

## *Review Essay*



# Thane Gustafson's *Wheel of Fortune* and the Study of Post-Soviet Oil

*Douglas Rogers*

Department of Anthropology, Yale University

*douglas.rogers@yale.edu*

### Abstract

Thane Gustafson's *Wheel of Fortune: The Battle for Oil and Power in Russia* is reviewed and situated within some broader trends in research on Russian natural resource extraction in the oil industry. Gustafson's book represents the high water mark of a particular genre of scholarship on oil and considerably improves our understandings on a wide range of fronts. However, a number of other methodological and analytical approaches to Soviet and post-Soviet oil are beginning to appear; in the coming years, they will broaden and diversify scholarly conversations about the significance of oil in Russia and the former Soviet Union.

### Keywords

oil – natural resources – postsocialisms – Russia – former Soviet Union

Thane Gustafson, *Wheel of Fortune: The Battle for Oil and Power in Russia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 672 pp. ISBN 9780674066472.

---

This essay was written with the support of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, and the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies, Yale University. I am grateful to Nataliya Langburd for research assistance.

*Wheel of Fortune: The Battle for Oil and Power in Russia* is without question the most thorough, multifaceted, and readable – indeed, often riveting – narrative of the post-Soviet oil industry’s relationship with Russian state agencies and international oil companies that has been published to date. Gustafson’s elaborate orchestration of individuals, institutions, policies, technologies, and geologies across two decades, a territory from the Caspian to Sakhalin and beyond, and some five hundred pages is nothing short of a triumph. The level of detail is glorious and never extraneous. In this essay, I highlight some of the notable aspects of *Wheel of Fortune* and suggest that Gustafson’s book represents the high water mark of an important form of knowledge about oil – in and beyond Russia – but that this form of knowledge is, increasingly, not an isolated one. Scholars in a variety of fields, from science and technology studies to history, and from critical geography to anthropology, have been making significant inroads into the study of oil and energy in recent years, steadily eroding the hegemony of political science and economics and works like *Wheel of Fortune*. This trend remains most visible in scholarship on oil and energy outside the former Soviet Union, a situation that is likely to change rapidly in the coming years. From this broader perspective, the study of post-Soviet oil is – Gustafson’s remarkable achievement notwithstanding – still largely in the exploration phase.

The opening chapters of *Wheel of Fortune* treat the breakup and restructuring of the Soviet oil industry, beginning in the 1980s and continuing with the privatization battles of the 1990s. The general outlines of this story will be familiar to many readers, including the background on decisions to privatize the oil industry but not the natural gas industry; the loans-for-shares privatization scheme that accelerated the rise of the oligarchs (rather, Gustafson is careful to emphasize, than creating them out of whole cloth); and the backroom deals that began to piece together vertically integrated oil corporations out of the numerous differently shaped puzzle pieces – from oilfields to pipelines to refineries and beyond – that had been cut out of the Soviet oil industry.

Gustafson’s sophisticated and many-stranded tale adds a wealth of new dimensions and interesting twists to the story. To give but one example: the manner in which the Soviet oil ministries disbanded gave unexpected and unplanned power to professional geologists in both Moscow and the regions. Roskomnedra (rendered by Gustafson as the Committee for Geology and Natural Resources), comprised largely of former employees of the Soviet geology ministry, wrote and ushered through Parliament the Mineral Resource Law of 1992. This legislation officially gave ownership of subsoil resources to the state and, at the same time, allocated a central role in licensing the use of those resources – at every phase from exploration to oil field development and

exploitation – to geologists. Some of these geologists were at central Roskomnedra, but others were spread across Russia's far-flung regions, as many region-based geologists had found employment in local state agencies and small oil companies looking to retain as much profit from the oil industry as possible. The Mineral Resources Law of 1992 established the “dual key” structure in which companies had to acquire operating licenses from both center and region for their operations – or more precisely, from both central and regional geologists. Many of the struggles between and among oil companies and federal and regional state agencies played out on this terrain well into the 2000s, making geologists, for a time, central power-brokers at all levels of company-state interaction.

Through all of this, Gustafson argues that the main trend of the 1990s was the gradual sidelining of the “oil generals” – the red directors of the Soviet oil industry – and the rise of *finansisty* – the financiers. Mikhail Khodorkovsky at Yukos stands, of course, as exemplar of the new and swaggering financier, while two “oil generals,” Vagit Alekperov of Lukoil and Vladimir Bogdanov of Surgutneftegaz, serve as the exceptions that prove Gustafson's rule about the gradual disappearance of oil generals. The outlines of this story, too, are widely known, but Gustafson's lengthy case studies of Surgutneftegaz, Lukoil, and Yukos in Chapter 3 provide enough new detail here that they considerably advance our understanding of the era. We learn, for instance, of the particular banking decisions and structures that enabled oil industry insiders at Lukoil to maintain control over the company's finances and structure its acquisitions of new subsidiaries in ways that did not cede control to banks. Likewise, we see how the highly centralized structure of the Soviet oil industry in the subset of West Siberian fields controlled by Surgutneftegaz gave Bogdanov a strong opening hand with which to resist all manner of attempted takeovers through the 1990s and into the 2000s. Less skillful banking decisions and a quite different infrastructural and geological inheritance – summarized rather blandly and not entirely satisfactorily by Gustafson as a lack of “control” – landed Yukos in the hands of Khordarkovsky and his Menatep bank and helped set the stage for the dramatic confrontations between oil industry and resurgent state in Vladimir Putin's first presidential term.

Chapter 5 opens the middle section of *Wheel of Fortune* with perhaps the biggest understatement of the book, directed at those who projected a continued decline for Russia following the financial crisis of 1998: “What the world's governments and pundits had missed was oil” (185). Indeed. The subsequent chapters move through the rapid rise of oil profits in the early 2000, the contemporaneous origins and consolidation of Vladimir Putin's “state capitalism,” the Yukos Affair, and the subsequent emergence of Rosneft as national

champion in the oil sector. In this section of the book, the careful differentiation of the oil sector by company and geological / geographical inheritance of earlier chapters pays dividends, as Gustafson is able to show how the different companies were positioned to pursue different strategies, with quite different results. Yukos took full advantage of Western technologies for squeezing oil out of its West Siberian brownfields, installing Joe Mach of the oil services multinational Schlumberger as head of production and reinforcing his oilfield management decisions with strict top-down control within the company. Other companies saw the potential in reviving existing wells less completely, focusing on new exploration instead, or else less enthusiastically adopted the Western drilling technologies and oilfield management strategies that could most effectively extract new profit from their aging fields.

But Yukos's success, of course, primed it for conflict with what Gustafson calls "the brothers from St. Petersburg" – Vladimir Putin and his often-fractious team. Rejecting several other accounts of and approaches to the Yukos Affair, Gustafson places the personalities and personal relationships of those involved at the center of attention, insisting that events would have unfolded quite differently if it were not for Mikhail Khardovovsky's swashbuckling, uncompromising tendencies, especially in meetings with the President of the Russian Federation. This personality-focused account provides a wealth of detail on the inner workings of state agencies and oil companies, but it is unlikely to satisfy readers more inclined toward theoretical considerations of the interaction of states, firms, and capital in the context of a commodity boom. It does, nevertheless, work beautifully in Gustafson's overall narrative arc and style, for he is, quite masterfully, able to bring all of the forces and factors described in the preceding chapters to balance on the "knife edge" (315) of the Yukos Affair. The real dramatic center of the book is here, in the confrontation of what Gustafson calls the "oil miracle" (*chudo*) and the "Russian Bear." The remaining chapters all spring from the reorganization of the relationship between oil companies and federal state in and after the Yukos Affair. The first step in this process, and the conclusion to *Wheel of Fortune's* middle section, is the formation of Rosneft as state-owned national champion, with private oil companies occupying a second tier – a process that Gustafson convincingly portrays as contingent and largely accidental, in contrast to the unfolding of a careful, pre-existing plan to undo privatization in the oil sector that more conspiracy-minded observers have discerned.

The final section of *Wheel of Fortune* opens with the third oil crisis in as many decades – the global downturn in oil prices in 2008–9 – that rapidly reduced the flow of oil rents and drew attention to vulnerabilities that had been masked by steadily increasing profits since the previous crisis of 1998.

Gustafson takes this opportunity to provide one of the great services of the book: a systematic accounting of the nitty-gritty of Russian tax law and regulatory policy as it has related to the industry over the 1990s and 2000s. Nowhere else in English, to my knowledge, do we have such a systematic account of the actual mechanisms by which state and oil companies interact in the more quotidian transactions of business (as opposed to the more spectacular show-downs, mergers, and acquisitions that dominate headlines). Gustafson's diagnosis is that the Russian tax and regulatory system is badly in need of overhaul, as it was designed for the purposes of the 1990s and 2000s, rather than for the crisis of production and rents that looms on the horizon. Too often, he claims, tax code revisions have been used in place of the real, necessary reforms that must take place. Gustafson gives a systematic overview of the potential for future development in the old Soviet brownfields (more than one might think, if the recent "tight oil revolution" in the US can be replicated in Russia); greenfields of Eastern Siberia (overstated, as there are likely no equation-changing fields left to be found); and bluefields of the Arctic circle (requiring high-tech, long-term partnerships with Western oil companies more experienced in deep-water exploration and drilling). Gustafson makes a number of predictions and recommendations and sketches some possible scenarios.

Interspersed in the narrative of the book as I have presented it here are three chapters that focus directly on the role of foreign oil companies in Russia. A chapter on the 1990s charts the entry of Western oil majors into the "wild east," focusing on misunderstandings and mutual incomprehension at nearly every level from drilling rig to boardroom – factors that sidelined Western oil companies right along with many oil generals. A chapter on the 2000s explores the failure of Production Sharing Agreements as the Western companies' preferred legal framework for their activities in Russia and its replacement by various forms of oil services and contracting that helped to boost production in Russian brownfields. Although these chapters themselves point to frictions, missed opportunities, and fraught partnerships, they anchor an important part of the book as a whole. In Gustafson's telling, things in the Russian oil sector go well most frequently, and wise leadership is consequently to be found and praised, when Western models are implemented or adapted. This goes for Vagit Alekperov's determination to move Lukoil, and indeed the Russian oil industry, into a vertically integrated structure in the early 1990s. It went all too well in the case of Khodorkovsky at Yukos, where the installation of Western oilfield management techniques helped create the conditions of his company's undoing. And Gustafson's clearest practical recommendation of the concluding chapters is that, if there is a "tight oil" revolution to come in the brownfields of the Urals and Siberia, it must come from a new breed of small, technologically

sophisticated oil and gas companies rather than lumbering giants, just as it has in the ongoing shale gas revolution in the United States. There are exceptions. The quintessential Soviet oilman and post-Soviet survivor Vladimir Bogdanov of Surgutneftegaz comes in for praise as a canny navigator of unpredictable situations, despite his insistence on going his own way and, at times, not adopting Western technologies or strategies. At the largest scale, Gustafson is not among those who counsel that Russia should diversify away from reliance on the oil industry. In his view, oil (and gas) continue to represent Russia's competitive advantage; the key will be to transform the industry into a high-tech knowledge sector, not build some other high-tech industry, as President Medvedev was fond of advocating. "For better or worse," Gustafson writes, "oil will dominate the future of Russia for years to come" (1).

*Wheel of Fortune* is a masterful example of an influential genre of scholarship on oil and energy, one to which Gustafson's past collaborator Daniel Yergin's recent book *The Quest* (2011) and Marshall Goldman's important *Petrostate: Putin, Power, and the New Russia* (2008) also belong.<sup>1</sup> Books in this genre tell the thrilling narrative of states, corporations, and the men who lead them involved in a parade of high stakes negotiations and decisions across realms of finance, politics, and science. There are competing institutions and factions within institutions, examples of strong, perceptive leadership and hubristic, fateful mistakes. Changes in personnel and technology, along with a range of internal and external factors, intersect to shape the course of history. Some of the most compelling parts can be anecdotal: a hostile exchange at a meeting, a chess game in the bathhouse, or the hierarchical allocation of office space at corporate headquarters. Indeed, Gustafson, like Yergin, often demonstrates an ethnographer's eye for significant local detail, particularly when it comes to subtle differences among factions of state or corporation and their relevance to a larger picture.

Books in this genre are often powered by the close relationship established between the authors and key corporate and state players through the international consulting industry – in the cases of both Yergin and Gustafson, this means IHS Cambridge Energy Associates – and they are compelling, in part, precisely because their authors are so close to the field of action they describe.<sup>2</sup> Yet the proximity of this literature to conventionally understood corridors of power is often matched by a reluctance to engage substantively with broader historical and social scientific scholarship on the actual workings of that

---

1 See Gustafson and Yergin 1995.

2 For an insightful ethnography-based analysis of the growing importance of expert consulting in the oil and gas industry, see Mason 2013.

power. In studies of oil, at any rate, it often seems that the closer one gets to the commanding heights of states and corporations, the less one is engaged with the history and social science *of* states and corporations.

This book is not, then, particularly theoretical. Gustafson distances himself, quite appropriately for his tale, from the large quantitative literature on the resource curse, preferring an approach that takes much more account of historical trajectories – what he terms the “curse of the living [i.e. Soviet] past” (8) – and post-Soviet contingencies than abstracted data sets concerning natural resource wealth and levels of democracy or development. He approvingly cites Brookings Institute economists Clifford Gaddy and Barry Ickes’s “virtual economy” thesis (2002) in several places, and is informed by some standard sources in the political science literature on post-Soviet “transition.” Geographical scholarship produced at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies plays a prominent supporting role. But Gustafson takes account of this work mainly with the intent of advancing his own overall narrative, rather than making substantive analytic or historiographical contributions. Readers interested in works that establish or invite ways to situate post-Soviet cases in theoretical conversations about natural resources in political science should look elsewhere, to path-breaking works such as Pauline Jones Luong and Erika Weinthal’s *Oil is Not a Curse* (2010), on the importance of property rights and institutions; M. Steven Fish’s *Democracy Derailed in Russia* (2005), on the place of natural resources among multiple determinants of Russia’s post-Soviet political trajectory; Pami Aalto and colleagues’ *Russia’s Energy Policies*, on the utility of structuration theory in understanding Russian energy (2012); and forthcoming scholarship by Gustafson’s Georgetown colleague Harley Balzer. In broader conceptual terms, substantive works such as Thad Dunning’s *Crude Democracy* (2008), on varieties of democratic political organization in rentier states, also remain crucial, theoretically sophisticated, guides.

In the remainder of this essay, I describe two trends in the study of post-Soviet oil outside of mainstream political science that have the potential to expand our knowledge in ways that *Wheel of Fortune* – concerned as it is with the “commanding heights” and largely skirting theoretical discussions – does not. Although these trends are, at present, much more visible in scholarship focused outside Russia and the former Soviet Union, this will not be the case for much longer.

Historical scholarship on oil is useful place to begin. As I have noted, Gustafson marks his distance from some of the comparative literature on the resource curse by rooting his analysis in Soviet legacies – what he calls “the curse of the living past” – rather than the standard quantitative literature in comparative petrostate theory (e.g. Ross 2012). But just what is the legacy of

Soviet oil? When we look for scholarship on Soviet-era oil, we find, for the most part, earlier works by Gustafson and colleagues in the contexts and conventions of Cold War political science (see Gustafson 1989, Hewitt 1984, Goldman 1980, Campbell 1968 for representative examples). The Western social and cultural history of the Soviet Union has, to my knowledge, produced no major study of Soviet oil analogous to key works on Saudi Arabia (Jones 2010), the United States (Sabin 2005), Venezuela (Tinker Salas 2009), and most other oil-producing and consuming states.<sup>3</sup> (This is despite the fact that, by the 1970s, the Soviet Union was the world's largest oil producer and exported quantities of oil second only to Saudi Arabia.)

One reason for this state of affairs, it seems to me, lies not in any deficiency in the topic selection of social historians, but in the fact that the Soviet oil industry had a quite different relationship to broader Soviet society than that which has historically obtained in the capitalist world. It is common knowledge that, at the all-Union budgeting level and at least following Stalin-era autarky, the Soviet Union relied heavily on hard currency and barter items obtained in exchange for the export of oil (Kotkin 2001, Gaidar 2007). But at every level of the Soviet system below the federal budget, oil did not directly produce the major social effects and transformations that scholars have long focused on in other oil producing countries. There were no capitalist oil booms that fed into massive new social inequalities or to high profile, highly politicized wars among private oil companies – both characteristics of the discovery of oil in the United States as described by Sabin (2005) or Davis (1998). There were no oil regions or oil camps that became fault lines for struggles between global imperial powers and local communities (compare Vitalis 2007 on Saudi Arabia, Tinker Salas 2009 on Venezuela, and Watts 2004 on Nigeria).

In the Soviet-era Perm Region, which is part of the Volga-Urals oil basin and the site of my own recent research on Soviet and Russian oil, the oil industry was among the least prestigious places to work even at the height of production in the 1970s. Soviet ideologies and practices emphasized Perm's urban factories, with their large labor forces and close links to visions of Soviet modernity and military power, over the rural, grimy, and low-paying jobs in the regional oil production association Permneft'. Western social historians were right that Soviet oil did not play such a central role in the social and cultural lives of Soviet citizens: oil and oil money occupied a quite different place – less visible, less prestigious, even less political – in the on-the-ground experience of Soviet non-capitalist modernity as compared to capitalist modernity.

---

3 See, however, work in architecture and urban planning by Blau and Rupnik (2015) and Engel (2006) on the making of space in Soviet and former Soviet oil cities.



A key part of the story of the post-Soviet years is the movement of oil from periphery to center in the social and cultural discourses and practices of ordinary Russian citizens (see also Rogers 2014a). Most of the Soviet-era elements of this story remain, however, to be written. Only with a good deal more scholarly attention to the social and cultural history of Soviet oil will we be able to fully appreciate the way its legacies helped shape the post-Soviet period – and to decide whether those ways can be fairly judged a “curse.”<sup>4</sup> Recent Russia-based and Russian-language scholarship is advancing this field rapidly, with important contributions by scholars such as A. A. Igolkin (1999a; 1999b; 2005; 2009), M. V. Slavnikina (2007), Vladimir Gel'man and Otar Marganiya (2010) and others.<sup>5</sup>

A second arena from which we can expect new insights into post-Soviet oil is the interdisciplinary field of science and technology studies and, more broadly, scholarship that understands some of the social and cultural force of oil to be caught up in material qualities and technological processes. When Gustafson writes of the physical legacy of Soviet oil, he has in mind the geological distribution of oil fields and the infrastructure that grew up around exploiting them in the context of larger Soviet political economy. When he writes of oil technologies, he generally means exploration and extraction techniques and the ways in which they enable or disable the effective and efficient exploitation of an oilfield. Indeed, “technology transfer” plays a major role in *Wheel of Fortune*, and some of the most interesting parts of the book focus on the specific kinds of Western drilling technology and oilfield management techniques – such as hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling – that boosted output in Soviet brownfields in the 2000s.

For scholars taking on board the insights of various strains of science and technology studies, however, there is much more to be said about the mutual implications of natural resources, infrastructures, technology, and human affairs. In his recent and acclaimed *Carbon Democracy* (2011), for instance, Timothy Mitchell argues that a new route into studying the intersection of oil

---

4 The anthropological literature on the postsocialist period is replete with examples in which all manner of actors discovered that the socialist period provided useful and important resources for navigating the new circumstances of the 1990s and 2000s (e.g. Verdery and Burawoy 1999; Rogers and Verdery 2013). These examples challenge the wisdom of labeling the Soviet past as a “curse” in any totalizing way, whether in the oil industry or in other segments of society.

5 Slavnikina 2007:7–36 provides an excellent critical overview of recent scholarship on oil produced in Russian universities, research centers, and oil companies themselves. In my own research, I have found local history publications from oil towns and districts to be a crucial source on both the Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

and politics involves actually following the flows of oil and the strategies and tactics used to challenge and protect its production and distribution channels. Crucially, these are not just strategies and tactics enacted by corporate and political leaders of the sort followed by Gustafson, but by a much wider spread of actors including oil workers and oil consumers (from the world's navies to Americans driving in cars with V8 engines). Following the carbon itself, as Mitchell puts it, affords striking new perspectives on a range of issues, from labor politics to the organization of the international petrodollar system to the origins of the Cold War. Mitchell suggests, for instance, that the materiality of the nineteenth-century coal industry lent itself to mass labor protests and strikes that won democratic concessions by virtue of their these actions' ability to interrupt the all-important movement of coal along rail lines. The transition to oil – lighter, more fluid, more easily transportable (especially by tanker), and also relying on much smaller labor forces for extraction – has, it follows, often been an effort to skirt the material constraints that coal as an energy source helped to impose on capitalist accumulation and corporate power.

The recent and forthcoming work of Andrew Barry (e.g. 2010) most closely applies the insights of science and technology studies to the case of former Soviet oil. Based on research along the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline, for instance, Barry fashions an innovative analysis of pipeline metallurgy as part of a “sociomaterial assemblage.” Pipelines and other material/technological aspects of the oil industry, in this view, are not inert materials shaped by more real social and economic forces. Nor are they simply items of “technology transfer” to be judged by how efficiently they extract and move oil. Pipelines are, rather, dynamic co-constitutors of those forces and processes. They have important implications for the shaping of broader political fields, especially when, as was the case in Georgia, they fail to work as promised and, in doing so, produce Parliamentary inquiries, NGO campaigns, other contested forms of expertise and knowledge, and, in general, the “stuff” of politics.

Steven Collier's (2011) study of Soviet and post-Soviet city planning also takes up the materiality of infrastructure in the hydrocarbon sector. Collier's fieldwork, conducted in the small industrial city of Belaia Kalitva in Rostov *oblast'*, showed how deeply the infrastructural design and function of Soviet cities relied on a specifically socialist vision of urban life. As parts of this workplace-based and collectivist vision, heat and power for the city were generated and provided by the local factory, and there were no individual energy meters in apartments, for there was no need to measure consumption at an individual level. In the post-Soviet period, the intransigent materiality of this infrastructure threw up enormous obstacles to all manner of planned reforms advocated by Western advisors and their Russian allies. Would Belaia Kalitva's factory still

provide heat to the city after privatization? What if it went bankrupt? How could individual energy consumers be fashioned when it was a technical impossibility to meter and bill individual apartments for energy consumption, at least without tearing out the walls of every apartment in the city order to reconstruct the heating infrastructure?

Collier situates these fascinating, ground level dilemmas in an innovative Foucaultian account of the Soviet Union as a biopolitical project, and in this respect differs somewhat from both Mitchell and Barry in choice of conceptual paradigm.<sup>6</sup> For my purposes here, however, these scholars share a concern with the ways in which the material infrastructures and technologies of the hydrocarbon sector are powerfully implicated in political processes in ways that scholarship in the *Wheel of Fortune* genre is not well positioned to grasp. Whereas Gustafson and others see technologies and material infrastructures as elements in the play of grand state politics and corporate competition, this emerging strand of research on oil and gas looks to much more elaborate and intricate interfaces between humans and the material world, and does so with the goal of rethinking the ways in which the field of politics works in fundamental ways (see also Richardson and Weskalnys 2014).<sup>7</sup>

I have argued that, in comparison to other parts of the world, scholarship on Russia and the former Soviet Union is notable for the relative dearth of writings on oil that provide alternatives to *Wheel of Fortune's* narrative genre. There is, to be sure, a great deal of instructive literature in political science, but oil is just beginning to catch on as a topic of broader historical and social scientific research on the region. I have pointed to new social histories and to science and technology studies as two arenas in which we can discern a gathering wave of scholarship that should considerably expand and diversify scholarship on oil in the former Soviet Union. Additional research topics common in the study of oil elsewhere in the world are also likely have an impact on the study of

---

6 Barry and Mitchell engage productively with the work of Bruno Latour and Michel Callon, founders of the actor-network theory strand of science and technology studies.

7 In some of my own research in the Perm Region (Rogers 2012), I take a complementary tack, showing how a physical quality of oil—its depth beneath the region—became tightly wrapped up in Lukoil-Perm's efforts to legitimate and market itself through corporate sponsorship. The company's corporate social responsibility campaigns often assertively aligned the depth of the oil deposits managed by Lukoil-Perm with the historical and spiritual depth attributed to local cultural forms, and did so as part of efforts sought to draw attention away from some other qualities of oil that many in the Perm Region found objectionable, notably its toxicity during refining. On corporate relationships with local communities in the world of post-Soviet oil, see also Yessenova 2012 and Stammeler and Peskov 2008.

post-Soviet oil in the coming years. Promising examples include: the intersection of cultural production, mass spectacle, and the performative aspects of state-building in oil-producing states (Coronil 1997; Apter 2005; RETORT 2005); the “sociology of resource rents,” which follows the channels along which states spend accumulated oil wealth (Hertog 2011); and the effects neoliberal restructuring on the ways in which the oil industry interacts with states and societies (Sawyer 2004; Shever 2012; Appel 2012).

Judging from the state of scholarship on oil elsewhere in the world, then, there is a number of compelling directions in which research on Soviet and post-Soviet oil is likely to move in the next decade. The goal, however, should not be simply to apply theories generated elsewhere in the oil-producing world to the post-Soviet context. Although this is useful as an opening move, we should not underestimate the many significant historical and contemporary differences between Soviet and post-Soviet oil-exporters and the family of petrostates that prominently includes Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, and Venezuela – all of which grew up in the wake of one or another version of Euro-American imperialism. Given both basic differences and under-researched similarities and connections between colonial/postcolonial and socialist/postsocialist oil (Rogers 2014b), there is reason to hope that new research on oil in the former Soviet Union will provide not just new cases studies using established theory, but some production for export as well – that is, insights that will challenge and expand our understandings of the ways in which oil has entered human social, cultural, political, and economic lives well beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union itself.<sup>8</sup>

## References

- Aalto, Pami (ed.) (2012). *Russia's Energy Policies: National, International, and Global Levels* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing).
- Appel, Hannah (2012). “Offshore Work: Oil, Modularity, and the How of Capitalism in Equatorial Guinea,” *American Ethnologist* 39(4): 692–709.
- Apter, Andrew (2005). *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

8 On this point, see especially the work of Jones Luong and Weinthal (2010), which brilliantly uses examples from the post-Soviet world to propose major revisions in the ways that political scientists conceptualize the relationship between oil and political systems the world over.

- Barry, Andrew (2010). "Materialist Politics: Metallurgy," in B. Braun and S. J. Whatmore (eds.) *Political Matter: Technoscience, Democracy and Public Life* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press): 89–117.
- Blau, Eve and Ivan Rupnik (2015). *Baku: Oil and Urbanism* (Zurich: Lars Muller).
- Campbell, Robert W. (1968). *The Economics of Soviet Oil and Gas* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press).
- Collier, Steven (2011). *Post-Soviet Social: Neoliberalism, Social Modernity, Biopolitics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Coronil, Fernando (1997). *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
- Davis, Margaret Leslie (1998). *Dark Side of Fortune: Triumph and Scandal in the Life of Oil Tycoon Edward L. Doheny* (Berkeley: University of California Press).
- Dunning, Thad (2008). *Crude Democracy: Natural Resource Wealth and Political Regimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Engel, Barbara (2006). "Public Space in the Blue Cities in Russia," *Progress in Planning* 66:147–239.
- Fish, M. Steven (2005). *Democracy Derailed in Russia: The Failure of Open Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Gaddy, Clifford and Barry W. Ickes (2002). *Russia's Virtual Economy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press).
- Gaidar, Yegor (2007). *Collapse of an Empire: Lessons for Modern Russia* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press).
- Gel'man, Vladimir and Otar Marganiya (2010). *The Resource Curse and Post-Soviet Eurasia: Oil, Gas, and Modernization* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books).
- Goldman, Marshall (1980). *The Enigma of Soviet Petroleum: Half-Full or Half-Empty?* (London: Allen & Unwin).
- . (2008). *Petrostate: Putin, Power, and the New Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Gustafson, Thane (1989). *Crisis Amid Plenty: The Politics of Soviet Energy under Brezhnev and Gorbachev* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- . (2012). *Wheel of Fortune: The Battle for Oil and Power in Russia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).
- Gustafson, Thane and Daniel Yergin (1995). *Russia 2010 And What It Means for the World* (New York: Vintage).
- Hertog, Steffen (2010). *Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).
- Hewitt, Ed A. (1984). *Energy, Economics, and Foreign Policy in the Soviet Union* (Washington: D.C.: The Brookings Institution).
- Igolkin, A. A. (1999a). *Sovetskaia Neftianaia Promyshlennost' 1921–1928 gg.* (Moscow: RGGU).

- . (1999b). *Otechestvennaia Neftianaia Promyshlennost' v 1917–1920 godakh* (Moscow: RGGU).
- . (2005). *Neftianaia Politika SSSR v 1928–1940-m godakh* (Moscow: Institut Rossiiskoi Istorii).
- . (2009). *Sovetskaia Neftianaia Politika v 1940-m – 1950-m godakh* (Moscow: Institut Rossiiskoi Istorii).
- Jones, Toby Craig (2010). *Desert Kingdom: How Oil and Water Forged Modern Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).
- Jones Luong, Pauline and Erika Weinthal (2010). *Oil is Not a Curse: Ownership Structure and Institutions in Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Kotkin, Stephen (2001). *Armageddon Averted: the Soviet Collapse, 1970–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Mason, Arthur (2013). “Cartel Consciousness and Horizontal Integration in the Energy Industry,” in Sarah Strauss, Stephanie Rupp, and Thomas Love (eds.), *Cultures of Energy: Power, Practices, Technologies* (Walnut Creek, WA: Left Coast Press): 126–138.
- Mitchell, Timothy (2011). *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (London: Verso Books).
- RETORT (2005). *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* (London: Verso).
- Richardson, Tanya and Gisa Weskalnys (2014). “Resource Materialities,” *Anthropological Quarterly*. 87(1): 5–30.
- Rogers, Douglas (2012). “The Materiality of the Corporation: Oil, Gas, and Corporate Social Technologies in the Remaking of a Russian Region,” *American Ethnologist* 39(2): 284–296.
- . (2014a). “The Oil Company and the Crafts Fair: From *Povsednevnost'* to *Byt* in Postsocialist Russia,” in Choi Chatterjee, David Ransel, Karen Petrone, and Mollie Cavender (eds.), *Everyday Life in Russia: Subjectivities, Perspectives, and Lived Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press): 71–83.
- . (2014b). “Petrobarter: Oil, Inequality, and the Political Imagination in and after the Cold War” *Current Anthropology*. 55(2): 131–153.
- Rogers, Douglas, and Katherine Verdery (2013). “Postsocialist Societies: Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union,” in James G. Carrier and Deborah B. Gewertz, (eds.), *The Handbook of Sociocultural Anthropology* (London: Bloomsbury): 126–138.
- Ross, Michael (2012). *The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Sabin, Paul (2005). *Crude Politics: The California Oil Market, 1900–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press).
- Sawyer, Susanna (2004). *Crude Chronicles: Indigenous Politics, Multinational Oil, and Neoliberalism in Ecuador* (Durham: Duke University Press).

- Slavnika, M. V. (2007). *Velikie Pobedy i Upushchennye Vozmozhnosti: Vliianie Neftegazovogo Kompleksa na Sotsial'no-Ekonomicheskoe Razvitie SSSR v 1945–1999 godakh* (Moscow: Neft' i Gaz).
- Stammler, Forian and Vladislav Peskov (2008). "Building a 'Culture of Dialogue' among Stakeholders in North-West Russian Oil Extraction," *Europe Asia Studies* 60(5): 831–849.
- Tinker Salas, Miguel (2009). *The Enduring Legacy: Oil, Culture, and Society in Venezuela* (Durham: Duke University Press).
- Verdery, Katherine and Michael Burawoy (eds.) (1999). *Uncertain Transition: Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield).
- Vitalis, Robert (2007). *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).
- Watts, Michael. (2004). "Resource Curse? Governmentality, Oil and Power in the Niger Delta, Nigeria," in Philippe Le Billon (ed.), *The Geopolitics of Resource Wars* (New York: Routledge): 50–80.
- Yergin, Daniel (2011). *The Quest: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World* (New York: The Penguin Press).
- Yessenova, Saulesh (2012). "The Tengiz Oil Enclave: Labor, Business, and the State," *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 35(1): 94–114.