

# Introduction

## Politicizing Energy Anthropology

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A political anthropology of energy starts from the position that energetic infrastructures are pivots for sociopolitical inquiry. They facilitate the contours of the state and local communities, both in their material existence and in their projection of imaginaries into the future and into a global environment. Not only is energy at the core of many economic interests, geopolitical struggles and international relations, but energy technologies are also central to modernist ideologies and neoliberal narratives. A political anthropology approach is one that can begin to unpack such tightly knitted sociomaterial and sociotechnical forms, tracing the links between material forms, concepts and ideologies and elaborating the forms of power that are thereby enabled or inhibited.

*Ethnographies of Power* compiles topical case studies and analysis of contemporary entanglements of energy materialities and political power. Based on original contributions with a strong ethnographic sensibility, it revisits some of the classic anthropological notions of power by questioning the role of energetic infrastructures and their current transformations in the consolidation, extension or subversion of modern political regimes. The choice of an ethnographic approach follows the intention to move away from large abstract explanatory theories and conceptual generalizations by attending to the contextual particularities of 'energopolitical regimes' (Rogers 2014). In doing so, we also seek to emphasize subaltern or alternative voices that are often overshadowed in energy debates by hegemonic discourses based on expert knowledge, technocentric thinking and other forms

of authority. The cases presented here unravel the arrangements of technological infrastructures, institutions and discourses of truth on which ‘energopolitical’ regimes are built, showing how energy implicates citizens and subjects in multiple relations of power that affect their political identity, sense of belonging, territorial anchorage, collective emotions, knowledge, conceptions of the future, and their access to states and to human rights.

The political reflections gathered in this volume fit within what Dominic Boyer (2015) calls a third generation of energy studies in the social sciences. According to this characterization, the first generation of energy anthropology studies was marked by the work of Leslie White (1943, 1949, 1959), who reinterpreted evolutionist theory in the light of thermodynamics (the correlation between energy concentration and entropy), leading him to consider energy capacity as a key factor for human life and progress. The second generation emerged in the 1970s and 1980s from ‘Michigan Anthropology’ and leading figures like Richard N. Adams (1975, 1978), Roy Rappaport (1975) and Laura Nader (1980, 1981), who applied White’s approach of energy and culture to more open and complex societies, while turning away from the ambition of building a general theory of energy and human development. Their ethnographic studies insisted on the socioenvironmental impacts of resource extraction and energy infrastructure (Coronil 1997; Sawyer 2004) and the rights of indigenous communities (Robbins 1980, 1984; Kruse et al. 1982; Jorgensen 1990). Significantly, Nader’s work on the governance of energy spurred her to define an approach to studying the powerful that she called ‘studying up’ (1972), helping to refocus anthropological attention on the exercise of power in modern states and corporations, as well as the subaltern and colonial subjects who were then more commonly of interest in anthropological research (with notable exceptions such as Richards and Kuper (1972); see also Gusterson (2008)). Since then, studies of the powerful, experts, elites or technocrats have become increasingly visible in anthropological libraries, and the question of studying up itself has been recast as a need to study across class, wealth, economic or other hierarchies (Stryker and González 2014). ‘The state’ is a relatively illusory concept, as Abrams pointed out (1988), and its presence can equally be understood through the experiences of those engaging with or suffering from its effects and services. Hence, the studies in this volume focus primarily on secondary state effects rather than those directly employed by states, yet for all that, they are studies of state power.

Both of the earlier generations of energy anthropology identified by Boyer emerged in moments of energetic vulnerability and transition: White published his works on energy and cultural progress when nuclear energy was emerging, while the second generation emerged during the oil crisis amid criticism of oil imperialism. A third generation, fuelled by multiple environmental crises (climate change, the Anthropocene), epistemological turns (ontological turn, infrastructural turn, Science and Technology Studies, Actor-Network Theory, posthumanism) and energetic challenges (the post-carbon era, nuclear phase-out, renewable energy, decentralized systems), has emerged in the last decade or two with a renewed set of field sites and theoretical frameworks (Strauss, Rupp and Love 2013; Love and Isenhour 2016; Smith and High 2017; Szeman and Boyer 2017; Günel 2018; High and Smith 2019). Although fossil fuels remain a fertile ground of scholarship (Ferguson 2005; Mason 2005; Wenzel 2006; Reed 2009; McNeish and Logan 2012; Huber 2013; Appel, Mason and Watts 2015; Barak 2015; Rogers 2015, Weszkalnys 2015; LeMenager 2016), as well as electricity and the grid (Bakke 2016; Özden-Schilling 2016; Coleman 2017; Abram, Winthereik and Yarrow 2019), a growing set of literature looks at renewables from an anthropological perspective (Jacobson 2007; Henning 2008; Krauss 2010; Love and Garwood 2011; Cross 2013; Argenti and Knight 2015; Franquesa 2018; Boyer and Howe 2019; Watts 2019). A proliferation of new energy technologies, decentralized systems and alternative forms of consumption is conducive to analytical exploration, political critique and conceptual diversification. This book therefore provides continuity to a range of social science studies seeking to overcome epistemological barriers to thinking politically about energy.

## Politicizing Energy

Invisibility and depoliticization are the first obstacles to thinking critically about energy systems. Except when they malfunction (Rupp 2016; Kesselring 2017), energy infrastructures are often taken for granted and are assumed to be a socially neutral process of technological development (Pink 2011; Larkin 2013; Gupta 2015), depoliticized through expert discourses and routine ‘anti-politics’ (Ferguson, 1990). Other obstacles are conceptual and semantic: the concept of ‘energy transition’ has aroused increasing interest over the last decade both as a technological challenge and a political label. Mette High and Jessica

Smith argue that the ‘overarching frame of “energy transitions” has narrowed the scope of how anthropologists understand and engage with the ethical dilemmas posed by energy’ (2019: 11). For them, presuming or advocating an energy transition towards renewables by casting fossil fuels as necessarily immoral ‘precludes understanding the ethical logics at play in those distributed assemblages and hinders our ability to engage with and respond to them’ (ibid.). Yet we should not be misled by the dominant debates around energy transitions to assume that these necessarily imply political transition. In Chapter 2 in this volume, Chris Hebdon demonstrates amply how the same colonial mechanisms and mentalities have followed the extractive energy politics of Ecuador’s Amazonian territories from oil to wind exploitation (see also Howe and Boyer 2015).

The very choice of the term ‘transition’ may also depoliticize its real implications by downplaying the turmoil and conflict caused by energetic uncertainty. Unlike ‘crises’, ‘revolutions’ and ‘mutations’, which can be structural, critical or violent, transitionist imaginaries suggest a gentle, gradual, consensual change. Caroline Kuzemko (2016) unpacks the forms of depoliticization to highlight a number of strategies that remove certain aspects of national energy systems from public debate and democratic institutions. This political concealment occurs through the transfer of issues from government to technocratic circles, arm’s-length bodies, experts, judicial structures (governmental depoliticization); from the public to the private sphere and to ‘market forces’ (societal depoliticization); or through a discursive framing of issues such as nonproblems (denial) or as problems that fall under a realm of necessity where human agency and contingency are denied (discursive depoliticization).

In contrast, following trends in science and technology studies (Leigh Star 1999; Barry 2013), energy anthropologists have called particular attention to be paid to the political dimensions of energy infrastructures as contours of the state (Meehan 2014) and sites of expression for dominant ideologies, collective subjectivities and socioenvironmental contestations. The anthropology of the state has itself been reoriented away from formal state institutions towards socially embedded processes and mundane practices through which the state is formed, performed and reproduced (Abram and Weszkalnys 2013). Analysing power and politics through diverse daily practices – including energy production sites, working infrastructures, consumption settings and energy bureaucracies – is a novel way to approach the porous, constructed and processual nature of the state.

## Energizing Politics

Boyer's conceptual proposal of a Foucauldian-inspired 'energopower' offers a stimulating framework for the anthropological inquiry into energy. Building on Foucault's concept of biopower (the management of life and population), he advocates an 'alternative genealogy of modern power' (Boyer 2015: 325), arguing that 'there could have been no consolidation of any regime of modern biopower without the parallel securitization of energy provision and synchronization of energy discourse' (ibid.: 327). Energopower, the harnessing of fuel and electricity for social purposes, can take a variety of forms, referred to as 'energopolitics' (Boyer 2014: 7). Energopolitics differ from other forms of energy (geo)politics in the sense that the close intricacy of energy and power transcends the scope of actors, strategies and decisions by involving knowledge and discourses, practices and emotions. If energy politics are a matter of governance, energopolitics are a matter of governmentality. Central to this definition is the power/knowledge nexus and indirect government through conduct of conduct. This includes social and cultural projects (Rogers 2014), Public Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility (or corporate ethics) strategies (Knudsen 2018), tourism initiatives (Loloum 2019), art exhibitions (Evans 2015) and film productions (LeMenager 2016) sponsored by energy corporations. Probably because oil has been the most pervasive source of energy in Western lifestyles and consumer culture, 'petrocultures' (Szeman 2019) have been a significant field of enquiry for anthropologists and cultural critics interested in the conjunctions of energy, culture and power. While supposedly forming a 'soft' version of energopower, the cultural politics of energy nonetheless contribute to the growing influence of big corporations in Western imaginaries and other aspects of social life. Energy infrastructure is thus about culture and knowledge (expert discourses, state or corporate categorizations, scientific or technical truths about energy) as much as it is about energy provision, and the coalescence of knowledge, culture, material property, finance, political power and technology always contains the potential to control and dominate (Foucault 1980; Nader 2010; Howe 2014; Kester 2016).

The chapters in this volume also push beyond energopolitics towards plural economies of knowledge and power, incorporating experiences of energy that people identify as political, but that are not biopolitical in the strict sense. In questioning the generalizing move of energopolitics, Raminder Kaur and Leo Coleman (this volume) reopen traditional political concepts like (post)colonialism, vio-

lence, citizenship, statecraft, nationalism, the ‘good life’, future, hope and uncertainty. In Chapter 1, Kaur engages more directly with the concept of energopower when discussing the relationship between energy infrastructure deployment and the politics of death. With reference to Achille Mbembe (2001) and Giorgio Agamben’s (1995) debate over biopower as a form of ‘thanatopolitics’ or ‘necropolitics’, she examines how the politics of nuclear power generation becomes a necropolitics of the state, bringing violence and death to poor communities that are located adjacent to nuclear installations. In doing so, she reminds us that energopower is not only about managing human life through infrastructure, but occasionally about brutally displacing, discursively dehumanizing, or even killing subpopulations who are considered detrimental to national energy sovereignty. In the Afterword, Coleman invites us to a ‘wider project of a political anthropology of energy’ by paying attention to other (metaphorical) meanings of energy in contemporary Western societies and beyond: Aristotle’s *energéia*, the Vedic concept of *agni*, the Chinese *qi* or the ‘vital energy’ described by indigenous people in Latin America (Gudeman 2012). These multiple ontologies of energy indicate the existence of alternative epistemic spaces (Chapman 2013) that should be examined within a genealogical analysis of energopower. Indeed, current discussions over energopolitics do not seem to have processed the recent (posthumanist) debates over the ontological nature of biopower (Rose 2007; Povinelli 2016). Just as Elizabeth Povinelli (2016) problematizes biopower not as the governance of life and the tactics of death, but rather as a set of discourses, affects and tactics to shape the difference between Life and Non-Life (geontopower), one could conceptualize energopower as the governance of the ontological difference between energy and nonenergy, provincializing Western definitions of energy by problematizing the very idea of modern energy in its social and historical context.

The electric grid in particular is emblematic of the kind of ‘infrapolitics’ (Scott 2008; Luque-Ayala and Silver 2016) deployed through energy infrastructure. Since the end of the nineteenth century, electricity has been instrumental in the shaping of Western states, cities and lifestyles (Hughes 1983; Nye 1999), as well as a ‘foundational apparatus upon which the experience of modernity has been constituted’ (Boyer 2015: 532). Associated with technological progress, the good life and social order, electrification has been central to the dissemination of modernist ideologies and Western lifestyles across the Global South, extensively promoted by corporate actors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations

(Shove 2003; Winther 2010; Coleman 2017). Electricity has legitimizing effects; it comes to incarnate the benevolence (Kirschner and Power 2019) or neglect (Cross 2019) of the state towards its citizens. Access to electric modernity has given markets access to new customers, incorporating populations into the capitalist economy whilst endorsing new types of behaviour and consumption habits (Labban 2012: 389). And this brings with it a host of future imaginaries that come to redefine understandings of what the state might be and what role it may legitimately play, as Austin Lord and Matthäus Rest in Chapter 3 in this volume amply demonstrate.

At the same time, disconnection, or lack of connection, or the refusal to be connected also constitute a political relation that is effected through sociomaterial practices. In Chapter 6 in this volume, Nathalie Ortar shows how French rural families may limit their dependence on state-owned services by maintaining their use of wood-fired stoves in the home. This enables them to think about historical continuity, alternative nonmodernist futures and their potential to hold the state at bay. The power of grid connection or nonconnection may therefore be a factor in territorial and social cohesion, ‘a maker of groups and a generator of political and economic difference among groups and individuals’ (Shamir 2013: 6). The gridding of relations has consequences for the distribution of political power, reinforcing the centralization of power and accumulation of wealth around those (from local bodies to foreign actors) who control resources and decision-making processes, allowing them to instrumentalize connection and disconnection for pork-barrel politics (Baker, Newell and Phillips 2014), colonization or political turmoil (Suliman-Jabary Salamanca 2011).

## Energy Statecraft and Political Ordering

Political structures are materialized through other energy infrastructures too, as well as through electrical grids; Chris Hebdon’s, Aleksandra Lis’ and Elisabeth Moolenaar’s chapters in this volume (Chapters 2, 4 and 5 respectively) offer three dimensions to this observation. Energy anthropologists have observed that the deployment of energy infrastructure is often related to the appearance of new forms of governance (pace Scott 1998), but also to new political imaginaries of nationhood and a wider transformation in the scope and rationale of state presence. Özden-Schilling’s work among electricity traders in downtown Boston and West Virginia farmers

turned anti-transmission lines activists undermines the uneven geographies of the electric grid, which is almost always governed remotely, from urban centres out according to city-centred models of economies of scales (Özden-Schilling 2019; see also Hughes 1983). In contributing to the making of the rural/urban/suburban divide, the expansion of electricity's transmission infrastructure also gives rise to new senses of belonging and an emergent (energo)political consciousness that crosscut political ('red versus blue') and social class divides (Özden-Schilling 2019). Multisited ethnography is a powerful tool for energy anthropologists, as it allows them to understand how transmission lines, hydroelectric infrastructures or pipelines are experienced upstream and downstream. By circulating from policy-making centres to places of implementation, they can better identify the unexpected repercussions of national or international policies and standards when reaching communities within specific territorial and cultural contexts (Johnson 2019: 72).

'Energy statecraft' often refers to the art of conducting state affairs, both domestic and international, as a means to guarantee access to energy resources or, conversely, the art of using energy infrastructure and resources as a means to consolidate state authority (Daugaard 2017). The costs of constructing electric infrastructures are usually high, often debt-financed, and delays between initiation of the project and actual production of electricity are long, allowing very few organizations other than state companies to embark on such investments. In foreign policy, energy statecraft consists of using energy resources as a means to get one or more international actors to do what they would otherwise not do by manipulating or exploiting their fundamental need for energy security, whether coercively (through embargos, sanctions, etc.) or cooperatively (through economic exchange, cultural diplomacy, etc.). Poland's participation in EU greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction mechanisms, for example, was key to the internal politics of the changing Polish party politics, but also framed its international manoeuvres in relation to corporations too (Lis, Chapter 4 in this volume).

Questions of energy sovereignty can be seen most vividly in the explicit use of threats to withhold fuel or power, such as Russia used against the Baltic states (Grigas 2013). But they can also be recognized in flows of energy that do not respect national borders or international geopolitical strategies, such as the capture of hydrological flows in the Mekong valley (Jensen 2019) or the 'volumetric politics' of Nepalese political ambitions around hydropower (Lord and Rest, Chapter 3 in this volume). Energy sovereignty here moves beyond



questions of state borders and resources to include new ‘geo-metrics’ (Elden 2013) of power, often directly inspired by measurements of energy.

## Moving Citizens and the Future

Ethnographic approaches to energy allow anthropologists to understand how infrastructures affect emotions and subjectivity at both the collective and the individual level, as shown by Moolenaar in Chapter 5 in this volume. Resource extraction and techno-infrastructure have direct consequences for people’s identity and wellbeing because they interfere with the integrity of their environment and landscape, their social relationships, and their health and self-perception (Knox 2017). In the case of conventional natural gas drilling earthquakes in the Netherlands, Moolenaar notes that ‘the symptoms people are suffering from in Groningen can be understood as social trauma and a cultural specific symptomology to express distrust, unsafety, uncertainty, and social rupture’ (Chapter 5 in this volume). These effects can result from the process of energy production or resource extraction, or from the politicolegal events that precede or succeed them (licensing, consultations, litigation and compensation).

The development of energy infrastructure affects the state–citizen relationship in many ways. Timothy Mitchell (2011) has exposed the links between carbon-based fuels and the changing forms of democracy, insisting on the essential contribution of coal infrastructure (railways, industrial cities, working-class districts, etc.) to the political agency of workers and their struggles for better rights. These struggles were subsequently jeopardized in the switch to oil as a core global fuel: it was much more fluid, more distant, less labour-intensive, often managed by authoritative countries aligned (or alignable) with Western imperialist interests and less susceptible to organized labour tactics of strikes. Other anthropological works on oil-producing states, like Fernando Coronil’s ‘Magical State’ on Venezuela (Coronil 1997) or Elana Shever’s ‘Resources for Reform’ on Argentina (Shever 2012) show the contrasting effects nationalization and neoliberal reforms can have on the relationship between the citizenry and the state. Now, though, evidence of climate change, the development of renewables and governmental alignments towards an energy transition have created new spaces for political resistance, participation and innovation. These emerging ‘energy citizenships’ include concerns for off-grid systems, the setting up of community renewable energy

projects, collective ownership and alternative funding of power infrastructures, equity and justice in energy access, climate change, policies and protests over (non)renewables and ‘smart’ technologies. For example, Lord and Rest’s concept of ‘shareholder citizenship’ (Chapter 3 in this volume) is evocative of the changing public-private-people configurations on which current energy projects stand. Decentralized energy systems open up other sets of questions on how existing political structures will be reworked between resource-consuming centres and resource-producing peripheries.

Several case studies developed in this volume reveal how energy resources and infrastructure – whether existing or projected – can generate ‘hopes, desires, and aspirations of citizens’ (Weszkalnys 2016: 161) and ‘saturate people’s conceptions of time and the future’ (Ferry 2016: 185). As such, energy forms part of an ‘economy of anticipation’ (Cross 2015) in which sociotechnical imaginaries are instrumentalized to draw attention away from the present and build ‘national narratives of a desirable future’ (Lis, Chapter 4 in this volume). As Lord and Rest (Chapter 3 in this volume) put it, ‘these performances and re-enactments of future prosperity become rhythmic *refrains*, a discursive tool for coordinating an assemblage of territorial motifs, spatializing state practices and affective orientations to the future’.

## An Overview of the Chapters

The aim of this volume is to map out the varieties of politics that are engaged through energy, from citizenship practices to energopolitical statecraft, to the multiple symbolic, material and expert practices that result in unevenness and inequalities in the development of and access to energy. The chapters present a wide range of sites for energy anthropology: from gas extraction, to projects for new green transport solutions, to flows of remittances and water. The chapters cover a broad geographical range, although there is a significant focus on Europe. Returning anthropological attention to the homeland of energy-intensive and imperializing industrial politics reflects a contemporary theoretical trend consisting of deconstructing the taken-for-granted existence of the material infrastructure and reconsidering the grammar of relations between humans and nonhumans within Western societies, where ontologies of nature have long divided Man and Nature into separate categories. Doing a political anthropology of energy ‘at home’ (Peirano 1998) is also a way to

return critical ethnographic thinking to a historical centre for energy systems.

Focusing on the nexus around a nuclear power plant in construction in the south Indian peninsula, in Chapter 1, Raminder Kaur revisits Dominic Boyer's concept of 'energopower' in a postcolonial context, where modern governmentality is entwined with direct and authoritarian state action inherited from colonial regimes. Kaur analyses the paramilitary presence and extra policing by the state following the construction of a nuclear power plant and its hostile reception among local communities. Her analysis shows how the politics of electricity generation apply differentially to varied constituencies marked by local, national and transnational power relations, provisions and sites through, along and against the grid. In doing so, her approach reminds us of the brutal materialities that often accompany state energy projects, whether nuclear or not. Displacement and oppression have been integral to large hydropower projects too, from the Aswan Dam onwards (Scudder 2005). Christine Folch's study of the connections between the Itaipú Dam and Stroessner's dictatorship in Paraguay (2013) reveals how the dictatorship's secret police used the Itaipú Dam as an apparatus to violently repress all opposition. Kaur argues that this goes beyond the realm of a neutral 'energopower', insisting on the significance of the 'raw politics of energy' or 'necro – (energo)power'. These, she claims, represent different 'spectrums' of political power deployed at the edges of the Western world: from indirect government *dispositifs* in the Global North (expert knowledge, community management, corporate social responsibility, soft power, etc.) to necropolitics in remote communities in the South.

The theme of colonization reappears in Chapter 2 by Chris Hebdon about the experience of the Oriente, a historically marginalized region of the Ecuadorian Amazon. Hebdon explores the political ecologies of energy statecraft in Latin America, identifying periods of extractivist practices in the *Oriente*, from dashed hopes of gold to agrarian colonialism, corporate oil drilling and hydropower mega-projects. Linking these episodes, he finds the structural persistence of inequality and marginalization, despite changes in government and 'conceptual shifts' in energy governance. After decades of dependency on oil subsidies, Rafael Correa's Energy Transition Plan aimed to increase national hydroelectric capacities and electricity consumption, but resulted in a significant rise in energy costs for users and a new hydrocolonial push towards the *Oriente*. Despite a 'conceptual transition' consisting of phasing out 'fictive energy' (oil subsidies)

and connecting energetic sovereignty to the indigenous notion of ‘good living’, a lack of broader-than-economic language prevented the transition from subverting the infrastructural logics of ‘unequal exchange relations within and beyond Ecuador’.

In Chapter 3, Austin Lord and Matthäus Rest explore the narratives of anticipated hydropower development in Nepal. Unlike work that looks only at the ‘impacts’ of major infrastructure, Lord and Rest pay particular attention to the nationalist assertions, popular speculation and ‘resource affects’ (Weszkalnys 2016) produced by what is marketed as ‘Nepal’s Water, the People’s Investment’, an ambitious state programme aiming to ‘securitize’ hydropower through dam construction and citizen shareholding. One of the key aspects of hydropolitics in Nepal is that it moves ‘beyond two-dimensional representations of sovereignty to define territorial ambitions in terms of volumes’, as if securing Nepal’s energetic future meant literally securing the hydraulic volumes within its mountains. These hydronationalist refrains are coupled with cohesive oratorical visions of time. This attention to the dynamic effects of hydraulic promises situates Lord and Rest’s work within a growing field of ethnographic interest at the crossroads of energy humanities and future anthropology. They show how the future is constructed by technicians, corporate actors and politicians through a shared ‘energy imagination’ that aims to secure future autonomy. Narrating this future is crucial to reproducing ‘a discursive regime that emphasizes both the liminality of the present and the abundance of the imagined resource future’. The present vanishes before a future that must be secured, despite the risks it appears to entail.

In comparison, in the Global North, Aleksandra Lis in Chapter 4 offers a broad reflection on the politics of carbon dioxide reduction infrastructure in post-EU accession Poland. She outlines three successive discursive moments in Poland’s climate and energy politics: (i) the discourses produced about carbon dioxide during the negotiation of the new EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) Directive proposed by the European Commission to amend the existing carbon market in Europe; (ii) those produced around the construction of a carbon capture and storage installation in Bełchatów, the biggest power plant in Poland, built as a response to the EU’s climate change policy; and (iii) the plans of the new conservative government of Poland to develop electromobility as a national response to climate change. The intertwined imaginaries of energy infrastructure and electromobility are here linked to discourses of national pride and economic autonomy. Through these discursive realities developed by

the state and the corporate sector, Lis problematizes the normalization of (economic and national) productivity in energy policies. She also reveals how infrastructures are brought into existence or fail to be constructed as a result of material and symbolic experimentation.

In Chapter 5, Elisabeth Moolenaar addresses colonization within European countries, which provides an interesting comparator to the internal colonization reported by Raminder Kaur in her chapter. Moolenaar's chapter introduces the energy controversies of a marginalized region – Groningen in the Netherlands – and the claim that it is treated as a 'resource colony' by political and economic elites. Her study unpacks local narratives regarding gas extraction in the Netherlands and describes the struggles surrounding corporate social responsibility, resource sovereignty and conservation. This case study illustrates how communities of resistance experience and navigate entanglements of governmentality, economic interests and environmental concerns. Moolenaar's ethnographic material indicates that the cracks and fissures appearing in buildings in the Groningen region bear witness to deeply embedded social, economic and political divisions. These materialities of ruin give rise to accusations of political corruption, with the state being seen locally as the primary beneficiary of gas proceeds. The sociohistorical context of Groningers' cultural and political marginalization takes on a new meaning in the wake of seismic events induced by conventional natural gas extraction. The narratives of Groningers not only reveal a sense of loss of security but also a growing distrust of central government, unveiling their attitudes towards region and nation. Moreover, the chapter describes how new political imaginaries and subjectivities among Groningers have spurred political and social debate regarding who should benefit from and who should decide on energy production, and what forms of energy production (and their respective consequences) are acceptable in the region.

Hebdon, Moolenaar and Kaur share an analytical understanding of 'internal colonialism', a pattern of subordination of a differentiated population within a dominant state (Pinderhughes 2011). All three chapters highlight how sections of the territories and the populations living there are perceived to have been sacrificed for the benefit of urban, political and economic centres. For Hebdon, the Oriente continues to be an internal energy colony, despite the change of regime and indigenous mobilizations. In Groningen, one of the poorest regions of the Netherlands, the development of conventional natural gas drilling has led people to feel like 'second-class citizens' and to question whether a national sense of shared wealth, wellbeing, sov-

ereignty and citizenship still has meaning. And Kaur shows a similar pattern where over time, protesters' claims to legitimate citizenship have been revoked, with police and paramilitary sieges, ambushes and countless arrests occurring. In each case, internal colonialism for energetic purposes follows a common and familiar pattern: the prior classification of given areas as 'underdeveloped', 'depressed' or 'useless' (i.e. versions of the colonial 'tabula rasa') to justify their use as a production or an extraction site and the transformation of the people's relationship with the environment.

Yet each chapter also illustrates resistance to this pattern. Nathalie Ortar's ethnographic account of energy consumption habits in Chapter 6 also demonstrates a modest form of resistance to state co-option of energy practices. She explores the relationship between national energy legacies, national policies towards new energy politics to meet international goals and household politics. What policy-makers call the 'demand-side response' offers a new set of questions and fields for anthropologists. Following energy policies into the home allows anthropologists to understand what energy consumption practices (like laundry, cooking and cleaning) actually mean and how they intertwine with other intimate economies (cf. Shove 2003; Pink 2004; Pink et al. 2015). Ortar's study among French rural and suburban families explores the social and cultural thickness of energy choices. While energy networks often seal social contracts that prove hard to untie (Johnson 2016), a close examination of daily heating practices allows Ortar to understand the alternative energy paths that people take despite the strong path dependency of national energy systems. Ironically, the dominant path is challenged within the state itself by the need to meet European energy goals, a climate challenge that has also encouraged the return of wood as a significant source of domestic energy. The close attention Ortar gives to individual energy choices reveals the complex bricolage of values and experiences that make up energy choices. Her concrete description of heating practices opens up a space to think about energy practices as a residue of multiple and often contradictory legacies inherited from the state, the family, communities and material infrastructures.

Ortar's analysis thereby resonates with Hebdon's exploration of histories and path dependencies in opening up unexpected energy potentials. They both address questions of inertia in energy policies and the capacity of individuals and groups to invent new energy practices. Both chapters show how energy in its various political ecological contexts shapes 'the social field of action so as to render some kinds of behaviour possible, while making others less possible or im-

possible' (Wolf 1990: 587). They also open up the blackboxed problem of how to overcome the 'inevitability syndrome' (Nader 2004) built through past political choices and hegemonic technological knowledge.

Leo Coleman's Afterword offers a brilliant synthesis of current anthropological debates around energy and power, invoking the many reasons why energy has become more and more relevant to contemporary political anthropologists. In dialogue with the different chapters, he pushes Dominic Boyer's concept of energopolitics further by exploring concepts like work and productivity, death and waste as key aspects of energopower. He points out that many ethnographic accounts of political struggles over energy are not strictly biopolitical and move beyond the register of critique. This concluding chapter also addresses some of the areas otherwise less present in this volume, such as the metaphorical meanings of the word 'energy' in Western culture or the difficulty in thinking about climate change as a political object when the focus of energy debates is almost always framed within national terms. As Coleman rightly observes, almost all ethnographies of power are understood in relation to political struggles and citizen responses at the national level, which seems illustrative of the current movement of national closure in which energy securitization is key.

## Conclusion

As the chapters in this volume demonstrate, energy is proving to be a truly fertile field of enquiry and theoretical debate that renews our understanding of the state, international relations and political power in all its forms. Energy is pervasive in political subjectivities and questions of national sovereignty. While neoliberal deregulations, oil-mediated deterritorialization and global climate crisis seem to transcend nation-states, the chapters contained in this volume remind us of the persistence of energy legacies at the national scale (national grids, nationalized industries, regulations, nationalist narratives, etc.) and the continued relevance of the state as a scale of analysis for energy conflicts.

What is specifically political about the ethnographic accounts of energy gathered here? These chapters all work against the grain in the way that they give voice to those often silenced within energy debates and they highlight the interfering currents that cut across the repressive dynamics emerging along the grids. They share an application

of critical anthropological analyses that ‘seek to show not only the fallibility of expertise and the faith it places in technology, but also the inventiveness and possibilities of lay knowledge’ (Johnson 2019: 74). They re-situate energetic power within broader social and cultural contexts, and in broader historical and geographical scales. In doing so, the authors open up energy landscapes that are more inclusive of diverse groups of people, allowing for solidarity and community in a way that is often denied by existing infrastructures, and offering the potential to be compatible with current environmental challenges.

Energy’s importance for political theory equally lies in its ability to frame competing perceptions of the future. State and technical languages can dispossess populations, offering elusive promises or inhibiting the articulation of fears. One of the most important roles of anthropologists in this setting is to deconstruct hegemonic narratives while reclaiming energy futures as a matter for public debate. Epistemological vigilance over the concepts used to think critically about energy is part of the anthropological method of critique: description is always a located political account. But it is not enough to describe what is to be critiqued; we should also criticize the mental mechanisms and conceptual routines that allow the reproduction of hierarchical orders, colonial forces and social inequalities (Strathern 1992). Lastly, knowledge-making in anthropology is both empirical and creative. Producing alternative accounts and counterhegemonic narratives of energy field sites (Haraway 2016; Watts 2019) can be regarded as a form of public engagement towards other futures and as a way for anthropologists to make a difference in the world. This volume represents a step in this direction and we hope that it will encourage others to engage in this crucial field.

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