Introduction

States of Feeling: Public Servants' Affective and Emotional Entanglements in the Making of the State

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Abstract
With the affective turn, scholars pay increased attention to the emotional dimensions of everyday life. This special issue builds on this work through an explicit focus on bureaucracies to show what a more sustained attention to affects and emotions can bring to the study of the state, both as an apparatus and as an image. Contributions highlight the importance of ethnographically studying the affective relations and emotional engagements of public servants to understand how representations and practices of the state are brought together in often intangible, sometimes unspoken, but nonetheless powerful ways. In this Introduction we situate our wider contribution and the individual articles in debates about the social lives of the state and the daily practices of public servants. We postulate how affective intensities give rise to particular political imaginations and subjectivities, and we reflect on ethnography's unique position within the study of emotions and affects in political anthropology.

Keywords: affect, anthropology of the state, bureaucracies, emotions, ethnography, public servants

Following the affective turn, social scientists increasingly engage with the emotional dimensions of everyday life, shedding new light on, among others, topics of space, migration, professions, food and technology, collective mobilisation or political participation (Blondiaux and Traïni 2018; Clough and Halley 2007; Gregg and Seigworth 2010; Thrift 2007; Traïni 2009). This special issue takes up Laszczkowski and Reeves' call to explore how the 'visceral and emotional [help us] to begin to understand the "magic of the state"' (2015: 10). Our ambition is to build on this work through an explicit focus on bureaucracies and the work of state agents to

show what a more sustained attention to affects and emotions from within can bring to the study of the state, both as an apparatus and as an image. We learn from a rich literature how citizens' anxieties, desires and identifications maintain the state as a 'social subject in everyday life' (Aretxaga 2003: 395), and how we can trace 'stateness' through affective entanglements with documents and other objects (Navaro-Yashin 2009) to consider how these emotional intensities may shape the experiences of those who, in different ways, represent and work for 'the state'. In other words, 'the visceral and the emotional' make the state as apparatus and image through the everyday work of public servants.

Tracing the experiences of disaster relief bureaucrats in Malawi, local leaders in rural Cuba, public school teachers and inspectors in Benin, welfare officers in Belgium, and volunteer social workers in Zimbabwe, we explore how emotions and the state are 'at work' as bureaucrats embody and bring the state to life. Our articles highlight emotions as a crucial dimension of state agents' daily experiences, their interactions with citizens and the collective constructions of 'statehood' that emerge. Through a commitment to empirical analysis, this special issue aims to point out how ethnography offers a unique entry point into civil servants' emotional lives and how these contribute to the making of the state. We are particularly interested to explore, through an ethnographically grounded, 'embodied' approach, how affective entanglements are articulated and how they engender political imaginations, identities and relations.

In this endeavour, the special issue speaks to two research interests in the anthropology of the state: the social life of the state, that is, how it is perceived, represented and imagined in the subjectivities of citizens; and the daily practices of state agents. In the first, the question of emotions has been prominent in recent years, whilst it has been less so in the second. Our articles bring these two strands together, tackling both methodological and analytical challenges in studying the state. Through careful empirical analysis, the special issue demonstrates how affects and emotions not only constitute essential elements in the daily work of bureaucrats but also shape the ways in which they imagine and represent the state.

The contributions in this issue explore the subjective lives of states—the expectations and experiences of 'statehood' that emerge from our interlocutors' different positionalities as front-line workers, as bureaucrats behind a desk, or as mid-level managers—and perceived identities as enforcers of the law, as embodiments of a revolutionary state, or as shadow public servants within a neglectful state. Indeed, in contexts where experiences of the state are mediated by historical and colonial legacies, or where public service delivery is tied to a repressive government, a global 'aid regime' or top-down, restrictive welfare systems, we want to ask how these projects of the past and the future interact with emotional engagements with the state and with what consequences.

Secondly, all articles in the special issue take an ethnographic approach, which allows us to consider, alongside theoretical discussions on the interactions of affect, emotions and the lives of public servants, the unique but fraught role of ethnography in the study of affect and emotions. These ethnographic engagements reflect

experiences across very different geographies and political regimes. Contrasting these different constellations, we can at once tease out the global significance of affect and emotions in how public servants make the state 'from within' but also how the manner of doing so is grounded in historical and ethnographic specificity. Our contributions, therefore, also compare and contrast how state agents navigate affective entanglements across different countries: many, though not all, of the contexts that we study are in the so-called Global South. In bringing these contexts together, we want to challenge assumptions about the nature of the state in the Global South. Whilst we propose that our different locations and analytical lenses constitute laboratories for the study of social and political dynamics, our ambition is to develop analytical insights and methodological reflections that are valid beyond these borders. In so doing, we also reverse and contest the usual tendencies to consider the state in the 'West' as generic 'ideal type' and to suggest a more heterogeneous entry point as we embark on a study of what emotions and affect can bring to the study of bureaucracies, public servants, and eventually the state.

In this Introduction, we examine these two contributions in turn. First, we discuss the theoretical underpinnings of our focus on emotions and affect, pinpointing the differences and relations between the two and how they might serve our interest in their political dimensions. We then highlight our methodological contribution, exploring how we can marry this theoretical perspective with our ethnographic study of public servants and the making of statehood across contexts.

The Subjective Lives of the State Affect, Emotions and the Inner Worlds of Public Servants

Grasping the State through Affects and Emotions

Political scientists and anthropologists agree on the challenges of studying the 'fictional reality' that is the state (Abrams 1988; Aretxaga 2003), an entity and an idea difficult to grasp other than through its intermediaries. Scholars have investigated the state's 'black box' through, for example, ethnographies of public services (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2014b; Dubois 2010) or studies of the material or symbolic dimensions of 'state effects' (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002; Hansen and Stepputat 2001). The notion of 'affect' is similarly far from uncontested and open to a variety of interpretations in existing anthropological engagements. Pioneered in the social sciences by Brian Massumi in 1995, the term was popularised in the 2000s during the 'affective turn', in which a multitude of collections were published, such as Clough and Halley's *The Affective Turn* (2007), Thrift's *Non-representational Theory* (2007), and Gregg and Seigworth's *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010). Within and across these collections, scholars continued to approach 'affect' in varied manners. In addition, as Frykman and Povrzanović Fyrkman have argued, 'the fact that the words *affect*, *emotion*, *feeling* and *sentiment* are often used interchangeably makes dialogue across disciplinary borders difficult and confusing' (2016: 10).

Often, in line with Spinoza's early descriptions, affect, feelings, and emotions are placed on a sliding scale from presubjective to subjective experience. Margaret Wetherell, however, challenges the conceptualisation of affect as presubjective, instead arguing for viewing affect as 'a moment of recruitment, articulation or enlistment when many complicated flows across bodies, subjectivities, relations, histories and contexts entangle and intertwine together to form just this affective moment, episode or atmosphere with its particular possible classifications' (2015: 16). To capture such myriad and varied flows, moments and entanglements, affect is frequently linked to notions of 'intensity', 'contingency' and 'potentiality'. Ben Anderson (2009), in turn, speaks of 'affective atmospheres', that 'something' which falls between subjective and objective experience, which comes out in impersonal collective situations, but can be felt as intensely personal. Anthropologists like Navaro-Yashin (2009) have also criticised the ways in which affect can be abstracted and delinked from material cultures, and she proposes that we pay attention to how objects can be 'affectively loaded'. Similarly, Navaro-Yashin's work makes a crucial addition to this debate by proposing a less categorical distinction between emotions and affect, or rather highlighting how attention to either or both concepts can offer important insights into the making of stateness and citizenship.

More broadly, there have been calls in recent years to attend to a domain of political life that had previously been ignored, as increasingly scholars have brought a focus on emotions and affect to provide a nuanced understanding of the multi-faceted experience of 'stateness'. These efforts have offered important advances for our understanding of how the state becomes real and maintains authority. One perspective from which anthropologists in particular have approached this in recent years is by looking at the role of affect in the making of stateness, particularly through the lens of citizens' experiences.

A first stream of anthropological research on the state, interested in the plurality of the languages of the state and on the importance of analysing the cultural processes through which images and representations of the state are produced, has generated numerous studies on the affective dimension of the state and the emotional entanglements through which the state is experienced. In fact, among a vast literature seeking to decentralise the gaze of the state itself, to study it from its margins (Das and Poole 2004), through the experience of its citizens (Auyero 2012), or through the multiple 'symbols, texts, iconography' (Hansen and Stepputat 2001: 5) through which it is instantiated, some authors have particularly focused on emotions. One excellent example of how the spectrum of affects and emotions is applied to the political domain is an article by Mateusz Laszczkowski and Madeleine Reeves (2015). They call for a more coherent, ethnographically grounded look at affect in political life more specifically. To do this, they propose we examine the state as a 'social subject', incorporating subjective experiences of state power, and the reproduction of the state through affective intensities into our analyses. Seeing the state as a 'social subject' allows us to move away from the conception of the state as separate from, standing above, and potentially overpowering, society,

and challenges the idea that states are mere fantasy, fetish or construct. As such, Laszczkowski and Reeves argue that:

> although commonly treated in scholarship as a 'fantasy' and an object of deconstruction, the state remains one of the most powerful institutions for enacting and organizing difference in the contemporary world, and as such continues to elicit powerful emotions: hope, fear, desire, hatred, pride. (2015: 2)

Such a conceptualisation of the state as a 'social subject' allows them to build on the ways in which scholars have taken seriously the state as a place of social imagination (Hansen and Stepputat 2001) and an object of emotional investment (Aretxaga 2003), while shifting the focus of such studies from states' bureaucratic practices, organisational violence, or ideological productions to their 'affective charge'. It is this charge, they argue, that 'is "the substance of politics", a complex, dynamic, and resilient reality that structures both opportunities and challenges for political actors and is constitutive of the acting subjects themselves' (Laszczkowski and Reeves 2015: 2).

Focusing on a suburb of a Sarajevo under war, Stef Jansen (2014) shows the inhabitants' desire to restore 'a normal life' as well as their hope for a state vertical and encompassing (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). Hope as a political emotion also lies at the heart of Monique Nuijten's (2004) study of land conflicts in Mexico. She analyses 'the hope-generating nature' of the state, and the Mexican bureaucracy's ability to produce never-ending expectations among the peasants, despite previous bad experiences. Focusing on other 'marginated' (Nuijten 2004: 223; Reeves 2011: 905) located at the Kyrgystan–Uzbekistan border, Madeleine Reeves calls for an analysis of the citizens' 'ordinary affects' elicited by borders and the way in which the spatialisation of the state also works through affects (2011: 906).

Other authors have tackled the affective and sensible dimension of statecraft through objects and materiality. For example in her article on Turkish-Cypriots living in expropriated homes, Navaro-Yashin (2009: 4) explores the 'intersection between subjectivity and affect' looking both at the 'inner worlds of [her] informants' and the affect 'discharged upon them by the dwellings and environments they have now lived in for decades'. She argues that to fully understand the 'thingliness of politics' (ibid: 8), we must also explore how objects are 'discursively qualified'. For example, 'the affect discharged by bullet holes was symbolized, politicized and interpreted by [her] informants' (ibid: 4). Christina Schwenkel proposes to 'read and "feel"' (2013: 255) post socialist affectivity and hope for the state in urban Vietnam through the materiality of urban structures and the symbols bricks represent for the citizens.

In a collective focus on hope, marginality and the emotive charge of material objects of statehood, these articles take seriously citizens' imaginations and projections of the state. Whilst being very diverse in their approach, these studies have in common a focus on the affective charge of the state and the ways in which these are generative of particular state–society relations. In this special issue, we are

interested to ask how these dynamics play out at the other end of the table—that is, how state agents engage with emotions and affective relations in their daily work. To do so, we take inspiration from the vibrant literature in the anthropology of bureaucracy.

Embodying the State: Daily Practices and Public Servants' Affective Entanglements

For several years now, there has been a proliferation of work on the 'concrete state' (Padioleau 1982). Since Lipsky's seminal work (1980) on street-level bureaucrats, a great deal of research has been devoted to describing, by means of ethnography, the daily work of state agents, professional cultures and modes of socialisation, lay knowledge and bureaucratic routines, arrangements with norms and daily adjustments. The 'black box' of the administration has been opened, initially mainly in relation to the administrations of Western states (Dubois 2010; Eule et al. 2018; Holm Vohnsen 2017; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003; Monjaret 1996; Spire 2008). For some years now, however, non-Western states have also been the subject of renewed interest in social science research, and in the anthropology of the state in particular. Among others, the members of the Association for the Anthropology of Development and Social Change (APAD) have published several edited collections analysing the delivery of public service through public servants' daily work, professional ethos and interactions with citizens (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2014b; Blundo and Le Meur 2009; De Herdt and Olivier de Sardan 2015), insisting on the importance of informal norms in order to understand 'real governance' from below. Building on the sociology of organisations, they insist on the need to understand the rationality, the agency of public servants (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2019), and the various strategies that they use in order to cope with conflicting demands from above and below, despite the lack of resources and manpower or unenforceable laws (Andreetta 2019; Bierschenk 2008, 2014; Holm Vohnsen 2017; Oumarou 2014). Others have insisted on documents as artefacts of the state, through which governance is effectively produced (Hull E. 2012; Hull M. S. 2012; Mathur 2016).

Beyond the mere description of the functioning of administrations, the aforementioned research contributes to anthropological reflection on what the State is, by working to analyse what constitutes its 'apparatus', but also because the state as an institution is first substantiated through mundane bureaucratic practices: 'What the state means to people such as government officials situated inside a bureaucracy, as well as to those outside, such as the clients of government programs and other citizens, is profoundly shaped through the routine and repetitive procedures of bureaucracies' (Sharma and Gupta 2006: 11). While they highlight the various, sometimes competing norms embedded in the making of statehood (De Herdt and Olivier de Sardan 2015; Verheul 2013), unpack civil servant practices (Beek 2016; Holm Vohnsen 2018; Hull 2012; Mathur 2016) and interactions with users and explore the professional ethos of those working for, and within the state (Anders

2002; Jarroux 2017; Spire 2008), these contributions, however, only pay marginal attention to the place of feelings, affects and emotions within state bureaucracies.

In our view, attention to the affects and emotions of bureaucrats at work opens up heuristic avenues for working on what Thelen, Vetters and von Benda-Beckmann (2014) have identified as a missing link between images and practices of the state. As they explain, the different methodological perspectives of the two streams of anthropological research on the state that we have presented, the lack of dialogue between them, or even the criticisms they have levelled at each other (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2014a: 52–54) have rather contributed to reinforcing the gap between the study of practices and the study of images of the state. In our view, exploring the subjective life of the state from the point of view of bureaucrats opens up new rooms of analysis of their everyday practice, hence linking, through the lens of affect and emotions, these two streams of research.

The 'feeling of unease' that we share with Billaud and Cowan (2020) towards a literature presenting bureaucracies as either 'lubricants for markets forces', 'epicentres for the "social production of indifference"' or full of 'responsibilised, self managed subjects' (ibid: 7) has constituted one major motivation for this special issue. However, we must acknowledge that multiple currents of research across disciplines, methodological and theoretical commitments have made some major contributions to the study of affect and emotions 'at work' (Jeantet 2018) within the past few years. In geography, for example, there has been a growing interest in emotions in relations to geopolitics and diplomacy (Jones 2020; Keys and Yorke 2019; Pace and Bilgic 2019; Sasley 2011). Similarly, the Law and Emotion movement studies what emotions produce in the judicial sphere and how emotions impact judicial interactions and decisions (for a critical overview, see Dumoulin and Vigour 2020). Arlie Hochschild's seminal work (1979) on the prescription and formation of emotions depending on feeling rules has also strongly influenced the development of management and human resource research on the role of emotions in organisations (Bjerg and Staunaes 2011; Fisher 2019; Fotaki et al. 2017). The emotional and affective dimension of work has thus been increasingly explored for various professions and different workplaces (Allan and Arber 2018; Billaud and Cowan 2020; Fortino et al. 2015; Soares 2003). These works contribute to underline the properly affective dimension of social life in general, and therefore also at work, whether prescribed (Hochschild 1979) or constitutive of the activity itself (Bernard 2014; Marché Paillé 2010; Wolf 2006).

Besides, as a result of the renewal of work on the 'État au guichet' and service administrations, many studies, more or less isolated, have taken as their object the emotions of workers from particular segments of (state-like) administrations, such as migration control officers in Lithuania, Latvia, Sweden, Denmark and Switzerland (Borrelli and Lindberg 2018), immigration officers in Great Britain (Bosworth 2019) or Sweden (Graham 2003), bureaucrats of a European Deportation Unit and Criminal Court (Wissink and van Oorschot 2021), English nurses of fertility units (Allan 2006), postal workers in France (Jeantet 2003), and those of the *Caisses*

d'allocations familiales (Corcuff 1996). The latter takes up the conceptualisation proposed by Vincent Dubois (2010: 79–80) of the 'two bodies of the frontline bureaucrat': 'On the one hand, the office holders are the embodiment of the state': they have to apply standard cases, abdicate their personality. 'By "depersonalising" themselves, they personify, in a way, the institution that employs them. They become one with the institution of which they are only avatars'. On the other hand, it is indeed concrete individuals who make the position of office holder exist.

Introducing the Articles

Drawing on the contributions of the different currents of research presented in this introduction, this special issue proposes an anthropology of the state attentive to the role played by emotions not only in the daily practices of those who claim to work for it but also in the ways in which the state is instantiated. Indeed, all of our articles take as an entry point situations where agents are faced with normative conflicts and contradictions that summon the very idea of the state and what it means to be its representative. As such, they provide information on professional ethos and the work of the 'concrete state' as well as on the images and representations held by public servants of what the state *should* be or do. Citizens are not alone in imagining the state: state agents do so too. It is precisely at this juncture that our articles fall: in an exploration of how emotions and affective entanglements are subjectivised and how distinctive political imaginations, hopes and expectations emerge. Which affects are mobilised in public servants' normative ideas of what the state should be? How do they shape their decisions and the way they perform their work?

In our first article, Tanja Hendriks examines the affect and emotions of Malawian public servants in the Department of Disaster Management Affairs in the context of relief interventions following cyclone Idai in 2019. She studies their regular interactions with citizens in a disaster-prone state, hence documenting how compassion, anxiety, anger shape their on-the-ground decisions. She finally shows how, in a context where relief interventions work for instantiating the imagined social contract between the state and its citizens while revealing the lack of resources to fulfil it, these public servants, through their aspirations and emotionally charged commitment to 'doing the right thing', make tangible an otherwise materially absent state.

Sophie Andreetta examines how the state is 'made' by public servants when they deal with underprivileged claimants, mostly migrants with a precarious legal status in the context of the Belgian welfare bureaucracy. She shows how the administrative treatment of cases involves many different affects and emotions on the part of the bureaucrats, responsible for granting social assistance. In a context where Belgian social policies have become more and more restrictive, she documents how bureaucrats, considering that their role is to help, engage in practices despite or against official guidelines, while expressing frustration towards what they expected from the state. She thus demonstrates how the interplay between these public servants'

emotions and professional ethos opens up unique, at times creative, spaces for welfare delivery.

Through the lens of volunteer community case workers in Zimbabwe, Saana Hansen highlights the complex, competing affects that shape the lived experiences of 'shadow bureaucrats': individuals who aim to deliver an often-distant state within their communities, while simultaneously having to navigate their position with, and within, this precarious state themselves. Despite the frustration they feel towards the precarity of their condition, they highly value their commitment to their job—done with 'passion', while at the same time expecting economic and social mobility from it. In a context of lack of resources for the public sector, they address forms of vulnerabilities that go beyond the state and NGO-centric definitions, hence maintaining the hierarchical image of a caring state on the ground.

Pauline Jarroux examines everyday interactions between teachers and primary school inspectors and pedagogical advisors in Benin. She analyses the teachers' discourses arguing that they no longer fear classrooms visits and inspections, in a context where inspectors have been encouraged to become advisors and 'partners' in order to take part in the improvement of the 'quality' of education. If the inspectors all valued this new professional ethos, they at the same time regretted their 'loss of authority', which they link with the fact that teachers were no longer afraid. As such, Jarroux argues that fear works as an operating tool which helps us to uncover the notions of legitimacy and authority that allow the state to be imagined and performed.

Marie Aureille aims to analyse the role of affects and emotions in the mundane interactions that constitute the Cuban state, through the daily work of local leaders (the *cuadros*) and their interactions with farmers. She shows how emotions have been used as a political tool for the revolution and still participate in producing the border work separating the state and the society: in a context of economic crisis where the social contract of the revolutionary state does not work anymore for the Cuban population, the *cuadros*, either themselves struggling to make ends meet, still show a strong moral and emotional commitment to the state. This tension is particularly visible during farmers' inspections. As *cuadros* seek to fight people's disinvestment and encourage their sacrifice for the revolution, they at the same time aim to appear as comprehensive and affable, hence performing the image of a 'firm but benevolent state'.

The articles allow us to go beyond the Weberian emotions/rationality divide in the work of government and show how emotions are an important feature of everyday work in bureaucracy. However, they not only state that emotions matter for understanding everyday public service but also show that these subjective lives have material consequences. They create opportunities for creative welfare provision; they reproduce neoliberal logics or serve as the foundation for normative deliberations and imaginations about legitimacy and authority. We show how the individual emotions of state agents are less related to their personal background or socialisation than to their structural position in the state apparatus and to their imaginary of the state. These emotions can even open the way to broader dynamics

of transformation of the moral orders of a society (Muehlebach 2012; Ticktin 2011). In this sense, these emotions are very rational and can even constitute real political instruments of neoliberal governmentality.

Ethnographic Explorations of Affective and Emotional Entanglements

We thus argue that an awareness of affects, emotions, and feelings is central to our research into public servants and their roles in state-making. This allows us to consider not only the intangible, visceral dimensions and 'atmospheres' of power, authority and decision-making but also how these dimensions shape and are shaped by the objects, affectivities and political subjectivities that make up the state and with what consequences. However, in re-visiting these questions through a commitment to ethnographic analysis, our special issue also raises key methodological and epistemological questions.

How do we study a 'something', an 'atmosphere' as complex and slippery as this? While the answer given collectively by scholars of the affective turn is that affect should be studied empirically, social scientists recognise the many epistemological and methodological challenges connected to the study of affects and emotions and disagree on where to situate them. Some have argued that the body of the ethnographer and their own emotional experiences acted as an open door onto the respondent's emotions (Hahonou 2019; Homan 2016; Skidmore 2003). For others, an inability or barrier to access another's affective experiences does not hinder these experiences from being studied through language or long-term observation, although there remains much debate both on the appropriate research methods (Knudsen and Stage 2015) and on the best ways of writing about them (Beatty 2010; Pasqualino 2007).

In this special issue, we asked authors to be reflexive about their own position in relation to their research site and interlocutors as well as to explicitly acknowledge their perspective on the theoretical and epistemological questions that arise from the study of affect and emotions. We were not prescriptive, and the result highlights the heterogeneity of approaches and reflections. This gestures to the multiple possibilities that emerge from taking emotional and affective engagements seriously and allows us to view the empirical and theoretical implications of different approaches.

We would caution, however, that in such ethnographic explorations of emotions and affect, researchers should not want to go too far: in particular, studying affect ethnographically should not give the researcher the prerogative of decrypting or interpreting others' affective energies. In her article, for example, Jarroux points to a discrepancy between her assumptions, based on observation, of a teacher's feelings about classroom inspections as she could 'feel [their] stress', and the teacher's own articulations. Most importantly, however, Jarroux's piece encourages us to take note of interpretive overreach and how contrasting our observations with interlocutors' words might be analytically productive. Rather than interrogate the veracity of our respondents' expressions, we may consider what these reflections tell us about

normative visions of the new Beninese state. At the same time, the presence of the ethnographer is not neutral. We become a sounding board, an opportunity for public servants to make sense of their feelings as starkly portrayed by Andreetta's interlocutors in the Belgian welfare system, like Nadine who suggests that: 'You're here, either you accept the values of the agency, or you quit, or you try to make the system more human'.

A common thread across the articles is that of how public servants navigate a fraught position 'in between', representing the state, on the one hand, and engaging with citizens, on the other, and the tensions that often emerge from this position. Each of the articles highlights in distinctive ways the power of ethnography to sit at the margins of the spoken and the unspoken. For example, Hendriks shows how ethnographic writing can 'evoke' emotions, allowing the reader to *feel* with Joseph, a Malawian disaster relief officer, as he sighs or as he chides relief distributors for their inability to distribute enough resources. At the same time, alongside these affects between the lines, we are also asked to read Joseph's own expressions of his emotions as he refers to the 'special heart' that is required for relief work, the pain he feels in the midst of a cyclone response and how this contributes to his normative articulations and expectations of statehood.

In keeping this tension between the spoken and the unspoken, we sought to avoid the danger that our theoretical commitments guide analysis. That is, we wanted to avoid 'ventriloquising to fit with…theoretical preoccupations' (Killick 2014). Indeed, Killick argues that, to avoid this, we should look to ethnography and a commitment to an anthropology that is 'radically empiricist'—the actual words, actions and ideas of other people are what 'generate alternative versions that are much more complex and novel than anything that "we" can dream up' (2014). Jarroux's article demonstrates this in the need for finding vocabulary to describe an experience that is itself expressed through a multiplicity of words. The study of emotions undoubtedly requires the building of trusting relationships and empathetic engagement with interlocutors' emotional worlds—something that the ethnographic approach is particularly well-suited to facilitate given its commitment to long-term engagement and its reliance on meaningful relationships with research collaborators. However, while empathy may go some way in overcoming the problem of intersubjectivity, it is also important to acknowledge its limits, not least in contexts with significant power imbalances between researcher and researched (Enria 2016). As Enria (2016: 325) argues, 'building empathetic spaces does not however translate into an erasure of power differentials, an assumption encouraged by the "liberal embrace of empathy that reduces otherness to sameness"' (Lather 2009: 19). At the same time, others have argued that studying bureaucrats can allow 'for a more symmetric anthropology where researcher and researched meet on a more equal footing' (Bierschenk and Beek 2020: 13). Indeed, the ability to write evocatively, as comes across in each of the articles, derives from the embodied experience of ethnography, following public servants' engagements, struggles and reflections over stretches of time, thus *feeling* with them, whilst remaining conscious of our positionality. 'Studying sideways' in welfare bureaucracies, for

example, Andreetta reflects on how both researcher and researched can share affective experiences when witnessing migrants' performance of helplessness, unease, or vulnerability.

Another strength of the ethnographic method for understanding the role of affect and emotions in the making of the state that is demonstrated by the articles in the special issue, is ethnographers' ability to place their observations in historical and political contexts. For example, several of our articles take 'inspections', of classrooms, of farms, of migration and vulnerability status, as a starting point. Each author physically followed the inspections over many months of ethnographic fieldwork, developing an embodied understanding of these experiences and tracing both affective responses and emotional reflections of both inspectors and inspected. At the same time, reading these accounts through comparative lenses, through each author's detailed contextualisation, we can see how these inspections take on different meanings when considering the contexts in which they are instantiated and as such produce different realities and relations.

For example, Aureille's exploration of a Cuban *cuadro's* excitement as he sees Fidel Castro in the sky is situated in the history of the Cuban revolution's theorisation of emotions so as to tease out the tension between the *cuadros*' commitment to the revolution's legacy in their interactions with farmers who, in contrast, have now grown disillusioned with the state. Conversely, in Hansen's reflections from Zimbabwe, we see how neoliberal visions of statehood rely on the mobilisation of public servants' emotions and affective relations with beneficiaries to justify their role as unpaid volunteers. Putting evocative ethnographic vignettes in conversation with structural analysis, allows our authors to draw out the distinctive ways in which emotions and affects are constitutive of stateness. This is both in terms of how emotions and affects are evoked in diverse images of the state and how they are instantiated in everyday encounters.

Despite the range of contexts these articles cover, four of them examine the experiences of public servants in 'caring' sectors. Saana Hansen and Sophie Andreetta, for example, examine the social work and welfare sectors, while Tanja Hendriks, looks at social assistance in the context of disaster relief, and Pauline Jarroux assesses the education sector. Rather than attribute this focus to a gendered bias, we draw out two aspects of this focus that have theoretical and methodological implications for studies of affect and emotion in the context of public servants. First, public servants in the process of delivering social services engage in a process of interaction, mediation, and translation between the bureaucrat and the citizen. Secondly, the articles in this issue collectively raise a question of whether affect and emotion take on specific forms within the 'caring' sectors of the state, as compared to, for example, surveillance policies or the tax sector. Do collective expectations of more 'feeling' within the 'caring' sectors create specific affective state performances? And how are these performances best studied?

To examine these questions, our collection reflects the heuristic character of the plural methodologies employed to study affect and emotions. That is, we combine observations with informal discussions, interviews, and textual analysis not only to

examine an affective intensity or an emotion within a moment but also to pay attention to their multiple 'echoes'. In her exploration of how affects and emotions shape public servants' in Belgium's migrant welfare sector, for example, Sophie Andreetta combines observations, interviews and textual analysis. Her article highlights that it is precisely the interaction of these methods that shed light on, and bring life to, the illusive and intangible dimensions of affect. For Tanja Hendriks, on the other hand, affect and emotions can predominantly be studied ethnographically, as they are experiential and felt, and while they may at times escape language, can be evoked through detailed ethnographic description. There is, however, a material element in what causes bouts of feeling among the disaster relief agents she engages with: a form, a document. Pointing to both the potential for discord (why waste time on a form when there is real work to be done) and for the writing of affect and emotion into (experiences with) the form.

Our comparative lens allows us to draw out important similarities: our articles highlight similar logics underpinning the various roles and effects of affects and emotions in civil servants' daily work and production of 'the state'. Hendricks and Andreetta both touch upon the way paperwork is created and utilised in order to provide a service despite bureaucratic red tape and limited funds. In Belgium (Andreetta) and in Zimbabwe (Haansen), social workers share a professional ethos centred around the will to help—furthering insights from previous studies of both welfare (Dubois 2010) and immigration workers (Fassin 2012; Ticktin 2011). Much like Andreetta, Aureille points to ethical commitments and bureaucrats' self-conceptions as a part of the many, sometimes conflicting injunctions that those working for, and 'making' the state have to reconcile on a daily basis.

By building on previous studies of the state and street-level bureaucracies both in the Global North and in the Global South, our articles, therefore, make a point in favour of decompartmentalising the literature. A large part of the African studies literature indeed insists on the importance of corruption and personal interests in understanding public policy implementation in the Global South. Our contributions demonstrate that despite of, aside from or against such dynamics, (African) public servants are dedicated to the production of a public good (Bear and Mathur 2015) and often share an emotional attachment to such a goal.

Focusing on emotional and affective intensities, we can grasp the full texture, depth and range of processes through which the state becomes real, in ways that may be incongruous and conflicting, but nonetheless meaningful. This is particularly important in contexts such as some explored by our authors, where the state is perceived to be 'absent' or even 'failed', without recognising both the continued significance of the state as an image even when its presence may be less visible or weakened by structural and historical forces and the plural manifestations of statehood that evade Western standards (Mustapha 2006). In this sense, a focus on emotions and affects, and a broad comparative lens, can help further long-standing efforts to demystify the state in the Global South, countering 'culturalist' perspective in favour of empirical (and we would argue, ethnographic) ones (Verheul 2013; Wai 2012).

In sum, our articles maintain a commitment to empirical analysis and contextualised ethnography. On the one hand, they highlight how the embodied practice of ethnographic research offers a unique entry point into the affective intensities and emotional investments of public servants and how these 'make' the state. On the other hand, we highlight a continued commitment to anchoring embodied research practice in an exploration of affective entanglements in terms of how they are subjectivised—how they are articulated through emotions, how they are instantiated in particular contexts, and how they give life to distinctive political relations and imaginations that confound simple categorisations and assumptions about what the state is and for whom.

Conclusion

The articles in this special issue aim to show the importance of studying the affective relations and emotional engagements of public servants to develop a deeper, more textured understanding of what the state is, how representations and practices are brought together in often intangible, sometimes unspoken, but nonetheless powerful ways. Our intention is to present these processes across historical and political contexts and to emphasise the productivity of heterogeneous theoretical and empirical approaches to studying 'states of feeling' through the eyes of public servants. The focus on the lives and perspectives of public servants across contexts helps us to expand existing literature on affective states and the emotional lives of citizens and their imagination of the state, whilst also offering new dimensions to anthropological literature on bureaucracies through a multi-sited and ethnographic approach. Bringing together ethnographic accounts from different locations—considering a diversity of historical, social and political conditions—points to exciting possibilities both in terms of the broad application of this theoretical lens and the contextual specificity that emerges from ethnography. This furthers ongoing efforts in political anthropology to provincialise the European state and to engage with the great empirical diversity of stateness. Finally, beyond describing public servants' affective atmospheres and emotional articulations, our articles start to chart how these go on to give rise to distinctive political imaginations that may at once make and sustain the state but also reflect a consciousness of the state that goes beyond what is experienced, for example, in the form of hopes and expectations.

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