



Resource geographies II: The resource-state nexus

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Abstract

This progress report surveys recent work in human geography on the resource-state nexus. This choice reflects several contemporary trends in the governance of land, water and energy resources that, taken together, suggest a renewed significance of the state: examples include resource ‘scrambles’ and land and water ‘grabs’, and calls for state intervention in the face of perceived food, energy and resource shortages. The report examines research themes and conceptual frameworks emerging at the resource-state nexus within human geography, and is organized into two sections. The first highlights research that unpacks processes of resource-making and state-making through close attention to scientific and political practices. The second section considers research examining the state’s role as a significant ‘extra-economic’ actor, enabling resource mobilization and capital accumulation. The report concludes with a brief summary.

Keywords

resources, state, territory, land grabs, post-neoliberal

I Introduction

The state is a staple feature of research on natural resources: lands, waters and innumerable other resources comprise the ‘specific qualities’ of the territorial state (Foucault, 1991) and are central objects of its administrative apparatus. Often a background presence in resource geography, the state has less frequently been the centre of attention. Recent work, however, suggests an increased enthusiasm for addressing the state head-on. This interest in understanding the contemporary nexus of state-resource relations can be attributed, in part, to momentous political-ecological transformations now occurring around land and other livelihood resources. ‘Grabs’ for land, water and minerals in which appropriation by the state is a central dynamic; growing calls for governments to intervene in the face of a ‘perfect storm’ of food, energy and resource shortages

(Beddington, 2009); modes of resource and environmental certification that supersede state sovereignty; and the continuing hybridization of neoliberal modes of environmental governance, and the emergence of neo-structural (or ‘post-neoliberal’) regimes in resource peripheries of the global economy: these underscore, in different ways, the importance of understanding the significance of the state in shaping contemporary socionatural relations.

The nature of the state, however, remains difficult to grasp. In recent work, for example, states are at once robust entities with the capacity to appropriate and dispossess, and contingent effects spun through multiple intersecting

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micro-threads of social practice. Such apparent contradictions lend the state a puzzling character. As Robbins (2008: 215) asks rhetorically, ‘how can the state be both a product and driver of territorialisation ... How can it be both sovereign and immanent?’ This second progress report surveys recent work in resource geography and related fields to identify emerging research themes around what I am calling here the *resource-state nexus*. It focuses on writing published in the period 2009–2012, although occasionally makes reference to work outside this timeframe.

The report has two sections. In the first I adopt the semantic device ‘resource/state’ – echoing similar devices such as power/knowledge – to capture the recursive character of scientific and political practice around resource-making and state-making projects. I describe several different research orientations – governmentality, subject formation and territorialization – and trace an evolution of conceptual interests marked imperfectly by reference to the work of Scott, Foucault, Mitchell, Gramsci and Ong. In the second I consider research in which states are identified as significant ‘extra-economic’ actors in resource mobilization: from enabling accumulation via land and water ‘grabs’, to hybrid neoliberalisms and the ‘neoextractivism’ of putatively post-neoliberal states. A significant research theme centred on resource-state relations but not addressed by this report is resource and environmental security (for which Foucault and Agamben provide conceptual reference points). I set this aside here as it will be the focus of my third progress report.

II Resource/state: the recursive relations of science and politics

‘Resources’ and ‘state’ are, of course, troubled terms. Both products and tools of socionatural ordering, their origins are intimately associated with modernity. The interesting questions for critical geography, then, have not been about

what resources and states are (in a realist sense) but about how they come to be – i.e. the formative processes through which resources and states are generated as ‘effects’, and the consequences of these effects for the organization of socionatural relations (Harris, 2010; Mitchell, 1991). The social construction of nature/natural resources is a well-rehearsed position in resource geography and political ecology. A key point arising from this work (and similar efforts within political geography around the state – e.g. Painter, 2006) is their *contingency* and *particularity* as forms of social ordering. The state, for example, is a specific institutional and territorial configuration and only one of a number of institutional and territorial formations through which human and non-human relations may be organized and managed. It is, however, a sufficiently powerful configuration that significant aspects of its re-production and territoriality have become naturalized. Understanding this particularity makes it possible to grasp the peculiarity of ‘state resources’ – a formation so naturalized it often goes unremarked, yet better understood as a contested achievement whose mechanisms and political-ecological consequences need to be explained (see, for example, Evenden, 2009, on the geopolitical context of ‘total war’ in which federal and provincial governments in Canada gained lasting control over hydro-resources).

I From legibility to governmentality

State management of natural resources is a cornerstone of the applied tradition of resource geography. The state’s (mis)management of natural resources also features prominently in resource geography’s critical tradition. Scott’s (1998) thesis on why state ‘schemes to improve the human condition have failed’ continues to inform contemporary work, with its core motif of ‘simplification and legibility’ as critical tools of statecraft through which (authoritarian) states understand, visualize and seek to manipulate peoples and

environments (Asher and Ojeda, 2009; Evered and Evered, 2012; Neville and Dauvergne, 2012; Oliveira, 2011; Olson, 2010; Potter, 2009). Significantly, however, the focal point of recent research has moved away from Scott's concern with the authoritarian state as a 'modernist menace' (Robbins, 2008: 209). Retained and elaborated, however, is Scott's interest in the technical devices of measurement and visualization – cartography, calculation and miniaturization – through which resources and the capacities for their control are achieved. In other words, the figure of the strong and purposeful state, so central to Scott's analysis, has largely receded from view. In its place is a more complex understanding of the relationships between scientific and political practice as they concern the relations between populations and resources. Rather than states wielding natural resource science as a tool of statecraft, the analytical focus is on how knowledge-production and the 'politics of measure' (Mann, 2009) are constitutive of rule (see Robertson and Wainwright, 2013: 11, on how the state 'requires some calculus of nature that supersedes and overcomes the specificities of price and ecology'). Derived primarily from Foucault's writings on governmentality and elaborated through work on resources over the last decade or so (Braun, 2000; Peluso and Vandergeest, 2001; Watts, 2004), this work couples an interest in 'technologies of rule' with decentred and 'capillary' understandings of social power.

Although a focus on capillary forms of power tends to dissolve the state in accounts of technopolitics, theories of governmentality need not be limited to power's distributed and micro forms, as both Harris (2012) and Li (2007) have argued. In her work on water resources in Turkey, for example, Harris (2012) complements capillary forms of power with an explicit focus on the scalar capacity of states – the capacity to mobilize landscapes and resources on a very large scale. Drawing on Mitchell's (1991) work on the state as an 'effect' of technical practices, Harris illustrates how the state is

enacted 'spatiotemporally, in relation to the new seasonalities associated with irrigation and cotton cropping, the changing circulation of migrant labourers ... and other elements of the large-scale diversion of water that fundamentally alter the space-times of agro-ecologies or electricity production' (Harris, 2012: 35). Through a detailed examination of how irrigation and water control shape collective life in the upper Tigris-Euphrates Basin, Harris demonstrates how it is through the capacity to organize socio-ecological relations on a landscape scale – and how these are experienced – that 'the state' becomes understood as a distinct realm outside of social life. Similarly, Meehan (2013) illustrates the uneven geographies of state power – from tolerance to repression – associated with informal and illegal water provisioning in Tijuana, Mexico. Her analysis shows how social order in Tijuana is maintained through variable and uneven practices of policing illegal water use.

Whitehead's work (2009; see also Coe et al., 2012) on the spatial history of 'atmospheric government' retains a clear sense of the administrative state as 'a key institutional and territorial fulcrum of governmental power and practice' (p. 215) while simultaneously foregrounding micropractices of atmospheric knowledge production. He explores the intersecting practices of science and politics through which air pollution became an object of government in the 19th and 20th centuries. A striking example is the 'smoke observers' who, walking the streets of Britain's largest cities to observe and record instances of atmospheric 'nuisance', literally embodied the capacities and desires of scientific practice and the (local) state.

The co-production of resources and state power through 'the same technopolitical process' is explored directly by Alatout (2008) and Harris and Alatout (2010). Drawing on research in Turkey and Israel, they show how the technical constitution of 'freshwater' resources has been instrumental to the definition of territory

and the national state's territorial administrative capacity. 'The hydropolitical construction of scale', argue Harris and Alatout (2010: 148), has been 'central to state and nation building, and their territorial consolidation'. In a rich and striking account, Alatout (2008) examines how Israel came to be understood as water-scarce from the 1950s onwards. Weaving together biographies and analysis of key projects – including irrigation of the Negev and construction of the National Water Carrier – Alatout identifies how a discourse of scarcity replaced one of water abundance associated with the Zionist project in the 1930s. Scarcity linked 'new apparatuses of water management with new apparatuses of government' so that the history of water scarcity in Israel is 'nothing less than the history of government' (Alatout, 2008: 960, 978). Peluso and Vandergeest (2011) examine the links between war, forestry and the extension of state resource control in Southeast Asia. They show how counter-insurgency measures during the Cold War – which targeted forests 'dressed up as jungles' (p. 258) – served to 'normalize political forests as components of the modern nation' and consolidate (colonial) state control. These historical moments are important because the resource/state entities to which they gave rise – national forests and water scarcity, for example – underpin contemporary environmental politics.

2 Ideology and making the state's environmental subjects

A number of scholars have turned to Gramsci's writings on ideology, coercion and consent in order to understand the reciprocal relations between resources/nature, social mobilization and political power (Asher and Ojeda, 2009; Ballvé, 2012; Ekers et al., 2009; Perkins, 2011). With their emphasis on the 'practice of politics' (Li, 2007) and maintenance of hegemonic power, Gramscian analyses offer something of a 'corrective' to capillary and diffused notions of power characteristic of governmentality.

Indeed, it is for precisely this reason that several authors draw on *both* Foucault and Gramsci in their analysis of resource/state relations. In research on groundwater access in Rajasthan, for example, Birkenholtz (2009) examines how 'willing environmental subjects' emerge at the intersection of state power and neoliberal technologies of environmental governance. In the absence of formal state regulation over groundwater, state power over groundwater resources rests on the normalization of environmentally aware state subjects (via instilling norms and practices of water conservation and self-monitoring among farmers). But Birkenholtz also shows how consent (i.e. compliance with water conservation norms) is not assured, because farmers are more than state subjects as they simultaneously hold other subject positions, such as those of caste and class. Evered and Evered's (2012) study of public education campaigns in Turkey against malaria illustrates a similar interest in the combination of state power and the making of biopolitical subjects. They show public health education to be 'a distinctive practice of governing' in which states establish themselves as educators in the face of major biopolitical threats (p. 312).

A broader point made by Gramscian-inspired accounts is the importance of examining how various forms of 'common sense' around natural resources create 'interests, ... positionings of self and others and ... meanings' that are constitutive of hegemonic political formations (Li, 2007: 22; see also Mann, 2009). Prominent examples in recent work include narratives of *waste* that 'foreshadow the problematic of development' (Gidwani, 2008: 17) and *improvement* that 'circumscribe an arena for intervention' (Li, 2007: 2; see also Leach et al., 2012, on the 'economy of repair').¹ In a piece on forestry in British Columbia during the Great Depression, Ekers (2009: 303) focuses directly on this question of how ideologies of nature/resources 'are constitutive relations in the orchestration of hegemony'. He examines how social relief

programmes organized by the federal and provincial state were key sites for securing normative relations of class, gender and ecology: forestry camps and work programmes asserted hegemonic ideals of wilderness and masculinity, for example, in response to perceived crises of social order (expressed in the unchecked migration of unemployed men to urban areas). For Ekers, the rise of multiple use and other 'scientific' forestry practices are significant beyond their application to forestry (compare with Scott, 1998): such interventions were part of a wider set of political practices that reveal 'the expansive *socionatural* character of hegemony' (Ekers, 2009: 304, emphasis added). Li's (2007) analysis of conservation and development in Sulawesi similarly shows that interventions to 'improve' socio-ecological relations are not state-centred 'grand plans', but are 'pulled together from an existing repertoire, a matter of habit, accretion and bricolage'.

3 Territories and sovereignties beyond the state

The previous sections have indicated an interest in the interplay of resource science and political strategy in state-making projects. An important aspect of this interplay concerns the matter of territory – i.e. the way in which space is organized (apportioned/bounded) politically via articulation with understandings of its biophysical qualities. Whitehead et al. (2007) identify *state territorialization* as a significant 'tendency' in the historical relationship between nature and collective life: the making of nature as a subject of state governance. More recent work in political geography on natural resources loosens this binding between nature and the territories of the state to explore a range of territorial formations 'beyond the state'. One line of inquiry has been to explore the territorialities produced via resource management science and their intersection with geopolitical strategy. In an interesting paper on the technical assistance

in water resource planning provided by the US Bureau of Reclamation to countries in the Middle East, Sneddon and Fox (2011) examine how water resource planning articulated with geopolitical practice during the Cold War. The authors show how geopolitical objectives shaped the scale of water resource management units – specifically the emergence of 'river basin development' – as a means of delivering the structural transformations associated with modernity.

Research has also focused on emergent 'resource frontiers' where the spatio-political ordering of territorialization is being worked out in the contemporary moment. Powell (2008) and Dittmer et al. (2011: 203), for example, examine the 'opening and therefore indeterminate zone' of the Arctic where environmental uncertainties associated with climate change, and wildly varying estimates of potential resource wealth, are creating a new geopolitical space.² Dodds (2010a, 2010b) explores the 'Arctic territorialities' emerging through the calculative effects of climate change and new resource extraction technology, while Dodds and Benwell (2010: 576) describe a 'resource-led nationalism' among Arctic littoral states expressed via a series of 'sovereignty performances', such as flag-planting to map-making. In a similar vein, Kristoffersen and Young (2010), in a paper on the Norwegian government's promotion of the offshore 'High North' as a new hydrocarbon frontier, consider the institutional and territorial reconfiguration of the state in response to concerns over energy security.

It is not only the Arctic where resource potential is driving new forms of state territorialization. Steinberg (2011), drawing on his extensive work on the territorialization and deterritorialization of ocean space (e.g. Steinberg, 2001, 2009), focuses on the hybrid maritime space of the 'Exclusive Economic Zone' (EEZ): the offshore region over which coastal states claim sovereign rights to minerals and living resources, but over which they do not have sovereignty. Around the world the EEZ is a significant

space for resource development, biodiversity conservation and the governance of ocean pollution. It was in this zone, for example, that the Deepwater Horizon was drilling for oil in the Gulf of Mexico. However, Steinberg (2011) shows how it is also a rather curious spatial category as it 'brokers the tension between the ideal of the ocean as a space that supports the division of the world into sovereign states and the ideal of the ocean as a 'free' space of flows' (p. 13). The broader problematic that he identifies concerns the 'dynamic and arbitrary' character (p. 15) of territorial forms (like the EEZ) that emerge through the intersection of geopolitical and physical geographic boundaries, and on which much resource development is predicated.

A significant contribution, then, has been to develop notions of territorialization that exceed those of the state, in order to problematize understandings of access, control and authority as they relate to natural resources (Yeh, 2012). Related to this is an emerging interest in 'post-sovereign' forms of resource and environmental governance. Writing on mining investment in Tanzania, for example, Emel et al. (2011: 70) challenge 'the fixed and static relation between sovereignty and territory that informs most theories of state power – especially in regard to natural resources'. Research on how transnational gold mining firms gain access to subterranean mineral resources leads them to argue that 'resource sovereignty cannot be territorially circumscribed within national space and institutionally circumscribed within the state apparatus' (p. 70). The authors mobilize Ong's (2006) notion of variegated sovereignty to advocate a relational and negotiated view of resource sovereignty, and question presumptions of state sovereignty associated with most mainstream accounts of extractive state-firm relations.

Research on the governance and certification of resource production networks for environmental and social quality has long recognized the interaction of state and non-state actors, as well as the insufficiency of this binary

distinction (Hall, 2010). Applying these ideas to biofuels, Bailis and Baka (2011) highlight the diversity of emerging modes of governance, from narrowly defined technical standards (around greenhouse gases, for example) to metastandards centred on land tenure, labour conditions and food security. Whereas the former have been enacted by states, it has been left to non-governmental organizations to take up broadly based social standards. Vandergeest and Unno (2012) directly address the 'certification territories' associated with non-state modes of environmental governance in the aquaculture sector. Like Emel et al. (2011), the authors draw on Ong (2006) to assess how transnational commodity standards for shrimp farming modify state sovereignty. Shrimp certification by non-governmental agencies in the global North produces two kinds of certification territories: the spaces of shrimp farms, and the surrounding spaces and environments in which farms are located (including provisions, for example, on buffer zones and biodiversity corridors). They note how certification territories extend control by actors in the global North over sites in the global South, facilitated by a narrative of protecting vulnerable subjects in the context of a weak state. Vandergeest and Unno draw a comparison with 'extraterritorial' forms of colonial empire experienced by 'states that were not directly colonized, but were nevertheless subject to imperial power' (p. 359). Certification does not displace state rule, they argue, but creates territories in which certification agencies 'claim rule-making and rule-enforcement authority in ways that pre-empt government authority' (p. 366).³ The result is a 'variegated sovereigntyscape' reproducing structural relations of domination between global North and South.

A significant feature of recent work, then, is a desire to denaturalize the institutionalization and territorialization of resources at the scale of the state. A corollary is that the state's institutions and territorialities do not exhaust the

possibilities for how political-ecological life can be organized: other institutions and territorial forms – the clan or community, for example – co-exist with those of the state. These substate resource governance regimes are a continuing object of interest, from community-based natural resource management (e.g. Eguavoen and Laube, 2010; Khan, 2010) to multi-level environmental governance (Lockwood et al., 2009). Much of this work goes beyond the moment of ‘devolution’ – when the capacity for making and enforcing ‘resource rules’ passes from the national state to community control – to highlight the social and environmental significance of shifts in institutional governance and territorial rights at scales ‘below’ those of the national state. Writing on community forestry in Malawi, for example, Zulu (2009) highlights the political-ecological consequences of ‘localizing’ forest management in the context of severe fiscal constraints at the national level: donor-funded forestry projects are linked to a general evisceration of the Department of Forestry’s capacity to manage forest land; and donor priorities have led to a rescaling of customary rules governing forest access from village level to those of ‘Traditional Authorities’. The result, Zulu argues, is that community forestry has undermined state enforcement while, at the same time, making forest rules ‘less relevant locally’ (p. 693).

III An ‘extra-economic force’: scrambles, grabs and the post-neoliberal state

This section considers the state as a resource actor. The literature on state intervention to acquire and/or mobilize natural resources is vast and variegated, particularly if one considers work at the boundaries of geography – in area studies and international relations, for example – that privileges national states as primary actors in international affairs. To make sense of it for the purposes of this report, I focus on just two themes: resource ‘scrambles’ and

‘grabs’; and resource extraction and the post-neoliberal state. These themes are linked by a notion of the state as a critical ‘extra-economic’ actor. In different ways, this work builds out of – and responds to – a substantial body of research by resource geographers on the neoliberalization of resource regulation and environmental governance (Bakker, 2010; Castree, 2008a, 2008b). Characterized by its empirical focus on the privatization, deregulation and marketization of the mechanisms for accessing and allocating natural resources, this work has addressed states primarily as ‘carriers of neoliberal reform’ (Wilshusen, 2010: 770). Recent research goes further, however, by building on a critical conceptual observation: the significance of neoliberalization lies not in marketization, but in the transformations of property on which market exchange ultimately rests (on the centrality of property regimes to the dynamics of globalization, see Prudham and Coleman, 2011; on the ‘recursive constitution of property and institutional authority’, see Sikor and Lund, 2009: 2). It is in reference to property, in particular, that the state emerges as a critical actor in shaping ‘new resource geographies’ via its powers of legal and extra-legal coercion. Recent work extends, then, an understanding of neoliberalism as ‘reregulation’ – i.e. the continued salience of the state in a general sense – to focus on the state’s role as an ‘extra-economic force’ enabling primitive accumulation (Levien, 2012: 937).

I Resource ‘scrambles’ and primitive accumulation

‘Scramble’ and ‘grab’ are narrative figures that loom large in recent research on the political economy of natural resources, and there is a growing popular literature that centres on the ‘race for resources’ (Kaplan, 2011; Klare, 2011; on the political geographies embedded in popular accounts, see Powell, 2012). Three ‘epicentres’ for this work are African mineral

resources, Arctic oil and gas, and subtropical land and water resources. Although unspecific, both ‘scramble’ and ‘grab’ are instructive because they highlight processes of appropriation: however, they implicate the state in quite different ways. An important distinction can be made between work that views land and resources as subject to interstate competition (a geopolitical ‘scramble’ over scarce resources and a precursor to ‘resource wars’) and research that understands appropriation as a key moment (primitive accumulation) in the political economy of capital. Although the former makes much play of ‘geography’ – see Kaplan (2011), for example – in the main it is a view adopted by scholars in international relations. Indeed, research by geographers on ‘resource wars’ and ‘the scramble for resources’ is often positioned as a critique of neorealist and liberal approaches to the state within international relations, which accept the premise of territorially defined states (Carmody, 2009, 2011; Gonzalez-Vicente, 2011). Buscher (2012), for example, reflects on the (re)insertion of Africa into global political economy via the medium of natural resources. He mobilizes the narrative of ‘scramble’, but as a way to draw attention to the processes of value creation and value capture associated with African resources (especially biodiversity).

Land has taken on ‘a new geopolitical prominence’ in the context of rapid urbanization, the financialization of agro-food commodities, and new forms of rural extraction linked to energy (Baird and Le Billon, 2012: 290; Neville and Dauvergne, 2012). Work on land and resource grabs engages the classic ‘land question’ of agrarian political economy (Bernstein, 2010; Borras et al., 2011; Fairhead et al., 2012; Hall, 2013; Hall et al., 2011; Mehta et al., 2012). It provides a clear account of the state’s capacities for mobilizing land and resources, and how state appropriation underwrites the emergence of ‘neoliberal’ landscapes. In work on Gujarat, for example, Sud (2009: 647) documents the close

relationship between state government and land acquisition by cement manufacturers. Liberalization in India, she argues, is not so much characterized by market allocation as by a state acting as ‘a business-friendly operator that ideationally, institutionally and politically legitimates, buffers, negotiates and facilitates a contested and complex liberalizing landscape’ (p. 663; see also Levien, 2012, on Rajasthan). A common critique made by this work is the state’s role in regressive land redistribution, transferring resources from the poor to the powerful (White et al., 2012).

2 Hybrid neoliberalisms and the post-neoliberal state

Coined a few years ago, ‘hybrid neoliberalisms’ captures the way in which neoliberal economic policies are constituted and supplemented in particular settings by their articulation with other logics (McCarthy, 2005). Recent work on the state continues this interest in the technological, ecological and political conjunctures through which ‘neoliberalism’ is actually constituted. McAfee and Shapiro (2010: 581), for example, show how commodification of environmental services in Mexico is refracted by legacies of state-led development: objectives like poverty alleviation sit alongside those of market efficiency, reflecting historic concerns and compromises around ‘national sovereignty over resources (and) a tradition of populist paternalism toward rural citizens’. Other work explores the adaptability and mutability of neoliberalism: Ioris (2012), for example, argues that neoliberalization of water in Lima, Peru, occurred in successive technical, economic and political waves, each involving the state in different ways; Nem Singh (2013) describes the ‘pragmatic combination of market incentives and state intervention’ which characterizes the evolution of neoliberal mineral resource governance in Brazil and Chile; and Budds (2009) illustrates how the technocracy of neoliberalism

(in her case, the apparatus for producing hydrological knowledge for groundwater abstraction in Chile) can be consistent with a bureaucratic desire to maintain authority over water resource decisions.

The ‘neo-extractivist’ model of development pursued by centre-left governments in Latin America provides rich case material for examining the state-led mobilization of resources in the pursuit of national economic liberation (Bebbington, 2012; Hindery, 2013; Kaup, 2010). Bolivia and Ecuador, for example, have explicitly positioned the relationship to natural resources as central to a post-neoliberal development model which ‘retain(s) elements of the previous export-led growth model whilst introducing new mechanisms for social inclusion and welfare’ (Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2012: 1; Radcliffe, 2011). Recent work explores social conflicts over land and territory at the heart of the extractive model (Bebbington, 2012) and the cultural politics of resource nationalism (Kohl and Farthing, 2012; Perreault and Valdivia, 2010), unpacking the meaning and sufficiency of the term ‘post-neoliberal’. Arsel (2012), for example, shows how stricter state controls in Ecuador have not reduced the commercialization of resources, while Nem Singh (2010) parses Chilean resource governance as a form of neoliberal ‘continuity with change’. Riffing on themes of territorial control and resource extraction presented in the film *Avatar*, Bebbington and Bebbington (2011) highlight convergences in resource and environmental governance among ‘neoliberal’ and ‘post-neoliberal’ regimes in the Andes.

IV Conclusion

This review was motivated initially by a number of trends around the governance of land, water and energy resources that, in different ways, raise important questions about the state’s role in the management and governance of natural resources. These trends and patterns are not all of a piece and do not amount to a ‘return of the

state’ in a general sense. However, they do suggest ways in which natural resources and state power can be mutually constitutive, and highlight the importance of examining the political formations currently emerging at the resource-state nexus. I structured the report around two broad thematic concerns: the formative and reciprocal processes of resource and state formation; and the state’s role in appropriating and distributing natural resources.

I conclude with two general observations. First, recent work explores a broad range of conceptual concerns, and reflects much of the theoretical diversity informing contemporary critical geography as a whole. There is little formal engagement with state theory, however, or effort to compare and evaluate alternative conceptualizations. There have been previous moves in this direction (e.g. Whitehead et al., 2007), but a more structured and sustained engagement by resource geography with work on the political geographies of the state is warranted. Second, the discipline of geography is not alone in thinking that contemporary resource-state entanglements are significant. There is extensive work in international relations and development studies, as well as a large and often sector-specific grey literature on contemporary trends in energy, food, water and mineral resources. Much of this research is conformable with the geographical perspectives reviewed here, notwithstanding the tendency of some critical geography to position itself obliquely to this work. If there is something distinctive about recent geographical research on the resource-state nexus, it emerges from a close attention to the conjunctures of natural resources and state power in particular settings. Geographical research on land grabs, for example, is beginning to highlight how processes of state land appropriation and re-allocation are refracted through embedded cultural practices, including collective memories of land and resources. The conceptual diversity and hybridization which characterizes recent research is, in part, an outcome of this desire to account – at a theoretical

level – for historically and geographically contingent articulations of the state with natural resources. My third and final progress report on resource geographies turns to one very significant aspect of the resource-state nexus that this report has not addressed: the question of resource and environmental security.

Notes

1. In this regard, Feitelsohn and Fischhendler (2009)'s observations about the intersection of a 'hydrological imperative' (emphasis added) with an ideology of state-building in Israel resonate with contemporary resource 'emergencies' around energy, food and climate. They also draw attention to the rationalities (of urgency, necessity, national demise) through which political conditions for state intervention are secured.
2. The Arctic is currently experiencing a kind of 'double (Northern) exposure' (see Leichenko and O'Brien, 2008) as new technical and physical assessments of resource potential and melting ice insert the space of the Arctic into the strategic and territorial frameworks of state and corporate power.
3. The essence of this is a one-sided exclusion, in which a state cedes an element of territorial sovereignty: 'it is no longer the subjects of Christian countries that are protected but endangered non-humans, local communities, workers, women and children' (Vandergeest and Unno, 2012: 366).

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