

# State as Socionatural Effect: Variable and Emergent Geographies of the State in Southeastern Turkey

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Dams were unique in the scope and manner in which they altered the distribution of resources across space and time, among entire communities and ecosystems. They offered more than just a promise of agricultural development or technical progress. For many postcolonial governments, this ability to rearrange the natural and social environment became a means to demonstrate the strength of the modern state as a techno-economic power.

—Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity*

The process of mapping, bounding, containing and controlling nature and citizenry are what make a state a state. States come into being through these claims and the assertion of control over territory, resources, and people.

—Roderick P. Neumann, "Nature-State-Territory: Toward a Critical Theorization of Conservation Enclosures"

## Socionatures, Everyday States, and Boundary Work

The relationship between states and environmental change has been a topic of increasing interest over the past several decades. Some have suggested that environmental issues pose a fundamental challenge to the state system and state capacity.<sup>1</sup> Still others have attempted to understand the diverse ways that states mobilize, contest, and negotiate "natures" as a central facet of state power and control, including efforts to make nature legible and controllable.<sup>2</sup> As Mitchell asserts with the above quotation, states demonstrate strength and power through rearrangements of socionatural environments, while Neumann suggests that the very notion of stateness is wrapped up with control of nature and citizenry. Mark Whitehead, Rhys Jones, and Martin Jones open up a broader set of questions to understand the diverse ways that states rely on, manage, and negotiate natures as central to state legitimacy or state building.<sup>3</sup> Building on works of this type, my argument contributes to a

1. See Andrew Hurrell, "The State," in *Political Theory and the Ecological Challenge*, ed. Andrew Dobson and Robyn Eckersley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 165–82; and Hallie Eakin and Maria Carmen Lemos, "Adaptation and the State: Latin America and the Challenge of Capacity-Building under Globalization," *Global Environmental Change* 16 (2006): 7–18.

2. See, e.g., Marius de Geus, "The Ecological Restructuring of the State," in *Democracy and Green Political Thought: Sustainability, Rights, and Citizenship*, ed. Brian Doherty and Marius de Geus

(New York: Routledge, 1996), 188–211; James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); and Bruce Willems-Braun, "Buried Epistemologies: The Politics of Nature in (Post)colonial British Columbia," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87 (1997): 3–31.

3. See Mark Whitehead, Rhys Jones, and Martin Jones, *The Nature of the State: Excavating the Political Ecologies of the Modern State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

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theorization of environmental changes and socio-natural relations as key to state consolidation and shifting state-society relations. I focus on elemental concerns from political ecology and social-natures perspectives, including spatioterritoriality, inequality and resource access, scale, and biophysical conditions, to enliven these intersections.<sup>4</sup> I also further these discussions by arguing that in the Turkish case, environmental and developmental transformations (e.g., changing agroecologies and access to water) and associated infrastructural works (e.g., dams and irrigation canals—raised concrete canals for irrigation delivery) can be understood as part and parcel of what enables the boundary between state and society to appear—what Mitchell labels the “state effect.”<sup>5</sup>

The article proceeds by first providing an overview of several literatures: everyday and ethnographic approaches to states and state-ness, Mitchell’s “state as effect,” and political-ecological and state-nature discussions, including key contributions offered by James C. Scott in *Seeing like a State*. I then provide detail on the case study of the Southeastern Anatolia Project (Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi, or GAP) and developmental and environmental changes in Turkey to provide an illustration of the ways that state-society relations and understandings of the Turkish state are evolving in relation to ongoing waterscape and infrastructural transformation in the upper Tigris-Euphrates basin. The case study material relies primarily on interviews, participant observation, and a survey of recently irrigated villages conducted in 2001 (with follow-up work done in 2004, 2005, and 2007 [see n. 27]). Through theoretical background and empirical discussion, the article offers four linked contributions. First, I detail ways that attention to developmental and environmental changes allows us to understand

the Turkish state as differentiated not only socio-spatially, culturally, and historically but also in relation to resource conditions, use, access, and other biophysical realities.<sup>6</sup> Second, I propose that the state and state-society relations are undergoing important revision with ongoing irrigation and waterscape changes. Third, I concur with those who argue that political-ecological and socio-natural approaches might be particularly fruitful for state theory. In particular, I argue that there are several key themes of interest, including spatiotemporalities of resources, inequality and differentiated access to resources, scale, and biophysical and materialities of natures. These analytics are useful both to understand differentiated states and to potentially expose key practices through which distinctions between state and society are invoked and consolidated—the state effect.<sup>7</sup> Fourth, building on Scott in conversation with the case study, I argue that scalar dynamics may further our theorization of states, state-society dynamics, and state-nature intersections.<sup>8</sup> I now turn to an overview of relevant theoretical discussions before providing the ethnographic material from southeastern Turkey.

### **Approaching States:**

#### ***Everyday States and Geographies of State-ness***

As Wendy Brown writes, “Despite the almost unavoidable tendency to speak of the state as an ‘it,’ the domain we call the state is not a thing, a system or subject, but a significantly unbounded terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules, and practices.”<sup>9</sup> A large body of work has arisen over the past several decades precisely seeking to understand the state through everyday social interactions and experiences.<sup>10</sup> Yael Navaro-Yashin provides one example, allowing for an analysis of “people and the state, not as an opposition, but as the same

4. See *ibid.*; Paul Robbins, “The State in Political Ecology: A Postcard to Political Geography from the Field,” in *The Sage Handbook of Political Geography*, ed. Kevin R. Cox, Murray Low, and Jennifer Robinson (London: Sage, 2008), 205–18; and Noel Castree and Bruce Braun, eds., *Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millennium* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

5. Timothy Mitchell, “The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics,” *American Political Science Review* 85 (1991): 77–96.

6. Cf. Joe Painter, “Prosaic Geographies of State-ness,” *Political Geography* 25 (2006): 752–74; and Sallie A. Marston, “Space, Culture, State: Uneven Developments in Political Geography,” *Political Geography* 23 (2004): 1–16.

7. Cf. Mitchell, “Limits of the State.”

8. See Scott, *Seeing like a State*.

9. Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 174.

10. See, e.g., Joel Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Akhil Gupta, “Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State,” *American Ethnologist* 22 (1995): 375–402; and Anna J. Secor, “Between Longing and Despair: State, Space, and Subjectivity in Turkey,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25 (2007): 33–52. See also the discussion in Stuart Corbridge, “State and Society,” in Cox et al., *Sage Handbook of Political Geography*, 107–21.

domain.”<sup>11</sup> Joe Painter highlights the “prosaic geographies of stateness,” suggesting that social life is suffused by state practices and that the state is experienced in ways that are necessarily uneven and differentiated temporally and sociospatially.<sup>12</sup> He argues that the “state emerges as an imagined collective actor partly through the telling of stories of statehood and the production of narrative accounts of state power.”<sup>13</sup> Together these approaches suggest that the state should necessarily be read in relation to how it is understood, experienced, and constituted through everyday spaces, practices, and narrations.

### *Situating “State as Effect”*

While others have taken the impossibility of defining the boundary between state and society as reason to abandon the state as an object of inquiry, Mitchell suggests instead that this provides reason to take states seriously—the imperative is to trace the specific practices through which the state-society boundary takes hold.<sup>14</sup> He provides one of the most established bases for understanding “that states are never ‘formed’ once and for all” but, rather, that state formation is an ongoing project.<sup>15</sup>

With this framing, Mitchell effectively turns the logic of state-society work from seeking to understand the effects of the state on society to considering the processes and technologies through which the concept of the state emerges and appears as a discrete object. He clarifies, “Rather than searching for a definition that will fix the boundary, we need to examine the detailed political processes through which

the uncertain yet powerful distinction between the state and society is produced.”<sup>16</sup> The study offered here takes up this imperative. Focusing on changing socionatures, the empirical examples from southeastern Turkey reveal that while experiences of the Turkish state differ significantly sociospatially, culturally, or historically, they nonetheless cohere by giving substance to the idea of state as distinct from society—the “state effect.”

To date, only a handful of other studies have taken on the task of providing illustrations of Mitchell’s theoretical contribution. Navaro-Yashin offers one case, considering how the state-society division is invoked through secularist and Islamic discourse in contemporary Turkey. As she describes, secularists invoke the sphere of civil society as distinct from the state in order to gain legitimacy as a democracy with a viable public sphere, while Islamists position the secular state as outside of, and inauthentic with respect to, Turkish culture (and Sunni Islam). Painter offers another case, drawing on public policy in the United Kingdom to discuss the emergence of “stateness.” He argues that “stateness” (or the bundle of characteristics associated with states) is actualized in countless mundane social and material practices and as such suggests that the state-society distinction serves as a symbolic resource on which people draw, producing real effects. My work here extends these contributions and links to broader debates related to “boundary work”—highlighting the specific discourses and practices through which boundaries are established, given meaning, and made to appear as fixed or natural.<sup>17</sup>

11. Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 2.

12. See Painter, “Prosaic Geographies of Stateness.” Stateness refers to the historical and geographical understandings of and associations with states, including characteristics that might be linked with states at particular times and places, and how these associations might change.

13. *Ibid.*, 761.

14. See Mitchell, “Limits of the State.” Theorists who work on this boundary problem are generally indebted to Antonio Gramsci’s work, suggesting that there is no possibility of theorizing states apart from social-economic processes (see Antonio Gramsci, *Se-*

*lections from the Prison Notebooks* [1971; repr., New York: International, 1997]). For discussion, see, e.g., Bob Jessop, “Bringing the State Back In (Yet Again): Reviews, Revisions, Rejections, and Redirections,” published by the Department of Sociology, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK, [www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/papers/Jessop-Bringing-the-State-Back-In.pdf](http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/papers/Jessop-Bringing-the-State-Back-In.pdf); or Kiran Asher and Diana Ojeda, “Producing Nature and Making the State: Ordenamiento Territorial in the Pacific Lowlands of Colombia,” *Geoforum* 40 (2009): 292–302.

15. George Steinmetz, ed., introduction to *State/Culture: State Formation after the Cultural Turn* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 9.

16. Mitchell, “Limits of the State,” 78.

17. See Thomas F. Gieryn, “Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists,” *American Sociological Review* 48 (1983): 781–95; Reece Jones, “Categories, Borders, and Boundaries,” *Progress in Human Geography* 33 (2009): 174–89; Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993); and Anssi Paasi, “The Changing Discourses on Political Boundaries: Mapping the Backgrounds, Contexts, and Contents,” in *B/ordering Space*, ed. Henk Van Houtum, Olivier Kramsch, and Wolfgang Zierhofer (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005), 17–32.

**State-Natures and Political Ecologies of States**

Other conceptual resources central to this project include the recent literatures on state-natures and political-ecological approaches to states. As Paul Robbins suggests, although the state has long been a focus for political-ecological studies (considering state policies or subsidies), there is a continuing need to detail how state practices transform environments and also, important for my purposes, how the state is consolidated, and constituted, in relation to “nature.”<sup>18</sup> A contribution by Whitehead, Jones, and Jones similarly calls for enriched attention to “state natures,” including the ways that states frame and represent the natural world, the role of resources in state and nation building, and the ways that nature figures in state territorialization or centralization.<sup>19</sup> While these authors cite several examples of work of this type, for instance, Roderick Neumann’s work on conservation territories as central to colonial state control in eastern Africa, these authors conclude that there is a need to extend work on these themes.<sup>20</sup> While I do not have the space to discuss all of their specific contributions here, several other works also usefully describe linkages among states, natures, and resources issues and so provide a useful foundation for this work. Together these works introduce a set of questions of interest, from considering how certain populations and locations are constituted as external to state interests, to specifying ways that transformations of nature may serve to legitimate state practices or institutions or ways that state formation occurs unevenly in relation to specific biophysical realities.<sup>21</sup>

Given the themes of interest for this study, it would be impossible not to also address Scott’s pivotal work, *Seeing like a State*. Scott provides a host of examples, from state forestry to villagization in Tanzania, to detail ways that statist “high modernism” often sacrifices complexity to simplification, legibility, and homogenization. He has been taken to task for a number of theoretical ellipses in his work, including the failure to explicitly theorize the very object of his study—states.<sup>22</sup> Notwithstanding these shortcomings, his work has become one of the most-cited discussions of state-environment-development linkages. The degree of uptake of his work across the social sciences suggests that there are elements of his work that are important and hold traction for understandings of nature, development, and state building. Thus I revisit his contributions after examining the case study of GAP in the next section.<sup>23</sup> With respect to Scott, I argue that perhaps his attention to scale and grand schemes of socioenvironmental engineering is a meaningful contribution that requires further consideration by state theorists.

**Narratives of State-Led Change from a Border Region**

With even a cursory understanding of Turkish history and politics, the salience of the rural southeast as an extreme site to investigate the Turkish state should be clear. The only predominantly Kurdish region in contemporary Turkey, southeastern Anatolia has also been the primary site of the decades-long conflict related to Kurdish separatism.<sup>24</sup> More recently, the southeast has also been a focal point for rising Islamisms,

18. See Robbins, “State in Political Ecology.”

19. See Whitehead et al., *Nature of the State*.

20. See Roderick P. Neumann, “Nature-State-Territory: Toward a Critical Theorization of Conservation Enclosures,” in *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development, Social Movements*, ed. Richard Peet and Michael Watts (London: Routledge, 2004), 195–217.

21. For more on the role of nature in state formation, see Kalyanakrishnan Sivaramakrishnan, *Modern Forests: Statemaking and Environmental Change in Colonial Eastern India* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Asher and Ojeda, “Producing Nature and Making the State”; and Leila M. Harris and Samer Alatout, “Negotiating Hydro-scales, Forging States: Comparison of the Upper Tigris-Euphrates and Jordan River Basins,” *Political Geography* 29 (2010): 148–56.

22. See Scott, *Seeing like a State*. Among critics it has been noted that Scott’s “state” is overly simplistically equated with high modernism, standardization, and scientific arrogance. Fernando Coronil also finds fault with Scott’s treatment of state and society as neat and distinct categories (Coronil, “Smelling like a Market,” *American Historical Review* 106 (2001): 114–18). See also Robbins, “State in Political Ecology”; Akhil Gupta, “Review of J. Scott: *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 58 (1999): 1093–95; and Tania Murray Li, “Beyond ‘the State’ and Failed Schemes,” *American Anthropologist* 107 (2005): 383–94.

23. For an overview of GAP, see I. H. Olcay Ünver, “Southeastern Anatolia Integrated Development Project (GAP), Turkey: An Overview of Issues of Sustainability,” *Water Resources Development* 13 (1997):

187–207. For critical analyses, see Leila M. Harris, “Water and Conflict Geographies of the Southeastern Anatolia Project,” *Society and Natural Resources* 15 (2002): 743–59; Leila M. Harris, “Irrigation, Gender, and Social Geographies of Waterscape Evolution in Southeastern Turkey,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24 (2006): 187–213; and Leila M. Harris, “Modernizing the Nation: Postcolonialism, (Post)Development, and Ambivalent Spaces of Difference in Southeastern Turkey,” *Geoforum* 39 (2008): 1698–708. See also Leila M. Harris, “States at the Limit: Tracing Contemporary State-Society Relations in the Borderlands of Southeastern Turkey,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (2009).

24. For more details on the Kurdish question, see Kemal Kirisci and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of Trans-state Ethnic Conflict* (London: Frank Cass, 1997).

a contentious staging ground for attacks against neighboring Iraq, and a fulcrum of European Union human rights concerns. As such, Arabic- and Kurdish-speaking villages in the southeast constitute both a literal and a figurative border of the reach and extent of Turkish language, legitimacy, and state influence. As a large-scale water-related development project in the upper Tigris-Euphrates basin that involves a complex of twenty-one dams and extensive irrigation infrastructure, GAP is transforming waterscapes, water use and access, and biophysical realities of the region. With these changes, this article asks: how does GAP fundamentally alter villagers' understandings, narratives, and imaginaries of the Turkish state? Further, how do shifting narratives also serve to isolate the state as a sphere seemingly distinct from society?

### ***State Productions: Infrastructure and Consolidation of the Borderlands***

In many ways, the massive scale of infrastructure associated with the southeastern Anatolia project extends and solidifies Turkish state influence in this contested border region. For instance, the establishment of canalet irrigation up to the border with Syria, but not beyond, is an inscription that marks the boundary of what lies "within" and "without" modern Turkey. As with other large dam-building projects, the scale and engineering feats of GAP play centrally on nationalist imaginings, with images of the Atatürk Dam appearing on Turkish lira banknotes and with attribution for the project's inspiration going to Turkey's founding father, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938).<sup>25</sup> The damming and diversion of Tigris and Euphrates waters also involves a range of novel state practices. For instance, the coming of irrigation required a flurry of activity to prepare the fields; state agents from the Devlet Su İşleri (DSİ;

State Hydraulic Works) built the canalets, Village Services and other agencies built roads and began land leveling, and engineers conducted research that led to the establishment of drinking wells and water user groups. In all of these instances the "contact zones" with the state in this rural border area have been extended and intensified.<sup>26</sup>

To tell the story of varied and changing narrations and understandings of the Turkish state in relation to GAP, I follow the flow of the Euphrates water from the new dams on the river to areas where it is being diverted for irrigation and also to other areas where future irrigation delivery is planned.<sup>27</sup> At each of these sites, I draw on interview and survey responses to tell the story of how the state is importantly differentiated by this infrastructure and by biophysical conditions, as well as how state-society relations are evolving in relation to the emergent waterscape. I also show ways that the state is differentiated as a sphere seemingly distinct from society in part through these narratives of change as well as the massive scale of the transformation under way. I begin very near to the Atatürk Dam (including the nearby half-inundated town of Halfeti) and then follow the water to the newly irrigated Harran plain. In the plain, villagers are adapting to new irrigation possibilities. In the same spaces, one encounters very distinct narrations of the state from those who had relied heavily on animal husbandry and from Kurdish migrant workers who "follow the water" to work as seasonal laborers. Moving back north, I then trace understandings of the state in areas slated to receive irrigation water in the future, in another town very near the Atatürk Dam reservoir and the town of Yayaş outside Diyarbakir. By tracing variable conceptions of the state across these sites, we can understand how state-society relations shift in rela-

25. On nationalism with respect to dam building, see Patrick McCully, *Silenced Rivers: The Ecology and Politics of Large Dams* (London: Zed Books, 1996); and Daniel Klingensmith, *One Valley and a Thousand: Dams, Nationalism, and Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). On Atatürk and GAP in particular, see Harris, "Modernizing the Nation"; and Leila M. Harris and Samer Alatout, "Negotiating Hydro-scales, Forging States: Comparison of the upper Tigris/Euphrates and Jordan River Basins," *Political Geography* 29 (2010): 148–56.

26. See Harris, "States at the Limit."

27. Much of this research was conducted in 2001, with follow-up work in 2004, 2005, and 2007. The research documented here relies on more than sixty interviews conducted with villagers in various parts of the southeastern Anatolia region, as well as a 125-household survey conducted in the Harran plain. The goal of this work was to understand sociopolitical and institutional dynamics related to GAP. Document analysis, focus groups, and interviews with state agents were also conducted but are not addressed here.

tion to the altered water resource geography of the region and also how the state is understood and narrated as distinct from society in part through these encounters.

***State Narrations in Inundated Villages:  
Between Atatürk and Birecik Dams***

To begin, we can consider inundated and relocated sites that are affected by the new dam infrastructure. An interesting affected site is that of Old Halfeti, just north of the Birecik Dam. As my assistant and I walk through the town we see a mosque from the early 1800s that is now largely submerged by the reservoir, although the minaret still rises out of the water and remains visible from across the town. The peculiar thing about Old Halfeti is that half the town is still inhabited. An elderly woman summons us to her balcony. We do not even ask questions, as the woman, Hanim, immediately tells us about her profound sadness, that the town has “lost its life” and that they did not understand that their half of the town would be “left behind.” As she explained tearfully, the town has been torn apart (literally); she can no longer visit with her neighbors now that they are in the resettled area ten kilometers up the hill—without public transport to connect them. “The state” came and explained to the villagers what would happen, but no one ever imagined that *this* could happen.<sup>28</sup>

Many in Halfeti talk about the inundation and what was lost of the unique microclimate that existed along the banks of the Euphrates—people grew pomegranates, apricots, plums, pistachios, and other fruits and nuts. “It was beautiful,” several proclaimed. “There was everything there.” There was a sad irony in that people had to cut down their own orchards before the inundation, ordered by the state to do so. According to Hanim and others, this was a deeply symbolic and profoundly sad moment for the villagers. It was also among the happenings that people still seem unable to comprehend—it still seems impossible.

Up the hill in the newly resettled village, we walk around in a very stark landscape. One

retired couple we speak with is not critical of the state. The husband, Cemal, was himself a former state bureaucrat. They are happy with their new cement home, even though they miss their garden and even though they are not pleased about being forced to live with people from other relocated villages. They also feel very uncertain about the future, worried about future charges they will incur and the lack of jobs for their son. Although they are relatively happy with the changes, what is interesting is that they too shared the sense that what happened was unimaginable. Both Cemal and Hanim describe a shared sense of disbelief when Turkish state agents first came to tell them what would happen. As Cemal recalls, “Someone came and told us, but we didn’t believe it, so we didn’t do anything. We didn’t organize; we didn’t hold meetings. Nothing.”<sup>29</sup> Even though Cemal himself was a state agent, the state in these narratives figures “apart” from villagers’ comprehension, occupying a separate domain of intelligibility. What had occurred remained incomprehensible to the villagers until they were literally forced to leave by (and believe) the rising waters of the Euphrates.

***State Narrations among Villagers in  
Newly Irrigated Areas of the Harran Plain***

Forty kilometers away, the water from the Atatürk reservoir emerges from a long tunnel, having arrived at its destination—the Harran plain. Villagers of the plain encounter the state in varied ways, from working with state agricultural engineers to discuss soil erosion to collecting state subsidies for cotton production. Those who own land tend to tell a positive story about how the changes have affected them—they now have more amenities, first electricity, then drinking water, and now, irrigation. As many suggest, irrigation brings life to the village, allowing farmers to grow crops year-round. For those who do not own land, and those who had relied heavily on animal herding, the transition to irrigation and cotton cropping has been less positive, even devastating.<sup>30</sup> When discussing

28. Hanim, interview by the author, Halfeti, 30 September 2001.

29. Cemal, interview by the author, Karaotlak, 30 September 2001.

30. For an explication of differentiated experiences of these changes, see Leila M. Harris, “Water Rich, Resource Poor: Intersections of Gender, Poverty, and Vulnerability in Newly Irrigated Areas of Southeastern Turkey,” *World Development* 36 (2008): 2643–62.

daily experiences of new irrigated agroecologies, the state always figures in narrations as the purveyor of changes under way.

As documented in my recently published work on state-society relations in newly irrigated areas of the Harran plain, villagers stress that state interest in the region has shifted with GAP and, with it, villagers' own sense of the state and of their role as citizen-subjects.<sup>31</sup> For instance, survey respondents remarked that "at least the state turned its face towards us," or "the state thinks about us now." Another said, "We did not see any accomplishments of governments in the past, [and] we are a little bit happy to see some now."<sup>32</sup> Analyzing such narratives from the pilot irrigation area of the Harran plain, I argue that there appears to be an increasingly positive association with the state and, with it, receptivity to further state intervention, as well as increasing recognition among villagers of themselves as citizen-subjects.<sup>33</sup> Even as all respondents do not share this positive association, I argue that this receptivity is nevertheless meaningful given the long history of contested state-society relations in the southeastern Anatolia region.<sup>34</sup>

To provide a bit of illustration, at several times respondents noted that the state is like a *devlet baba* (head of family) and as such must care for them, and they, in turn, must be devoted to the head of household. Or, similarly, villagers in two surveys (the one I and Karahan Kara conducted in 2001 and another by Bahattin Akşit and Adnan Akçay conducted a decade earlier) appear to accept a role for the state in water management.<sup>35</sup> Undoubtedly, this is based on a sense of the state as a somewhat neutral arbiter, seemingly standing apart from the *aşiret* (familial) ties or favoritism that so often characterizes village life.<sup>36</sup> As such, the state appears at once as increasingly part of village life with

irrigation delivery and associated development (even as part of the family) and simultaneously outside of village networks (apart from familial ties and power dynamics) in ways that might allow the state to be viewed as a more suitable water manager.

#### *Harran Plain II:*

##### *Changing Mobilities of Seasonal Migrant Labor*

Another contrasting portrait of the Turkish state is offered by Kurdish migrant laborers who reside in the plain for several months of the fall. Sitting around the fire at the end of a long October day at the height of the cotton harvest, these workers convey a sense that the interests of GAP and the Turkish state are opposed to their own. The workers from nearby Bozova to the northwest of the plain are upset; they note that their villages are very close to the Atatürk Dam reservoir, but yet they do not receive water. They believe that the reason is that they are Kurdish, and Arabs in the plain received priority for irrigation. "Water came to Arabs and we suffered, but we, the Kurds, are more noble than they. . . . However, the Arabs got the water first and they are benefiting."<sup>37</sup>

Perhaps it was because of the presence of a Kurdish speaker who accompanied us that day that the workers complained in a manner that was much more overtly political than on many other occasions. It may have also been the atmosphere, relaxing at the end of the day around the fire rather than in the fields. "Why shall I not support Abdullah Öcalan? He made all the Kurds known to the world," one suggested. He continued by noting that he would vote for the former Kurdish Worker's Party leader, Öcalan—not for Turkish politicians. Our translator warned him that there were Turks present. The speaker amended his statement saying,

31. See Harris, "States at the Limit."

32. Leila M. Harris and Z. Karahan Kara, survey of eleven villages in the Harran plain experiencing transition to irrigation, 2001. See Leila M. Harris, "Modernizing Gender: Social Geographies of Waterscape Evolution in Southeastern Turkey" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2004).

33. See Harris, "States at the Limit"; cf. Andrew Finkel and Nükhet Sirman, eds., *Turkish State, Turkish Society* (London: Routledge, 1990).

34. It is important to note that approximately 80 percent of the Harran plain is Arabic-speaking and 20 percent Kurdish-speaking. Thus shifting state-society relations in the plain cannot be taken as indicative for the entire region. For a more detailed analysis of shifting state-society relations in the plain, including several important caveats, see Harris, "States at the Limit." For discussion of varied responses by different sociodemographic groups, see Harris, "Water Rich, Resource Poor."

35. Bahattin Akşit and Adnan Akçay, "Sociocultural Aspects of Irrigation Practices in Southeastern Turkey," *Water Resources Development* 13 (1997): 523–40.

36. In general, *aşiret* refers to familial association, traced back seven generations. See Maarten Martinus van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: On the Social and Political Organization of Kurdistan* (London: Zed Books, 1992).

37. Kurdish migrant worker, interview by the author, October 2001; see also Harris, "Irrigation, Gender, and Social Geographies."

“Sure, not to worry, we are all brothers with Turks; we like our state.” Here the state is cast as “Turkish” in opposition to an association with “Kurdish,” with which the workers forcefully identify. Rather than a state that is ethnically or linguistically neutral, or multiple, the state articulated here is clearly read through politics and practices related to Kurdish separatism, state response, and differentiated senses of Turkishness, Arabness, and Kurdishness. It is also of interest that for these workers the differentiated geography of access to irrigation water with GAP development has consolidated the notion of state as “differentiated,” as discriminatory (against Kurds), and also as distinct from the realities and needs of these “citizens.” As such, the imaginary of the state as articulated in relation to ongoing developmental and environmental changes is cast as a continuation of earlier injustices—the physical and infrastructural geography of where water is available, where cotton is grown, and where laborers must travel, all serve to produce particular understandings of the state. The physical infrastructure is also a constant material reminder of the relocation of many Kurdish villages for the dams, of the continuing inability of many Kurds to access irrigation, and of the long-term exclusion of Kurds from state modernization efforts.<sup>38</sup>

Many Kurds we interviewed also directly contest the “technical” rationalities invoked by the state to justify why priority for water delivery was given to Harran. As they note, the nearby Suruç plain is very similar topographically to Harran, yet it is occupied mostly by Kurdish residents. As such, some understand the biophysical rationalities that justify priority delivery to the Harran plain as secondary to the geography of ethnic difference. The statement of the workers, “Not to worry . . . we like our state,” is surely given in part to stem unease among us, recognition that even raising the Kurdish issue or citing Öcalan’s name may lead to discomfort or conflict. Clearing the air is also indicative of long-standing fears of the state to the extent that an offhand remark about Öcalan could lead to imprisonment or worse. For these residents, new irrigated waterscapes have deepened

dissatisfaction with the state, and they call the Turkish state and territory into question by vowing support for separatists.

### ***Contrasting Sites: Kurdish Villages Northwest and Northeast of the Harran Plain***

Similar portrayals of the state circulated in several of the Kurdish-speaking towns we visited north of the Harran plain. These villages had not yet received irrigation, although it is promised for the near future. Elijah, a Kurdish man in his late thirties, complains bitterly about unemployment in his village and notes that half the village has been forced to move to urban areas to earn a living. He and his neighbors believe that the problems will be solved with irrigation, but they remain skeptical that the state will follow through on its promise.

When we first arrive in the village, Elijah is one of a half-dozen men standing in the center of the village, symbolically resting idle next to a fountain with no running water. My assistant and I introduce ourselves, and we suggest that we would like to learn about the planned irrigation. Elijah responds by saying that they work hard, but because they do not know eminent people with the GAP administration, they have not yet received water. “They told us we would get water first when the next stage starts, but right now, they moved the priority to someone else’s village, to the parliamentarian’s village [he names a village bearing the name of a specific parliamentarian]. I have been there, it is like heaven.”<sup>39</sup> Water is portrayed throughout the conversation as panacea: “if only” they had irrigation water, people would not be forced to move to cities, villagers would enjoy livelihood security, and they would not continue to be marginalized from state practices. Again, we can understand the “state as effect” of complex geographies, of nature-society, and of emergent infrastructures. Who is perceived as within or without state influence and interest is read in relation to one’s position with respect to new irrigation infrastructure and water delivery. Whether the water comes or not has important effects for population mobilities and agroecologies. In this case, the coming of water would

38. Cf. Harris, “Modernizing the Nation”; and Harris, “Irrigation, Gender, and Social Geographies.”

39. Elijah, interview by the author, Harran plain, October 2001.

allow people to stay in their natal village. The lack of water is described as leading to poverty and forcing people to leave, disconnecting them from their families and landscapes.

One would imagine that, given the increase of land prices in the nearby Harran plain after the delivery of irrigation, villagers here would aim to hold onto land in anticipation of higher land prices. However, this is not the case. Despite the promise of irrigation, many have sold their fields. This can be taken either as evidence of the gravity of their situation or as skepticism regarding the state's promise. Discussing changes past or anticipated, much of the conversation with Elijah and his neighbors inevitably revolves around the state—state corruption, deflected state responsibility for those who died during the construction of irrigation tunnels, or skepticism. The state emerges as untrustworthy, and sporadic—its legitimacy and its sense of being seemingly hanging tenuously on the promise of irrigation.

I asked Elijah what he would do if he himself were the president of GAP. Despite his repeated complaints of favoritism, he said, “Of course I would take care of my family first, then my neighbors, then everyone else.” I replied, “But isn't that the same thing that you were just complaining to us about, that they take care of their own villages first?” He smiled, “That is how it is done.”<sup>40</sup> Elijah thus conveys a view of the state as an entity that is at once embedded in and standing apart from sociocultural networks and practices. This statement can be understood as referring to the character of the *devlet* (state), as essentially corrupt and socioculturally embedded, operating along patronage lines. Elijah fashions a representation of the state as prey to desires of certain individuals rather than as a body that operates on behalf of all citizens. Even as he recognizes the state as embedded in village, patronage, and *aşiret* associations, he also understands the state as socially and spatially “elsewhere,” apart from the needs of his community (locating it instead in the space of

the parliamentarian's village or in faraway Ankara). With such an account, the state is again cast as geographically differentiated and is read through emergent waterscapes—unequal access to water is fundamental to this state ontology. Here irrigation networks and water flows follow physical geographic features, but also historical practices, sociocultural differences, and kinship and patronage networks. The flow of water is simultaneously a biophysical, historical, and sociocultural artifact and the visible inscription of a corrupt and “external” state.

### **Contrasting Sites II:**

#### ***Kurdish Villages outside of Diyarbakir***

Yaytaş is a village in the area around Diyarbakir, several hours to the northeast. I detail in another article the scene that we witnessed as villagers responded to state irrigation engineers about impending irrigation.<sup>41</sup> Elements of the encounter are worth revisiting here for what they reveal about the state, stateness, and villager subjectivities. Responding to a presentation about the imminent delivery of irrigation, villagers overtly contested the knowledge of the state engineers, calling them to task for failing to ground-truth the location of irrigation canals. Throughout the meeting, state agents self-consciously deferred any sense that they were experts—working diligently to convey that they were there to learn from the villagers. In Yaytaş no one doubted whether irrigation would come. The infrastructure was already in place. Rather, there was questioning as to *how* the irrigation would be delivered and ultimately *if* it would serve the village's needs. A key challenge was offered by a former *muhtar* (village head):

The engineer did the canals on the map. He did not come here to see. In some places [where they located the canals], you cannot find even a gram of soil, even when you explode an atom bomb. And in some places, there is soil for agriculture, but there is no canal around. On paper, Hacı Ömer has 100 decars of land, but in reality, you only find soil in 5 decars of that land. The rest is rocks and stones.<sup>42</sup>

40. Ibid.

42. Ibid., 700.

41. See Leila M. Harris, “Contested Sustainabilities: Assessing Narratives of Environmental Change in Southeastern Turkey,” *Local Environment* 14 (2009): 699–720.

Throughout the discussion, the state was positioned as purveyor of changes and also as “unknowing” with respect to the landscape, realities, and needs of the villagers. What we witnessed was an important negotiation of shifting state-society relations—villagers called the state to task for failures (e.g., with respect to knowledge, placement of the canals, and the inadequacy of the infrastructure for landscape conditions), as state agents very reflexively attempted to ward off a critique that the project was a top-down imposition or that state knowledges were more “expert” than those of the farmers (with the lead engineer repeating, “I am not a teacher; I am here to learn from you”).<sup>43</sup> In many ways, this enactment was one of citation and deferral of *techné* (abstract knowledges) discussed by Scott and the recognition of the value of local knowledges adapted to local ecologies and *metis* (conditions).<sup>44</sup> As with the earlier examples, here again the state is understood, contested, and necessarily refashioned in relation to new GAP infrastructure and irrigation possibilities. The state is called to question on the same ground—its lack of knowledge with respect to specificities of the terrain and the landscape conditions that villagers live with daily. As such, the state is contested on the very possibility that the state could ever “know” the local ecologies and biophysical conditions that are meaningful for people’s lives.<sup>45</sup> While state-society relations are being refashioned, it is also apparent that senses of place, landscape, topography, and village geography are central to these renegotiations, including the state’s inability to know the intimate geographies where one lives from its far-off offices in Ankara or from its far-off satellites, maps, and other state optics.<sup>46</sup>

43. Ibid.

44. See Scott, *Seeing like a State*.

45. Cf. Trevor Birkenholtz, “Contesting Expertise: The Politics of Environmental Knowledge in Northern Indian Groundwater Practices,” *Geoforum* 39 (2008): 466–82.

46. See Scott, *Seeing like a State*.

47. Sivaramakrishnan, *Modern Forests*, 35. See also Gupta, “Blurred Boundaries”; and Painter, “Prosaic Geographies of Stateness.”

## Analysis:

### State as Differentiated and Socionatural Effect

What do we learn from divergent experiences and interpretations of state practices and the state across various sites of rural southeastern Turkey following GAP implementation? There are many elements of state theory that could be highlighted through the examples given, including the importance of everyday state making or changing citizen subjectivities. For purposes of this analysis, I highlight several issues that are salient from a socionatural and political ecology perspective. Specifically, I consider spatiotemporalities, inequality and differential access to resources, the importance of scale, and also concern with biophysical “materialities” to detail what these foci might lend to understanding the Turkish state or to state theory generally. I then suggest that these foci also underscore how it is that the state emerges as an effect of these diverse experiences and “ecologies.”

### Spatiotemporalities

The narratives from Turkey’s southeast remind us that “statemaking occur[s] in places even as it produce[s] them” and that the state is embedded in everyday practices and spatialities of village life.<sup>47</sup> It is also clear that the state is variably understood and constituted socioculturally, geographically, temporally, and in relation to emergent agroecological landscapes and livelihood possibilities in ways that are consistent with political-ecological and social natures (or hydrosocial) approaches.<sup>48</sup>

With respect to other geographic considerations, it is clear that the state is located and experienced at many sites and across various scales—what Akhil Gupta refers to as the “trans-locality of state institutions.”<sup>49</sup> Further, the nar-

48. See Marston, “Space, Culture, State.” For more social natural and ecological inflected approaches, see Castree and Braun, *Remaking Reality*; Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); and Erik Swyngedouw, “Modernity and Hybridity: Nature, Regeneracioismo, and the Production of the Spanish Waterscape,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89 (1999): 443–65.

49. Gupta, “Blurred Boundaries,” 392.

ratives are consistent with findings offered by Anna J. Secor with respect to the ways that the state is understood, and emerges, in relation to varied spatiotemporalities.<sup>50</sup> In her example, she details the spatial-temporal techniques through which state power is enacted and suggests that it is through the operation of the space-time of the state that individuals submit to state power and become subjects of rights (citizens). Specifically, Secor highlights the “circulation and arrest” of paperwork, people, money, and other elements of daily life in Istanbul as central to the everyday epistemologies of the state.<sup>51</sup> In a similar way, narratives from the southeast suggest that the state is experienced and enacted spatiotemporally—in relation to new seasonalities associated with irrigation and cotton cropping, the changing circulation of migrant laborers (including new patterns of seasonal migration or of rural-to-urban migration), and other elements of the large-scale diversion of water that fundamentally alter the space-times of agroecologies or electricity production.

By emphasizing narratives of the state in the relatively marginal sites of the rural, multiethnic, and impoverished southeast, I have also sought to extend the “sites” and “spaces” of the state beyond its most likely locations. In the case of Turkey, reading the state in relation to villages of the southeast severs a facile association with the capital in Ankara or with “state institutions,” such as schools or police stations, where state symbols and authority are readily visible.<sup>52</sup> Temporally, too, the examples illustrate that the contemporary Turkish state is necessarily read against historical practices, as well as with respect to expectations for the future. The narratives also trace ways that interpretations of the state undergo revision, as the state is understood in novel ways in relation to dam building or irrigation delivery. The Turkish state that is narrated by villagers today is necessarily different from what it might have been even a decade ago before these large-scale changes. In sum,

the state is variable both according to differential locations and experiences and according to changing temporalities. Meanings associated with the state are sedimented in relation to past histories and geographies and also recast in relation to recent developmental and environmental changes.

### ***Inequality and Uneven Access to Resources***

Another theme that is emphasized with a political ecology or socionatural approach is unequal and differential access to resources.<sup>53</sup> Differentiated understandings of states are very much about differentiated water access, varied relationships to irrigation infrastructure, even as they are also importantly mediated by sociospatial difference.

While many residents of the Harran plain appear to increasingly view the Turkish state favorably, residents of villages who have not yet received state irrigation portray themselves forcefully as outside of the Turkish state and nation.<sup>54</sup> Elijah and his friends express this sentiment when they convey that the surrounding infrastructure and the lack of irrigation in their village are symbolic and persistent reminders of their exteriority to the Turkish state and *vatandaş* (nation). For Elijah, this isolation reinforces that the state is, at its core, an institution that mirrors social and familial networks—favoring some and marginalizing others.

In addition to the common sentiment among Kurds that the state is not working on their behalf (e.g., given priority irrigation access for Harran over Suruç), there is also a similar discourse circulating internationally that is related to the marginalization of Kurdish interests regarding the planned inundation of Kurdish cultural sites along the Tigris River. Thus even as I have found some evidence to suggest receptivity for GAP, and a sense of benefits from the project among some Kurds, these changes are clearly read against multiscalar landscapes of inequality and difference.<sup>55</sup> To the degree that

50. See Secor, “Between Longing and Despair.” Discussions of spatiotemporalities have been increasingly visible in state theory, particularly through the work of geographers. See, e.g., Painter, “Prosaic Geographies of Stateness”; Merje Kuus and John Agnew, “Theorizing the State Geographically: Sovereignty, Subjectivity, Territoriality,” in Cox et al., *Sage Handbook of Political Geography*, 95–106; Corbridge,

“State and Society”; and Neil Brenner, *New State Spaces: Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

51. See Secor, “Between Longing and Despair.”

52. Cf. Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

53. See Castree and Braun, *Remaking Reality*; and Robbins, “State in Political Ecology.”

54. See Harris, “States at the Limit.”

55. See *ibid.*; and Harris, “Irrigation, Gender, and Social Geographies.”

political-ecological approaches, in particular, highlight unequal access to resources, and relationships to other sociospatial differences (e.g., gender or ethnicity), this lends force to the suggestion that these approaches hold considerable potential to bring new insights to state theory.

### Scale

While geographers have raised many issues related to spatiotemporalities of state building and geographically differentiated state effects, there has been less attention to scalar dynamics and scale politics as key to state formation, state building, and shifting state-society relations. In concert with recent discussions related to the need for enriched scalar discussions in political ecology, or that focus on scalar processes as key to enriching political-ecological approaches to states, I suggest that scale is a particularly useful analytic to unravel some of the ways that the Turkish state is understood, narrated, and refashioned.<sup>56</sup>

In brief, it is in part because of the massive scale of the transformation under way with GAP, including an extensive network of dams and massive changes to the seasonalities of agriculture and mobilities of people and water, that the state is cast in the contemporary moment. Indeed, as I elaborate below, scale appears to be particularly crucial to what enables the state to be understood as a sphere distinct from society. Here it is useful to again signal the connections between large-scale dam building and nationalism (as it is the large-scale engineering feats associated

with dams that suggest state power in important ways), as well as the lessons from Scott.<sup>57</sup>

To recall, Scott's work is largely an attempt to theorize why it is that states are so often implicated in large-scale (and high modernist) environmental-developmental changes and, indeed, how these types of "grand schemes" could even be considered as definitional to states. Following Scott's cues, we might endeavor to take seriously the degree of capacity required to undertake these changes in terms of how we theorize states.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, theorists have long grappled with the connections among state building, large-scale infrastructure, and water resources. For instance, Homayun Sidky argues that in the case of Hunza, Pakistan, irrigation was central to state consolidation, primarily because of the increased wealth associated with intensified agricultural production.<sup>59</sup> This recalls the earlier "hydraulic hypothesis" by Karl Wittfogel, who argues that irrigation has historically been central to the evolving political organization and to state building.<sup>60</sup> While these approaches can be critiqued for what appear to be overly deterministic associations, there may be issues related to scale, and the massive mobilization of resources required for certain types of infrastructure, and to the consolidation and maintenance of certain institutional forms. While the proliferation of work on the microphysics of power or banal nationalisms including flag waving or other symbolic practices is certainly important to, and even constitutive of, states, it seems that we also need to attend to the importance of large-scale

56. For scale and political ecology, see Haripriya Rangan and Christian A. Kull, "What Makes Ecology 'Political'? Rethinking 'Scale' in Political Ecology," *Progress in Human Geography* 33 (2009): 28–45; and Roderick P. Neumann, "Political Ecology: Theorizing Scale," *Progress in Human Geography* 33 (2009): 398–406. For political ecology and state theory, see Robbins, "State in Political Ecology."

57. See, e.g., Klingensmith, *One Valley and a Thousand*; and Scott, *Seeing like a State*.

58. For a discussion of the mobilizations of science and technology as crucial for the legitimization of the postcolonial state in India, see Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

59. Homayun Sidky, "Irrigation and the Rise of the State in Hunza: A Case for the Hydraulic Hypothesis," *Modern Asian Studies* 31 (1997): 995–1017.

60. See Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957). According to Wittfogel, water is "institutionally decisive" in that it requires the coordination of mass labor. Some have argued that irrigation was central to the emergence of originary states in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Mesoamerica, and the Central Andes. Sidky concludes that in the case of Hunza, "large-scale irrigation did indeed contribute to increasing political complexity and state formation" ("Irrigation," 1014). For another example of the centrality of hydrology and water management to state building, see Samer Alatur, "Imagining Hydrological Boundaries, Constructing the Nation-State: A Fluid History of Israel, 1936–1959" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2000).

changes to landscapes, economies, or possibilities for living and ways that these too are often strongly connected to states and stateness.<sup>61</sup>

As such, in concert with James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta's suggestion that we need to attend to state spatial and scalar hierarchies, I suggest that we need to consider large-scale landscape and waterscape productions not as incidental but as potentially central to the function or definition of states.<sup>62</sup> In the case of GAP, it is clear that the state cannot be understood apart from the massive alterations of the twin rivers under way.<sup>63</sup>

### **Materiality and Biophysical Properties of Nature and Resources**

Discussions in political ecology and related socio-natural approaches are also important for state theory given the linked focus on specific properties of natures and the importance of these for linked social, institutional, and political processes.<sup>64</sup> As Karen Bakker notes, the characteristics of water as a resource (heavy and expensive to transport) often require large-scale capital investments, highly centralized infrastructure, and monopoly power, potentially explaining why water management often relies on particular administrative forms, including common roles for states (connecting to ideas of Sidky and Wittfogel related to linkages between water infrastructure and administrative form).<sup>65</sup>

In the GAP case, issues related to the biophysical characteristics of water or the physical landscape and topography appear as relatively minor in the narratives. Nonetheless, they are potentially salient to the differentiated understandings of states that arise, as well as to the conditions of possibility through which the Turkish state is able to intervene in certain landscapes, ecologies, and livelihood possibilities. Just as those in areas that had not yet received

irrigation infrastructure expressed that they, and their villages, were outside of the Turkish state (and nation), we can imagine that those spaces where irrigation is not possible for topographic reasons might similarly view themselves as outside of state concern or the reach of state services. Recall also the quotation about Hacı Ömer's land, where an explosion would reveal "not a gram of soil." In such examples, particular populations or landscapes appear to be written out of state modernization efforts. Another example noted is that of the Suruç plain, which is very similar topographically to the Harran plain, but as some Kurds point out, this is not where the Turkish state chose to prioritize irrigation delivery. In this example, the topography and biophysical characteristics of Suruç are cited as evidence that state rationalities are not scientific but rather cultural and political. Thus the variable topographies and natures in the southeast, and the actual properties of water, are connected to, and even central to, visionings and articulations of the state, including how these change in relation to altered infrastructure and waterscapes.

### **State as Effect**

All of these elements together delineate a final aspect of importance for the reading of evolving states offered, that related to Mitchell's state as effect. To this end, I am interested in not only the ways that the state is differentiated sociospatially but also the ways that the state is narrated in these examples as oppositional to, or sociospatially apart from, social relations, landscapes, and village life. In other words, how is the boundary between state and society invoked and sedimented through these diverse and shifting narrations?

For instance, certain residents of the Harran plain discuss a Turkish state that has dem-

61. Cf. Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995). The focus on microphysics of power is due, in part, to the widespread influence of Foucauldian governmentality, yet the theoretical opening provided by Michel Foucault is not limited to focus on distributed and capillary power (see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan [New York, Vintage, 1979]). Tania Murray Li, for example, connects governmentality to grand schemes of socioenvironmental engineering (see Li, "Beyond the State").

62. See James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta, "Spatializing States: Toward an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality," *American Ethnologist* 29 (2002): 981–1002.

63. See also the discussion of state consolidation and hydro-scalar politics in Harris and Alatout, "Negotiating Hydro-scales, Forging States."

64. See Karen Bakker and Gavin Bridge, "Material Worlds? Resource Geographies and the 'Matter of Nature,'" *Progress in Human Geography* 30 (2006): 5–27.

65. See Karen Bakker, "A Political Ecology of Water Privatization," *Studies in Political Economy* 70 (2003): 35–58; Sidky, "Irrigation"; and Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism*.

onstrated increasing interest in the region, with increased capacity to meet villagers' needs, and as such, perhaps is viewed with increasing legitimacy.<sup>66</sup> Another example relates to the ways that villagers situate the state as the most suitable manager for irrigation waters because of the sense that the state is more neutral or less subject to village politics. Even as versions of the state diverge across these discussions, common to many is the way in which the state is authored as a distinct entity that has a function and character *apart from* village life. Elijah's skepticism that the state will ever provide irrigation situates his village outside the realm of the Turkish state. In Yaytaş, the state's abstracted techniques and ways of knowing (satellites, mapmaking in faraway Ankara, and unfamiliarity with the landscapes and daily rhythms of village) situate it as apart from village life. In the town of Hal-feti, the state is fashioned as exterior to village life, and interests to the degree that the state agents who came with news of inundation were not to be believed. These and similar narrations reveal the ambivalent tension that the Turkish state is at once understood as both *inside* and *outside* of village spaces.

By emphasizing differentiated and evolving narrations in relation to the changing waterscape, a political-ecological approach to the Turkish state helps highlight these processes and the specific pathways through which the Turkish state emerges as an effect of these diverse narrations. As Mitchell writes, "It [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. In fact, the nation state is arguably the paramount structural effect of the modern social world. . . . By approaching the state as an effect, one can both acknowledge the power of the political arrangements that we call the state and at the same time account for their elusiveness."<sup>67</sup> In line with this approach, I have endeavored to reveal the everyday practices and narratives through which the state is understood, recast, and lived. Regardless of whether it is portrayed as legitimate or corrupt, the Turkish state emerges as an object of analy-

sis and as an effect of these citations. A political-ecological and socionatural approach informs this "boundary work" by attending to the importance of spatiotemporality, uneven access to resources, scale, and biophysical properties as revealing for the ways that the state-society distinction is invoked and sedimented.

### Conclusions: Revisiting State Theory

Forging India into a productive, interlocking network of irrigation works, railways, telegraphs, mines, and manufacturing, the colonial state introduced and oversaw the establishment of modern technics.

In an important sense, however, technology was not only the instrument but also the substance of state power.

—Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India*

Bob Jessop explains the tendency of state theorists to focus on "state effects," or effects of state practices, given the impossibility of treating the state as a "set of institutions that can exercise power."<sup>68</sup> The analysis here seeks to understand how state practices differentially affect spaces and residents of Turkey's southeast. Yet it also contributes to the very different project of understanding the state as effect—the diverse processes whereby the state is given form, consolidated, and made to appear as discrete from society. As such, the work here builds on the insights from Prakash, whereby infrastructure, technology, and associated socioenvironmental changes are best understood as both the instruments and the substance of state power. Examination of differentiated experiences, narrations, and spatialities of large-scale infrastructural works associated with ongoing damming and diversion of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers suggests that the Turkish state emerges, in part, as an effect of these ongoing developmental-environmental changes. I argue that a political-ecological and socionatural perspective exposes these dynamics in particularly pronounced and interesting ways.

The theoretical and empirical discussion suggests four linked conclusions. First,

66. See Harris, "States at the Limit."

67. Mitchell, "Limits of the State," 94–95.

68. Bob Jessop, *State Theory: Putting the Capitalist States in Their Place* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1990), 7.

the Turkish state is importantly differentiated socially, spatially, culturally, and also in relation to landscape conditions, agroecological possibilities, and waterscape realities. Second, by transforming waterscapes, water use and access, and other social, economic, and ecological realities, GAP is fundamentally altering villagers' understandings, narratives, and imaginaries of the Turkish state (even as these are never entirely distinct from past histories and relations). Third, concurring with Robbins and with Whitehead et al., I consider that there is some exciting intellectual space offered by political ecology and socionatural approaches for state theory.<sup>69</sup> By engaging concepts associated with political ecology (including scale and spatiality, but also natures, biophysical materialities, and environment-development linkages), I suggest that studies of states and nature can do more than consider the role of the state as fostering or responding to environmental or developmental changes. Instead, we might engage questions of socionatures to think through specific pathways through which state-society relations evolve and even ways that state-society distinctions are articulated. Adding to these discussions, I have argued that concepts and analytics associated with political ecology and socionatural approaches might be particularly illustrative to empirically draw out Mitchell's state as effect approach.

Finally, the fourth point is that among the important concepts and approaches offered, scalar analytics may prove to be especially useful to interrogate these processes and relations.<sup>70</sup> Highlighting scalar dynamics, including those associated landscape and waterscape dynamics, perhaps offers a needed corrective to the heavy focus in recent work on the banal, everyday, and capillary experiences of states or power in ways that downplay processes of large-scale change or grand schemes of social engineering, centralization, or territorialization. I argue that this is

perhaps one of the meaningful offerings from Scott's *Seeing like a State* that we need to take seriously in state theory. For the state to take on meaning and importance in the lives of rural residents, it not only has to be enacted through festivals or parades but must also command the attention of citizens through large-scale efforts as part of what characterizes the state as something that stands apart from society (this idea also has resonance with Jessop's very definition of states, where he characterizes states by their unique resource capacity).<sup>71</sup> The building of dams, the launching of space programs, or the movement of entire rivers or villages are all among these highly visible shows of power and force. Thus while attention to microphysics of power has served as an important corrective to earlier repressive theories of states, there is also something lost by *only* attending to micropractices of power in ways that downplay the importance of large-scale, centralized, and visible transformations, of which GAP is a prime example.<sup>72</sup> As Mitchell writes, "Large dams offered a way to build not just irrigation and power systems, but nation-states themselves."<sup>73</sup> Neumann also signals the need to attend to socioecological processes that give rise to particular scalar forms of organization (e.g., states, local governments, or interstate arrangements).<sup>74</sup> Here I argue in a parallel sense that certain large-scale changes may serve to consolidate particular state territories, spaces, and institutions and that highlighting these elements might be crucial for theorizing states and stateness.<sup>75</sup> For the GAP case, these analytics help expose novel and evolving dynamics in a border region where the Turkish state has historically faced important challenge. S

69. See Robbins, "State in Political Ecology"; and Whitehead et al., *Nature of the State*.

70. Neumann, "Political Ecology"; Robbins, "State in Political Ecology"; Harris and Alatout, "Negotiating Hydro-scales, Forging States"; Scott, *Seeing like a State*.

71. See Jessop, *State Theory*, 279.

72. Cf. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

73. Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Technopolitics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 44.

74. See Neumann, "Political Ecology."

75. Implicit to this argument is the idea that such a project could not occur at the hands of nonstate entities. I maintain that changes on the scale of GAP, including the relocation of hundreds of villages, could not occur apart from the role and consent of "states," even as other actors may be engaged in such processes. See also Brenner, *New State Spaces*; and Harris and Alatout, "Negotiating Hydro-scales, Forging States."