



MARINE PIPELINE TERMINAL

URSULA BIEMANN

Oil companies are the architects of many oil infrastructures that guarantee a globalized and frictionless flow of resources. The terminal is a major node between the messy resource fringe in remote places and the clean world of digital users. Since in the extracting industry resources are bound to a specific location, a highly technological and capital-intensive distribution system has to be put in place. In the process, not only urban centers but also fringe spaces are reconfigured by the networked infrastructures and turned into spaces of flow. (1) These architectures are widely invisible but determine, nevertheless, the means by which this space is made productive for geopolitical ends. They constitute a system of dispersed and physically disconnected sites which remotely rely on and affect each other (oilrigs, vessel control towers, stock market, corporate headquarters, gas stations). The global dispersal of operations ranging from the extraction and refinement to the transportation of oil to world markets requires a complex network of logistical processes which synchronization across distance has become a corporate priority. (2) Oil companies are the architects and operators of a vast web of transfer infrastructures to guarantee a globalized and frictionless flow of resources. Detached from local contexts, they constitute ever new offshore zones in strategic places and increasingly are the sites where territorial conflicts over resources are fought out.

The focus on hyper mobility and the seamless flow of energy privileges the role of the logistical centers as the key nodes in the network of the space of flows. While it is important to analyze these integrated systems, I believe that placing them center-stage in the oil discourse reproduces existing asymmetries in the world oil geography which result from persistently delinking local contexts from infrastructural connectivity. This creates geographic differentiations which are mainly due to the uneven way in which different places are enrolled into the global information and energy system. There is a dynamic at work which dramatically contrasts an infrastructure which logistically organizes the energy flows for the planet against the offline rural social environment it traverses. At one end of the spectrum are fully digital and mobile movers, at the other end are traditional place-based communities. But there is a whole range of hybrid possibilities in between. For instance, the pipeline project doesn't address the Azerbaijani farmers as energy consumers or users of information, which they both are, but as total non-participants. There is no need to conceive of them as radically different from the global consumer community which is networked and mobile. From what I could see, the flow of information wasn't hindered due to a reception problem

but because the corporation was reluctant to circulate it. We have to recognize that it is through their emancipatory struggle only that the farmers became partners in the negotiations. Distinct power geometries are generated in the process. (I like geometry here because it's also a spatial measuring device and more concise in the proportional layout than geography) In the course of my research they became clearly legible, not only with respect to the subject of my research but also in terms of the methods used by the multiple discourses I examined - economic, journalistic, anthropological, geographical ones ? which equally shape this space. Oil appears primarily in geo-economic contexts. Looking at economic discourses, then, it appears that the discipline of energy geography, dominated by post-industrial, service-oriented economies, shows little interest in what is perceived as old-fashion resource geography. (3) There is a center-periphery dynamic set up between the digital, fast, technology and capital driven core, and the unstable, remote, foreign, messy and uncomfortable, if not dangerous, periphery. The mechanisms of the power centers are at the explanatory heart of geographic theory (both located in urban centers) while the resource peripheries, (oil extraction zones) are located elsewhere, expensive to reach and scarcely relevant for a basic understanding of processes underlying spatial unevenness. For even the processes themselves are not seen as dynamic but something that ultimately resides in the center. In this context, network theories have not provoked a decentralization of discourse.

Black Sea Files locates itself on the messy fringe, introducing a multi-vocal approach to a place where there is a high degree of conflict among competing value systems and voices. Globalization inarguably has different meanings, implications and history for resource peripheries than for cores. The post-industrial nations are perpetually pre-occupied with the looming Peak-Oil crises and crude prices. This project, in contrast, tends to favor a diversity of perspectives and discourses, reflecting the historical and cultural complexity of the subject. On the resource fringes, industrial, environmental, cultural, and geopolitical dimensions are amplified and often clash against each other. Even if this is not an experience we share in the centers on the same scale, they shouldn't be deemed theoretically unimportant for that matter. Resource peripheries around the world have become deeply contested spaces and anyone involved in the anti-globalization movement understands that insights about the global economy cannot be derived from the experience of cores alone. What place locally embedded resource peripheries have within a wider global system of capital, markets and power has become a central question if peace shall be maintained.

The terminal is a major node in the connections between fringe and center and hence of particular interest here. The Mediterranean oil terminal near Ceyhan is where the Caspian oil will eventually fill the tankers and sail off to world markets. With a media-effective ceremony, the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline was inaugurated in May 2005. It will take another 6 months to fill the line and have first oil pumped on board a tanker on the jetty loading platform of the marine terminal. The Caspian crude has come on stream

and will soon begin to feed the hydrocarbon capillary system: silently, invisibly, high-speed.

The BTC terminal didn't need to be built from scratch. It is the extension of the terminal of a pipeline bringing oil from Kirkuk in Iraq's north to Yumurtalik, a small Turkish fishing port near Ceyhan in the bay of Iskendurum. With the lifting of the embargo on Iraq, the choked oil flow is now returning to full capacity. The new oil hub is presented as a strategic junction of Middle Eastern and Caspian energy basins and as such is of growing importance to the region and the world. After U.S.-led forces laid claim to Iraq in 2003, this Iraq-Turkey pipeline has blown up on multiple occasions, causing Turkey great worries and substantial losses in oil transit fees. In times of war, the vulnerable connection turns into a national lifeline. Major operational and military infrastructures coincide in this space. The Turkish military base Incirlic, in vain requested by U.S. forces for use during the invasion of Iraq, is located just around the corner from the oil terminal. Here, like elsewhere, fences and watchtowers profile the architectures on the fringe which are in explicit conflict with the interests of local populations or, in a more blurry way, are anticipated to be a potential target in the mind of an imaginary opponent.

1. 1 Easterling, Keller (1999) Organization Space, Cambridge, MIT Press
2. 2 Graham, Stephen (2001) FlowCity, Networked Mobilities and the Contemporary Metropolis
3. 3 Hayter, Roger (2002) Relocating Resource Peripheries to the Core of Economic Geography's Theorizing, Area (2003) 35.1, 15-23, Royal Geographical Society

Cluster: Black Sea Files

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