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## **George W. White**

*PhD (Geography), Professor of Geography,  
South Dakota State University, Wecota Hall 115F, Box 506, 1101 Medary Ave., Brookings, SD 57007, USA  
e-mail: [George.White@sdstate.edu](mailto:George.White@sdstate.edu), <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1849-0581>*

## **Bruce V. Millett**

*PhD (Biological Sciences), Assistant Professor of Geography,  
South Dakota State University, Wecota Hall 115F, Box 506, 1101 Medary Ave., Brookings, SD 57007, USA  
e-mail: [Bruce.Millett@sdstate.edu](mailto:Bruce.Millett@sdstate.edu)*

## **Kimberly K. Johnson Maier**

*ABD (Geography), Instructor of Geography,  
South Dakota State University, Wecota Hall 115F, Box 506, 1101 Medary Ave., Brookings, SD 57007, USA  
e-mail: [Kimberly.JohnsonMaier@sdstate.edu](mailto:Kimberly.JohnsonMaier@sdstate.edu)*

### **THE DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE (DAPL): THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHIES OF A CONTROVERSY**

The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), constructed 2016-2017, is just one of numerous energy pipelines in the United States. As with many pipelines, environmental impact is a potential and a concern, but opposition to the DAPL became more intense than opposition to other pipelines, even reaching the national and international stages. Though competing narratives and the depiction of some actors in the DAPL debate have been elucidated and analyzed, there are still ways to apply theory to explain why the DAPL in particular became such a hot political issue or if this issue did any more than capture the public's attention for a fleeting moment. Assemblage theory should be able to provide an explanation, but it has different genealogies, some diametrically opposed to one another, and they have not been rigorously applied to real-world situations. By carefully applying assemblage theory to the controversy surrounding the DAPL, this article seeks to simultaneously explain the controversy surrounding the DAPL and refine some of the nuanced concepts comprising assemblage theory.

**Keywords:** *Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), oil, water, protests, critical realism, response assemblage (RA), Socio-Ecological Systems (SESS).*

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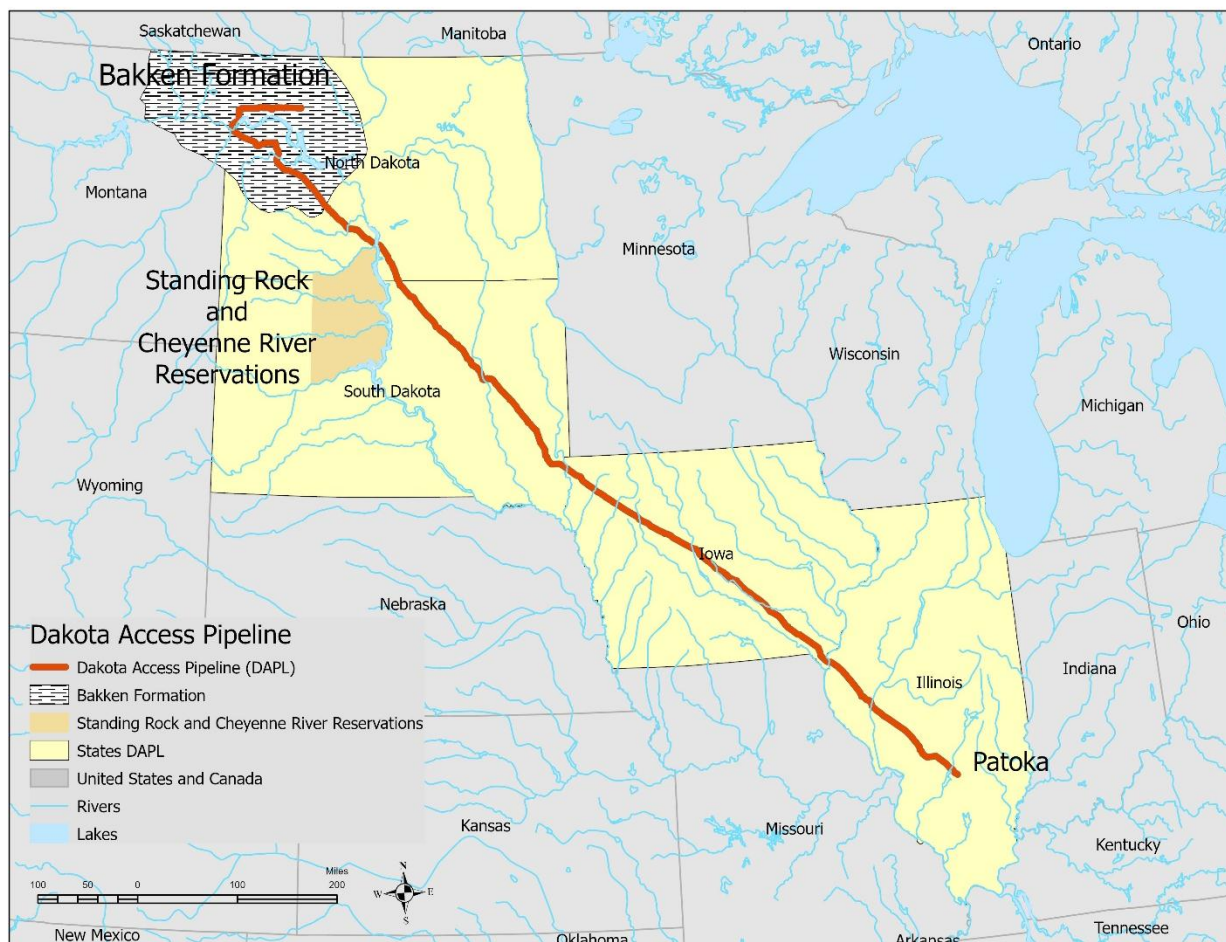
**Problem Definition.** The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) is a 30-inch pipeline that extends from six different terminals in the Bakken and Three Forks shale oil fields in northwest North Dakota to Patoka, Illinois for a distance of 1,172 miles (1,886 km) [1] (Fig. 1). At Patoka, it connects to the Energy Transfer Crude Oil Pipeline ("ETCO") that runs approximately 700 miles (1,127 km) to Nederland, Texas. The DAPL is primarily a project of Dakota Access, LLC, a subsidiary of Dallas-based Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. The project was first announced in June 2014 [2]. Construction began in June 2016 with completion and transportation of oil on June 1, 2017 [3]. Though the DAPL was completed, opposition to it arose shortly before construction commenced and then grew fierce as construction proceeded. Of the 2.4 million miles of energy pipelines in the United States, the DAPL's potential impact, especially concerning the natural environment, is not particularly noteworthy though opposition to it reached the national and

international stages. For example, when then President Obama was on an official visit in Laos in September 2016, a Malaysian woman asked him about the DAPL controversy [4]. This research applies the concept of the response assemblage (RA) to explain the controversy surrounding the DAPL and to determine whether the concept of the RA is a useful tool of analysis.

**Analysis of Current Research.** The concept of the "response assemblage" (RA) has been widely applied in geography in recent years. Its origins trace back to Gilles Deleuze, a French philosopher, and Félix Guattari, a French psychoanalyst and political activist [5] [6]. Others have built on their work. Figures include but are not limited to Manuel DeLanda [7] [8] [9]. Jane Bennett [10], Ben Anderson, Matthew Kearnes, Colin McFarlane, et al. [11], and Eden Kinkaid [12]. In short, response assemblages have been applied in differing situations involving human interactions of varying political, economic, and social types.

Helen Briassoulis has elaborated on the general concept of “assemblages” to advance more specific concepts of “response assemblages” (RAs) and their “socio-ecological fit” to explain human responses to environmental degradation (SEFRA) [13]. In contrast to ontologies of “wholes” and “networks”, the former characterized by positivist analysis and the latter by social con-

structivism, Briassoulis employs the term “assemblages”, which she derives from a critical realist perspective. The key difference among these three ontologies is the conception of the relationships among the “multifarious biophysical and human components” of Socio-Ecological Systems (SESs) [13, p. 169].



**Fig. 1. Route of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL)**

In contrast to positivist and social constructivist understandings, Briassoulis portrays assemblages as entities with autonomous components, which in turn “have variable spatial and temporal extent and reach and play material and expressive roles” [13 p 169]. Additionally, “a component may be detached from one assemblage and inserted into another.” Thus, assemblages are not fixed or given but instead forever “becoming” as the number of components and their relationships endlessly change. It also means that human responses to any event or situation are unique because the set of actors and elements and their interplay producing the event or situation are unique. In other words, human reactions to one another and to elements in the natural environment are “contextual and contingent.”

According to Briassoulis, assemblages and their components emerge, change, disintegrate, and/or become subsumed depending on the nature and evolution of their *properties*, *capacities*, and *tendencies*. “Properties are local results of interactions between entities. They refer

to actual states of affairs and they are given and known (or knowable) [13, 170] Anderson, Kearnes, McFarlane et al. [11].” *Capacities* refer to an entity’s total powers though they may not be fully brought to bear in all instances. The entities’ patterns of behavior in their interactions result in certain *tendencies* of a Socio-Ecological System (SES). The sum total of all entities’ capacities within a SES demarcate a *possibility space* [13 p 170].

Within the possibility space is a region known as the *basin of attraction*, which represents the location of a SES. The initial circumstances of a SES orient a SES toward an *attractor*, the final location of a SES within the basin of attraction [14]. Attractors emerge and exit over time, fading gradually to rapidly (the latter akin to technology disruption). Briassoulis notes the following general example concerning the definition and nature of an attractor: “an agricultural region may persist for centuries as such; it may have traditionally been cultivated with cereals (attractor 1), mechanized cultivation may have followed (attractor 2), trees may have partly or

totally replaced cereals (attractor 3), while tourism pressures may be gradually driving agriculture out, converting the agricultural into a tourist RA (new basin of attraction)” [13 p 177]. This example illustrates that a territory can include multiple RAs, which not only coincide or overlap spatially but also temporally.

The attractor is important because it causes a SES to move and change within its basin of attraction, and thus helps to explain the processes underlying events, change, and movement. More than one attractor can exist within a system, each pulling the SES in diverging directions. Identifying an attractor or attractors reveals the possible trajectory or trajectories of the SES and the Response Assemblages (RAs) that emerge and act within them. Attractors also can exist within and act for more than one system, often with varying effects for the differing systems. Thus, attractors shape possibility spaces for systems and assemblages, not only in terms of internal characters but also in spatial and temporal extent. Drawing on Manuel DeLanda’s work [9], Briassoulis believes that the exploration of tendencies created by attractors is “purely an empirical matter” [13 p 170]. This is a goal of this work vis-à-vis the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) with the intent of illustrating the applicability of SESs and RAs to real-world circumstances.

The identification of attractors and trajectories is important to analysis, but identification alone does not guarantee forgone conclusions concerning events. The actual interactions of the components (i.e., entities) within the SES and RA will determine the degree to which events will unfold, in turn determine the actual directions of the tendencies established by the attractor(s). With each SES and RA being contextual and contingent, essential to the determination of outcomes and final destinations of an assemblage are the interactions of the components within the SES. Because all components are not equal in terms of the power and influence that they exert, Briassoulis employs the term *critical components* and characterizes them as either ‘slow variables’ or ‘fast variables’ [13 p 170]. She elaborates and identifies specific examples accordingly: “Certain critical components (e.g. relief, culture, governance, political regime), the slow variables of an SES, play key, regulating roles, shaping the identity, conditioning the operation, and steering the evolution of the RA while faster changing variables (e.g. temperature, product prices, leaders) may be influential in a period” [13 p 174]. Simultaneously, external forces also can change an RA and the trajectory of a SES.

Response assemblages may offer a better conceptualization and thus more accurate explanations of real human decision-making and action and resultant events. More important is the need to appraise the effectiveness of a response assemblage in environmental conservation and/or preservation. Ideally, response assemblages lead to improved methods of environmental conservation and/or preservation. Processes that reinforce the effectiveness of a response assemblage are known as *territorialization* [13 pp 169-170, 176, 179]. However, scenarios exist whereby certain response assemblages evolve in such a way as to increase environmental degradation. This can occur when components of the response assemblage are disassembled, i.e., *deterritorialization*.

### Pointing out unresolved part of the problem.

Though literature on response assemblages (RAs) is very robust, it is still evolving and with varying emphases. The aim here is to consider the concept of the “response assemblage” in reference to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) with the intent of asking and answering pertinent questions. Most importantly, does the concept of the response assemblage provide the best explanation for the events surrounding the DAPL? Does the concept of the response assemblage demonstrate that best decision-making practices are implemented which, in turn, protect the natural environment and secure continuous provision of ecosystem services? Or, in the case of the DAPL, did the response assemblage become deterritorialized and fail? In short, this case study will demonstrate that the concept of the response assemblage is a useful tool of description and organization. However, it also will show that deterritorialization can occur when certain entities within the response assemblage use their capacities to assert outcomes beneficial to their own agendas but at the expense of the natural environment and the ways of life of the people and cultures who rely upon it. This can occur when new attractors emerge after fast variables suddenly change circumstances and, in turn, abruptly change *properties, capacities, and tendencies* of a SES. Overall, this research will be shown that Briassoulis’ conception is useful for understanding the events surrounding the DAPL, but it requires modification through the application of other researchers’ ideas to provide more nuanced analysis to account for intersectionalities and synergies.

**The results of the research.** Applying Briassoulis’ terms, the DAPL itself is one component within a Socio-Ecological System (SES) of “multifarious biophysical and human components” [13 p 169]. It was a manifestation of a new attractor within the SES: oil extraction and transport. This new attractor emerged among other existing attractors such as mechanized farming, Native American land uses, recreation, and urban systems. As a new attractor, oil extraction and transport changed the overall *properties, capacities, and tendencies* of the SES by adding new components to the SES. In turn, the *possibility space* was altered and also the location of the *basin of attraction*. As new components (e.g., Dakota Access, LLC) entered the SES and employed their capacities to enact their agendas, they competed and conflicted with existing attractors and the components that developed around them. The competition and conflict intensified in certain locations as the differing components employed their capacities to resist or bring about change in the SES’s trajectory.

When oil extraction and transport became a new attractor in this Socio-Ecological System (SES), the Bakken oil and natural gas fields of western North Dakota simultaneously emerged as a biophysical component and became a critical component after two human components became significant. One was high oil prices on the world market resulting from changes in the global economy and geopolitics. The other was a rapidly improving technology known as hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”). All three synergized and gave rise to the DAPL project, and in turn acted as a catalyst for the corresponding response assemblage and resulting con-

flict that emerged within the SES as other components with the SES contested the construction of the DAPL. To understand each of their roles in the response assemblage, the three new components need detailed examination.

The Bakken oil and natural gas fields of western North Dakota were discovered in 1951, and oil production quickly ensued with a peak reached in 1986. During this period, the state of technology allowed for only a relatively small percentage of the oil and natural gas deposits to be exploited. Estimates ranged from one to 50 percent [15] [16] [17]. Much of the oil and natural gas was inaccessible, trapped within the shale and dolomite rock layers. Hydraulic fracturing (aka “fracking”), eventually allowed far greater accessibility. First tried in 1947, it was not perfected and economically feasible until the 2000s. As it improved, greater quantities of oil and natural gas were unlocked in the Bakken fields, in turning giving hydraulic fracturing new significance and great impact.

The price of crude oil became a critical component of the SES with developments in the global economy and geopolitics. It was less than US\$28 per barrel in the early 2000s, [15] [18], but then rose sharply. On July 11, 2008, it peaked at US\$ 147.27 per barrel. National figures such as oilman T. Boone Pickens stated that “In two or three years, we’re going to be at \$200 a barrel—could be \$300 a barrel for oil” [18]. The backdrop for such beliefs were China’s and India’s rapidly growing economies and a concurrent rise in demand for oil and natural gas. A world recession precluded such an occurrence, but oil rose again to over US\$100 per barrel between 2011 and 2013. In Briassoulis’ concept of the “response assemblage”, the sharp rise in oil prices operated as a “fast variable” [13, pp. 174, 176].

The third aforementioned critical component was rapidly improving hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) technology, which in turn made extraction with such technology profitable. This cost has varied in terms of geology, geography, and the economic efficiency of each of the numerous companies involved in the activity. Less than one percent could break even when oil sold at US\$30 per barrel. About half of the wells in the Bakken could break even in the US\$60-70 per barrel [15]. However, when the price of a barrel of oil reached US\$ 147.27 in 2008, essentially all the oil wells became profitable. This explains the heavy investment in the Bakken in 2008 and afterwards. As hydraulic fracturing technology has continued to become more efficient, its cost has continued to decline and steadily lowered the breakeven point of a barrel of oil: “Thus what may have only been economical at \$100/bbl in 2006 could have been economical at \$75/bbl by 2010, and perhaps \$60/bbl by 2014” [17]. One analysis showed that the cost of hydraulic fracturing declined 42 percent from early 2013 to early 2017 [16].

To reap the maximum profits, a pipeline was needed to transport Bakken oil to market. The most logical intermediate destinations were tank farms in Patoka, Illinois or Cushing, Oklahoma. Patoka was chosen [19], which required a new oil pipeline from western North Dakota to south central Illinois. The specific route then needed to be mapped.

Any oil pipeline route from western North Dakota to Patoka simultaneously crossed an existing Socio-Ecological System (SES) with its “multifarious biophysical and human components” [13 p 169]. Because the oil pipeline threatened the existing land uses within the SES, the existing components coalesced into a response assemblage to oppose and resist the components, some of them new, which sought to construct, allow, and facilitate the DAPL. The resistance made a fourth component of SES play a prominent role, namely the numerous governmental agencies with their hierarchies and overlapping jurisdictions that needed to approve the pipeline. Indeed, Briassoulis notes that usually no single, central governing power exists concerning ecosystem services [13 p 179]. Instead, governance consists of structures, systems, and processes manifesting themselves in multi-level governance networks. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) are just two examples of agencies at the federal level that became involved in the DAPL case. Governmental agencies of North Dakota, South Dakota, Illinois, and Iowa also played roles.

In Iowa, for example, state representatives introduced bills into the Iowa legislature that would have restricted the use of eminent domain in Iowa. “The legislation would have required companies pursuing the projects to secure voluntary easements for 75 percent of the land parcels before eminent domain could be authorized by state officials” [20]. The intent of the legislation was to make it more difficult for Dakota Access, LLC to obtain access to the lands that it needed for an oil pipeline as well as prevent a company seeking to build a high-voltage transmission line. However, opposing interests prevailed and the bills died in committee.

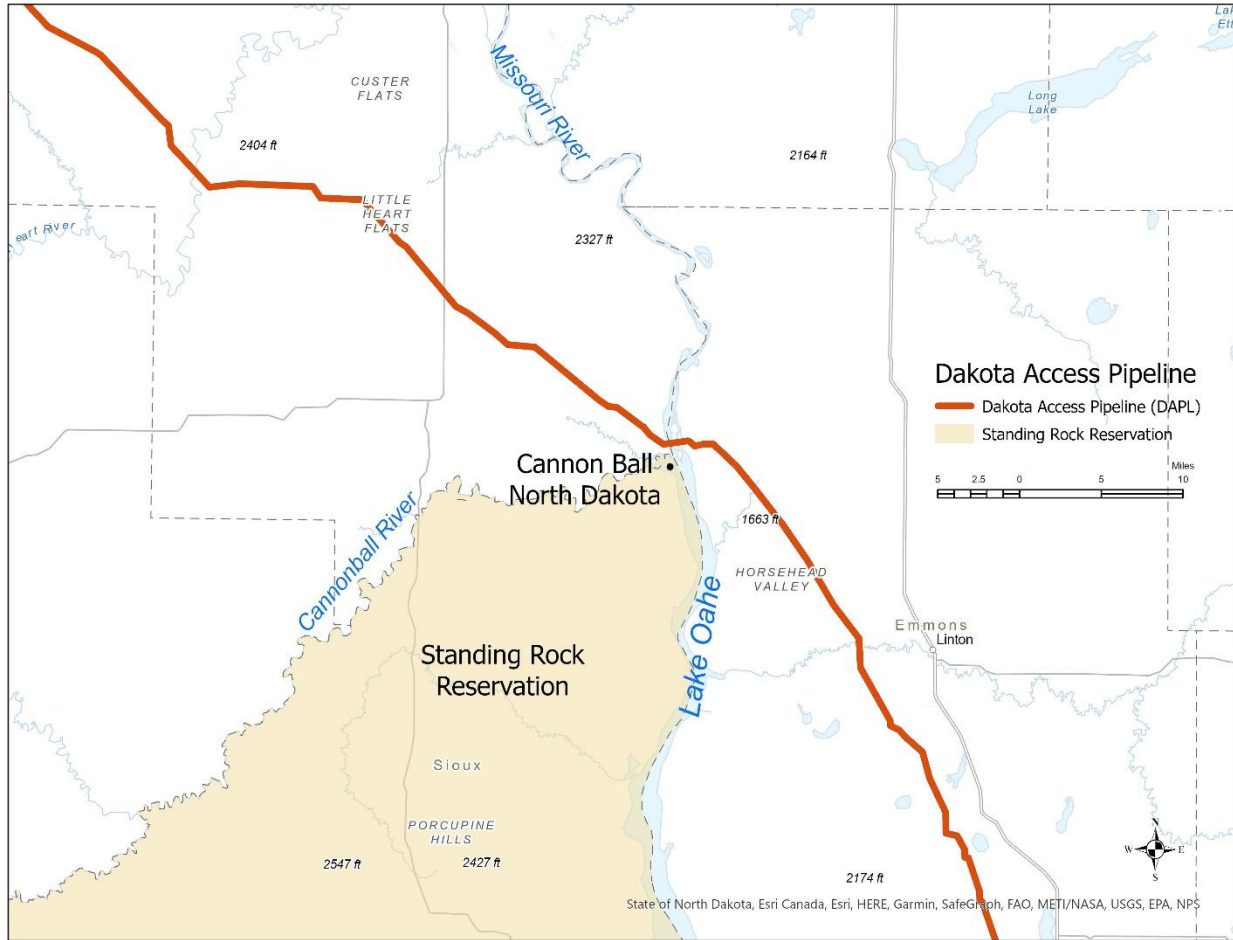
In May 2016, Iowa farmers filed two lawsuits to stop eminent domain proceedings pursued by Dakota Access, LLC and authorized by the Iowa Utilities Board [21]. The plaintiffs argued that Dakota Access, LLC was not a utility and, therefore, had no right to pursue eminent domain cases against their properties. Fifteen other landowners also sued with additional arguments that the pipeline also was not in the public interest as it was only to the interest and benefit of a single company, especially because the oil was to be exported. National organizations like the Sierra Club [22] supported the landowners. The League of Women Voters of Iowa and 27 other state organizations formed the Bakken Pipeline Resistance Coalition [23]. However, a Polk County judge ruled that Dakota Access, LLC had such a right [22].

The variety of actors illustrate that the planning and approval of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) was not subject to a single, hierarchical, integrated system of governmental agencies acting in harmony. The DAPL illustrates Briassoulis’ argument that assemblages are comprised of autonomous components, many of which enter and exit the assemblage as relationships continually change, forever “becoming” [13 p 169]. In its “becoming”, the greatest number of components opposing the DAPL converged and aligned at Cannon Ball, ND, which was close to the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. One of the Reservation’s members, *LaDonna Bravebull Allard*, set up Sacred Stone Camp for those expressing their opposition [24] (Figure 2). The camp



attracted native peoples from across the country and was touted the largest gathering of native tribes in 100 years and included Native American organizations not tied to any specific tribe. Examples included the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN), Honor the Earth, and Native Organizers Alliance [25]. Standing Rock tribal members stated that an oil leak would contaminate their

water supply, a simple, yet clear narration: clean water, a basic human need, was threatened by a big oil corporation seeking profit. Integral to this narrative was the argument that those opposed to the DAPL were not *protesters* but instead *protectors*, that the former term “is negative” and “makes Native people seem angry and violent for protecting their resources” [26].



**Fig. 2. The Route of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) as it crosses under Lake Oahe on the Missouri River near Cannonball, North Dakota and Standing Rock Indian Reservation**

Beside the water issue, tribal members expressed concern that sacred sites could be destroyed during the construction process, sites located on land promised to the Standing Rock Reservation. Thus, the DAPL treaded on feelings of a historical injustice never rectified and now re-committed. Together, the three issues of clean water, sacred sites, historical injustice painted a picture of continued and renewed violations of both the human and cultural rights of a historically oppressed minority. These issues are eloquently outlined in Nick Estes’ recently published book, *Our history is our future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the long tradition of indigenous resistance* [27]. Succinct and drawing on broad historical and cultural understandings in American culture, these issues had great potential for resonating far beyond the location where the DAPL crossed the Missouri River near Cannonball, ND.

In April 2016, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) acknowledged five recorded cultural sites and the possible existence of 30 others within a 1-

mile radius but concluded that no historic sites would be harmed [28]. In June 2016, the U.S. government’s Advisory Council on Historic Preservation—representing a new component in this response assemblage—disputed the USACE’s findings, encouraged it to justify its position, and work with tribal leaders. Nevertheless, on July 25, the USACE approved the DAPL project citing “No significant comments remain unresolved” [28]. On July 27, Standing Rock Reservation sued the USACE, alleging that the USACE had violated the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Clean Water Act (CWA), and the Rivers and Harbors Act (RHA) [29] [30]. With court permission, Dakota Access, LLC joined the USACE as a defendant. Onsite protests began and grew as others united with Standing Rock members in protest. Notably, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe joined the lawsuit as a plaintiff with Standing Rock.

As the legal disputes intensified, the confrontation escalated and enlivened the response assemblage. For

example, on August 15, Dakota Access LLC sued leaders of the Standing Rock Sioux, alleging that protesters “halted construction activities” [28]. On September 3, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe claimed that Energy Transfer Partners destroyed an area that contained “significant Native artifacts and sacred sites”. Other components joined the response assemblage. For example, North Dakota Governor Jack Dalrymple involved himself on September 8 when he sent the North Dakota National Guard to reinforce local law enforcement [28]. The Justice Department, the Department of the Army and the Interior Department also became involved when they requested Dakota Access, LLC to voluntarily halt construction on land under the jurisdiction of the USACE near the river crossing at Lake Oahe pending further evaluation and consultation.

Increased tensions led to confrontation and arrest on October 10, Columbus Day (celebrated as Native American Day or Indigenous Peoples’ Day in some states and localities) with the gathering of many people at Cannon Ball. For hours, people expressed their opposition to the DAPL in front of a line of police. Eventually, Morton County Sheriff’s department arrested 27 demonstrators [31]. Among them was Shailene Woodley, an award-winning Hollywood actor and environmental activist. At the time of her arrest, the Environmental Media Association (EMA) already planned to award her the Female EMA Futures Award on October 26 [32]. Woodley’s arrest created more press coverage for both the demonstrations against the DAPL and her award [33]. At the moment of her arrest, Woodley was at almost the two-hour mark of a Facebook livestream. Her interaction with law enforcement over the subsequent few minutes [31] [34] was posted as a video entitled “The riot police are arriving” on Woodley’s Facebook page [35]. At the EMA Futures Award on October 26, Woodley received her award and had the stage for nearly 11 minutes [36]. Accompanied by a member of the Diné (Navajo) Nation and a member of the Apache Nation, she yielded to the former for a prayer. Afterwards, she spent the remaining seven minutes talking about Standing Rock Reservation and the DAPL, stating that about 40,000 watched her Facebook livestream on October 10. Woodley then implored people to go to Standing Rock, noting that 35 people were at the protest site when she arrived there, but numbers grew to over 8,000 by the time she left six weeks later. Woodley’s “The riot police are arriving” video had more than five million views by the end of 2018.

Meanwhile, despite the aforementioned requests by federal agencies to temporarily halt the construction of the DAPL at the Lake Oahe river crossing, Energy Transfer Partners resumed construction on October 12 [28]. Using response assemblage terminology, Energy Transfer Partners employed its *capacity* to move forward. Subsequently, tensions continued to increase and more actors joined the response assemblage. For example, on October 23, Jaden and Willow Smith (children of actor Will Smith) attended an anti-pipeline march in Los Angeles [37]. Days later, Jaden Smith received the Male EMA Futures Award for his sustainable water bottle project at the same time that Woodley received the female version of the award for her work [38]. Other Hol-

lywood celebrities also had environmental interests, but Shailene Woodley’s activism encouraged others to become involved in opposing the DAPL and bring the issue to the attention of a wider audience. Examples include Susan Sarandon, Leonardo DiCaprio, Rosario Dawson, Riley Keough, and Pharrell Williams [37] [39].

The rapid addition of these aforementioned individuals illustrates that they can grow with a broadening number and variety of components, illustrated by the heterogeneity of the components surrounding the DAPL. Also, each component has autonomy and “may be detached from one assemblage and inserted in another” [13, p 169], demonstrated by various government agencies, police forces, and Native American groups. The Hollywood celebrities also clearly had their own projects and operated with other corresponding response assemblages but found resonance and solidarity with the Native American opposition to the DAPL, expressing their autonomy by simply joining with Native Americans through their own volition. As they joined, the response assemblage continued to evolve and transform as the growing number of components multiplied the interactional relationships [11 p 177] [7].

Soon, politicians entered the response assemblage. The impending U.S. presidential election heightened the political aspects of this oil project to the extent that politicians either saw an opportunity or felt pressured to take a position on the issue. For example, Bernie Sanders, U.S. Senator for Vermont and former presidential candidate for the Democratic Party, declared his opposition to the DAPL on August 25 [40]. On October 24, Dave Archambault II, the chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux, sent a letter to Loretta Lynch, U.S. Attorney General asking for an investigation “to protect civil rights” of the protesters and expressed a concern of “overall militarization of law enforcement response” [28]. On October 25, former vice president Al Gore publically expressed his solidarity with the Standing Rock tribe [41]. On October 26, Jesse Jackson arrived at the camp near Cannonball, ND. Appearing on a horse, he declared that the rerouting of the pipeline from north of Bismarck where white landowners dominated to a southern path through Native American lands was “the ripest case of environmental racism I’ve seen in a long time” [42] [43].

On November 2, President Obama stated that the USACE was “examining whether there are ways to re-route this pipeline in a way. So we’re going to let it play out for several more weeks and determine whether or not this can be resolved in a way that I think is properly attentive to the traditions of the first Americans” [28]. Then Donald Trump won the U.S. presidential election on November 8. Trump’s financial disclosure forms indicated that Trump had invested between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 in Energy Transfer Partners and a similar sum of money invested in Phillips 66, which was to have a 25% stake in DAPL after its completion. Kelcy Warren, the chief executive of Energy Transfer Partners, already had donated \$103,000 directly to the Trump campaign, \$66,800 to the Republican National Committee, and \$100,000 to the Trump Victory Fund [44]. Also on November 8, Energy Transfer Partners announced that it would begin the final phase of construction (under Lake Oahe). On November 14, the USACE announced

that it needed more time to make a decision and encouraged more public input [45].

Meanwhile, the number of components in the response assemblage opposed to the DAPL had grown significantly, perhaps as a direct result of the preceding events. Additional groups joined such as National Nurses United, Hip Hop Caucus, UPROSE, Justice and Witness Ministries-United Church of Christ, the Arab American Institute, Iraq Veterans against the War [25] and Veterans Stand for Standing Rock [46], helping to make the DAPL part of frequent national discussion. The *capacity* of those opposing the DAPL apparently increased, seemingly as a direct result of the election of Donald Trump and Energy Transfer Partners sudden and aggressive moves to press ahead with construction of the DAPL. Soon a rumor spread about Energy Transfer Partners: “We got word that the drill is now on the pad so tensions are high right now” said a tribal member [47]. At 5pm on November 20, a semi-truck drove up to a barricade placed by law enforcement on a bridge that linked the main highway from Standing Rock Reservation to Bismarck; the barricade consisted of two burned out trucks, concrete, and barbed wire [48]. A group of fewer than 10 people exited the semi-truck and began dismantling the barricade. Police fired rubber bullets and took other actions. Smoke filled the air. By 6:15, a steady stream of protestors arrived on the bridge as the barricade was pulled apart. Police then used tear gas and eventually a water cannon. The next day, national and international news agencies showed images of battered protestors sprayed with water in subfreezing temperatures and reported that as many as 200-300 people required medical treatment for hypothermia; a further 150 people were injured with seven suffering from serious injuries; twenty-six were hospitalized [49]. The ACLU called again for the Department of Justice to determine if law enforcement had improperly used force against protestors [50]. Amnesty International and the National Lawyers Guild also condemned the use of force against the protestors.

On November 25, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) instructed protestors to leave “Corps-managed lands” by December 5, citing safety concerns during “harsh North Dakota winter conditions” [51]. North Dakota’s governor also issued a similar evacuation order [52]. DAPL opponents seemed unsuccessful in their efforts to stop the DAPL’s construction, but on December 4, the USACE denied the permit necessary for Energy Transfer Partners to build the section of the DAPL under the Missouri River [53]. Jo-Ellen Darcy, the USACE’s secretary for civil works stated that it was “clear that there’s more work to do” and that “the best way to complete that work responsibly and expeditiously is to explore alternate routes for the pipeline crossing” [53]. The USACE stated that it planned to issue an Environment Impact Statement with “full public input and analysis” [53]. Protestors near Cannonball, ND expressed jubilation.

The news spread to Hollywood celebrities like Shailene Woodley who, in turn, disseminated the news even more widely, especially through Twitter [54]. They not only expressed jubilation but also certain views about the achievements of their activism. For example,

Pharrell Williams wrote that “Solid proof that people coming together can change things for the better”. Katy Perry tweeted that “PROOF THAT YOUR VOICE ACTUALLY MATTERS!” Sally Fields stated “Bravo Army Corps of Engineers, bravo Standing Rock, bravo Sioux Nation. You’ve taught us all something of great value. Stand your ground!” [54]. It seemed that their decisions to join the response assemblage had changed the trajectory of the DAPL project, in turn leading to more sensitive practices concerning the natural environment.

Though those wanting to stop the construction of the DAPL appeared to have succeeded, the situation completely changed in January 2017. Donald Trump became president of the United States and with a few days issued an executive memorandum directing the USACE to expedite the process for the approval of the DAPL [55]. Energy Transfer Partners immediately resumed construction, finished the DAPL in June 2017, and began pumping oil through it.

**Conclusion.** The DAPL case certainly illustrates Briassoulis’ main argument that actual relationships are not best characterized by “wholes” and “networks” but rather by assemblages of autonomous components as succinctly summarized by lawyer Maranda Compton:

Crude oil pipelines like Dakota Access are constructed without any overarching or centralized permitting scheme—relying instead upon piecemeal state-by-state approval, with federal permits required only where the pipeline crosses federal lands, including tribal lands, or federal water. . . . This whole permitting scheme is a real mess. [56]

Briassoulis’ conception of the response assemblage (RA) provides a useful vocabulary includes ideas of *territorialization* and *deterritorialization* [13, pp 169-170]. Therefore, as part of the broader determination as to whether the concept of the response assemblage (RA) is a valuable framework for analysis, we must ask whether Briassoulis’ ideas of *territorialization* and *deterritorialization* are applicable to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) case. In other words, did the events and actions surrounding the DAPL employ or produce “best practices” and good environmental conservation and /or preservation? Or, did one or more fast variables (e.g., cheaper technology, rapidly rising oil prices) allow certain (new) components (actors) (e.g., oil interests) to employ their capacities to achieve their goals but likewise harm the natural environment?

The DAPL began construction in June 2016 and transporting oil in June 2017, but harm to the natural environment (e.g., clean water) has not been identified. Yet, this does not mean environmental harm will never occur, and it is just as likely to occur later as sooner. Therefore, it is not completely possible to apply the concepts of *territorialization* and *deterritorialization* at this time; “the proof is yet to be found in the pudding”. Nevertheless, it is possible to examine the policies and procedures that were followed, modified, and circumvented to build the DAPL to demonstrate the appropriateness of the response assemblage concept as lens of analysis and highlight the decisions and policies that contribute to *territorialization* and *deterritorialization*.

Overall, Briassoulis’ conception of response assem-

blages is a valuable tool of description and organization. When applied to actual cases, indeed Briassoulis calls for empirical testing of her ideas [13 p 182], nuances are revealed that can be employed to refine the concept. Indeed, Leah Horowitz already identified a refinement when considering her research in New Caledonia [57]. She discovered that a local protest movement comprised of indigenous members (Rhéébù Nùù) co-merged with an IGO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) as a response to an emerging economic activity that would have damaged coral reefs [58].

The idea of co-merging is important and should be examined for entire response assemblages and their individual components. Briassoulis notes that “a component may be detached from one assemblage and inserted into another” [13] [11] [7]. This statement describes components as something analogous to a nut or bolt, which can be removed from one machine and incorporated into another. While such may be the case in some situations, it does not capture the effects of components on one another and subsequently on entire response assemblages. For example, why did the DAPL become such a national, even international, issue when oil pipelines frequently are constructed in the United States? The DAPL case indicates that the interactions of components create synergies. In the beginning of the conflict when farmers protested the use of eminent domain to obtain their lands for DAPL, their protests received limited support. In contrast, Standing Rock Reservation was able to put up much greater resistance to DAPL’s construction. Its reasons for resistance (i.e., clean water and sacred land) resonated widely and attracted allies such as other Native American groups across the United States. Significantly, it attracted Hollywood celebrities who were interested in environmental causes and human rights. These celebrities were not components who merely detached themselves from one response assemblage

and reattached themselves to the Standing Rock response assemblage, contributing merely an additive effect. Instead, they already had projects and campaigns and viewed Standing Rock’s struggle against the DAPL as a concrete example of their projects and campaigns. The intersection of their response assemblages with that of Standing Rock’s created synergies that had a multiplier effect, not merely an additive one.

The attention that Hollywood celebrities brought to Standing Rock’s resistance to the DAPL created further attention of national political figures as it coincided with the final month of the 2016 U.S. presidential election. The appearance of political figures, especially Jesse Jackson who accused the USACE of environmental racism, helped keep the issue in the national spotlight, even make it an international again. The intersection of their projects with Standing Rock’s also created synergies and had a multiplier effect.

By President Trump’s inauguration day on January 20, 2017, Standing Rock’s resistance to the DAPL had become part of the national political discourse. For those opposed to President Trump, the DAPL became one of the concrete reasons for their opposition. For example, it appeared on banners carried during protests marches on President Trump’s inauguration day. However, this was the high water mark for protests against the DAPL. After President Trump ordered the USACE to expedite the process for reviewing the DAPL and the DAPL was approved, national interest in the DAPL waned and active resistance to the DAPL shrunk back to Standing Rock, its tribal allies, and environmental groups such as *Earthjustice* [59]. Nevertheless, the case of the DAPL illustrates that concept of the response assemblage is a useful tool of description and organization. Also, DAPL case demonstrates that part of the contingency of response assemblages depends on intersectionalities and synergies.

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### **Джордж В. Уайт**

доктор філософії (географія), професор географії,  
Університет штату Південна Дакота, США,  
Wecota Hall 115F, Box 506, 1101 Medary Ave., Brookings, SD 57007, USA,  
e-mail: [George.White@sdstate.edu](mailto:George.White@sdstate.edu), <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1849-058>

### **Брюс В. Міллетт**

доктор філософії (біологія), доцент кафедри географії,  
Університет штату Південна Дакота, США,  
Wecota Hall 115F, Box 506, 1101 Medary Ave., Brookings, SD 57007, USA,  
e-mail: [Bruce.Millett@sdstate.edu](mailto:Bruce.Millett@sdstate.edu)

### **Кімберлі К. Джонсон Майєр**

докторант (географія), викладач географії,  
Університет штату Південна Дакота, США,  
Wecota Hall 115F, Box 506, 1101 Medary Ave., Brookings, SD 57007, USA,  
e-mail: [Kimberly.JohnsonMaier@sdstate.edu](mailto:Kimberly.JohnsonMaier@sdstate.edu)

## **ТРУБОПРОВІД ДАКОТА ACCESS (DAPL): СУПЕРЕЧНОСТІ ПОЛІТИЧНОЇ ГЕОГРАФІЇ**

Трубопровід Dakota Access (DAPL), побудований у 2016-2017 роках, є лише одним з численних енергетичних трубопроводів у США. Вплив даного трубопроводу на навколишнє середовище, як і інших, є потужним, важливим та викликає занепокоєння. Однак протидія DAPL стала більш різною, ніж протидія іншим трубопроводам, та навіть сягнула національного і міжнародного рівнів. Крім огляду суперечливих розмов та розповідей деяких акторів, що брали участь у DAPL дебатах, існують інші способи застосувати теорію та пояснити, чому саме DAPL стала гарячою політичною проблемою або ймовірно важливістю даного питання скороминуша. Дана стаття надасть теоретичне тлумачення, хоча вона має різну генеалогію, деякі діаметрально протилежні одна одній, до того ж вони не були застосовані у реальній ситуації. Обачно використовуючи теорію до суперечок навколо DAPL, ця стаття прагне одночасно пояснити суперечки навколо DAPL та підкреслити деякі нюанси концепції, що складають теорію публікації.

**Ключові слова:** *трубопровід Dakota Access (DAPL), нафта, вода, протести, критичний реалізм, відповідна збірка (RA), соціально-екологічні системи (СЕС).*

***Джордж В. Уайт***

доктор философии (география), профессор географии,  
Университет штата Южная Дакота, США,  
Wecota Hall 115F, Box 506, 1101 Medary Ave., Brookings, SD 57007, USA,  
e-mail: [George.White@sdstate.edu](mailto:George.White@sdstate.edu), <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1849-058>

***Брюс У. Миллетт***

доктор философии (биология), доцент кафедры географии,  
Университет штата Южная Дакота, США,  
Wecota Hall 115F, Box 506, 1101 Medary Ave., Brookings, SD 57007, USA,  
e-mail: [Bruce.Millett@sdstate.edu](mailto:Bruce.Millett@sdstate.edu)

***Кимберли К. Джонсон Майер***

докторант (география), преподаватель географии,  
Университет штата Южная Дакота, США,  
Wecota Hall 115F, Box 506, 1101 Medary Ave., Brookings, SD 57007, USA,  
e-mail: [Kimberly.JohnsonMaier@sdstate.edu](mailto:Kimberly.JohnsonMaier@sdstate.edu)

**ТРУБОПРОВОД DAKOTA ACCESS (DAPL):  
СПОРЫ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ ГЕОГРАФИИ**

Трубопровод Dakota Access (DAPL), построенный в 2016–2017 годах, является лишь одним из многочисленных энергетических трубопроводов в Соединенных Штатах. Как и в случае со многими трубопроводами, воздействие на окружающую среду значимо и вызывает беспокойство, но противодействие DAPL стало более интенсивным, чем противодействие другим трубопроводам, даже достигло национального и международного уровней. Кроме обозрения спорных обсуждений некоторых акторов, которые принимали участие в DAPL дебатах, есть другие способы применить теорию, чтобы объяснить, почему DAPL стал таким горячим политическим вопросом, или напротив, этот вопрос не что иное, чем мимолетная заинтересованность. Данный материал предлагает теоретическое объяснение, хотя содержит разные генеалогии, некоторые диаметрально противоположные друг другу, к тому же они не были строго применены к ситуациям реального мира. Тщательно используя теорию сборки к спорам вокруг DAPL, эта статья пытается одновременно объяснить эти споры и уточнить некоторые тонкие концепции, составляющие теорию сборки.

**Ключевые слова:** *трубопровод Dakota Access (DAPL), нефть, вода, протесты, критический реализм, ответная сборка (PA), социально-экологические системы (СЭС).*