

Afterword

People Thinking Energetically

Leo Coleman

Why an anthropology of energy now? And why specifically a political anthropology of energy rather than an approach focused on the seemingly more relevant domains of science, technology or economics? The first answer that springs to mind (in the context of this volume in particular) is simply that energy is explicitly at issue nowadays in policy, government and everyday life, in terms that while not always obviously political do implicate collective life, distributions of power and possibilities of participation in the common good. The conditions of our world are such that people pay attention to energy less as an abstract measure of work or an ‘invisible’ power enabling activities (its scientific and technical meanings, respectively) than in its more concrete and tangible forms, when it is proximate and powerfully relevant to collective aspirations: the price of petrol, a proposed pipeline or a dam, even the settings on one’s household ‘climate control’ devices (a term strangely resonant with talk of climate *change*). Such encounters with energy as a fuel, an infrastructure and a set of daily habits of consumption (with their ramifying effects) spur thinking about energy in political terms; that is, in terms of the distribution of power and the allocation of risks, possible alternatives (pathways that we might travel together) and costs that might be shared (now or in the future). As consumers and citizens and indeed as inhabitants of a shared planet, from disparate locations and working within our distinct habitus of energy use, we *all* count and monitor the items in our energy lives regularly and consistently, while our choices are constrained by our collective investment in cer-

tain material pathways, our relative inability to imagine other ways of life. Energy is, at once, personal, collective and political, an experienced reality and a total social fact, and hence the kind of political phenomenon anthropology is best situated to study. As the editors explain in their Introduction, this volume is part of a wider renewal of anthropological interest in energy. However, this turn to energy also implicates basic questions of political anthropology, which are the questions I will focus on in this Afterword.

When Marshall Sahlins and Ellman Service, at an earlier moment of anthropological interest in energetic models for society, hypothesized that general social evolution could be measured by higher rates of exploitation of energy, the latter term was for them clearly scientific rather than popular, etic rather than emic: a statistical object far from the minds of men and women working, using machines or being hurtled through space by a thousand tiny explosions of oil and oxygen in a car's engine (Sahlins and Service 1960, 36–38). Political life, for them, came into view mostly in the form of institutions, social integration and coordination of myriad social forces. However, they did observe that energy use could produce an *individual* sense of mastery over forces and hence personal freedom, linking energy quite directly to political affects. Nowadays, we can observe that the political associations that gather around energy and its infrastructures and devices are much broader, more embedded in ordinary language and not so easy to define as integrative or progressive (Rogers 2015; Weszkalnys 2016; Hughes 2017; High and Smith 2019). Sahlins and Service's multifactorial modernist equation between harnessed energy, social complexity and progress, on the one hand, and increased individual freedom, on the other hand, has been undone – or, if not undone, at least is no longer automatically granted a positive valuation. Energy is now reckoned in terms of risks and consequences (often individualized) instead of as a measure of historical advancement. Calorie counts are prominently displayed on food packaging and, as Andrew Barry notes, 'the thermodynamic efficiency of a vast range of devices, from lightbulbs to internal combustion engines, is increasingly regulated, while individuals and organizations are expected to monitor and manage their expenditure or consumption of energy in the face of growing concerns about energy security, resource scarcity and climate change' (Barry 2015: 121). Energy has become not only a means of accounting for social wealth and progress and fuelling personal aspirations, or just a matter of urgency in times of crisis, but also a part of ordinary political thought and action, not least for state actors trained to think of so-

ciety in terms of inputs and outputs, efficiency and productivity (see Daggett 2019).

Taking the measure of this ordinary attention to energy and the ways in which statecraft is inflected as it is exercised in and through flows of energy, often in the form of ‘technopolitics’ (see Mitchell 2011), the contributors to this volume all build on a set of political-anthropological insights into the nature of contemporary governance, the constitution of political power in a neoliberal era, and the forms of discipline and organization to which citizens are subject as they move across domains, from work to school to political participation. There is another set of theoretical influences evident here as well. According to Dominic Boyer, the rise of energy as a topic in the social sciences follows on an ‘anti-anthropocentric turn’ in anthropology that explicitly seeks to map out how non-human things and forces combine to constitute new forms of being and new levels of reality (Boyer 2014). Scholars pursuing this line of thought have sought to replace or supplement ethnographic explanations based in processes of human meaning-making, ‘symboling’ and communication, with others that involve tracing out ramifying connections between material bodies and forces (from molecules to pipelines to the wind itself), and only then moving from these to the rationalities and calculations in which these nonhuman forces are put to work (Howe and Boyer 2015). This approach – and it is primarily a set of methods or modes of descriptions rather than a cohesive theoretical system – has made it possible to imagine an anthropology of electrons, or of waves, or indeed of their ‘energy’, independent of their harnessing for human ends or their relationship to any particular community or a set of intentional actions. Bringing these two lines of thought together – the biopolitical and the anti-anthropocentric – Boyer has proposed that we now live in and, most importantly, *must think in the terms of* an era of ‘energopolitics’ (more on this shortly).

This volume offers, in this conjuncture, a distinctive and to me unanticipated ethnographic response. To be sure, these chapters deploy the full range of analytic possibilities opened up by attention to distributed sites of power, the movement of flows of energy across infrastructures, regimes of power and rationality, and impersonal forces and affects. Yet, the authors here focus on collective and individual political actions that arise from the operation of people’s critical faculties and their organization towards common projects, often in the face of stiff competition from other collectively formed interests (including corporate and state interests). This provides a distinctively anthropological perspective, from amidst human conflicts and

struggles, on the rationalities by which states and other powerful organizations grasp and organize flows of energy and power, their material impacts and even the more-than-human consequences of climate change.

Time and again, these ethnographers return to practices of meaning-making and the interpretive links and partial associations that are made in both political propaganda and in everyday efforts of understanding, including the ‘refrains’ of state actors invoking a flow of megawatts to come from damming remote rivers (see the chapters by Lord and Rest, and Hebdon), and those of Polish ones imagining a future of high-tech electrical mobility while holding into their coal-fired economic base (see the chapter by Lis). They gauge the affective reaction of (deeply energy-dependent) rural Europeans against the intrusion of oil and gas infrastructure into their neighbourhoods, the firm resistance mounted by indigenous groups in the resource frontier of interior Ecuador to new economic disciplines imposed in the name of geopolitical and climatological necessity (see the chapter by Hebdon), and the angry self-awareness of those whose lives or regions are sacrificed to national (or corporate) energy and security needs (see the chapters by Kaur and Moolenaar). Let me be clear: this is not a matter of ethnographic particularism focused on *reaction* and resistance, gauged against some absent, but established and authoritative, centre of power. Rather, the ethnographic insight at stake here indicates that whether we are looking at policy documents or popular mobilizations, corporate strategy or efforts to get by at the margins, energy in its ordinary materiality is entangled with cultivated meanings and deep feelings of solidarity – and, similarly, it is subject to debate and discussion, which may at times even lead to revision of meanings once thought to be stable.

To be sure, these studies reveal distinct, located apperceptions of what Nathalie Ortar calls the ‘weight’ of systems that are at once technical, cultural and (importantly) legal; however, for the most part they explore the ‘raw edges’ (see the chapter by Kaur) of the energetic organization of life and society, dwelling at friction points between imaginations of prosperity and dirty, inhuman or violent processes of extraction, and tracing the political consciousness sparked there. Moreover, they follow out the organization and consequences of specific responses to such apperceptions, from protest, to alterations in everyday energy-consumption habits, to state and corporate efforts to paper over the widening cracks in energy-intensive ways of life. Finally, these authors trace the contours of an emerging form of citizenship and political action within the matrices of energy produc-

tion and consumption, one in which the supply of energy becomes an object of domestic choice and personal investment of labour and value – when people seek shares in a national hydropower concern or as they organize on a small scale to collect wood and put local resources to personal use. Thus, these chapters show us clearly that the infrastructures of energy-intensive modernity are not only ‘integrating’ in some material or organizational sense, as an earlier modernist anthropology might have proposed or even as a study devoted to tracing material associations and ramifying networks might imply. Instead, energy practices, policies and infrastructures are themselves integrated into local politics, neither impervious to them nor beyond their reach, not only imposed from afar or simply smoothly rational and banalistic. Plans and infrastructures and social organizations of energy can inform a way of life, but only because they stand as problematic objects of interpretive effort, both provoking doubt about their effects and, at times, sustaining a wider claim on community (Berlant 2016; Coleman 2017; Coleman and Abel 2020).

Energy and Its Metaphors

This volume’s ethnographic evidence about energy and contemporary political action might serve to remind us that the central – perhaps original – topic of any political anthropology with a democratic vocation is not only the organization of society but also collective effervescence, its sources and its transformative potential (personal and societal). Though employing varied theoretical approaches, these authors are all attuned to meaning and the gathering that intensifies it, to the forceful ascriptions that impress the sign of belonging upon objects and bodies, and how collective energies take forms that extend ‘beyond the gathering’ as a (contested) claim upon participation in the common good (Durkheim 1995: 222). Towards a wider project of a political anthropology of energy, following these leads, we might also want to recall that the word ‘energy’ has a set of perfectly literal meanings that relate to civic participation, the attention that our common and daily affairs demand, and how this kind of effort can both reshape institutions and make them durable. Alexis de Tocqueville used the French word *energie* (and its variants) some fifty times in his *Democracy in America* as he sought to define a power of action that was both psychological and physiological, in the citizen and the body politic, which could wax and wane, be generated or wasted, concentrated and diffused (Berger 2011: 91). Of course, it is

necessary and appropriate to be critical about neoliberal techniques that claim to increase involvement and participation, like the Nepali popular ‘shareholder’ model of hydropower development, as Lord and Rest describe it, which is more about ‘securing volumes’ than extending democracy or augmenting collective energies. Still, collective practices that involve the coordination, extension and concentration of energy, that make something tangible and sharable of the *work* expended – including such humble-seeming ones as cutting wood (see the chapter by Ortar) – can indeed have deep implications for political life, in that they both actualize and organize a broader awareness of the distribution, and expenditure, of forces.

Of course, any such ethnographic conception of political energy as attention and effort has an Aristotelian genealogy – Aristotle’s *enérgeia* or actuality means, in Boyer’s gloss, ‘being-at-work’ (Boyer 2014: 325). Indeed, our entire political vocabulary echoes with the deep resonances of a whole (Western) tradition of political reflection. In this vein, all of Giorgio Agamben’s work, with its recent influence in political anthropology, can be read as an extended commentary on the historical, material implications of our philosophical vocabulary for political power and its descent from Aristotelian metaphysics (Shadri 2014). Any talk of power, potential, dynamic, force – all ‘energetic’ metaphors – invokes an interaction between bodies, actions and some horizon of actualization. Thinking through our language of political analysis in some detail, in such a genealogical fashion, might go some way towards clarifying the role that energy – even in its technological absence or inadequacy – plays in political life (see Cross 2019).

This kind of linguistic analysis or genealogy of energy-talk is, for the most part, not a task that the present volume takes up; it does not fall within its remit. However, energy practices in the present are given intense descriptive attention in ways that draw out the meaningful terms by which people understand the energetic realities that affect them, whether it is a matter of entropic disorder looming on the horizon of climate change or of the ground quite literally shaking as a result of energy extraction and national policies. This volume shows us people both at work and in conversation, and how they interweave physical realities with imaginations, rhetorics and passions in talk and action – from formal political analysis to the mobilization of new political identities.

Indeed, this distinctive ethnographic attention to talk and anger about local projects, fears for the future, affective responses to governmental energy discourses and situated attempts to wrest control

over or assert democratic participation in energy choices helps challenge from within, as it were, any account of ‘carbon modernity’ in which (political) power is distributed and works its effects silently and invisibly through energy infrastructures that operate unnoticed and beyond the reach of ordinary political consciousness and collective organization until they break down (Mitchell 2011; Harvey et al. 2017). More explicitly, it also calls into question the routine modernist association between energy, (public) utility, productivity and life – positive discursive links between energy, consumption and political power that are not only ill-suited to the constraints imposed by climate change, but starkly inapposite when energy projects so often despoil and destroy both natural and human life (a critique articulated, distinctly, by Kaur, Hebdon and Lis in their chapters in this volume).

Beyond Energopolitics

All the contemporary political-anthropological approaches mentioned so far are indebted to Michel Foucault’s analysis of power and of modern governmental regimes: the attempt to shift focus from formal institutions and organizations (‘the state’) to trace rationalities and technical actions as they operate across social fields; the infrastructural analysis of carbon modernity; and the biopolitical account of modern states as invested in regulating – indeed, augmenting – the life of their populations. These Foucauldian approaches continue to hold serious critical force and resonate with much contemporary political experience. Foucault’s descriptions seem in fact to capture a political reality that is starkly materialized in energy grids, pipelines and mundane artefacts like power meters: the pluralization of political sites (with the emergence of a political rationality concerned to regulate and maximize vital flows rather than simply secure territory); the intimacy of a form of power exercised through knowledge and discipline rather than constraint; and the productivity of that power – with its commands to desire and consume. Such diffuse and forceful political phenomena are precisely what Dominic Boyer means to describe with his concept of ‘energopower’: these forms of power are not only biopolitical in their purchase on human life and productive bodies, but also seek to produce ‘corporate’ vitality (taking both *corporate* and *vital* in a wide sense) by a simultaneous ‘securitization of energy provision and synchronization of energy discourses’ (Boyer 2014: 327). However, on the evidence of

these chapters, we can push Boyer's insight further. 'Energopolitical' thinking is not only a matter of tonnes of coal, barrels of oil or rates of generation and consumption of electricity; it is also evident in neo-liberal regulation of labour-time and in governmental calculations of hours worked or jobs created. In a word, it is the *work* of the population, including the forces of nonhuman 'actors' and not just its biotic life, that is the object of our most characteristic contemporary government rationalities.

Each of the chapters here demonstrates the strength of the energopolitical and infrastructural approaches, recounting shifts of power from state to private actors, productive deployments of knowledge and expertise, and a proliferation – within and beyond formal legality – of new technical instruments and practices of regulations. And yet, ethnographically this volume pushes against the strictly biopolitical or governmental framing of energy politics. Each chapter looks at specific places where some energy project is provoking political debate and providing the occasion for new languages of collectivity and practices of belonging to emerge, often in deliberate opposition to regimes of productive interconnection with their own discursive appearances. Each chapter, in its own way, uses ethnography to move past questions of state rationalities and their material forms to focus on complex negotiations in which stakes are laid out and sides are not just taken, but are themselves constituted and reconstituted as positions in political struggle. In other words, the volume as a whole investigates not so much *why* energy is relevant to politics or vice versa, but rather two aspects of *how*: how do political actions, gathering people and suturing together otherwise disparate scales of knowledge through located acts of judgment, shape and frame energy resources? And how, in turn, can energetic resources help provide the conditions – or the occasion – for people to organize politically and unleash power?

As Kaur argues in her chapter, we might start to move beyond energopolitics by turning the basic biopolitical lens around to look not only at the places where distributions of political power, life and actual energy mesh, efficaciously and productively, but also take in those places, equally saturated by power, where risk is dumped at the cost of life and health. Kaur models her intervention on Achille Mbembe's thoughts about the violence and death inherently produced by modern governmentality, not as an exception from but as integral to its processes, and it is useful to remember that he stipulates there that the productivity of biopolitics *includes* the violent destruction of the very material basis of alternative and oppositional

forms of life, ‘an orchestrated sabotage of the enemy’s societal and urban infrastructure’, leading to ‘invisible killing’ (Mbembe 2002: 29–30). Energopolitics is, Kaur and others show us (see the chapters by Moolenaar and Hebdon), as much about spectacular destruction and violent sacrifice, the negative other or magical side of ‘work’ and ‘productivity’ as it is about protection and fostering of forms of life and vitality. Both work and waste are equally material aspects of its operations.

The counterpublic of activists that also emerged in Kaur’s field site near the now-operating nuclear power plant at Kundankulam provides some hope that energopolitics is never entirely totalized or totalizing – as Foucault’s notion of a ‘productive’ power that ‘calls forth, arouses, and even programmes the action that is liable to resist it’ would indicate (Foucault 1978, as quoted in Ortar, this volume). This latter is an important aspect of Foucauldian thought that Ortar takes up and develops in her chapter on wood-gathering as integrated into but also as a means of resistance to a nationwide energy policy. It also appears – although more in the form of paradox – in the massive protests against energy-change policies in Ecuador described by Chris Hebdon. As Hebdon tells us, indigenous resistance was sparked by policies that aimed to reduce reliance on cheap hydrocarbons in the Ecuadorian economy. The policies might appear laudable, a useful exercise of governmental power to mitigate climate change by altering incentives and shifting behaviours. But the resistance the policies provoked reveals that they entail not only ‘reduced consumption’, which through the lens of Northern climate change politics is a good, but also increased exploitation of Ecuador’s resource frontier and damage to the lands and livelihoods of its indigenous occupants.

These ethnographic insights shift our attention away from the terms of energopolitics, insofar as it sees energy primarily in its material forms and in its positivity, as a set of sources and resources always available to a governmental analytics of force and security (Foucault 2007). Ultimately, it directs us to another set of abstract representations of *work* and the various conversions these can undergo – into money, say (see the chapter by Hebdon), or speculative futures (see the chapter by Lord and Rest). However, this also involves an analytic shift away from the ‘ordinary’ level of energy interactions with which I started. In this other, perhaps more-than-ordinary perspective, energy is nothing material at all; it is a relation and a capacity, a potential and an abstraction, evident in social and political forms (structured sets of relations) that do not accord at all with those we

might otherwise be led to expect by either the boundary-crossing materiality of energy flows or by the expansive reach and global scale of contemporary governmentality. Lord and Rest observe that in ‘all the debates about contracts, concrete and shares’ in the Nepali politics of hydropower development that they study, ‘*water* itself has been largely overshadowed’. This striking observation indicates that something *politically* is at stake that is not water or the energy produced from it at all, but rather something that energy is only one *partial* way of measuring: a social form that owes only a part of its reality to materiality or energy.

Climate and Nation

Two striking features of these chapters are particularly significant for the clarification of this other perspective, beyond energopolitics, which focuses less on the global organization of energetic flows or the reprogramming of work as ‘energy’ in carbon modernity, and more on the energy of the abstract ideas, solidarities and immaterial bonds (of obligation and reciprocity and belief) that link people to each other and to things. First, climate change is pervasive but hardly central to the particular projects pursued here and, second, the problems, corporate and political actors, and avenues of citizen response explored in this volume are all notably *national*. These two are linked as ethnographic findings and are not the result of methodological blindness or ethnographic microscopy.

Climate change has, of course, generated a new domain of policy knowledge and political action with many permutations and potentially global consequences (Mann and Wainwright 2018). The policies meant to address it and the problems of grappling with it through normal political and policy routines are discussed throughout this volume. Meanwhile, both the causes and the effects of climate change are unevenly distributed, localized and specific; this specificity – which is usually registered in scientific knowledge as uncertainty – demands ethnographic engagement with its many manifestations at scales below the global one (Barnes 2016). On the evidence in this volume, we can certainly see that climate change is now providing a context of evaluation and justification that also drives economic investments and defines contemporary energy politics. For example, large dams have returned to prominence – in Nepal and Ecuador and elsewhere – in part because they can be ‘sold’ to international investors and institutions as well as local populations as a neat solution to

both energy supply and emissions problems at the same time. However, environmental scientists are increasingly aware that dammed rivers in tropical areas can produce just as many greenhouse gases (methane from decaying vegetation) as any coal-fired power plant (Bauer and Bhan 2018). In short, this programme of building is not any kind of rational response to climate change, even as the latter is put forward as a political justification for the large investments – affective as much as financial – that dams require. Similarly, the prominence of fracking as a nation-state desideratum follows the massive shift of power generation to gas-fired plants, in part justified by gas being relatively cleaner to burn than coal. Meanwhile, fracking that takes place in densely populated parts of Western democracies intimates a new era in carbon modernity: the politics of carbon-intensive societies can no longer be entirely characterized by an oil-mediated ‘disentanglement’ of energy consumption from the labour and place involved in its production (see Appel 2012); rather, new and uncomfortable proximities (for citizens in Western democracies) with energy production and palpable consequences in local climates alike seem to be the new norm.

For her part, in her chapter, Lis shows us that the political promise of a Polish electric vehicle is framed in terms of national technological achievement and industrial (and biopolitical) productivity, as well as freedom from conditions of economic constraint (the latter figured by the high numbers of used cars imported into Poland). The urgent need to decarbonize transport is hardly more than a distant justification and not (she demonstrates) the proximate cause or real stakes of the policy for actors involved. Meanwhile, economic marginality and a sense of regional identity are far more important than reducing carbon emissions to Moolenaar’s *Groningers*, while the earthquakes that provoke their political organization and action are themselves the direct geological result of past gas extraction rather than being caused by emissions or accumulative climate effects.

In sum, at every point where climate appears to be central – in the Ecuadorian policy of ending petrol subsidies, in the turn to hydropower to fuel growth in Asia, in the promotion of a Polish electric vehicle and so on – it turns out to be peripheral to the debates and political processes really at issue.

Perhaps this only proves the ‘weight’ of the infrastructures we have inherited. This brings us to the ‘national’ framing of the case studies in this volume. In all three of these cases, and throughout these chapters, climate is framed and understood in relation to national laws, national interests and national citizenships. Transnational connections

become apparent mostly when *other* nation-state actors (e.g. China) deploy their own national finance and expertise to expand their energy operations and secure flows of energy from elsewhere. Meanwhile, national laws shape the availability of natural resources like fallen wood in municipal forests and regional governments greedily eye the possibility of a giant spike – albeit a temporary one – in flows of gas revenues if fracking takes off or pursue a new generation of power and prosperity from the ‘blue gold’ of the resource frontier. For her part, in her chapter, Kaur passionately indicts the exclusionary national security logic that not only accompanies but itself justifies both the construction of a large nuclear installation and the suspension of basic political rights in its pursuit. As her chapter makes clear, moving beyond energopolitics towards another political anthropology of energy involves moving beyond the limitations of the logics of ‘security’ and those governmental rationalities that are so often the central *object* of even ethnographic attention. Moreover, this also introduces judgement and evaluation, in two registers, directly into ethnographic engagements with energy: both attending to the values and valuations given to energy objects by people in their own places and times, and, at the level of analysis, judging critically the good or bad that energy forms can bring. Neither task is, in itself, necessarily confined by the framework of a national politics or a national citizenship – to say so would be to commit the sin of methodological nationalism. But both in practice and in thought, energy is, as the chapter by Lis on the Polish effort to navigate transnational regulations and economic realities shows, very often linked to a notion of national productivity and national effort. In other words, the form that energy politics takes is contingently but also affectively national – and this is another ethnographic finding, not an *a priori* assumption.

The difficulty of framing climate change as a political object – an object of governmental rationality – reflects built legacies and long-cultivated affective bonds, which themselves have national histories to which we should pay closer attention in our ethnographic analyses (Edgerton 2018). In the middle third of the twentieth century, energy economies became increasingly bounded by national regulations, nationalized industries, national autonomy and national security. Energy was mobilized to serve social reproduction at national and regional scales through the construction of urban gas networks and national grids, while governments calculated potentials and reserves, and sought to construct capacity for national autonomy. We may think that this era ended long ago, with the oil

shocks of the 1970s and transnational neoliberalization, but the actual energy institutions and networks that these chapters cover are still largely constituted of networks and devices that served the prior governmentality of energy. However, this is not all. These ethnographers all conducted their research on the cusp of a new movement of national closure. Hebdon talks of the return of the state in Ecuador and its postneoliberal politics; India and Europe are experiencing political revivals of explicitly nationalist rhetorics. In all these sites, energopolitics is explicitly linked to nation and community in ways that abstract talk of energy flows or material mapping of pipelines and interconnections cannot predict. This is a dark thought, for it recalls Foucault's own caution that biopolitics can underwrite even the most destructive of attacks on the life of others; in the name of defending a society from 'external' threats, even 'massacres . . . become vital' (Foucault 1978: 137).

But these chapters offer an alternative. On the one hand, deeply embedded matrices of power, participation and legitimacy are enormously difficult to change, and the renewed attachment to national infrastructures – even when they threaten destruction – is in one sense a return of the repressed, a resurgence of the neglected material and affective underpinnings of contemporary governmentality (reprogramming or putting to new ends the old machineries of social reproduction may not be as easy as neoliberal reformers once thought). On the other hand, these turns and returns of climate and nation may also be worked together for the good, providing an opportunity to push along the necessary transitions and occasions for rethinking possible scales of action, with an accent on solidarity and effervescence rather than materiality and governing rationality. These chapters contribute to this work by dwelling in the dynamic space between action and reflection, in which efforts of collective concentration are sustained and then released to live on in the work of symbols. We see here that climate change demands more movement, more solidarity and more connection than our ill-considered and unthought infrastructures are able to give us. Settled rationalities – which we need to think about critically, as much as ever – can even under critical scrutiny bind hopeful and transformative practices to established lines of communication, and reinstate the exclusions of the latter. To counter the integrating force of these grids (which is even palpable at their raw edges), we can and must try to catch the currents that cut across them, offering indications of other directions in which energy has and still might flow, other configurations of solidarity and community, and other objectives for collective effort to

attain. Such counterflows and unexpected bonds of solidarity – with other people, but also with sources of energy that may exceed all existing political geographies – are what we all, more than ever, need to find ways to think about, and they are the subject of the emerging political anthropology of energy that this volume helps to bring into view.

Leo Coleman is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Hunter College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York. He is the author of *A Moral Technology: Electrification as Political Ritual in New Delhi* (2017) and the editor of *Food: Ethnographic Encounters* (2011).

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