State/Society: The Social Relations of Stateness

Political Geography
(GEOG 329)

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Stateness

For Tilly, the quality of stateness is characterized by the degree to which a government possesses formal autonomy, is differentiated from nongovernmental organizations, centralized, and internally coordinated.

The quality of the state existing as a coherent object.
For Painter, the quality of stateness emerges as an effect of the practices, processes, and relationships that project an imagined collective actor – the state – functioning as the source of central political authority in the national territory. These include practices, processes, and relationships involved in issues such as: the recognition and guidance of citizens, the definition of aliens and foreigners, the maintenance of borders and coordination of cross-border flows, the assessment of taxes, and the distribution of funds to for social services.

The quality of the state being coherently expressed as an effect of practices, processes, and relationships.
For Painter, stateness is an effect of ongoing processes that intensify the symbolic presence of the state across all kinds of social practices and relations, rather than the historical emergence of a distinct sphere of activity called the state.

The enactment of the effect of stateness, the quality of relations being state-like, is ongoing not historical.
State Formation

Thus, the development of practices of coordinating militaries, compiling statistics, and operating bureaucracies did not constitute the state as such. Rather what emerged was a method of organizing discourse and practice so that processes, practices, and relationships could be understood to operate in the name of the collective body of the people. What occurred in late nineteenth-century was the emergence of a discourse of state.
Census

**Column 70.** Number of oatmeal mills in every such place

**Column 71.** Number of barley mills in every such place

**Column 72.** Number of saw mills in every such place

**Column 73.** Number of oil mills in every such place

**Column 74.** Number of fulling mills in every such place

**Column 75.** Number of carding mills in every such place

**Column 76.** Number of thrashing mills in every such place

**Column 77.** Number of paper mills in every such place

**Column 78.** Number of iron works in every such place

**Column 79.** Number of trip hammers in every such place
Military School

17 Students are to maintain silence in the classrooms. Their place in each classroom will be permanently assigned, by the drawing of lots.

18 A student is not permitted to change his place in any of the classrooms, without permission. This order is to be kept in all classes.

19 During lessons the students are to refrain from play of any kind, are to make no noise, and are to abstain from anything that may cause them to be distracted from their lessons.

20 Students may not leave the classroom to go to their rooms, or to walk in the corridors or the garden.

21 No student may leave the classroom until the lesson has ended and the signal for the break has been given.

22 All written work must be signed by the students, and collected up by the master after they have completed it.
Corporations

The Governor, Sub-Governor, Deputy Governor and Assistants of the said Company for the time being or any seven of them duly appointed in manner aforesaid shall and may have the ordering rule and government of all such forts, factories, and plantations as now are or shall be at any time hereafter settled by or under the said Company...and also full power to make and declare peace and war with any of the heathen nations that are or shall be natives of any countries within the said territories...and also to appoint governors there with powers of raising troops and executing martial law; provision as to profits of gold mines.
Management of the State/Society Divide

Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific R. Co., 118 U.S. 394 (1886)

Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company

Decided May 10, 1886

118 U.S. 394

Syllabus

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One of the points made and discussed at length in the brief of counsel for defendants in error was that "corporations are persons within the meaning of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States." Before argument, MR. CHIEF JUSTICE WAITE said:

"The Court does not wish to hear argument on the question whether the provision in the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution which forbids a state to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws applies to these corporations. We are all of opinion that it does."
Theoretical Resonances of Stateness

Nico Poulantzas provides the inspiration for the ‘social relations of stateness’ in the title of this lecture, in his working thinking through the state is a social relation.
Theoretical Resonances of Stateness

Responding to simplistic Marxist accounts of the state as simply the tool of capitalists, Poulantzas argues that the state is relatively autonomous from capitalist, constituted as the condensation of the relations between class and class fractions. Thus, for Poulantzas, the state was not a distinct entity but rather a relationship of forces. He argued the definition of a separate political sphere was the outcome of capitalist social relations, and that the appearance of divide between state and society was simply one particular form of the state’s presence in socio-economic relations.
Theoretical Resonances of Stateness

Similarly, Bob Jessop has used the term statization to emphasize the processual (as opposed to formal) character of state relations in his strategic-relational approach to state theory.
Theoretical Resonances of Stateness

Timothy Mitchell has provided an account of the state as a structural effect. Arguing that the state "should be examined not as an actual structure, but as the powerful, metaphysical effect of practices that make such structures appear to exist."
Theoretical Resonances of Stateness

This is not to suggest that the institutions of state do not exist or have effect on the world. Mitchell is steadfast that they do. The armies, schools, and bureaucracies associated with the modern state make it “the paramount structural effect of the modern social world.”
However, Mitchell’s larger point is to argue that these institutions have power to the extent to which they are able to organize relations, establish procedures, coordinate activities in association with the social world. The presence of the state does not transcend and unify these practices as a larger structure that stands apart from the social world. Rather the state is an immanent effect of modes of organizing people and things.
Prosaic Geographies of Stateness
Prosaic Geographies of Stateness

prosaic, n. and adj.

2. In pl. Dull or commonplace matters, considerations, observations, etc.

1847 *Amer. Whig Rev.* Apr. 347/1 Pantol replied with an observation on the weakness of human nature and that no constitution or privilege would make men free, but only the natural liberty of the mind; with other prosaics.

1890 W. C. RUSSELL *Ocean Trag.* I. viii. 163 She [sc. a ship] hardened rapidly into the familiar prosaics of timber, sail-cloth and tackling.

1938 *Science* Sept. 230/1 The term culture comprises much. It includes the prosaics of food getting and of everyday family life.

2003 *Washington Post* (Nexis) 1 May c1 War-gaming adds a dash of lottery drama to the prosaics of normal life.
Prosaic Geographies of Stateness

prosaic, n. and adj.

b. Of a person or thing: unpoetic, unromantic; dull, flat, unexciting; commonplace, mundane.

1729 J. Mitchell. Poems II. 291, I wish Mankind Were Prophets all—to Poetry inclin’d; for I’d not have them Priests, of a Prosaic Mind.

1792 P. Stockdale. Three Lett. ii. 8 A plain, prosaic man, would insist, that I have been traduced.


1859 J. G. Holland. Gold Foil iii. 41 Do you get impatient with the prosaic life around you—the dulness, and the earthliness and the brutishness of men?

1892 B. F. Westcott. Gospel of Life. 128 The Chinese are commonly held to be a prosaic people.

1924 Amer. Mercury Dec. 438/2 Lincoln..remains a prosaic figure in rusty black and a half-gallon hat.

1951 ‘N. Shute’. Round Bend iv. 118 The old man..had come to India after that for the prosaic job of organizing a service of lorries in Bengal.

1993 Albuquerque (New Mexico) Jrn. 4 Feb. B1/5 Turnips are prosaic, even dowdy.
Prosaic Geographies of Stateness
Prosaic Geographies of Stateness

Quoting Morson on Tolstoy: “important events in history are those that no one notices because they are so common and because there is nothing dramatic about them. ... History is made ... only by the countless, small daily actions, hidden in plain view, whose motives and cumulative operation we do not understand.”

... “the infinitesimal, of the accidental, of the trifling incidents on which everything ultimately depends.”
Prosaic Geographies of Stateness

Painter wants to direct us to think through the importance of the mundane and the everyday to not only the constitution of social life, but also the workings of state processes (or rather the processes that create the effect of stateness). He wants to stress the importance not of wars or treaties but rather the way stateness emerges as a structural effect of the organization of everyday life.
Prosaic Geographies of Stateness

Invoking Bahktin’s celebration of the everyday, Painter wants to remind us of the creativity of the everyday, its inventiveness and unpredictability. He wants to invite us to think about how it enables us to think about the state as something innovative rather than a centralized system of control.
Prosaic Geographies of Stateness

Painter wants to demonstrate how stateness is effected through relationships with a range of partnerships, including not only state institutions, but also community organizations, voluntary bodies, and everyday people. He wants to stress that bodies (both institutional and corporeal) generally conceived of as outside the state are enrolled not only as the objects of state policy, but serve as the agents mobilizing and implementing policy as well.
“There is no sharp institutional distinction between ‘state’ and ‘society’. The legal system, for example, depends on the activities of numerous organizations and individuals, not all of whom are conventionally understood as parts of the state.”
## Governing Anti-Social Behaviour

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of agent</th>
<th>No. of agents mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrators of ASB (e.g. ‘drunken yobs’)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of ASB (e.g. ‘decent people’)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-ASB actors (e.g. ‘Neighbourhood Watch’)</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community actors</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education system</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire service</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central government</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health service</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing system</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice system</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social services</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary sector</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislation (e.g. ‘Police Reform Act’)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms of anti-ASB intervention (e.g. ‘ASBOs’)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government policies and strategies (e.g. National Policing Plan)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmes (e.g. ‘New Deal for Communities’)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of local best practice (e.g. ‘Dundee Families Project’)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>277</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ultimately Painter instructs us that stateness is something that is understood as a effect of how society is organized rather than the quality of any distinct institution. The way this effect emerges is evident in the actions of boundary maintenance – determining what institutions belong to the state and not. But stateness effected in every instance in which people participate within interventions in the name of the state.