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**Water struggles as resistance to neoliberal capitalism: A time of reproductive unrest** (Progress in Political Economy Series)

Madelaine Moore.

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*What* is water? How is it politicized by social movements across the globe? To what extent is it inscribed in global capitalist dynamics? Which contradictions does it reveal?

The book “Water struggles as resistance to neoliberal capitalism: a time of reproductive unrest” by Madelaine Moore addresses these and more questions, by providing an incorporating comparison of water struggles in Ireland and Australia.

Through a theoretical framework based on social reproduction theory, in dialogue with ecofeminist perspectives and Marxist theory of the state, the author argues that ‘struggles over water politicize the process of expropriation, opening up what was taken as given, and thus bringing to light the underlying contradiction that are inherent in global capitalism’ (p.5). These contradictions are explored in the struggle against unconventional gas extraction in Australia around 2012, and the social movement against water charges in Ireland in 2014. According to the author’s argument, both cases reveal dynamics of expropriation: in the Australian case, the expropriation of nature as the gas extraction affects water sources; in the Irish case, the expropriation of social reproductive infrastructures as water services are essential to the reproduction of life. In the author’s words: ‘through the enclosure of water [...] the background conditions of nature and social reproduction are brought to the economic foreground’ (p. 80).

The book contributes to several disciplines, for example critical political economy and water politics. However, for this review I focus on contributions to social movement studies and I will highlight three main contributions, in empirical, methodological and theoretical terms. First, the book makes an empirical contribution, through a detailed account of two cases of water social movements, adding to the growing literature on struggles about natural resources. In Australia, the author studies resistance against

unconventional gas extraction in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales and South Gippsland in Victoria. This extraction affects water in two ways: first, the process of unconventional gas production itself requires large amounts of water; second, water discharges from such production can cause contamination of surrounding water sources. In Ireland, the author explores the social movement against water charges that were introduced by the national utility company 'Irish Water', as part of austerity policies. The author provides a detailed account of these movements, in their description ('the who, what, where and when') but also in their evolution and main contradictions faced.

In both cases, the author shows how communities came to be defined through the struggle itself, rather than being pre-determined; in other words, she shows how agency emerged in resistance. In the case of Australia, an unprecedented alliance emerged between farmers and environmentalists. In Ireland, trade unions joined the movement that started with households blockading the installation of water meters, and continued with a widespread boycott of water bills and 'Right2Water' public rallies. In both cases, social movements' claims evolved over time, and "social reproductive activities such as care networks and support were not intrinsically anticapitalist, but became so through struggle as they were further articulated to subversive logics" (p.162).

Second, the book makes a methodological contribution. The author proposes an understanding of social movements as a "window onto a specific conjuncture" (p.9), or in other words a vantage point to observe economic, social and ecological contradictions of the global political economy. The incorporating comparison employed implies understanding dialectically the relationship between parts and whole, hence "cases are not distinct unit of analysis, but rather differentiated moments of historically integrated processes" (p. 46)

Third, the book offers a theoretical contribution. It advances the concept of water grabbing, as including expropriation through enclosure of nature (i.e. water sources through gas extraction) but also privatization of services (i.e. introduction of water charges). Water becomes then 'a constellation of contested social relations' (p.182), that allows to examine the contradictions shaping states' political projects and competing

capital fractions, and thus integrates capitalism into the analysis of social movements, as recently auspicated within the field.

The book provides a comprehensive conceptual framework to analyze water struggles within capitalism. However, a way to expand its application could be to broaden the empirical scope. Moreover, a way to enrich such framework in both empirical and theoretical terms could to study the impact of these struggles, or in other words to explore the transformative potential of long-term alternatives put in place by water social movements.

To conclude, I highly recommend this book to scholars, activists, policy-makers working on water, but also more broadly to anybody interested in the relation between environment, politics and economics and their internal contradictions.