The exploitation of oil in resource-poor countries has been marred by two sad realities. The first is enduring poverty due to the misuse of oil revenues, the corruption of public institutions, or less nefarious political and institutional processes that nevertheless lead to imbalances in the economy and to the withering of other productive sectors. The second is a stark instrumentalism whereby the oil industry subordinates good governance, social equity, poverty alleviation, and environmental protection to the desire for economic efficiency and “good” returns on investment. Under the supervision of the World Bank, the Chad Oil and Pipeline Project was designed to transcend these realities. The pipeline project is a $4.1 billion public-private venture organized around over 300 oil wells and a 660-mile pipeline that involves the state of Chad, the World Bank, and an international oil consortium led by ExxonMobil. Over a 25- to 30-year period, approximately one billion barrels of crude oil will be transported from southwestern Chad to the Cameroonian port of Kribi, bringing Chad more than $5 billion.

The scale of the pipeline project — it is the largest infrastructure project in sub-Saharan Africa — and its location — in a poor, authoritarian, and unstable country — caught the attention of national and transnational advocacy groups who expressed both skepticism and hope that World Bank intervention could lead to new, and more “development”-oriented, modes of oil exploitation. Specifically, the state lacked domestic capital and the oil consortium feared the weakness of domestic institutions. As a result, the World Bank was able to leverage its influence to make the pipeline project into an experiment with a high degree of social programming. This programming is
reflected in a set of economic, social, and political institutions. It formalizes specific regimes of duties and obligations for the state and the oil consortium under determinate schemes of governance, revenue allocation, and environmental protection. The government is required to invest nearly 80 percent of the oil revenues in “priority sectors” of the economy: health, education, agriculture, and rural development. An additional five percent of the revenues are to be invested in the oil-producing region, while 10 percent are set aside in a “future generations” fund. The oil consortium was required to develop an environmental management plan (EMP) and a petroleum sector capacity-building project that conforms to World Bank standards for large-scale infrastructure projects. In short, the pipeline project is meant to accelerate modernization through benefits to the poor, local capacity building, and the protection of the environment.

These schemes have been widely presented as evidence of the World Bank’s positive influence in developing countries. However, recent disputes between the World Bank and the government of Chad over revenue allocation have bolstered critics’ early warnings that the World Bank did not properly align enforcement mechanisms with its responsibility as moral guarantor of the pipeline project. Most of the criticisms are pragmatic and focus on the shortcomings of project implementation. For example, critics have denounced a “two-speed process” where construction activities directed towards oil production have outpaced institutional capacity-building and assistance to the poor. This dual speed is presented as unfortunate given that the pipeline project was “a sincere and innovative attempt to address the resource curse.” Others have noted critical loopholes in the project’s design that “hamstring the fundamental principles of the Chad-Cameroon pipeline project — those of revenue transparency, accountability and management.” These criticisms have led to fear that the pipeline project may actually lead to a worsening of socioeconomic conditions in the Central African country, while strengthening its ruling oligarchy.

We do not agree that the flaws of the pipeline project are solely the result of deficiencies in implementation. We argue that critiques of the formal dimensions of the pipeline project are not a good substitute for analysis of the content of its juridical schemes and related social structures. These
schemes and structures are embedded in the operations of an historical political economy of oil. This oil economy arose in the Middle East in the aftermath of World War I under political and economic circumstances that favour hegemonic powers and the oil industry on account of greater military, technological, and financial resources. The schemes and structures of the oil economy engender local social relations and processes that have specific cognitive and ethical dimensions. We are aware that events in the Middle East reflect specific temporal and spatial contexts. However, we hope to highlight the continuity across space and time of the juridico-political terms of the oil economy. These are: external encroachment on state sovereignty and the political autonomy of local populations, manipulation of market mechanisms and presumed traditions as a means for expropriating land, and the institutionalization of compensation regimes that lower the cost of oil exploitation to industry and secure the transfer of wealth from countries endowed with natural resources to the homes of industry and capital.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the relationships and processes engendered by the pipeline project do not necessarily agree with the moral and programmatic underpinnings stipulated by the World Bank and others. Nor do they conform with the expectations and preferences of local populations. These discrepancies and discordances extend to gaps between the principle of global responsibility to persons and the environment, on the one hand, and the actualization of the legal and political schemes of the project on the other. The above discrepancies and discordances raise questions about the role of the World Bank in the pipeline project as well as the nature, function, and purpose of that organization’s trusteeship. The World Bank seems to have successfully mediated the competing interests of an authoritarian state, global capital, and hegemonic powers. Despite occasional disputes in which the state or the oil consortium scores partial victories, the World Bank remains the ultimate arbiter of the pipeline project. In this role, the World Bank has ensured that crucial dimensions of Chadian sovereignty have been altered in order to promote neoliberal directives that favour the transfer of public functions to private domains while bolstering the state’s bid to control its population, particularly labour and contestants in property disputes. Related policies are best understood in the larger polit-
Studies in Political Economy

Empirical context of the oil economy and global geopolitics under the post-Cold War actualization of American hegemony. This geopolitics includes the American quest for alternative and stable sources of energy outside the Middle East.\(^{11}\)

In this context, rather than being neutral or ineffectual, the World Bank has helped to institute notions of rights and justice that shape power and subjectivity in favour of the state and the oil industry to the detriment of the populations of the oil region. This partiality is manifest in the norms of monitoring and is sanctioned by the International Advisory Group (IAG), the World Bank’s monitoring body. The World Bank has appointed multiple monitoring bodies, but we focus on the IAG because of its members’ authority and credibility and their involvement in the production of legitimating knowledge about the pipeline project as experts on Africa specializing in development.

**Empire, Capital, and the Petroleum Economy** According to Karl Polanyi, the institutions, norms, and values attendant to capitalist expansion and its modes of accumulation obey specific temporalities which, for our purpose, includes historical cycles of Western hegemony.\(^{12}\) The institutions, norms, and values of capitalism also reflect affective structures or perceptions tied to the objects and geography of transaction. Petroleum is a peculiar object of transaction resulting from the properties of oil in nature and its connections to sovereignty and national security. In nature, petroleum lies underneath land masses claimed by states as national territory, but the territory itself is inhabited by individuals who claim these spaces as private property. Politically, petroleum has ushered in peculiar dynamics, including legal entanglements created by the terms of its exploitation.\(^{13}\) These terms oppose the interests of resource states, hegemonic powers, the oil industry, and local populations. In these regards, the exploitation of oil invites legal regimes and institutions that set it apart from the transformation of other raw materials into commodities, including cash crops, labour, and trade. In this light, while the pipeline project has made important innovations, it retains characteristics singular to the oil economy. These include structures of power and economies of affect. The structures of power encompass polit-
ical, military, and economic interests and tools that are specific to time and space. The affective economies shape the inclinations of actors and agents towards others. They incorporate perceptions of self and society that result from, and lead to, localized cultural processes. Together, the structures of power and affective economies determine the reigning ethical norms, particularly those pertaining to technology, investment, and development.

Institutions and norms of power, culture, and ethics thus guide the relations of production and the distribution of resources as commodities. They also define justice as entitlements and desserts. Today, it is generally agreed that particular articulations of power, subjectivity, and market institutions led to nineteenth-century liberalism, itself the basis of a self-regulating market economy founded upon the gold standard and the “new imperialism” initiated by Britain. This order was replaced in the mid-twentieth century by a different configuration of power, culture, and ethics, leading to developmentalism, the nationalization of the economies, and the promotion of a liberalized market under the oversight of the United States allied with other liberal Western states. The twenty-first century opened with an entirely different articulation of power, culture, and ethics. Today, a US-initiated neoliberal globalization has brought about the denationalization of the functions of state; the restructuring of state functions and their orientation towards the protection of property and capital; the limitation of democratic input in decisionmaking, and the unilateral projection of American power as guarantor of the attendant international order.

In other words, the modern political imaginary and economic order have depended upon temporal partnerships and the codependence between state and capital. This codependency obeys regional circumstances and the utility and function of given commodities. The dynamics of state-capital codependency have been shaped by three crucial factors, all related to sovereignty. The first is that the expansion of the oil economy beyond the industrialized Western world occurred first in the outer reaches of the Ottoman empire at a time of uncertainty about political authority and when regional sovereignty was in flux. Second, the emergent Western postimperial but hegemonic powers exploited this uncertainty in order to establish the claim of open access to oil as an essential dimension of national security. Third,
these external powers required resource-rich postcolonial entities to enter into sovereignty-encumbering arrangements as a condition for the development of their resources into commodities. These political rationalities and their assumptions ensured that specific states’ interests were reproduced, along with those of capital, as the collective good under subsequent constitutional orders.

It is thus in the Middle East that the United States, Britain, France, and their home-based capital and industry first experimented with the current institutions and norms of what would become the oil economy. The impetus for the new economy was the discovery of vast reserves of oil in the declining Ottoman empire, the expansion of modernization upon the industrial revolution, and the motorization of war begun during World War I. Specifically, the automobile industry and World War I helped to define the utility and value of petroleum as a commodity. Having linked oil to national security, the United States, Britain, and France played a crucial role in developing the moral foundations and institutions of the oil economy. But the bid to create the new economy and to engineer its institutions was not a straightforward process based on market rationality alone.

As Albert Hirschman might have argued, the bid to engineer institutions and norms for the emergent oil economy was mediated by the opportunistic mobilization of affective taxonomies of political societies and their institutions. So-called Orientalists provided the intellectual instruments with which to theorize these effects. To this end, Orientalists advanced dubious or unfounded views of the “Orient,” ranging from speculation about the effects of lapsing Ottoman sovereignty to the character of Arab dependencies in the wake of the Ottoman empire, to local conceptions of autonomy. These speculations led teleologically to convenient and self-serving Western instrumentalization of regional “difference” and “culture” to promote imperial interests in the region. Orientalists maintained that the relationships that local populations had with territory or the land were not properly constitutive of property. Orientalists also affirmed that local populations were less nobly motivated than their Western counterparts and, therefore, could be coerced to adhere to the rationality of capital as self-interest. Finally, Orientalists helped to define the terms of moral solici
of former Ottoman Arab dependencies based on notions of entitlements and merit. These included dubious views about the rational self-interest of capitalists and the irrationality of Bedouins and others.

The Orientalist frame converged functionally with the operative assumptions of the emergent oil economy. These include the notion that petroleum is a national security-related commodity to which access must not be barred without rational cause. This assumption sees petroleum as a collective good. The complement to this view is that the exploitation of petroleum is in the collective interest of modernization and wealth creation. The notion of oil-as-common-good gave legitimacy to an open-door policy defined as unconstrained access. But in the Orient (now the Middle East), Orientalists legitimized the imperial position that such access could be legitimately based on concessionary terms from local authorities to capital and industry of specific countries — usually Western powers. Thus the American, British, and French states could legitimately institute geopolitical forms as contexts for the oil concessions and exploitation based on a hierarchy of power, values, and interests.

These Orientalist views translated into political rationalities. Even before the end of World War I, Western powers initiated political agreements among themselves that granted each other special privileges that infringed upon Ottoman sovereignty and local autonomy. These had social and cultural consequences too numerous to detail here. The most notable of these agreements was the 1916 Sykes-Picot accord, which divided Ottoman dependencies into British and French zones of influence. Although it may seem to run counter to the open-door policy promoted by the United States, the Sykes-Picot accord established a crucial connection between foreign political presence and the design of new regional institutions — including those that later proved central to the emerging oil economy. In fact, subsequent accords associated American oil companies with the Anglo-French project. The 1916 Arab revolt and Woodrow Wilson’s 1918 peace plan unleashed local expectations of self-rule and appeared to undermine the Sykes-Picot accord. Local expectations were nonetheless subordinated to Western desires for political and administrative control under the League of Nations mandate system. The mandate offered foreign intervention as a
context for institutional development in preparation for self-government with full autonomy. The guidance implied by the mandate set the context for political machinations and interference with domestic and regional political processes. It allowed Western powers to advance institutional frameworks or juridico-political regimes that reconciled the competing interests of capital and the oil industry (i.e., access to oil) and local entities whose interests were to promote self-government.

After the mandates, Western powers pushed for semicolonial legal and economic regimes and corresponding institutions of sovereignty and property and their modes of acquisition and use. The instituted forms of sovereignty, initially under the mandate system, ensured Western participation in regional political processes, with the aim of recruiting local elites who were already in favour of Western intervention and to granting concessions to the petroleum industry. With assistance from local elites, Western powers were able to introduce new institutions and norms of citizenship, governance, and property in the region. Hence, under the watchful eyes of imperial powers, materialism became public morality, land grab was elevated to public necessity, and the privatization of the commons was justified as public policy. Compliant local elites enacted the new institutions, norms, and values into executable standards through specific instruments and mechanisms of implementation. It did not matter that the underlying processes might transgress the will of local populations. The inhabitants of the oil regions were viewed as less sovereign, less industrious, and thus less deserving of moral consideration than industry, capital, and agreeable state officials.

Western states remained involved in the formalization of the oil economy in order to maintain control over local processes long after the mandate. Their involvement ensured that bifurcated but convergent sets of institutions and norms would be structures of the new economy. The first set consisted of administrative and judicial acts that protected property rights and promoted investment measures as a symbol of the rule of law. The related institutions and norms were accompanied by enforcement mechanisms and instruments under specific regimes of rewards and penalties. The second set of institutions and norms was more malleable. It consisted principally of declarations of commitment to protecting local interests. These innova-
tions were not the result of a simple act of imposition. Western powers recruited local elites with whom they worked in tandem to set in motion institutions and norms favourable to industry, capital, and local rulers. Thus, from the 1920s onward, foreign powers and oil companies supported local rulers who granted favourable treaties or concessionary agreements to oil companies. Under the guidance of their foreign backers, local rulers also introduced regimes of property, entitlements, and adjudication based on previously unavailable assumptions about the relationships of individuals to nature, and the purposefulness of wealth creation and its collective utility. These regimes favoured the privatization of nature as property and the creation of wealth as individual entitlements and desserts. Their institutions and norms — of sovereignty and autonomy, rights and entitlements, and justice and citizenship — alienated citizens who felt stripped of their cultural and political autonomy, leading to a loss of domestic political legitimacy.

These institutional arrangements and their regimes of governance were later contested. The 1951–1953 political turmoil in Iran is a good illustration of this contestation. In 1951, when the government failed to obtain higher oil royalties, the parliament voted to nationalize Iran's oil industry and seize control of the British-owned and operated Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). This action precipitated a crisis in which one prime minister, General Haji-Ali Razmara, was assassinated for opposing nationalization, and another, Mohammed Mossadegh, was later removed through Anglo-American intrigue for supporting nationalization and expropriation. Despite the removal of Mossadegh, ruling elites in Algeria, Libya, and elsewhere took up the theme of national rights over oil and other natural resources. By the 1970s, most oil-producing countries united in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) had joined the movement towards the nationalization of oil. Paradoxically, nationalization only buttressed the political clout (and wealth) of ruling local elites and spurred a further rapprochement between them and their Western allies during the Cold War. Subsequent strategic alliances between Western powers and regional rulers turned local public opinion against local regimes and their external backers. The alienation of the public proved a minor nuisance as Western powers and oil companies drew their own conclusions from the
utility of the institutional arrangements — that the two most important conditions of Western access to foreign oil are to entertain congenial networks of political rulers and elites in oil regions, and to secure institutions that are consistent with industry-dependent notions of the rule of law, property, and entitlements.

**Modernization, Effect, and Justice** One similarity between the Middle East and Chad is that the ratio of political and economic power continues to favour external powers and industry on account of greater military, technological, and financial resources. Today, France and the United States and their base-international organizations (e.g., World Bank) are still able to unduly influence events in Chad. They are able and willing to actualize an historical form of geopolitics that exploits power in order to advance parochial values and interests as the foundation of the global economy. In Chad, foreign powers and international organizations have thus been able to extract strategic concessions that structured juridical and social rewards and sanctions favourable to the oil consortium but unfavourable to local populations.

Even placed within the larger context of the oil economy, the specificity of the Chad project and its African context must not be obscured. Peter Rosenblum has noted, for instance, that the Chad project came to international attention due to advocacy by new networks of national and transnational actors interested in sustainable development, the realization of human capacity, and the distribution of wealth in poor countries. These advocacy groups included religious, environmental, and human rights organizations and had all pledged to an equitable distribution of oil revenues, the protection of the environment, the prevention of social dislocation, and the promotion of local participation in decisionmaking. Advocates also demanded transparency and accountability in the project’s implementation as a means to protect civil society and local interests against the authoritarian and secretive tendencies of the oil consortium and the Chadian government. We agree with Rosenblum that the World Bank’s moral guarantee has been useful in providing a practical risk insurance to the oil companies and securing sources of funding. It is also certain that the presence
of the World Bank in the Chad project has provided a moral shield against criticism that oil companies seldom adequately address issues of development and human rights.²⁹

Yet, these points betray Rosenblum’s and others’ faith in the innovations introduced by the pipeline project and the role of the World Bank in it. In fact, several features of the pipeline project that are considered novel are not when viewed from an historical perspective. The professed desire to protect the interests of vulnerable African populations is a mainstay of progressive Western discourse on Africa. So too is the utility of “subduing African sovereignty” as a prerequisite to the protection of populations. For instance, the General Act of Berlin, concluding the 1884–1885 Berlin Africa Conference, included a clause mandating foreign powers desiring to exercise sovereignty in Africa to “watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for the improvement of the conditions of their moral and material well-being.”³⁰ A similar admonition appears in Articles 22 and 23 of the League of Nations Covenant, which proposes the mandate system on behalf of “peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world.” The United Nations Charter reprises this theme of “a sacred trust of civilization” “to secure and maintain fair and humane conditions” and “just treatment” for native populations as the basis for its trusteeship system.³¹ In all three cases, the duty to protect emerged in the larger context of Western extraterritoriality and claims to property in Africa. In all of them, the stated motivation for international regimes was subverted by the desire for unequal exchanges under unequal power relations. For instance, while the Berlin Act claimed to introduce legitimate trade in lieu of slavery, it laboured to protect “the property and collections” of “Christian missionaries, scientists, and explorers, [and] their followers.” In these instances, as in the present, imperial powers instituted monitoring bodies: the International Congo Commission, the International Mandate Commission, and the Trusteeship Committee. These institutions were neither neutral nor without effect.³²

Even so, the Chad project retains some particularity in the manner in which the World Bank formulates its own trusteeship as guarantor of an equitable distribution of revenues; environmental preservation; local capacity-
building, and transparency and accountability. We think first of the privileges and dispensations granted to economic agents and, second, the uses and effects of new “private powers” that transfer previously public functions to transnational and private agents. As a result, the state’s ability to regulate the oil economy is hampered while its power to coerce is enhanced for the purpose of control of labour and expropriated villagers. As in the Middle East of yesteryear, the institutions supplied under trusteeship are founded upon certain anthropological notions of African industry, attachment to the environment, expectation, and entitlements. For instance, they allow the transfer of crucial dimensions of sovereignty to the World Bank and property rights to the oil consortium through modes of coercion deemed appropriate to local contexts or cultural norms.

Just as Orientalists once produced the Orient, Africanists are called upon today to produce an Africa at the frontier of modernity as failed states and thus as institutionally deficient. In resulting scenarios, Africans live in proximity to nature but they are unable to control it. Africans are viewed simultaneously as possessing traditions favourable to modernization and unable by themselves to adopt the proper institutional and normative tools. In this light, the kind and degree of assistance to be provided to individual societies and countries depends upon the nature and depth of its institutional deficiencies. Consistently, Chad is assumed to lack the requisite institutions for modernization on account of its postauthoritarian status — an ontological or constitutive condition susceptible to political chaos that brings about vulnerability to its citizens and uncertainty to business. By contrast, few have claimed that Chad is devoid of culture. Rather, supposed Chadian cultural norms have served as a guide to institutional engineering and to the development of the rule of law. As incorporated by the oil consortium’s EMP, such norms enable practices of expropriation and modes of compensation. The IAG has also treated the consortium’s practices as if they were consistent with custom and tradition — and therefore as though they were just. As we show below, social scientists have played crucial roles in defining Chadian culture and thereby shaping policy. They have done so through personal involvement but also preferences and orientations towards the pipeline project.
Any discussion of the relationship between intellectuals and specific political projects must contend with views advanced by Karl Mannheim on the heterogeneity of intellectuals, their uniform openness to different influences, and their aspiration to transcend their own motives and interests in their quest for truth. Accordingly, intellectuals have a unique capacity, due to their training and mental habits, to empathize with their subjects while detaching themselves from their immediate concerns in the interest of analysis. But Mannheim’s idea that intellectuals can float above social conflict has been challenged. One counterargument is advanced by Antonio Gramsci, who asserts that intellectual activities are necessarily aligned with the interests of particular social groups. Since Gramsci, scholars have argued, on various grounds, that intellectuals maintain orientations that align them with particular parties and projects. While Gramsci advocates an outright implication of intellectuals in historic projects on behalf of specific classes, others are more cautious of such claims. According to one position, to be morally credible, social theorists must necessarily occupy a neutral space between the desire for control expressed by states, corporations, and hegemonic classes, on the one hand, and, on the other, the impulse of researchers to defend or give voice to the oppressed.

Regardless of one’s position, intellectuals remain microcosms of society and, as such, enable generalizations about the nature of their involvement in specific social projects. This view acquires particular saliency in the context of the pipeline project where individual intellectuals have been involved not merely as detached observers but as participants closely aligned with contestants in conflicts related to the project. Two categories of intellectuals are of concern to us. The first consists of intellectuals employed by the oil consortium to produce knowledge and policies concordant with its own aims. The second category extends to those intellectuals who are deputized by the World Bank to ascertain the implementation of the pipeline project’s conformity with its ontological regimes. These two groups are represented by two professional anthropologists whose involvement in the Chad project exceeds the view of anthropologists as social arbiters in their fields of research. In fact, they are specifically asked to provide instrumental
knowledge that affirms specific practices of expropriation of local populations towards the insertion of the pipeline project into the global petroleum economy under neoliberal structures of international governance as an expression of moral concern.

Prior to the official inception of the Chad project, Ellen Patterson Brown was hired by the oil consortium as an expert anthropologist to provide practical knowledge about local culture, landholding or tenure systems, and their modes of transmission. Her involvement with the oil consortium has been represented as a demonstration of good faith that the consortium takes into consideration local cultures and practices. The oil consortium credits Brown for her seminal fieldwork and anthropological data on land tenure and property. By the consortium’s own admission, Brown was the architect of the norms of land seizure and compensation.37 Indeed, Brown is an ethnographer of the Sara, a group closely related to the Ngambaye of the oil region.38 As an employee of the oil consortium, her task was to harness knowledge for predetermined policies. In her corporate role, Brown dispensed with caution in affirming tenancy, possession, and the transfer of land in Sara society. She helped to legitimize positive legal processes by likening Sara systems of landholding or tenure and their modes of transmission to Locke’s aphorisms of property, which were further refined in the Anglo-Saxon world upon the enclosure movements.

Specifically, Brown provided the justifications for the property-related categories used by the state and the oil consortium: These are incorporated in Volume 3 of the EMP as Appendix A. The categories include “bush” (defined as “uncultivated areas and fields once cultivated”), “field” (“an area of cultivation, being prepared for cultivation, or cultivated in the last season, March-November of last year”), and “fallow” (“fields cultivated more than a year ago, whose cultivator has the right to reuse the area, or whose cultivator is known to the village chief or elders”). To be sure, the term “bush” is used today in the region alongside the concepts of fallow and fields. Although villagers use the concept to depict an area not currently under cultivation, Brown joined the oil consortium and the state in reassigning a colonial signification to the concept of bush. Colonial anthropology once projected African cultures and practices as fixed and unchanging for instru-
mental reasons. Then, the notion of bush and associated concepts of fallow and field denoted a certain imaginary of the relations of “natives” to nature. In related accounts, natives merely existed in close proximity to nature; their uses of it were not constitutive of attachment and expectation translatable into unqualified property. This belief had implications for the value of native labour, expectation, and thus entitlements.

As a result of Brown’s efforts, the lexicon of the pipeline project has revived colonial-era dispositions. “Bush” emerges once again as the primary condition of the environment of villagers. Thus construed, “bush” discounts the extent of villagers’ interactions with or activities in nature: hunting, gathering, fishing, and the like. So long as bush is not cultivated as field, it remains unclaimed and available to the state to be reassigned. The state and the oil consortium have determined that, even where nature is transformed into a field, villagers’ attachments to the land expires after a single growing season. Then, the land reverts to nature as bush and to the state as public property. This is obviously not the place for a new ethnography of the Ngambaye of the oil region, but a cursory review of history and interviews with local elders suggest, for instance, that the period of fallow in the region ranged from two to more than ten years during which time the user’s claim to the land was sustained. Under the new regime, however, the consortium may take land without individual compensation and not commit an injustice, no matter the prejudicial effects such an action may have on the everyday lives of persons and communities.

Unlike Brown, other anthropologists have recently noted that a synthesis of African cultures and practices is difficult to achieve under the best of circumstances. Most admit that African cultures and practices, particularly those regarding landholding or tenure, have been dynamic and fluid. As such, they are not reducible to Western images of property. African attachments to land have not been simply materialistic and they are connected to both symbolic spheres (relations to ancestors or duties to future generations) and social purposes, including the reproduction of particular kinship relations. Based on these assessments, one is left with the sentiment that Brown was not interested in an open and fair synthesis of Sara and affiliated cultures.
Finally, more than an intellectual in charge of providing a conceptual framework for expropriation, Brown also executed policy. Until the end of 2005, she worked as a point person on the oil consortium’s social and economic programs, adjudicating property claims and thus assessing compensation. Based on our field interviews, we can assert that one of Brown’s tasks was to verify villagers’ claims about their connections to land and their relations to each other around land and labour. Households in our study identified her as the individual who most fervently challenged villagers, often chastising them about their accounts of the nature, size, and value of their fields.

The oil consortium is not alone in seeking assurance and affirmation from intellectuals. Reflecting a recent trend, the World Bank has also looked for intellectuals to give legitimacy to its actions in Chad. Among them it enlisted Jane Guyer, a professor of anthropology, to serve on the IAG. Guyer has carried out extensive, highly praised field work in Nigeria and Cameroon. In her current capacity, however, Guyer has entered a point of contention between the state and citizens over land rights on the side of the Chadian state against local claims. For instance, in a much quoted article in the journal *African Affairs*, Guyer affirms that in Chad “land itself belongs to the state.”

We take this assertion to be ontologically distinct from one that posits, for instance, that the state claims proprietorship of land. Guyer’s endorsement of the state’s claim and presentation of it as fact acquires a particular status, given her position as an advisor to the World Bank and her ability in that role to influence politicians, policymakers, and scholars.

Regrettably, Guyer’s affirmation of state claim also goes against anthropological and other social scientific common sense, where it is widely recognized that land rights have been political since colonial times. There is an emergent consensus among Africanists, for example, that the constitutional terms of the postcolonial African state were cast long before decolonization, when Africa was imagined at the outer frontier of modernity. In the French colonial context, the appropriation of native land was founded upon medieval French conceptions of eminent domain authorizing the transfer of private property into the public domain. While the expropriation of land was nominally sanctioned by formulations of the public interest,
it was a matter of colonial policy that land seized or claimed by the state be reverted or reallocated to private agents for conversion into private goods with public utility. In an era where the good life requires high standards of consumption, the state generally seized unused or underutilized private land to be awarded to colonial settlers (generally farmers) and industry on the assumption that they would create an economy that served the public good. Frequently, postcolonial African rulers upheld underlying claims of state rights under both eminent domain and privatization of public land in the public interest. These rulers founded the legitimacy of related acts on two grounds. First, rulers posited the anteriority of state claim as tradition and, by this fiat, subordinated citizens’ contrary claims to those of the state. Related legal machinations stripped individual claimants of their rights to property. Second, the state claimed the right to coerce non-compliant citizens and thus forcibly compel them to part with their possessions when required by law.

We see in Chad today that, at the time of the commodification of land and the valuation of local entitlements as ordinary possessions, the state has denied local autonomy and sovereignty in favour of its own right to define land tenure and to legislate and regulate property. This is done ostensibly in the public interest and the common good under the appellations of development and modernization. Without negating the possibility of such public interest and common good, Mahmood Mamdani has cautioned against the \textit{prima facie} endorsement of postcolonial institutions of property as either traditional or legitimate.\footnote{To Mamdani, the conflict between the postcolonial state and society around questions of law and the commodification of nature-as-property have profound ethical dimensions, including whether land seized and commodified is put to the declared use and purpose. These implications should concern scholars.}

\textbf{Policing Neoliberalism: Trusteeship and Interest} There are differences between colonial regimes of trusteeship and the World Bank’s moral guarantee, but these differences can be overstated. One crucial difference is that, under colonial modernity, foreign control bestowed moral responsibility. Upon decolonization and late-modern neocolonial arrangements, moral responsi-
bility is bestowed by the need to enforce norms (specifically of governance, property, and human rights). In either case, national and transnational entities may welcome specific concerns and norms but these are formulated and enforced from without. In the present case of Chad, not only do the institutions and norms of the oil economy emanate from outside Chad, they also antedate its postauthoritarian condition. These include the institution of international monitoring, which did not serve the interests of local populations in the past.

The IAG has received greater public scrutiny than other monitoring bodies of its type. These include the Revenue Management Board, the External Compliance Monitoring Group (ECMG), and the follow-up technical committee: the Comité Technique National de Suivi et de Contrôle (CTNSC). We focus on the IAG because it was offered by the World Bank to allay transnational advocacy groups’ fears that the operations of the pipeline project were too far removed from local populations to allow for their input. The IAG is staffed by individuals selected on the basis of their conscience, probity, competence, and knowledge of the region. To underscore its authority and competence, the World Bank selected the members of the IAG according to their extensive experience in their respective domains. The chair, Mamadou Lamine Loum, boasts a law degree and a number of senior positions in Senegal, including the post of prime minister. Jacques Gérin, the executive secretary, is a civil engineer who has held several distinguished positions including vice president of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), deputy minister of environment, and associate deputy minister of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Jane Guyer has been previously discussed. Abdou El Mazide Ndiaye, a graduate of the Sorbonne, has held top positions with the African Network for Integrated Development and the Forum of African Voluntary Development Organisations (FOVAD). Finally, Dick de Zeeuw is a specialist in international agriculture and environmental policy who was a member of the Dutch senate, general director of agricultural research in the Netherlands, president of the Agricultural University at Wageningen (1985–89), and convenor of the IAG on the Nam Theun hydroelectric project in Laos. It is significant that the IAG reports to the president and board of directors of the World Bank.
Group and “makes recommendations on measures to be taken by the WBG and the Chad and Cameroon governments.”

Questions remain today about the purpose of IAG field trips and, therefore, advising. They arise partly from the terms of reference of the IAG and the manner in which the monitoring body has carried out its role. When offered a review of the preliminary draft of the IAG’s terms of reference, critics objected that the IAG could not monitor the activities of the oil companies in their executive capacities and, as such, may not comment on possible damage caused by their activities, could not monitor human rights abuses, and could not advocate for those in need of protection and, as such, was not endowed with proper mechanisms to systematically consult with local populations and the organizations that represent them. Further, critics have noted that it is implausible that the IAG would properly monitor the state to which it must submit its reports. These constitutional limitations have led critics to ask whether IAG activities, specifically its reports and analyses, risk degenerating into an elaborate intellectual “con game.”

If there is a con game, the IAG must be a willing participant. As contradictory as it may seem, the IAG’s terms of reference also allow it to set its own agenda. The IAG is therefore ostensibly free to tailor its monitoring activities to its own convenience, according to its own conscience and dispositions. Thus far, the IAG has elected to submit opinions on the performance of the government and oil consortium, and local reactions to it. Meanwhile, it has avoided any reflective analysis on the operations of the project. As justification, the IAG claimed that it “does not pass any overall judgment on the Project,” it merely investigates technical difficulties and tensions arising from the current institutional order. The IAG has chosen to limit its monitoring activities to verifying contractual undertakings arising from the EMP that are directly related to the “orderly” exploitation of oil, commenting on the exercise by the state of its claims over land and its conformity with the prerequisites of the rule of law, and delivering opinions on the difficulties arising from the execution of land and labour-related contractual agreements.

The idea that the IAG does not pass judgment begs the question whether the expertise, competence, and experience of IAG members are not wasted
on mere observations and statements of the obvious. But it would be patronizing and foolish to ask the question. Such a question would be patronizing because the IAG does not lack agency, and foolish because the IAG is not indifferent to the outcomes desired by the World Bank, the state, and the oil consortium. If neo-Gramscians are to be believed, the World Bank has recently sought allies among the intellectual classes to disseminate the notion that capitalist progress, under a new ideology of free market, will be beneficial to the poor. These elites are placed in intermediary positions, such as monitoring, with the aim of insulating corporations from public scrutiny and democratic accountability. It might be said that the IAG has a disciplinary role in the global oil economy: that of arbitrating among the contending forces of the pipeline project according to rules and ends endorsed by the World Bank. Accordingly, IAG reports always point to progress while obscuring the fact that the institutions, instruments, processes, and mechanisms of the pipeline project do not compel the state, the Bank, or the oil industry to translate their proclamations into measurable accomplishments.

From this perspective, it is a proper function of the IAG to embellish certain dimensions of the pipeline project and to obfuscate others. In the first instance, it must partake in the neoliberal truism that corporations are less corruptible than states and that, if properly motivated, they will be morally solicitous of local populations and of the state. To this end, the IAG has not followed up on evidence of the inadequacies of the operational schemes of the pipeline project regarding property. As noted earlier, members accept the validity of colonial-era regimes of property and, by this token, endorse faulty anthropological imaginaries of native rights and attachments to the environment. In the second instance, the IAG must obfuscate the predatory and coercive dimensions of the new neoliberal economy — particularly corporate autocracy and authoritarianism and excessive bureaucratic centralization. The language of obfuscation generally relies on dubious distinctions between, on the one hand, public and private goods, and, on the other, parochial ends and collective interests. The IAG is not expected, for instance, to object to the greater police powers assumed by the state over citizens as a condition of the orderly exploitation and delivery of oil — a suggestion denounced by Amnesty International. Rather, it is expected to deplore, but
nonetheless endorse, state police powers as ultimately consistent with the common interest and the need of the “market” for order and stability.

These conclusions are borne out by the IAG’s reports, including the Report of Mission 9. The central theme of this report is the absence of a clear oil sector policy for which it recommends remedial state actions. The report also notes deficiencies in the area of poverty reduction, but withholds judgment on the absence of transparency in revenue management. Here, the focus of this ninth report falls on regulatory and oversight shortcomings. By contrast, the report does not discuss the objections of civil society to existing plans, nor does it allude to reservations by civil society to the doctrines underlying them. We did not find any instance where the IAG suggested revisiting the institutional superstructure of the pipeline project — e.g., its norms of authority and subjectivity, entitlements and obligations, rights and privileges, and equity and justice as indispensable to development. The IAG has never advocated considerations of local norms and institutions as plausible contexts within which to adjudicate value and justice and obligations and interests.

To compound matters further, the IAG’s relations with the state and the oil consortium cast doubt on the credibility of its data. In fact, villagers are unable to tell IAG members apart from Esso officials. As a result, many are unable to ascertain whether the IAG is a neutral overseer or a conduit of information to the Bank, the Chadian government, and the oil industry. To us, at least, the independence and impartiality of the IAG is doubtful on account of the close connections that it maintains with the oil consortium during its visits. The oil consortium has arranged for IAG travel to the oil region and has hosted its members on the company compound during their stay. In contrast, the IAG has deliberately kept its distance from national advocacy groups and local populations, presumably to maintain neutrality. The proximity of the IAG to the state, the oil industry, and the World Bank undermines the petition process. Also, the petition process precludes private meetings with villagers. Instead, the IAG requires that villagers report their grievances and other comments in full view of neighbours, Esso functionaries, and local officials. We have learned that, on several occasions, local officials have reprimanded plaintiffs and even threatened them. Not only does the IAG
not offer any guarantees of confidentiality, villagers have learned that there is no certainty that their complaints will be followed up by remedial actions. Indeed, the absence of anonymity of petition and uncertainty about the utility of complaint would be a deterrent to truthfulness in any authoritarian state. Would-be petitioners may legitimately wonder about possible uses of data from petitions.

It follows from the preceding that IAG monitoring and reporting confirm the coming into form of the interests of capital and the state disguised as trusteeship and the rule of law. Still, the most ironic dimension of the IAG resides in the mere fact of its existence and not, as critics have stated, in its actions and inactions. At its core, the IAG is antithetical to democratic governance through the protection of cultural, civil, and political rights that might be tolerable as part of a transition towards greater local and national participation in decisionmaking. Instead, the creation of the IAG has obscured the necessity for the World Bank, the state, and the oil consortium to imagine culturally and politically germane institutions of governance, control, and solidarity with greater Chadian participation. Indeed, reliance on the IAG has helped to obscure the absence of transparency and accountability in the pipeline project, that is, continued state centralization and bureaucratic authoritarianism as well as industrial and financial secrecy. By assuming the sufficiency of the consultative mechanisms of the IAG, the World Bank can feign that disputes, contestations, and conflicts are duly adjudicated or mediated even as the instruments of the pipeline project to deprive Chadians of legitimate avenues to justice.

**Conclusion** As with all interventions, the motivations and methods are two separate concerns. In Chad, the ostensible reason for intervention was to institute the rule of law in a postauthoritarian context. The motivation for the pipeline project was to start a revolution that breaks from the so-called resource curse. Unfortunately, as national and international advocacy groups have pointed out, the pipeline project is far from meeting expectations. A number of factors militate against earlier optimism, but the methods of intervention also contribute to failure. Specifically, under World Bank trusteeship, the pipeline project has been inserted into more insidious
structures of governance. As a neoliberal project, the pipeline project is necessarily entangled in questions of sovereignty and rule of law that are subject to specific ideological registers that evade questions of obligation and justice. In this context, advising engages the responsibility of the advisors. They either confront the operational flaws of the pipeline project or help to legitimize corporate malfeasance under a neoliberal mandate.

If current trends hold, the IAG will oversee local communities being stripped of agency, identity, subjectivity, and resources. Unable to represent themselves today and to protect their own interests or appeal to any authority, the Chadian populations of the oil region are being trampled upon as mere dwellers in nature who must bear the burden of modernization. Thus far, Chadian villagers have not fared any better than similarly situated persons and entities in the oil-producing regions of Nigeria, Angola, and Equatorial Guinea. They are presently denied the means of social reproduction and the capacity to maintain or improve upon the social, economic, and cultural systems that had hitherto sustained them. Upon close scrutiny, the management and environmental regimes of the pipeline project sketch a future disinheritance of populations cursed by oil.

Notes

1. This research is partially supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant 0527280. The authors are solely responsible for the material presented within the article.
7. World Bank, “World Bank, Chad Reach Interim Agreement.”


10. See Bank Information Center, “NGO Comments on the World Bank’s Terms of Reference.”


13. The following discussion restricts itself to practices and dimensions of the oil economy related to sovereignty and land rights, as they apply to the acquisition of land. It is not a comprehensive analysis of institutional arrangements and practices related to the exploration and exploitation of oil, whether in the form of contracts, techniques, and technologies of production and distribution of oil, oil revenues, or associated liabilities.


21. Section 4, Article 22 states that “The communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory Power.”


27. Rosenblum, “Pipeline Politics.”


29. Rosenblum, “Managing Oil.”


42. We follow 120 households in three sites: a village surrounded by oil wells, an administrative district in the oil region, and a peri-urban center near the capital. Members of our research team conduct surveys with 40 households in each site. The surveys involve multiple questions including health, agricultural production, nutrition, compensation, employment, and the administration of justice. We interview the households at least once each month and sometimes several times per month on different topics. These surveys are complemented by ethnographic interviews that we conduct. Initially, households were selected by knocking on every nth door in all three sites. The combined refusal rate was less than four percent. As part of a recurrently administered demographic survey, we enumerate household members (who were initially defined as individuals who ate out of the same cooking pot and regularly slept in the household. There is considerable flux in many of these households due to temporary migration). If the entire household moves or is relocated, we attempt to follow its members and to continue to interview them in the new location. Since the beginning of this study, we have replaced four households in the peri-urban study site because the households moved to another part of the country. We have also replaced two households in the small town. If individual household members move, we continue to gather information about them from household members who remain. Finally, we plan to add additional households to our study sample as members from the original household break off and form new ones (e.g., through marriage, divorce, etc.).


46. See Bank Information Center, “NGO Comments on the World Bank’s Terms of Reference.”

47. CIEL, “Chad/Cameroon Oil.”

48. Bank Information Center, “NGO Comments on the World Bank’s Terms of Reference.”

49. See Oxfam, “Comments on Draft Terms of Reference for the International Advisory Group for the Chad–Cameroon Pipeline,” (25 September 2000).

50. Bank Information Center, “NGO Comments on the World Bank’s Terms of Reference.”


53. Ibid.


