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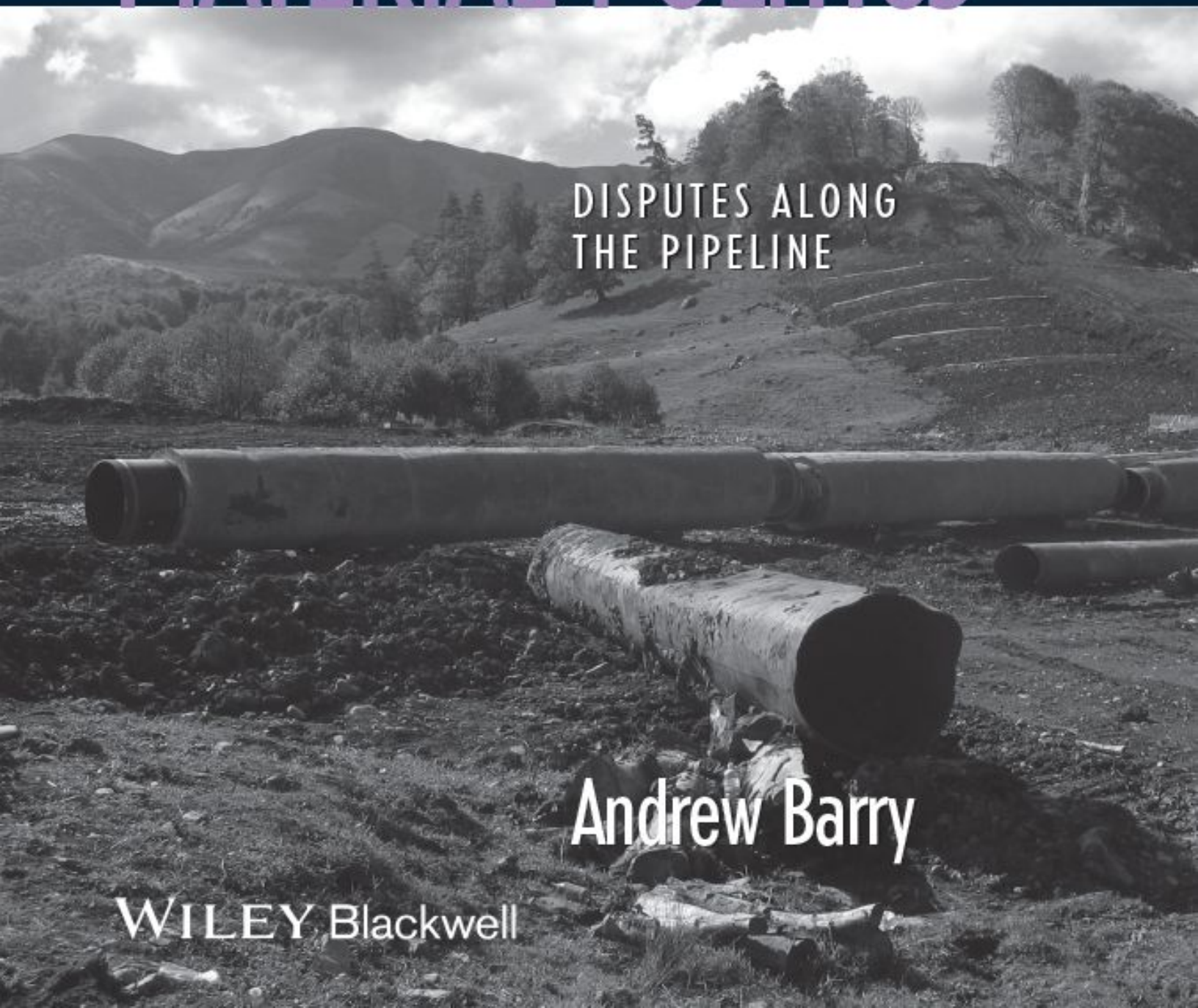

DISPUTES ALONG THE PIPELINE

Andrew Barry

WILEY Blackwell

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Material Politics

Disputes Along the Pipeline

Andrew Barry

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For Georgie

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This book reports on a huge body of social research carried out along the route of a 1760 km pipeline. Much of the book is based on my own reading of the reports that this enterprise generated, whether they derived from the work of consultants, officials or NGOs. When weighed up against this research, my own fieldwork along the route of the pipeline through Georgia was modest in scale, but it also proved highly productive. For this I am grateful to my colleagues, assistants and informants. I am particularly indebted to my researcher Joanna Ewart-James, whose organisational ability and good sense made an enormous contribution to the success of six months of fieldwork in the UK and Georgia in early 2004. While in Tbilisi, we were initially assisted by the staff of the British Council. My thanks go, in particular, to Jo Bakowski, then Director of the British Council in Georgia, and to Louis Plowden-Wardlaw for introducing us. Tamta Khalvashi and Alex Scrivener provided invaluable assistance and translation skills as well as their knowledge of, and insights into, Georgian political history. Alex's good humour and tolerance of my determination to track down seemingly obscure details made fieldwork with him a real pleasure. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Farideh Heyat, who carried out a short period of fieldwork on the development of BTC in Azerbaijan on my behalf, which was the starting point for my account of transparency. While much of this book is based is based on evidence found in public documents, the BTC pipeline was also the subject of two important documentary films. I am especially grateful to Marin Skalsky for a series of conversations about his film *Zdroj* and to Nino Kirtadze for sending me a copy of her *Un*

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Abbreviations

ACG	Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli oil field
AGI	Above ground installation
APG	Artist Placement Group
APLR	Georgian Association for Protection of Landowners Rights
BPEO	Best Practicable Environmental Option
BTC	Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline
CAO	Compliance Advisor Ombudsman
CDAP	Caspian Development Advisory Panel
CDI	Community Development Initiative
CEE	Central and East European Bankwatch Network
CIP	Community Investment Programme
DFID	UK government Department for International Development
DEAO	District Executive Authorities Office
DSA	Designated State Authority
ECGD	UK government Export Credits Guarantee Department
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
ERM	Environmental Resources Management
ESAP	Environmental and Social Action Plan

ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
ESM	Environment and Social Management Plan
ESR	Environmental and Social Report to Lenders
FFM	Fact-Finding Mission
GIOC	Georgian International Oil Corporation
GSSOP	Georgia Sustainment and Stability Operations Program
GTEP	Georgia Train and Equip Program
GYLA	Georgian Young Lawyers Association
HDD	Horizontal Directional Drilling
HGA	Host Government Agreement
IAT	Indicator Assessment Tool
IDP	Internally displaced person
IEC	Independent Environmental Consultants Report to Lenders
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFI	International Financial Institutions
IRM	Independent Recourse Mechanism
KHRP	Kurdish Human Rights Project
MSG	Multi-stakeholder group
NCEIA	Netherlands Commission for Environmental Impact Assessment
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

OSR	Oil Spill Response Plan
PCIP	Project Community Investment Plan
PCDP	Public Consultation and Disclosure Plan
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PMDI	Pipeline Monitoring and Dialogue Initiative
RAP	Resettlement Action Plan
RR	Regional Review
SCP	South Caucasus Pipeline
SLRF	state land replacement fee
SOCAR	State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic
SPJV	Spie Capag/Petrofac International Joint Venture
SR	Sustainability Report
SRAP	Social and Resettlement Action Plan Review
STP	São Tomé e Príncipe
STS	Science and technology studies
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UKNCP	United Kingdom National Contact Point for the OECD guidelines
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

Chapter One

Introduction

In July 2004 officials from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) visited the small village of Dgvari, in the mountains of the Lesser Caucasus, in the region of the spa town of Borjomi in Western Georgia. The village, which was built on a slope that was prone to landslides, was gradually-collapsing, and the villagers wanted to be moved elsewhere. The visit from the IFC was not prompted directly by the occurrence of landslides, however, but by the construction of an oil pipeline in the valley in which Dgvari was situated. The villagers feared that pipeline construction would intensify the frequency of landslides, and they looked to the pipeline company, which was led by BP, to address the problem. Geoscientific consultants, paid for by BP, had previously visited the village, taken measurements and produced a report, reaching the conclusion that although the villagers did need to move, the construction of the pipeline would not make the situation worse. A controversy therefore arose between the villagers and BP over whether or not the construction of the pipeline carried significant risks for the village, and whether the company had the responsibility for addressing the problem. It was this dispute that brought the IFC officials to the village of Dgvari.

In recent years geographers and social theorists have increasingly drawn attention to the critical part that materials play in political life. No longer can we think of material artefacts and physical systems such as pipes, houses, water and earth as the passive and stable foundation on which politics takes place; rather, it is argued,

the unpredictable and lively behaviour of such objects and environments should be understood as integral to the conduct of politics. Physical and biological processes and events, ranging from climate change and flooding to genetic modification and biodiversity loss, have come to animate political debate and foster passionate disputes. Yet if geographers have become interested in what has variously been described as the force, agency and liveliness of materials, thus probing the limits of social and political thought, then at the heart of this book lies an intriguing paradox: for just as we are beginning to attend to the activity of materials in political life, the existence of materials has become increasingly bound up with the production of information. Disputes such as those that occurred in Dgvari have come to revolve not around physical processes such as landslides – which have activity in themselves – in isolation, but around material objects and processes that are entangled in ever-growing quantities of information. The problem of the landslides of Dgvari was assessed by BP's consultants and Georgian geoscientists, as well as by the officials from the IFC, and the deteriorating condition of the villagers' houses was observed by numerous environmentalists and journalists over many years, as well as by myself. To understand the puzzling political significance of the landslides of Dgvari, I will suggest in what follows, we need to understand how their existence became bound up with a vast quantity of documents and reports that circulated between the village and the offices of ministries, scientists and environmentalists in Tbilisi, Washington, DC, London and elsewhere.

This book focuses on a series of disputes that arose along the length of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline that now passes close by the village of Dgvari. In the period from 2003 to 2006 the BTC pipeline was one of the largest single

construction projects in the world. Stretching 1760 km from south of Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, on the Caspian Sea to the port of Ceyhan on the Turkish Mediterranean coast, it had first been conceived in the late 1990s when, in the aftermath of the break up of the Soviet Union and the first Gulf War (1990–91), international oil companies sought to gain access to off-shore oil reserves in the Caspian Sea, including the giant Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli (ACG) field. At the outset, the route of the pipeline through Georgia and Eastern Turkey was explicitly determined by geopolitical considerations, so as to enable oil exports from Azerbaijan to bypass alternative routes through southern Russia and Iran. Indeed, the pipeline was regarded from the late 1990s through the early 2000s as having enormous strategic importance both for the region and, according to some commentators at the time, for the energy security of the West. By 2004, the BTC pipeline employed nearly 22,000 people in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, with a projected cost of approximately $3.9 billion and the capacity to carry 1.2 million barrels of oil per day. While the pipeline was built by a consortium led by BP (BTC 2006), it involved a number of other international and national oil companies including the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR), Unocal, Statoil, Turkish Petroleum (TPAO), ENI, TotalFinaElf, Itochu and Delta Hess (see Table 1.1). It was also supported by the US and UK governments, the International Finance Corporation (IFC)[1] and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Prior to its construction, the BTC pipeline had figured in the plot of the James Bond film, *The World is Not Enough*.

Table 1.1 Institutions and organisations involved in the development and politics of the BTC pipeline

Sources: BTC/SRAP 2003a, BTC/PCIP 2003, BTC 2003b, 2006, Platform et al. 2003, House of Commons 2005b

Participant	BP International and BP Corporation North America (30.1%);

oil Companies (equity stakes in 2003)	State Oil Company of Azerbaijan SOCAR (25%); Turkiye Petrolerri A.O. (TPAO) (6.53%); Statoil ASA (8.71%); TotalFinaElf (5.0%); Union Oil Company of California (Unocal) (8.9%); ITOCHU Corporation (3.4%); INPEX Corporation (2.5%); Delta Hess (2.36%); Agip (5.0%); Conoco Phillips (2.5%).
Contractors and consultants (selection)	Botaş (design, engineering , procurement, inspection); Spie Capag Petrofac (construction); WS Atkins (engineering consultants); Bechtel (engineering and procurement services); Environmental Resources Management (environmental and social impact assessment); Foley Hoag (human rights monitoring); Ernst and Young (sustainability monitoring); Mott Macdonald (lenders' environmental and social consultants); D'Appolonia S.p.A (lenders' independent environmental consultant); Worley Parsons (lenders' engineering consultant).
International financial institutions	International Finance Corporation – World Bank Group (IFC); European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).
Commercial lenders (selection)	Royal Bank of Scotland (UK); Citigroup (US); ABN Amro (NL).
Export Credit Agencies	Eximbank (US); OPIC (US); COFACE (France); Hermes (Germany); JBIC NEXI (Japan); Export Credit Guarantee Department (UK).
International NGOs and related organisations	Amnesty International (UK); World Wildlife Fund for Nature; International Alert; Central and East European Bankwatch (CEE); Friends of the Earth (USA); Crude Accountability (USA). The Baku-Ceyhan Campaign: Friends of the Earth International; Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP); The Corner House (UK); Platform (UK); Bank Information Center (USA); Campagna per la Riforma della Banca Mondiale (Italy).
Regional NGOs (selection)	Open Society Institute (Azerbaijan and Georgia); Green Alternative (Georgia); Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA); The Committee for Oil Industry Workers Rights Protection (Azerbaijan); Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN); Association for the Protection of Landowners Rights (APLR) (Georgia); Centre for Civic Initiatives (Azerbaijan); Entrepreneurship Development Foundation (Azerbaijan); Institute of Peace and Democracy (Azerbaijan); Coalition of Azerbaijan Non-Governmental Organizations For Improving Transparency in the Extractives Industry.
NGOs involved in BTC Community Investment Programme	Care International in the Caucasus; Mercy Corps.

(CIP) in Georgia	

Yet the pipeline was much more than a vast financial and engineering project with security implications that stretched across three countries. For a period it was also viewed by many as a public experiment intended to demonstrate the value of a series of innovations in global governance that had developed progressively through the 1990s and 2000s, notably transparency, corporate social responsibility and 'global corporate citizenship' (Thompson 2005, 2012, Watts 2006, Lawrence 2009). Indeed, one of BP's explicit goals in developing BTC was to establish 'a *new model* for large-scale, extractive-industry investments by major, multinational enterprises in developing and transition countries' (BTC/CDAP 2007: 2, emphasis added, BTC 2003a: 7). It was, in particular, the first major test of the Equator Principles, the financial industry benchmark for 'determining, assessing and managing social and environmental risk' in project financing (Equator Principles 2003, Browne 2010: 172). This was a demonstration or test that would have to be performed in a region, the South Caucasus, in which none of the key parties – international oil corporations, investment banks, international NGOs – had much prior experience. In these circumstances, the parties involved in the development of BTC sought to carve out a space, simultaneously governmental, material and informational, within which this test could be performed and its results published. The BTC project is therefore remarkable not just because of its scale and complexity, or what was thought to be its geopolitical significance, but because an unprecedented quantity of information was made public about both the potential impact of its construction and how this impact would be managed and mitigated.[2] Indeed, as the project came to fruition in 2003, thousands of pages of documents about the pipeline were

made public by BP, heading the consortium behind the project, while further reports were released by the IFC and other international institutions. At the same time, the pipeline attracted the attention of numerous documentary film-makers, artists, environmentalists, journalists, academics and human rights organisations.

The global oil industry has, of course, long been a knowledge production industry focused on the problem of how to locate and extract a complex organic substance that takes multiple forms from a range of distant and dispersed locations (Bowker 1994, Bridge and Wood 2005). Moreover, the oil industry has always been concerned with the problem of how to suppress, channel, contain or govern the potentially disruptive activity of materials and persons. In this light, the recent efforts to promote the virtues of transparency, public accountability and environmental and social responsibility have to be understood in the context of a longer history (Mitchell 2011). The story of BTC is in part a story of how the production and publication of information appears to offer capital a new, responsible and ethical way of managing the unruliness of persons and things. To understand the construction of the BTC pipeline, I suggest, we need to appreciate how its existence became bound up with the publication of information intended to effect its transparency. And to understand why and how its construction was disputed, we need to attend to the controversies that it animated, which did not just revolve around issues of geopolitics or the pipeline's relation to state interests, but also around quite specific technical matters concerning, for example, the likelihood of landslides, the impact of construction work on agricultural production, and the depth that the pipeline would need to be buried in the ground to protect it from sabotage. Indeed for a period, the BTC pipeline became the focus of an extraordinary range of particular disputes about what was

known about its construction, its environmental impact, and even about the material qualities of the pipe itself.

I have already suggested that a case such as this poses a challenge to geography and social theory. The challenge is how to understand the role of materials in political life in a period when the existence of materials is becoming progressively more bound up with both the production and the circulation of information. At a time when social theorists and philosophers have drawn our attention to the agency, liveliness and unruly activity of materials, we need to be aware that the existence of materials is also routinely traced, mapped and regulated, whether this is in order to assess their quality, safety, purity, compatibility or environmental impact. This is not a new phenomenon; but the generation and circulation of information about materials and artefacts, including massive infrastructural assemblages such as oil pipelines, has come to play an increasingly visible part in political and economic life. One core argument of this book is that we need to develop accounts of the political geography of materials whose ongoing existence is associated with the production of information.

A second core argument follows. It responds to the claim that when information is made more transparent and publically available, rational and open forms of public debate should ensue (cf. Hood 2006). In this book I put forward an alternative account of the politics of transparency. I argue that the implementation of transparency, along with the growing salience of other core principles of transnational governance and social and environmental responsibility, foster new forms of dispute. The practice of transparency and corporate responsibility, I contend, does not necessarily lead to a reduction in the intensity of disagreement, although it does generate new concerns, sites and problems about which it matters to

disagree. My central questions are geographical. In a period in which the virtues of transparency and environmental and social responsibility have been so insistently stressed, how and why do particular materials, events and sites become controversial? Why should quite specific features of the pipeline, such as its relation to the village of Dgvari, become matters of transnational political concern, while other-candidate problems do not? If we understand the construction of the BTC pipeline as a demonstration of the practice of transparency, then, as we will see, the results of this vast public experiment turn out to be instructive.

The remainder of this introduction is organised into four parts. In the first, I introduce the idea of a public knowledge controversy, of which the case of the BTC pipeline is an example, and survey a number of key features of knowledge controversies in general, and public knowledge controversies in particular.[3] There is already a substantial literature on knowledge controversies, but here I introduce the concept of the political situation in order to highlight the way in which the spatiality, temporality and limits of any given controversy are themselves likely to be in question. I suggest that individual controversies, such as the dispute over the future of the village of Dgvari, are rarely isolated events. Rather, the relation between a particular controversy and other controversies and events elsewhere is likely to be uncertain and itself a matter of dispute. Individual knowledge controversies, I propose, need to be understood as elements of multiple political situations of which they form a part.

The second part of the introduction turns to the question of the way in which the properties, qualities and design of materials are bound up with the production of information. Human geographers have increasingly argued that they need to attend to what has variously been understood as the liveliness, agency and powers of materials as well as