An integrated approach to changing extractivism

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Pedro Nel Gomez, Colombia
(Anori, 1899 - Medellín, 1984)
El problema del petróleo y la energía, 1936
Outline

1. Where does change in policy and/or practice come from?
2. Horizontal relations
3. Institutional/contextual embeddedness
4. An integrated approach to changing dominant forms of policy and practice
5. Select Bibliography
6. Thank you

Antonio Caro
Bogotá, Colombia
*Colombia Coca-Cola*, 2007

Fernando Botero
(Medellín, 1932)
*Carrobomba*, 1999
1. Where does policy/practice change come from?

+ the myth that research automatically leads to policy/practice change; eg. climate change research has yet to develop serious policy responses
+ in practice, the policy framework perpetuates basic assumptions built into the nation-state structure:
  + top down government rather decentralized, self-governing approach
  + each policy sits isolated in its own Ministry silo, where arising contradictions are used to maintain dominant power relations, rather than a holistic or integrated approach
+ rise of the new extractivism, seeking a social license to further relations of domination under globalized capitalism
  + undermining the nation-state’s ability to develop its own policies and practices
  + annexing and reducing public infrastructure and institutions to serving private interests

⇒ Strictly speaking, change will not come from the top
2. Horizontal relations

horizontal relations between diverse social struggles across the Americas is a critical area for study. Different contexts affected by top-down policy within the new extractivist development model, what forms of collective resistance are pushing for policy/practice change?

my action-research:

- A group of young scholars and activists from Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, and Bolivia working on themes of environment and health, with support from Antipode and EkoSante.
- A self-organized workshop in Medellin, Colombia, August 18-26 (2015) exploring our roles in democratizing north-south extractive relations.
- Key informant interviews with social movement organizers in Colombia and Canada.
3. Institutional/contextual embeddedness

Emerging challenges and learning:

+ building relationships between diverse experiences, across different geographies of capital
+ understanding each other’s institutional position and identity possibilities
+ organizing our own group process, developing a parallel space to the official channels
+ publicizing ourselves, opening space for public debate
+ making time as part of our career development
+ managing different expectations, pressures, and measures of success
+ connecting with other groups and past struggles in terms of strategies for solidarity
+ theorizing ecological consciousness in a local/global integrated context
+ exploiting our differences as a way of producing our own knowledge

⇒ How to take seriously our different institutional/contextual embeddedness AND help each other supersede this through collective intervention?
4. Integrated approach to policy/practice change

+ Change comes from re-organizing the relationship between top-down and bottom-up processes, *it is necessarily an integrated approach*
+ Strengthening horizontal relations between social justice struggles can help reclaim a new public role for policy and practice
+ Groundwork for future victories:
  + (re)politicizing ourselves through collective action
  + (re)defining leadership through self-organizing efforts
  + (re)connecting different struggles in person and online

⇒ towards a collective approach to public knowledge in the network society
5. Select Bibliography

6. Thank you for your support

The workshop entitled, “The Role of Activists and Academics in Addressing Health and Environmental Issues Associated with Extractive Industries in Latin America and Canada” took place in Medellin (Colombia), August 18-26, 2015. It was made possible with support from an International Workshop Award from the Antipode Foundation, as well as two Internship Awards from the EkoSante Collaboration:

http://antipodefoundation.org/international-workshop-awards/201415-recipients/iwa-1415-feagan/

http://ekosante.ugam.ca/en/

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