutdowncanada movement have amplified distributed, ongoing processes and counter-infrastructures. Like the *Ende Gelände* and "Idle No More" movements, they enact an intersectional compression of problems, space and time as multi-sited, spontaneous, temporally, geographically and socially transversal actions that strengthen networks. The Wet'suwet'en blockades signal a deep infrastructural unrest that is welcome, difficult, vital and hopeful.

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[1] The American television show 'Last Week Tonight with John Oliver" devoted an entire 2015 episode to the topic of infrastructure, humorously highlighting the repeating of the "infrastructure is not sexy" mantra by a number of powerful, rather unsexy, white male figureheads across the U.S. political spectrum.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wpzvaqypav8