

Assemblage and the Changing Geographies of the State

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Abstract: In this chapter I introduce the conceptual potential of assemblage thinking with regard to the state. I begin by reviewing recent moves in the geographies of the state to shift from a narrative/discourse of the state to a ‘everyday state’ that emphasises the performance of individuals located within it. Assemblage offers the chance to inject a greater emphasis on materiality and the agency of objects in our understanding of state power and state potentiality. The chapter then turns to an analysis of the assemblages formed by multiple states as they engage in different forms of diplomacy with one another. Some of these diplomacies are covered by the traditional definition of diplomacy as the practice of international relations, while others rely more on materially designed connections between apparatuses. I conclude by arguing that future research in this area needs to attend to both the transversal nature of these assemblages and the flat ontology of which they are composed; in these ways the anthropocentric notions of power common to understandings of the state can be decentred, allowing for a more-than-human conceptualisation of the state to emerge.

Key words: agency, diplomacy, statecraft, affect, ontology

x.1. Introduction

The Turkish troops rolling into northern Syria in October 2019 were clearly identified with the agency of the state, clearing a ‘security zone’ along the Turkish-Syrian border and muscling aside the Kurdish forces previously inhabiting the zone. However, this exhibition of state power was predicated on a range of interlocking systems, from the diplomatic work of the Presidency in convincing President Trump to abandon the Kurds, to the infrastructure of Turkish military logistics that sustained the forces across the border, to the flow of tax revenue needed to pay the troops, to the training and action of each individual soldier. Altogether, this assemblage of assemblages co-constituted the agency of the Turkish state in northern Syria. This essay examines the rise of assemblage thinking with regard to the geographies of the state.

The rise of poststructuralism might have been expected to displace the state as the focal point of political studies, given the centrality of the state within structural accounts of the social. However, the de-centring of the state within accounts of politics has taken a range of forms, each of which also has its own politics. Within the discipline of geography this has primarily been seen in the development of critical geopolitics as a deconstructionist, discursively-oriented project. Critical geopolitics emerged as an effort to de-centre the hegemonic politics of the Cold War, and especially American empire, in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Ó Tuathail 1996). As such, it drew on the inspiration of literary theory, most obviously Derrida (1981) and Said (1978). This literary theory was put in dialogue with Foucault’s philosophy (1970) to dissolve the supposedly hard truths of geopolitics in the solvent of discourse analysis.

This dissolution did critical work in terms of opening up new space for contestation of the fundamental geographical ‘truths’ that underpinned the making of foreign policy and which

had limited debate to fairly limited palette of (mostly imperial) options. However, the second decade of the third millennium has highlighted the limits of such an approach (Bachmann and Moisiso Early Online), with the poststructural state being too-frequently reduced to a set of narratives and discourses that underpin geopolitical orders. Nevertheless, critical geopolitics remains an important arrow in the quiver of scholars who want to open up space for alternatives. The limits were twofold.

First, the deconstructive approach of critical geopolitics was effective at demonstrating the flawed assumptions of geographic generalisations that permeated foreign policy making and opening up spaces for alternative visions; however, it rarely constructed convincing alternative accounts that could win over publics. The ‘common sense’ nature of many geographic constructs make them fundamental to many people’s world views, and this makes the task of dislodging them not only intellectual (via critique) but also visceral (through a politics of affect). The discursive focus of critical geopolitics as traditionally practiced makes it an awkward (though still helpful) tool for intervening in the material and somatic politics of affect. Second, the increasing salience of climate change politics to the realm of geopolitics offered an incentive to think of new tools that would allow critical scholars to think through and with physical processes and the material forces that they unleash. A critical geopolitics built on refusing the ‘reality’ of the environment and its political effects is an awkward place from which to defend climate change science from its deniers and well-heeled detractors.

What was needed then was a form of poststructuralism that could speak to the current needs of critical scholarship, both in terms of its attentiveness to physical processes like climate change as well as the new forms of affective and somatic politics emergent in the 2010s: social media and their attention economies, the racial underpinnings of the politics of

migration and refuge, and the embodied geopolitics of populism and its reliance on authoritarian models of masculinity. Assemblage theory offered another poststructural approach to the state that offered purchase on these topics. In what follows I trace out the literature that served as antecedents to this conceptual move, and then outline some of its implications for scholarship on the geographies of the state.

x.2. The new statecraft

Recent work in political geography has tended to emphasise the politics of everyday life over the politics of the state (e.g., Pain 2009; Wood 2012). This was a much-needed corrective in a sub-discipline that had been dominated by statist approaches for nearly its entire history (Taylor 2000). Research on the politics of everyday life highlight the role of bodies and their habits and practices in the constitution of various spaces, including home and the workplace (Brickell 2012). This has been a crucial step the feminist project of diversifying the gendered assumptions of politics (Dowler and Sharp 2001).

However, to say that the state isn't *everything* is not to say that it isn't *something*. By bringing state theory in dialogue with this literature on the politics of everyday life it becomes possible to enliven some of the rather stale theorisations of the state that dominated the twentieth century and led to political geography being designated a 'moribund backwater' (Berry 1969). It is possible to trace these developments back to political geography's adoption of Foucauldian thought around the turn of the millennium. Foucault's advocacy of power as a concept that is relational and therefore diffuse has indeed proven very influential and has partially replaced the idea that power is something 'out there' held by actors, especially state ones.

Thinking about the state from the perspective of everyday life both highlights the ways in which the everyday state is enmeshed in various peoples' life worlds in highly differentiated ways and also points scholars in the direction of the everyday constitution of the state from 'within' (Painter 2006). Both of these perspectives share the idea that the state is that which emerges from a wide array of relations and interactions that are performed by a range of actors at the scale of the everyday. That is, the state 'up there' is seen as being produced by the interactions and performances of people 'down here' in the trenches, either working in, or through, the state (Abrams 1977). This marks something of a distinction from the early Foucauldian thought that was popular in critical geopolitics, which relied on a top-down (if diffuse) conceptualisation of power (through concepts such as governmentality, etc). By connecting scales that had previously been thought of as separate, the social world is seen as shaped by power, but not in ways that are always predictable. Rather, sometimes highly parochial and 'local' events can bring about 'global' effects, or at a minimum can defy the trends that are identified as unfolding on a global scale.

In parallel to these trends in political geography, political theory has been re-working our understanding of the state. Rather than accepting the state as an *a priori* actor in the world, these scholars have come to understand the agency of the state as emergent from the interaction among performances of the state undertaken in various times and places. These can include a wide range of activities, mundane and exceptional. For instance, the biopolitics of the border serves not only to decide who is or who is not acceptable to enter the body politic, but also to iterate the idea of the state as the arbiter of who comes and goes from the state's territory (which is, of course, itself a production of the performance at the border). The registration of births, marriages, and deaths inscribe the state's role in acts which otherwise lack any particular relation to the state, giving the state the appearance of being both

ubiquitous and transcendental. This veneer of timelessness is crucial to the mythology of the state, which aspires to a role as the hegemonic organiser of life.

A literature has formed over the past decade which I loosely refer to as 'the New Statecraft'.

This umbrella term includes a range of political geographers (and political scientists or theorists) who are primarily interested in the everyday crafting of the state. Appropriate to the focus on 'crafting' the state, these scholars have adopted the language of the humanities.

Painter (2006, p.760) utilises Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of *prosaics*, developed to understand literature: 'Prosaics highlights the intrinsic heterogeneity and openness of social life and its 'many-voiced' character. It challenges all authoritative monological master subjects (God, Man, the Unconscious, the Sovereign as well as the State.'" If we focus on the latter, we can see that Bakhtin's *prosaics* is more interested in the everyday and its brushes with the State than it is in the State *per se*. This harkens back to the registration of births, marriages, and deaths mentioned just previous, but it also includes voting, parking tickets, and so on.

Crucially, by looking at the State in this fashion we can highlight the polyvocality of the State, with its clerks and *petit* bureaucracy. The State can be seen to be an incoherent, fragmented actor, often working at cross purposes to itself. Because of this incoherence, the State cannot be understood as overweening or transcendental. Rather, it is always becoming otherwise.

The idea of *prosaics* calls our attention from categories – such as 'state' or 'non-state' – and shifts it to a spectrum of what Painter called 'stateness'. That is, politics – whether commonly perceived as states (like Finland), or non-states (e.g., Gibraltar), or somewhere in between (Palestine) – exhibit some qualities that are seen as inherent to the idea of the state. Therefore we can assess how closely they approximate a state ideal; even the most 'obvious' states will

have some quirks that make it stand out from the ideal. A useful example here is the United States, which although usually considered a very strong state, is also marked by a federal system of government that reserves certain elements of sovereignty to the individual 'states' (like Florida).

McConnell et al. (2012) have taken up Painter's idea of stateness and taken it to its logical endpoint, which is to focus on these moments of excess when every polity falls short of the State ideal. The only 'real' state is the State ideal, the rest are all trying to perform that ideal in hopes of grasping its transcendence. The key humanities trope that informs approach is Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry from literary theory. While Bhabha's original concept attempted to make sense of subaltern attempts to mimic the colonizer in hopes of one day achieving parity, McConnell et al. use it to describe the performance of diplomacy. Finland, Gibraltar, and Palestine all perform a mimicry of the State ideal in hopes of being granted its imprimatur. The state/non-state boundary is performed into existence by the adjudication of those performances by those who have achieved insider status. The closer the performance is to the State ideal, the more the requirements proliferate to ensure eventual failure in the mimicry.

One consequence of all this literary theory is that it dematerialises the embodied practices in order to render them into texts. In contrast, Alex Jeffrey's (2012) deployment of the concept of improvisation from the world of theatre and music holds promise in that it reasserts the centrality of the body and its political performances. Jeffrey draws on Bourdieu's concept of virtuosity (1977), in which 'performed resourcefulness' enables political performers to deviate from the script in creative ways that nevertheless remain recognizably 'the script'. In other words, the script is not a structure that restrains them but instead a set of resources with

which to play. This advances the idea of state-craft because it means that various performers can simultaneously be improvising from the same script in the same territory. In Jeffrey's example of Bosnia, a number of competing state projects coexist, each aspiring to become the new 'script' to which everyone must adhere. That introduces the dimension of multiplicity into state theory, of which more later.

Crucially, Jeffrey's focus on embodied performances raises the question of the state's transcendence. How does the state seem so solid, so coherent over long periods of time (centuries, in many cases) if it nothing but daily embodied performances? Bourdieu (1999) features in one response to this question, via his concept of symbolic capital. That is, the state has accumulated legitimacy that makes the performances of statehood vibrate with the authority of the state: consider the solemn parade of the guard in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, or the pomp of a courtroom when the judge enters. Attention to symbolic capital has permeated work in the so-called 'practice turn' in International Relations, and indeed Bourdieu's focus on the body and its habitus has introduced a kind of attention to materiality in state theory (Adler-Nissen 2012; Kuus 2014; Neumann 2002; Poulliot 2008). However, what about materiality beyond the body and the habits or improvisations that perform the state into being? How do we account for the monuments, the office buildings, and the guns of the State?

x.3. Towards assemblages of state power

How can we consider the state in its everyday fragility and performativity, and also think through the importance of materiality to its seemingly-transcendent state effects? In short, how can we reconcile the everyday nature of the state, as described by the above thinkers, and the seeming permanence of the idea of the state? The solution proposed here is to

conceptualise the state through assemblage theory. Assemblage theory relies on a flat ontology that is dynamic, relational, and energised by processes of self-organisation.

Assemblages have been described by Martin Müller (2015) as sharing five characteristics.

First, assemblages are composed of a range of elements that exhibit relations of exteriority.

That is, the various parts of an assemblage are not understandable except through the various

relations in which they are enmeshed. Their characteristics and capacities are defined by

those relations rather than by anything inherent to them. Second, assemblages are constantly

becoming otherwise; new elements enter the assemblage and others depart (this is known as

territorialisation and de-territorialisation, respectively). Further, because assemblage is a flat

ontology, some of the elements of an assemblage are assemblages themselves, and so they

too are undergoing change. Therefore changes in one assemblage can ripple through other

assemblages that are in relation to the first assemblage. To be in an assemblage is to make

oneself vulnerable to being affected, and also to make others vulnerable to your affective

forces. To the extent that an assemblage appears stable, it is likely because of the specific

spatial and temporal frame at which it is being observed. The third characteristic of an

assemblage is that its elements are heterogeneous. Difference is inherent to an assemblage,

and this is the source of its continuous novelty. With regard to our argument regarding the

state, Manuel DeLanda (2006, p.12) argues that ‘the components of social assemblages

playing a material role vary widely, but at the very least involve a set of human bodies

properly oriented (physically or psychologically) towards each other.’ The fourth

characteristic is that — because of the aforementioned relations of exteriority — assemblages

can never be delimited with any real finality. That is, they must be thought of ecologically

rather than in their individuality. The trail of affective relations is potentially infinite, or

nearly infinite. Practically speaking of course analysts of assemblage can make ‘cuts’ to

produce the object of their study, but these cuts are not innocent and must be considered carefully. Coding and de-coding refer to the processes through which the identity of an assemblage is solidified or rendered diffuse, and the cuts made by analysts are part of these processes. Finally, the fifth characteristic of assemblages is that they exhibit desire. By this Müller (following others) means that assemblages demonstrate the capacity for self-organisation. Change to an assemblage can occur from within, without any exogenous source. Altogether, assemblage theory offers an ontology that does not privilege any particular scale, and which imagines a world of flux rather than a world of structure. But how can we imagine it to be political?

John Protevi (2009) has adapted assemblage theory to speak to the political through his concept of the body politic. Of course, the most famous version of the body politic is that outlined by Hobbes (see Rasmussen and Brown 2005), in which the different parts of society function as various organs of a meta-body, with the sovereign famously occupying the head. This formulation is clearly inappropriate to assemblage theory because of the way in which it embeds a functionalism into the body politic. That is, each type of person (or class) has a defined role within the body politic. The function of each is fixed; clearly this is a political formulation that suits those occupying roles of privilege. Protevi, by contrast, draws on the insights of assemblage theory to imagine body politics at a range of scales, synchronically becoming with — and through — one another. Protevi delineates between first-order and second-order bodies politic. A first-order body politic is a human subject, emergent from the assemblage of various bodily organs, along with territorialised flows of energy, water, and air. These first-order bodies politic are shaped by those flows, and others such as media and other sensory stimuli, such that they act politically in certain ways, from the material

deprivation that leads to revolutionary action, to the media ‘bubble’ that produces the Fox News voter.

The second-order body politic is composed of first-order bodies politic, but enmeshed with other materials, discourses, and objects. These social assemblages are prone to some degree of collective affective cognition, in that they are brought into alignment even if individual differences persist. That is, the ability to affect and be affected means that members of social groups are shaped by their participation in that group, even if in small or unseen ways. The second-order body politic, however, is not subsequent to the first-order body politic. There is no ‘body’ that is not already enmeshed in a community, and no community that exists outside of the bodies that compose it. This is crucial given the emphasis in liberal political theory on the state being constituted by an *a priori* existing citizenry. Rather, the scales of the body and the state are synchronic — constantly re-emerging from and through the relations that compose each assemblage.

It is crucial to note that Protevi’s second-order bodies politic is not a synonym for a state. Rather, the state is but one iteration of the many social assemblages that Protevi is discussing. Second-order bodies politic range from the state, to a power-laden conversation between a professor and student, to a military unit. All are becoming at different temporalities. Nevertheless, Protevi’s formulation of first- and second-order bodies politic allows us to consider the state as something other than a structure that shapes the social field. Rather, the state is composed of bodies performing the state into an everyday existence, as discussed above, in conjunction with a range of materials that persist in time and space and affect the political performances of those engaged in the (re)production of the state. These materials might include key documents (constitutions, legal judgements, etc.), monuments that code the

nation-state in certain ways, and of course the flows of political-economy (which are also linked to the flows of tax revenue), to say nothing of the more everyday dimensions of the state (such as Painter's Crown-certified pint glasses).

The re-working of state theory to think through assemblage is helpful because it holds onto the gains of the humanities-inflected approaches described earlier while also applying their insights to the objects and materials that compose the state and allow it to persist in time. For instance, we can see how the state/non-state divide doesn't just apply to polities like Finland and Gibraltar, but also to the objects and materials of the state. A policewoman is clearly identified as an element of the state, but when she goes home and takes off her uniform and badge and puts on casual clothes for a night out with friends, she is no longer clearly of the state. Nevertheless, when off-duty police still retain some state-ness. These processes of de- and re-territorialisation are occurring all the time. The state is here seen to be a set of bodily performances, objects, and materials that are brought into and out of the state assemblage, with effects on the agency of the state apparatus.

x.4. Topologies within and among states

But what happens if we apply the ideas of assemblage theory not just to the state, but to inter-state relations? Indeed, diplomacy is a natural field of politics to re-map using assemblages. Traditionally, diplomacy has been thought of as a field focused on relations, materialised in both embassies and the bodies of ambassadors. Clearly this speaks to the relational aspects of assemblage. However, this move allows us to rethink the diplomatic system as a kind of body politic itself. Instead of thinking of the agency of the state as emergent from all its constituent parts, this formulation asks us to imagine a collective agency that is 'above' the state, but not represented or embodied in a single sovereign figure. This is an uncomfortable view for many who are attached to the idea of an anthropocentric agency; however once non-human agency

is allowed for, it becomes clear that the diplomatic system itself channels forces that work through and on the various state apparatuses that compose it.

There is empirical justification for this in the diplomatic studies literature; for instance Christian Wieland (2012) has argued that for some political actors, serving as an ambassador made them more loyal to their sovereign. Being posted to a foreign capital made them acutely aware of their own subjectivity and made them loyal servants. Similarly, Noe Cornago (2013) argues that early ambassadors did not have a singular loyalty; rather while overseas they were often representing their locality and their religion as well. They were, to put it in terms of assemblage, key nodes through which distinct assemblages became linked, allowing affects to circulate. This changed over time of course as the state colonised the realm of the political, closing down the multiplicitous politics of the early Modern period with something more regimented. This role of the ambassador as a 'key node' in the diplomatic assemblage remains to this day. Certainly today's diplomats are more associated with a single state than they used to be in the times that Cornago describes. Still, however, it is understood that the best diplomats are not necessarily those who adhere too closely to the instructions of their masters, but are instead those who occupy a space in-between their government and their interlocutors, working on both in order to 'seal the deal'. It is partly for this reason that ministries of foreign affairs, and especially overseas diplomats, are seen as suspect by other parts of the government (and often also by the general citizenry). The reason that ambassadors are sent overseas is so that they can tap into flows of information and affect to guide their home government. However, to be able to affect is also to be able to be affected. Therefore, an ambassador of influence is also likely to be influenced. For this reason it is traditional to rotate diplomats from one post to another every three years or so, in hopes of disrupting the affective influence of the foreign court on the diplomat's subjectivity.

The Treaties of Westphalia are frequently described as a key event in the statist closure of politics. Stuart Elden (2007) sees the extended period of the treaties' negotiation as a moment in which the state and the diplomatic system are seen to be becoming together to form a 'diplomatico-military dispositif':

War is intended to be used judiciously, with a clear sense of why it is being fought, and used strategically to reinforce the balance of power. Diplomacy is to become an instrument or tool, with the negotiations in Westphalia as a model, with a congress of all states involved, and with a system of permanent ambassadors. Europe is seen as a juridical-political entity in itself, with a system of diplomatic and political security; but this is underpinned by a third instrument, each state having a permanent military apparatus of professional soldiers with an infrastructure of fortresses and transport, and sustained tactical reflection.

This summary of events traces effectively the synchronic emergence of the state and the diplomatic system, with both built on the back of the same assemblage. The idealised institutions of the newly formulated states (the diplomats, and the military) must be made interoperable with one another so as to regulate the passions and metabolisms of Europe.

The Elden quote above highlights for us the role of the non-human in the production of the diplomatico-military dispositif. Indeed, the discussion just prior of ambassadors as key nodes could be accused of the anthropocentrism that assemblage theory allows us to disrupt. The body politic of the diplomatic system has many key nodes, some of which are not human at all, but which serve as points of connection between the various state apparatuses (or

bureaucratic assemblages) aimed at governance of ‘the foreign’. While these connections may seem mundane and unimportant in comparison to the glamour of a diplomatic dinner party, they create real, material, flows of affect that co-produce the collective political subjectivities of the states that ‘own’ them. These might include data flows, or the exchange of attaches in government bureaucracies, or the circulation of goods across borders. These materials are of course always already just ‘things’, but they also serve as subtle influences on collective world views. Because they are objects of governance that range from all pillars of society, they are governed by other apparatuses beyond the ministry of foreign affairs, including ministries of agriculture, environment, defence, and so on. Under assemblage, diplomacy is both a fundamental way of thinking about the international and also no longer the preserve of the Diplomats.

The expansion of the governmental points of connection that link together the apparatuses of the state have focused attention on the technical practices that underpin this governmentality (Barry 2001). Processes of harmonisation across national borders have been unfolding for centuries. A salient example is the development of diplomatic protocol, which serves as the standard script of performance by diplomats. It was codified in 1815 at the Congress of Vienna, which sought to create a permanent infrastructure with which to head off a return to the conflicts of the Napoleonic era. By establishing the norms with which diplomats greet each other and demonstrate their recognition of one another, everyone was able to set their expectations around a set of standard procedures. This drained the possibility of aristocratic honour being offended and sparking more warfare.

However, this protocol is but one form of harmonisation that an assemblage approach to the state must consider. Other forms of procedural, embodied protocol include the development

of English as the *lingua franca* of most post-war international institutions, or the procedures used in extradition. More unusually, we might turn to the material, design-oriented protocols, such as computer networking protocols, document formatting, and so on. I have elsewhere written about these various protocols, and the ways in which they link together elements of a transnational state (Dittmer 2015, 2016, 2017). One such example is the standardisation of signals intelligence in the UKUSA alliance from World War 2 to the present. This entailed the harmonisation of terminology, classification systems, and signals intelligence bureaucracies. For instance, after the war the United States pulled together its fragmented signals intelligence apparatus (distributed across the State Department, the Army, and the Navy), compiling its capacities into the new National Security Agency so that their structure could mirror the UK's GCHQ. Australia, New Zealand, and Canada all had to develop counter-intelligence capabilities that mirrored those of the U.S. and UK in order to fully participate in the flows of signals intelligence that the UKUSA alliance was designed to circulate. In terms of technical standardisation, the US and the UK during the war had adopted identical encryption/decryption machinery so that they could communicate with each other. The flows of signals intelligence – and their associated flows of bodies (seconded from one country to another, or staff attending meetings) and objects (equipment, etc.) – are conduits for the subject-making powers of affect that offer the potential for re-working political cognition and the re-shaping of the broader structures of the state.

To summarise these last two sections, it is clear that an assemblage approach to the state entails a range of distinct shifts to our perspectives on the state. First, it enables us to think about the agency of materials, both in the production of state effects and state affects. These materials are crucial both to the ability of states to enact their agency, either domestically or internationally, and therefore it also requires us to think more carefully about the technical

fields through which materials are produced and set in relation to one another. Second, it also enables us to de-centre individual states in our understanding of states, instead seeing them as a set of apparatuses always already in relation to one another, acting on and through one another in ways that require empirical investigation.

x.5. Future research

Thinking the state through the concept of assemblage has, as I have just specified, implications for how we think about studying the state (or states). Research that adopts this perspective must adapt itself to some of these implications. First, future research should think transversally, focusing not on specific assemblages. Research on the state is, understandably, traditionally focused on a single state. What the assemblage approach offers is the opportunity to look at specific *relations* within and between states: points of connection, the milieu of meeting spaces, technical systems through which the state is composed or through which the diplomatic system coheres. How do civil servants communicate or work, either with each other or with their counterparts in other countries? How do changes in these practices or systems lead to evolutionary transitions within the state or the international system? Going further, assemblage offers transversal purchase on the state (or states) and the capitalist assemblages that constitute the economic side of political economy. Indeed, thinking the state through capitalism (or capitalism through the state) is a fruitful way to think about the mangling together of politics and economics and its implications for each half of that dyad (Pickering 1995). A challenge to thinking through assemblage is, however, that it becomes difficult to know where to make the cut and limit the scope of your inquiry. If every assemblage is 'open' and connected to other open systems, the chain of analysis can spin out endlessly. These are the kinds of questions with which scholars must engage as we further

develop our understanding. Assemblage offers the opportunity to re-think the state, and the relations that compose it and through which our social world is composed.

Second, the flat ontology of assemblage directs our attention to the bottom-up processes that inspire change over time periods that are perhaps out-of-sync with our usual sense of the temporalities of politics. Scholars are much more comfortable – and methodologically deft at – paying attention to the sayings and doings of heads of state and heads of government (and their various ministers and other elites). Assemblage approaches to the state tend to prioritise the everyday state and its practices. While of course state elites are themselves parts of the everyday state, and they wield tremendous influence, they are not the only source of agency. To understand this non-human agency, it is crucial to use methods that speak to different temporalities. For the *longue durée*, it is useful to engage in archival research that enables practices and events to be brought into dialogue despite them happening far apart in time in space. At the other end of the spectrum, ethnographic and other methods that consider the microgeographies of everyday life are helpful in understanding the agency of lower-level bureaucrats. At either end of the temporal and spatial spectrum, assemblage thinking challenges us to trace the emergence of agencies that are subtle and largely affecting anthropocentric politics via inhuman registers. Scholars must learn new sensitivities to these registers if they are to unleash a politics of assemblage that might remedy the politics of grievance that underpin both the populist uprising of recent years and the *longue durée* of the Anthropocene.

x.6. Bibliography

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