

Beyond rescaling: reintegrating the 'national' as a dimension of scalar relations

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Abstract: Among scholars of globalization and neoliberalism, there has been a marked turn away from the national as a relevant scale in today's world, with researchers arguing that the national is being 'rescaled' to local, regional and global scales. This paper argues that we need to move beyond this rescaling argument to recognize that the national still is relevant in contemporary political economy. Seeing the national not as a discrete scale but as a dimension of political economic practice is an alternative analytical approach that treats the national as constitutively implicated in other scaled activities. Distinctions between one scale and another are not so clear. This approach enhances our understanding of contemporary patterns and processes because, instead of focusing on one set of scales or another, analysis can reveal relations among multiple scales. This approach also moves us beyond the historical periodization posited in the rescaling literature. Instead of providing descriptions of contemporary change in which the dominant national is giving way to a messier configuration of global and local scales, the idea of scales-as-dimensions offers a way of analysing scalar relations more generally. This can then be used in both contemporary and historical analysis. The rescaling argument treats the national largely as residual, which serves to draw our attention away from complex scalar practices without offering a truly different way of thinking about scalar relations.

Key words: globalization, national, neoliberalism, rescaling, scale.

I Introduction: decline of the national?

A notable feature of contemporary scholarship is a marked turn away from the 'national' as a significant scale in the present-day world. Once considered the dominant organizing principle for social life, attention is now focused more on local, regional and global scales of interaction. A central argument is that national governance is being 'rescaled' to global and regional levels, such that the national is largely residual. Whether the

central cause of change is seen to be transnational production, trade and communication or the logics of capital and neoliberal statecraft, many commentators argue that today's governance evades and undermines the national state. According to Held and McGrew (2003: 39), 'the locus of effective power can no longer be assumed to be simply national governments ... Some of the most fundamental forces and processes which determine the nature of life-chances are now

beyond the reach and control of individual nation-states.' Focusing more on complex scalar relations, Brenner and colleagues (2003: 11) state that 'the primacy of nationally scaled forms of state regulation is being destabilized ... and new forms of political mobilization, conflict, and struggle are crystallizing that cross cut, bypass, or transcend inherited geographies of the national state'. Authors such as these are quick to point out that their contributions do not signal a wholesale end to the nation state or the national, yet they then give little focused attention to the national, instead studying everything from local governments and regional innovation clusters to macroregions and world city networks. The overall message is that a relatively contained and powerful national state, acting in a system of other such states, is no longer the proper way of conceptualizing political power, territoriality or scalar dynamics. In this way, these empirical, historical arguments draw our attention away from the national as a significant scale.

The main argument of this paper, however, is that to understand and explain political economic patterns and processes we need to move beyond this rescaling argument. Instead of helping elucidate complex processes, the idea of rescaling draws our attention away from complicated scalar practices – those that do not fit the new model become harder to see – without offering a truly different way of thinking about scalar relations. The rescaling thesis implies a move from one level to multiple others, and tends to cast this move in a fairly simple, historical periodization (Goodwin and Painter, 1996; O'Neill, 1997; Cox, 2002; for a related critique of approaches to neoliberalism more broadly, see Larner, 2003). One problem with this is that it creates an either/or situation (much as the globalization debate did regarding the state): if rescaling is happening then the national is no longer so important, whereas if the national can be shown to still be important then rescaling must not really be

happening or is only limited in its effect. This either/or approach is inadequate analytically in that it forces one to choose between positions rather than to examine the actual processes at work in any particular case. The sides become schema through which to view the world, rather than descriptions of actually existing situations. These limits become evident when we acknowledge that, empirically, the national is still important to contemporary problems and how people understand them, even when those problems are also regional or global. Issues such as economic competitiveness, levels of unemployment and international migration all have national dimensions as well as local or global ones, and are often seen through particularly national lenses (think, for example, of discussion of 'offshoring'). That the national continues to be salient has actually become much more apparent over the past several years, particularly in regards to the 'new imperialism' of US foreign policy, which can be seen as a geopolitical extension of, rather than challenge to, neoliberal globalization (Harvey, 2003; Roberts *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, events of the past few years can actually help to reformulate our understanding of the national, as US assertions of (national) power are actually ways for the US government to imbricate itself in myriad local, regional and global geographies around the world; the national is constituted not as a space apart, but as part and parcel with these multiscaled, geopolitical-economic processes.

This paper is motivated by the fact that I have found the rescaling argument to be quite *unhelpful* in my own research on changing economic and political relations in natural resource production, trade, and management. I found that the rescaling argument hindered my analysis in that it drew my attention away from the significant role of the national in encouraging foreign direct investment and trade, new forms of neoliberal governance, and conflict over environmental regulation. As I will show in more detail later in the paper, the national played an important

role both as a regulatory framework and an idea around which people built political strategies. Further, while my findings include complex scalar relations, I have not in any of my investigations found a shift from the national to a messier configuration of local-global scales. Therefore, were I to emphasize rescaling (i.e., shifts from the national to local-global scales of interaction), I would be promoting a profound misunderstanding of what causes political economic change in the situations I am analysing. This paper, then, grows out of my efforts to understand the limitations of the current literature on scale and the national, and to develop alternative approaches. How can we have scalar change and have a robust national? In other words, how can we have multiscale relations that include the national?

It is essential to acknowledge and analyse complex scalar relations – my argument is certainly not that nothing changes or that the national is the dominant spatial organizing principle for all political, economic and social life. This idea has been roundly criticized for over a decade by scholars such as Taylor and Agnew, who in separate but parallel arguments argue that we need to think beyond the idea of independent, sovereign nation states, each with a clear line between domestic and foreign affairs, and each existing as a container for a society and national economy (Agnew, 1994; Taylor, 1994; 1995; 1996; 2000; Agnew and Corbridge, 1995). While both Taylor and Agnew do have an empirical component to their arguments (i.e., contemporary global change calls into question our spatial assumptions about the system of territorial states) the point of their work, it seems, is not just to provide a periodization – such as that presented in the rescaling argument – in which the national once was dominant but is not any longer. Instead, it is more broadly to question simplistic geographical imaginations. They undermine the idea that the national was ever a unitary entity and container for all political, economic, social and even cultural processes and identities. These theoretical

developments definitely challenge the significance of the national, in that they question the spatial assumptions underpinning orthodox notions of the national. Yet it is also possible to use these developments as an opportunity for thinking anew about the national. We can now ask what the national might be if it is not the dominant scale containing myriad social processes. In what ways might the national be important, even if it is not seen as a container for society and economy, or as a unitary actor in foreign affairs? The challenge is to reintegrate the national into explanations of scalar relations while still taking into account theoretical challenges to simplistic spatial assumptions about the national as dominant. Analytically, the rescaling argument makes this difficult by positing a shift from one scalar regime to another. Instead, we need to decenter the national, yet do so in such a way that helps us understand its ongoing importance.

The alternative I propose treats the national as constitutively implicated in other scaled activities, such that distinctions between one scale and another are not so clear; the national is a dimension of political economic practice. While decentering the national, this also serves to highlight its relevance, as it is in multiscale interactions that the national gains its significance and gives significance to other scales and territorial formations. This idea of scales as dimensions of practice clearly resonates with more general discussion about ‘the production of scale’ over the past decade or more. The aim of this paper is not to develop entirely new insights about scale as a geographical concept, nor is it intended as a review of this literature (for recent reviews of and debates about the production/construction of scale, see Marston, 2000; Brenner, 2001; Marston and Smith, 2001; Herod and Wright, 2002; Howitt, 2003). Instead, I start from the now widely accepted idea that spatial scales should not be taken for granted as ontologically given, discrete objects, but should be questioned and examined as relational processes, and I apply

this specifically to our understanding of the national. Some of the scholars who have developed the idea of the production of scale are the same as those who downgrade the national by talking about a process of rescaling from the national to other scales (Swyngedouw, 1997a; 1997b; Brenner, 1998; 1999; for a critique, see Mansfield, 2001b). As an alternative that does not downgrade the national, I offer scales-as-dimensions as an analytical tool for thinking in relational terms about the significance of multiple scales simultaneously.

The next section of the paper discusses different perspectives that all de-emphasize the national by interpreting recent empirical changes to mean the national is less important now than in the past. The following section of the paper then highlights some recent attempts to bring the national back into scholarship on contemporary political economy, but shows this has been done largely by falling back on ideas about the national state as a container and unitary actor. The subsequent section develops the idea of the national as a relational dimension of multiscaled practices, and illustrates this with examples from my research on the political economy of fishing.

II De-emphasizing the national

This section of the paper discusses the trend in current scholarship to downplay the significance of the national in contemporary political economy, and discusses how this trend in the literature has come about. This trend exists across different bodies of scholarship, even as scholars in those areas offer quite different perspectives on the processes of present-day social change. I start with a short discussion of the 'globalization debate', which is about whether or not globalization is eroding the power of the state (presumed to be the national state). It is the structure of this debate that precludes the notion of complex, multiscalar relations that might include the national. The section then turns to scholarship on neoliberalism and the state, in which researchers argue that states are actually

quite central to the creation of economic globalization, which itself is only one among a variety of contemporary changes. It is here that scholars have developed the argument that state power is not being eroded but rather is being rescaled to both sub- and supranational levels, such that a stable national formation has given way to a messier multiscaled formation. These scholars offer important correctives to simplistic ideas about processes of political economic change, such as those presented within the globalization debate. In making a historical argument about scalar shifts, however, these scholars also tend to reproduce notions about scale that preclude the idea that complex, multiscalar relations might include the national. Thus, both the globalization debate and rescaling thesis contribute to the idea that the national is less important today than in the past.

I The globalization debate

In their summary of the globalization debate, Lechner and Boli (2004: 212) explain that a variety of factors associated with 'the rapidly integrating world ... have led many observers to ... predict the breakdown or irrelevance of states. ... Other observers caution that the death of state has been announced prematurely.' Held and McGrew, in a variety of publications, put political processes at the center of globalization and add a third position to this debate, as they try to chart a course between these polarized positions (Held *et al.*, 1999; Held, 2000; Held and McGrew, 2002; 2003). According to them, states still exist and play important roles, but globalization is increasingly causing power and authority to shift away from the territorially bounded nation state to larger regional and international forms of governance. Of particular importance are 'global politics' and 'global governance', which include a wide variety of inter- and nongovernmental organizations representing a diverse range of interests. As Held and McGrew (2002: 1) put it, there has been a 'shift from national

government to multilayered global governance' (see also Lechner and Boli, 2004: section VI).

Because this 'globalization debate' contributes to the notion that global and national scales are opposed to each other, the structure of the debate (not just the positions within it) is problematic for thinking through scalar relations and contemporary change. Authors such as Held and McGrew implicitly reduce scalar issues to a relatively simple question: how does the 'global' affect the 'national'? Asking the question in this way treats 'globalization' as an empirical object that can be identified and measured, and that, if it exists, will force the state to adapt or even decline. As such, this question gives the global scale ontological status as an object that has causal power and concrete effects. Moreover, within most of this literature, 'the state' is considered to be synonymous with 'the national'. To the extent that 'the global' affects 'the state', it affects 'the national' as well. For example, McGrew (2000: 140) writes that 'political globalization today is marked by a number of features [including]... the growth of new centres of authority above, below, and alongside the state.' Viewed from within this debate, if globalization exists, then the national is no longer of much importance.

It is possible to challenge the outlines of this 'globalization debate' on a number of grounds. Taylor (2000), for example, notes that Held and McGrew have managed to write about globalization in remarkably traditional statist ways, even as they suggest that the modern state system is being transformed by globalization. The main problem with conceptualizing change from within this debate is that it fails to place globalization itself in a larger context; treating globalization as cause of contemporary changes avoids investigating the political development of globalization. Empirically, it is clear that 'states still matter', but this need not lead to the skeptical argument that processes of globalization do not exist (Smith *et al.*, 1999: 9; see also Dijkink

and Knippenberg, 2001). One way in which states matter is that they mediate global processes, producing different national outcomes in everything from industrial competitiveness to welfare provisioning (Weiss, 1998; 2003a; Swank, 2002). In this vein, a crucial activity of the contemporary state is creation of both domestic and transnational market conditions, such that it becomes a 'competition state' (Cerny, 1999) or 'internationalized state' (Glassman, 1999). Hence, another way in which states matter is that they facilitate the very global processes that are claimed to undermine them (Panitch, 1996; Sassen, 1999; Cox, 2002; Cameron and Palan, 2004). This can be seen in everything from state-supported free trade agreements and foreign direct investment to welfare reform and deregulation. Thus, rather than suggesting the global as cause of changes in the state, these approaches emphasize the role of the state – including the national state – in the geohistorical development of globalization.

2 Neoliberal rescaling

In focusing on ways that states have actually been authors of their own restructuring, many scholars have usefully turned their analytical focus from globalization to neoliberalism, which is a philosophy, policy orientation and technique of governmentality that promotes free markets as the organizing principle for economics, politics and society (Larner, 2000; 2003; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Peck and Tickell, 2002). With neoliberal governance, the state role is not restricted to mediating global processes, but more fundamentally involves facilitating overall marketization and privatization. As one dimension of this, states restructure themselves based on the argument that 'big government' is an impediment to the free market. Such restructuring involves activities that are apparently 'global' (free trade agreements) and apparently 'domestic' (welfare reform), and, as such, the turn toward global political and economic institutions is just one outcome of this general turn toward neoliberalism. However,

quite significantly, proponents of neoliberalism do not just reduce state involvement in social and economic processes, but also create new roles. Neoliberalism entails both the destruction, or 'roll-back', of state functions through actions such as deregulation, and the creation, or 'roll-out', of new regulations focused on flexibility and economic competitiveness, and especially global competitiveness (Peck, 2001; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Peck and Tickell, 2002). On its own, roll-back neoliberalism leads to the *end of the state*, but roll-out neoliberalism indicates *restructuring of the state* around a suite of new state forms and strategies. It is in attempts to describe and understand processes of state restructuring that scholars have developed the rescaling argument, in the process shifting their attention away from the national.

The rescaling argument generally starts from the premise that until recently the world was fundamentally organized around the national scale such that the national state was the primary territorial unit that structured both domestic and international relations; but, in the contemporary era of neoliberal restructuring, state power has come unbundled from this territorial grounding (for recent reviews on rescaling, see Mansfield, 2001b; Peck, 2002; Sheppard, 2002; Kofman, 2003). Power is now being rescaled from the national to *both* subnational scales (e.g., urban areas) and supranational scales (e.g., free trade areas) (Brenner, 1998; Hudson, 2001; Jessop, 2002; Swyngedouw, 1997a; 1997b). National states, traditionally focused on national economic development and welfare provisioning, are replacing themselves with local and suprastate political organizations that are oriented toward economic competition (Peck, 2002). In their assessment of current scholarship on states, Brenner and colleagues (2003: 5) suggest that the 'political economy of scale' is 'pivotal', in that scholars '(1) call into question the taken-for-grantedness of national state space as the necessary arena for political life; (2) suggest that a relativization of scale is currently unfolding as subnational and

supranational levels of state space acquire increasing importance; and (3) analyze ongoing struggles to establish new scales as sites of regulatory activity under conditions of rapid geoeconomic change'. Thus, at the core of the rescaling argument is the idea that the national is no longer very important.

The rescaling argument is perhaps most developed by Jessop (2002), who theorizes political economic change in terms of the relationship between capital accumulation and its regulation. According to Jessop, changes from the 1970s forward were the result of a crisis in 'Atlantic Fordism', which was the system in which economic growth was driven by mass production and mass consumption. Dominant in western Europe and North America after the second world war, Fordism was sustained by a regulatory system Jessop calls the Keynesian Welfare National State, or KWNS, which was oriented toward national economies as functional wholes, and worked to reproduce capital accumulation by encouraging growth via a variety of social welfare programs that stimulated (national) consumption. However, by the 1970s, the KWNS was no longer able to contain capitalist crisis, and even contributed to it. Seeking alternative regulatory approaches to achieve sustained capital accumulation, by the 1980s a variety of states had turned to neoliberal alternatives, creating what Jessop calls the Schumpeterian Workfare Postnational Regime, or SWPR. (Jessop also identifies three other 'ideal-typical' strategies that can lead to the SWPR: neocorporatism, neostatism and neocommunitarianism.) *Schumpeterian workfarism* differs from *Keynesian welfarism* in its orientation to supply-side rather than demand-side policies: it focuses on innovation and competitiveness rather than full employment, on getting people to work rather than providing them welfare.

Central to Jessop's argument is that this shift involved completely reworking state organization and strategies, including reworking scalar relations away from the national. The move from *state* to *regime* entails a 'shift

from the primacy of state intervention ... to an emphasis on public-private partnerships and other self-organizing governance mechanisms' (Jessop, 2002: 248). In turn, this entails a move from the *national* state to a *postnational* order, which comprises a broad shift in power. Functions of the state are being moved to supranational, regional and/or local, and translocal (i.e., horizontally networked) scales. Jessop quite explicitly argues that this rescaling 'does not mean that the national state loses all importance: far from it. Indeed, it remains crucial as an institutional site and discursive framework for political struggles ... [and] it has a continuing role in managing the political linkages across different territorial scales' (2002: 212). Thus, the national state continues to exist as a site of struggle, but its role is now to support and steer relationships among the new institutions and scales that have taken power from it. In this way, even as Jessop describes roles for the national, he makes it seem secondary to regional and global scales, which are central to the 'postnational regime' to which he refers and which receive much more attention than does the national.

An interesting, parallel argument about rescaling is made by Cameron and Palan (2004). As they put it, 'the nation-state persists as an idea, but the content of that idea has fundamentally altered' (2004: 110). Rather than focusing on the empirical realities of globalization or neoliberalism, their point of entry is the *story* of globalization. Their central argument is that this story 'involves a subtle rewriting of the basic spatial imaginary of the state, and hence of the entire social field. This is not, however, the process conventionally associated with globalization – that of the scalar transcendence of the territorial nation-state and its replacement by a larger "global" domain. Rather, the pervasive adoption of the narratives of globalization is having the effect of altering the very meaning of spatiality within and across contemporary states' (2004: 7). They give central attention to dynamic interactions between *ideas* and

practices, arguing that people act based on their perception of reality more than on reality itself, and in doing so may bring into reality that which they thought already existed. For example, to the extent that corporate managers or state policy-makers believe that globalization is happening, they will then adjust their actions to adapt to this perceived reality (e.g., engage in transnational mergers or free trade agreements), which then reinforces the perception that globalization already exists.

According to Cameron and Palan, stories of globalization affect the state in ways that make the national scale less and less relevant. They focus on 'foundational myths' that act simultaneously as ideas and social facts, and they argue that globalization is replacing the nation as the foundational myth that structures social and political imaginaries (2004: 66). In other words, to the extent that people accept the story of globalization – they find it plausible and they act on it – this story is fundamentally reworking collective imaginaries of the spaces and scales of politics and society. Over the past two centuries, the nation state has been imagined as the basic unit of economy and society, with 'nation' and 'state' being co-constitutive. Today, however, the globalization narrative is fragmenting this into 'a multiplicity of spatial domains'. As such, 'the prevailing narratives of political action and engagement are changing, and they are changing in and through the production of the particular imagery of globalization' (2004: 7–8). In this way, Cameron and Palan make an argument that is congruent with the political economic concept of rescaling, but do so by acknowledging and analysing important cultural dimensions of the political economy of scale. In making this argument, they suggest not only that the state is no longer conceived as a unitary container for a national economy and national society, but also that the national itself – as concept, practice, institutional arrangement and reality – is less important. Thus, even though they treat both the global and the national as ideas (and not actually existing objects), they treat them as

ideas about objects, rather than as social relations. In this way they support the notion of shifts from one scalar regime to another, which precludes the possibility that the national may remain important even as ideas about globalization become prominent.

Scholars such as those discussed here are making an historical argument: the national state was dominant (as an empirical reality and idea of political and social space), but, in response to political economic changes and stories about such changes, the national has increasingly been replaced by more complex, overlapping scalar configurations of governance (which also exist as both empirical reality and structuring idea). In state-theoretical literature, then, it seems that the national is simply residual. To be absolutely clear, none of these authors are claiming that the national is completely irrelevant. For one, they all suggest that the national was dominant in the past, and thus deserves attention as a historical form. Further, they all suggest that the national state has been crucial in restructuring and rescaling itself. Finally, they also nod to the ongoing existence of the national, particularly as a facilitator and manager of the competition state. Yet notions such as the 'postnational regime' do shift our attention away from the national. Once the national is displaced as the central organizing principle, it no longer figures prominently in theoretical accounts of contemporary political economy.

III Reasserting, but not rethinking, the national

In response to the dominant tendency to de-emphasize the national, a variety of scholars have tried to bring the national back into their accounts of contemporary political economy. They give particular attention to national institutions and ways these mediate processes of globalization. Many of these scholars argue that it is national institutions that account for spatial variation in how processes of globalization impact particular places. While these perspectives raise important issues that challenge the general notion that the national is

less important, the value of these perspectives is limited because they do not rethink what the national might mean. In particular, they reassert the notion of the national as a container, such that the national either conflicts with other scales or interacts with them, but in either case is treated as a clearly defined object. This approach, therefore, tends to revert to fairly simple concepts of spatial variability and scalar relations.

Among geographers, Hudson (2001) is prominent in this area, as one theme of his work on capitalist production and its relationship to place is the importance of the *national* state for the continued viability of capitalism. In this sense his argument seems to support my general point about the national as a significant scale, but his argument is problematic in two ways. First, Hudson makes a general argument for the national by describing the importance of national states with their own national economy and civil society, that have absolute sovereignty over their territory, and that interact with other states. He notes that institutions of the national state create different national outcomes in response to changes in the world economy, and that states are involved in a constant process of crisis management, with crisis largely conceived as being internal to individual states. Unfortunately, this theoretical argument about the role of the state in capitalism rather uncritically reproduces traditional ideas about the national as the dominant scale of politics and as a container with fairly clear lines between foreign and domestic affairs. The national is treated as a fairly simple, clearly demarcated object that organizes political life.

Secondly, at the same time that he makes this theoretical argument about the national, Hudson also makes an empirical argument about rescaling and the role of the national state. He agrees with scholars cited above that the state is being rescaled to supra- and subnational scales, but, instead of arguing that states have rescaled themselves as a means to achieve neoliberal goals, he argues that rescaling is caused by external 'pressures on the

national state “from above” [globalization] and “from below [local regions]” (2001: 69). He also agrees with other scholars that there has been a shift away from direct interventionism on the part of the state toward a state role that entails enabling and facilitating markets, and that this resulted from general capitalist crisis in the 1970s, and in particular crisis caused by state involvement. What is different, however, is that he goes on to argue that the extent of rescaling should not be overstated, and that in fact it is the national state that has a new role as the enabling, competition state. In sum, the national state still exists, but its particular actions have changed. However, even as Hudson usefully tries to move beyond a simple rescaling argument, there are several problems with his approach. First, Hudson’s approach to rescaling, in which rescaling is caused by external pressures on the state, contradicts the main message of the restructuring literature, which is that globalization should be seen as the *outcome* of scalar processes. Hudson instead treats globalization (and regional uneven development) as the *explanation* for rescaling. Secondly, he also separates the rescaling process from neoliberal restructuring. Most scholars suggest that rescaling is one means to achieve the neoliberal goal of shifting state action toward competition and supply-side policies; in this way rescaling is an aspect of the competition state. Hudson argues exactly the opposite. He uses the existence of the neoliberal, competition state as evidence that the extent of rescaling has been overstated and that the national state is still the primary (though not only) political unit. Thus, while he usefully describes some ways in which the national state can facilitate neoliberalism, he does so in a way that reinforces a standard, container view of the state, and that treats scalar configurations as either/or propositions. Globalization and regional economic development may challenge the national, but have not yet caused it to disappear, and in fact the national state has redefined itself as the (national) neoliberal competition state. In this

way, Hudson has managed to theorize neoliberal restructuring in traditional terms that treat the national state as a container that clearly divides the foreign and the domestic.

Similar arguments about relevance of the national are made by scholars in comparative political economy. Comparative analysis among countries indicates that there are national varieties of capitalism, and, as Colin Hay (2000: 512) puts it, national variations show that ‘common pressures’ do not produce ‘common convergent tendencies’ among states (see also Vogel, 1996; Weiss, 1998; Smith *et al.*, 1999). To explain this spatial variation, these scholars give primary attention to national institutions and their role in shaping economic governance. The central claim is that globalization can enable as well as constrain state regulatory capacity, and national institutions mediate how globalization actually plays out in particular national situations (Weiss, 1999; 2003b; Swank, 2002). As Linda Weiss (2003a: 4) says, ‘one cannot deduce the impacts of global markets – whether constraining or enabling – because these are mediated by domestic institutions, which in turn shape the ways in which national authorities choose to deal with the challenges of openness’. Thus, the significance of these domestic institutions is not just that their existence counters the notion that globalization erodes states, but also that, through them, states can play critical roles in everything from fiscal policy to welfare provisioning. In many ways, this argument is consistent with the idea of the neoliberal competition state, in which states work to support economic activity. The difference is that this group of scholars counters the rescaling argument by giving primary attention to national institutions, and does so through empirical work on various national-level responses to globalization and how they produce different outcomes. Thus, by focusing on spatial diversity and national institutions, this body of literature seems to provide an alternative way of thinking about the national in the contemporary era of globalization and neoliberalism.

A limitation of this approach, however, is that it still treats globalization as an object, and one that is the ultimate causal agent; the narrative is one in which the global acts while the national responds. For example, Weiss' three central propositions are: '1. States have significantly more room to manoeuvre in the global political economy than globalization theory allows ... 2. States have room to move because globalization enables as well as constrains economic governance ... 3. In conditioning the way states seek to move in the room they have, the character of domestic institutions ... is decisive' (2003a: 26–27). In this formulation, globalization causes states to adapt and sets the conditions under which they do so; national institutions allow authorities to act, but only within these externally imposed conditions. Given that the message of this body of scholarship is that the national is very important, it seems ironic that this formulation still gives priority to the global. Further, in doing so, these scholars treat the global and the national as distinct realms. The global is the out-there realm of openness and convergence, while the national is the in-here realm where people react to openness and create spatial diversity. What this indicates, then, is that these writers have a traditional geographical imagination in which the national is a coherent unit that acts as the main organizing feature of geographical difference and that has clear insides and outsides. That the national scale is still treated as container is particularly clear when Weiss says we need to 'look more carefully at what is going on *inside* nation-states' (2003a: 4, emphasis in original). The whole notion that domestic institutions mediate global impacts implies that these national institutions form a narrow film between the global outside and the domestic inside. Further, in that these researchers focus on differences among nation states, the entire comparative approach treats the national as the dominant unit. The idea that significant variations might exist at other scales is not addressed.

Thus, this body of literature makes an important contribution in that it calls attention back to the national. We need not think in terms of shifts from one scale to another: the global and the national coexist. But the utility of this approach is limited because, by focusing on a mediating role for the national, these scholars support the idea that the global is the ultimate causal agent and reproduce a problematic container view of state territoriality. The national is treated as a distinct scalar object that can interact with other such scalar objects and that has clear boundaries between inside and outside. More useful would be to examine how a national regulatory focus might fundamentally contribute to global and regional processes, as well as how such a national focus articulates with neoliberal approaches. Sassen, for example, writes of 'denationalization', yet posits a multiscale approach to globalization that resonates with the idea of scalar dimensions, and also argues explicitly for 'the partial embeddedness of the global in the national' (2003: 4). In other words, global processes are often constituted in and through what we think of as the national. Thus, even without modifying their focus on national variation, scholars of comparative political economy could push their analysis further. Instead of ending on the argument that national institutions enable states to react to globalization in distinct ways, they could instead use this as evidence that as national (and other) authorities reproduce national institutions they simultaneously contribute to the production of globalization as a diverse set of processes. This simple move disrupts the narrative of global causality and begins to blur the lines between insides and outsides of states. In this way, it starts to challenge the idea of the national-as-container without denying the importance of the national more broadly. This shows that it is possible to talk about the 'national' in ways that do not reproduce the notion that national states are the main organizing feature of society, or that the national is an object that acts as a container.

IV Rethinking the national

Existing approaches to scale make clear that scale is important to sociospatial relations, and that scalar relations change over time. There is also empirical evidence that the national is still important in contemporary life, but how to conceptualize this remains unclear. It is difficult to reintegrate the national into analyses of scalar processes without reproducing overly simplistic views of the national as a clearly defined unit or as the dominant scale of politics. The approaches discussed thus far in this paper are of limited usefulness for understanding scalar aspects of sociospatial relations because they focus either on shifts from one dominant scale (or set of scales) to another over time, or on interactions among discrete scales. Scalar relations are actually much more complex than this. A more interesting question is to ask about the ways (i.e., through what processes and for what reasons) different scales are produced and given significance at any particular time and/or place. This encompasses shifts over time and interactions among scales, but it also allows us to capture the complexity of multiscale processes. This complexity is not captured in the idea of rescaling, but rather in the idea of scales as *dimensions* of particular events and processes. Other commentators have also referred to scale as dimension, but my use is somewhat different in that these authors are referring to ways that scale as a whole is one important dimension of sociospatiality, along with other dimensions such as space and place. As Howitt (2003: 142) recently put it, scale 'is almost meaningless as a stand-alone concept: it only matters in context – as a co-constituent of complex and dynamic geographical totalities'. While acknowledging the importance of distinguishing scale from other analytical concepts such as space, place and territoriality (Brenner, 2001), my goal in using the term 'dimension' is to show that multiple scales are intertwined and work together as relational processes.

The idea of treating scales as dimensions is implied within the larger scholarship on the production/construction of scale, which treats scale as process, not as an object; scale does not have ontological status outside of social relations. In taking this stance, many commentators implicitly refer to scalar dimensions when discussing various events and phenomena that can, and should, be understood as being simultaneously global, regional, national, local and even bodily (e.g., Smith, 1993; Swyngedouw, 1997b; Herod and Wright, 2002). From this analytical starting point, the national is not a level, arena or even orientation, but is a dimension of social practice and the production of space. Empirical analysis is then required to understand particular scalar relations, and such analysis may reveal situations in which the national is less important – but to elevate these situations to a general process erases the possibility of multidimensionality and ends up reasserting an either/or situation in which one scale or set of scales must be dominant. Rather than implying that one scalar regime must yield to another, we can identify ways that scales are intertwined, without implying that any particular scale is necessary in all situations. In this way, thinking about *scalar dimensions of practices*, rather than *practices occurring at different scales*, is an analytical tool that can yield new understanding.

Examples from my research on the political economy of fishing in the North Pacific Ocean make these abstract points more clear. The regional fishing industry of the US portion of the North Pacific is among the largest in the world, encompassing Alaska pollock (the largest food fishery in the world), a variety of salmon, king and snow crab, Pacific cod, halibut and a variety of other species of 'groundfish'. My research has focused mainly on the pollock fishery, which has gone through a series of political and economic changes over the past 40 years, including jurisdictional changes, rapid growth, global integration, neoliberal restructuring (i.e., privatization) and increasing environmental

regulation. In analysing these changes, I have found that my ability to understand and explain phenomena was hampered, rather than helped, by ideas not only about the decline of the state but also about scalar shifts from a dominant national to a messier configuration of local and global scales. Yet neither was I able to explain phenomena by resorting to ideas about a dominant national state that contained domestic processes or mediated globalization. These approaches all obscured as much as they revealed. Giving attention to the multidimensional scalar relations of particular events and practices, however, brought multiple aspects of these phenomena into focus at the same time, thus contributing to more complete and powerful explanations. I will briefly discuss three strands of this larger research project to illustrate how a dimensional approach to scale can incorporate the national in new ways.

First, fisheries development in this region in the 1970s–80s entailed both asserting the oceans as national space and integrating the fishery into global networks (Mansfield, 2001b; for a related story, see Mansfield, 2001a). Japanese firms dominated the North Pacific pollock fishery from the time they developed it, around 1960, through the 1970s. In 1976, as part of the worldwide process through which individual countries enclosed the coastal oceans as national economic territory, the USA extended jurisdiction over the oceans to 200 nautical miles. This unilateral declaration, along with that of the then Soviet Union, enclosed almost all Alaska pollock as a state resource, yet, despite this new legal control, there was no US pollock fishery because there was no US fishing or processing capacity for pollock. To be able to take true control, the US government initiated a fisheries development program, termed ‘Americanization’. In one initiative of this program, the government used a variety of federal laws to encourage nonequity ‘joint venture’ fishing, in which US fishers could sell their catch directly to Japanese processing vessels stationed within the 200-mile zone,

thus encouraging US fishers to enter the fishery. In another initiative, the government, again through laws and also direct negotiations with the Japanese government and fish firms, encouraged Japanese firms to build and run processing plants in coastal Alaska, thus building a US-based processing industry and providing markets for US fishers.

In this way, the federal government used ‘foreign’ activity as a means to develop a ‘domestic’ industry that was premised on ongoing ‘foreign’ investment and on ‘international’ trade that was often intrafirm. Scalar relations certainly changed, yet this is not effectively explained as the dominance of the global or as a rescaling from the national to the global-regional. Asserting, claiming and controlling the oceans as national space was clearly central. Neither is it about the national mediating the global. Creating and asserting the national simultaneously created and asserted the global. Nor is it about the national as a container. While the rhetoric was about creating a ‘national’ space that contained a ‘domestic’ industry, the actual process involved blurring the line between what is national, regional and global: these are all intertwined dimensions of enclosure of the oceans and fisheries development.

Secondly, neoliberal restructuring of the pollock fishery has centrally involved ongoing national regulation (Mansfield, 2004a; 2004b). In the 1998 *American Fisheries Act*, the federal government privatized the fishery by giving it to a small group of fishing and processing firms. The act created new ‘fishery cooperatives’ that receive a percentage of each year’s catch and allocate shares of that catch to their members; members can then lease their shares to other firms. The justification is that privatization provides market incentives for reducing capacity in the fishery, which raises profits and reduces pressures for overfishing or wasteful fishing. Analysis shows, however, that, despite the market justification for this program, it actually involves complex government intervention to make it work. The legislation itself contains a series of

highly detailed rules that regulate how pollock fishers and processors can participate in other fisheries (such as crab or cod). Additionally, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (the Council), which is the regional branch of the US National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), implemented the plan by creating additional rules and definitions that not only further regulate firms' activities in other fisheries, but also regulate formation and operation of fishery cooperatives. Strikingly, all these rules were designed to protect the competitive market context: markets could not exist without detailed regulations.

These findings are consistent with much scholarship on neoliberalism, which has identified a basic 'contradiction' in that neoliberalism does not entail deregulation so much as 'reregulation' (as discussed above, on roll-back versus roll-out neoliberalism). These findings are not, however, consistent with the related idea of rescaling away from the national. The regional Council does play a key role, but to focus entirely on regional governance ignores the importance of the *American Fisheries Act* itself, which is national, and misses a key dynamic of this privatization plan, which is that it is based on national, federal control of the fish resource, i.e., the entire privatization program is based on regulators determining the annual total allowable catch from which co-op shares are calculated. Again, emphasizing this national role does not require seeing the national as a container. Instead, national regulation is one dimension of neoliberal restructuring, along with, *inter alia*, decisions of individual vessel owners, actions of the regional Council, and changes in global markets that affect and are affected by business and regulatory decisions.

Thirdly, the national continues to play an important role in environmental regulation of these fisheries (Mansfield, 2003). A central environmental concern has been the possibility that the pollock fishery is having a negative effect on endangered Steller sea lions, which not only live in the areas in which fishing is

conducted but also eat pollock. The Steller sea lion case has been quite controversial, and opposing groups frame their analysis of the underlying problem in scalar terms. NMFS, which under the national *Endangered Species Act* is required to create a protection plan for the sea lion, largely made the issue a local one in which localized interactions between fishers and sea lions are the problem, and thus solutions should be local as well. Environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including Greenpeace, American Oceans Campaign and the Sierra Club, concur with this explanation, but have tried to make the issue national by emphasizing problems with the entire fishery management regime, which spatially is coextensive with the 200-mile zone and the scale of national control. The fishing industry has contested the entire fishing hypothesis, arguing instead that the problem is macroregional climate change that extends beyond the borders of the USA and, therefore, is beyond the scope of regulators. These debates have played out in both federal courts and the US Congress. Environmental NGOs challenged NMFS' strategy in a series of federal lawsuits between 1998 and 2003, winning several times as the courts forced NMFS to expand their analyses and plans to encompass the wider fishery management regime. In Congress, Alaska Senator Ted Stevens, a strong fishing industry supporter, used federal legislation to block or delay court orders, and to appropriate over \$80 million for research into alternative reasons why the Steller sea lion is endangered, with an emphasis on climate research.

The Steller sea lion case shows that, despite global integration and neoliberal privatization in the pollock fishery, environmental protection is still regulated mainly through national laws and enforced by national courts, while challenges, too, are promulgated through national channels. Global actors (the NGOs) worked with national laws and through national courts to force a national agency to change how it regulates a regional

fishery to protect a regional endangered species that falls under national jurisdiction; at the same time, regional fishers and their national representatives used national laws to promote macroregional explanations for a regional problem. This case provides no evidence that the national is eroded or less important now than in the past – indeed it may suggest the opposite. Yet the national is not a container: global and regional actors work through the national, while national laws simultaneously assert regional, national and macroregional spaces. Analytically it does not make sense to separate these into different practices happening at conflicting scales. Instead, these are all different scalar dimensions of how environmental regulation has been practiced.

V Conclusions

The new orthodoxy has proclaimed that the national has become less important as a result of neoliberalism and globalization. Proponents of global transformations argue that the global has replaced the national as the dominant scale of political and economic organization, while scholars focusing on neoliberal restructuring argue that governance has been rescaled from the national to global and local-regional scales. In response, a variety of scholars have attempted to reassert the importance of the national; while sympathetic to these efforts, the approach offered here differs from this work in that such scholars tend to reify the national-as-object. An alternative is to think about the national as one dimension of political economic (and other) practices.

The central argument of this paper, then, is that, while we need to avoid thinking of the national simply as a unitary container that has clear insides and outsides, we need to move beyond rescaling by reintegrating the national as a dimension of scalar process. This is important for several reasons. Most obviously, it enhances our understanding of the contemporary world, and in particular processes of neoliberalization. Although it is

important to acknowledge and analyse changes in scalar relations, doing so by downplaying the national has the result of hiding important dimensions of political economic change. As examples from North Pacific fisheries illustrated, the national continues to have importance in ways that are occluded in discussions of rescaling. The idea of rescaling, then, leads to partial explanations that lead us to misplace our efforts, both analytically and practically. An analytical approach to scales-as-dimensions, however, makes multiple aspects of phenomena visible simultaneously, which contributes to more in-depth understanding and stronger explanation. We no longer need to downplay one scalar dimension in favor of others, and we can incorporate the national back into accounts of neoliberalism and broader political economic change.

Another way in which the notion of complex scalar dimensions is important is that it allows us to think about the past as well as the present. The rescaling argument, while theoretically sophisticated, is ultimately an empirical argument about the ways that today is different than the past. A stable scalar arrangement in which the national was dominant has given way to a messy scalar arrangement in which local and global scales are dominant (and presumably this will give way to some other dominant formation). Thinking about scalar dimensions, on the other hand, moves us beyond a historical periodization by offering a way of thinking differently about scalar relations more generally. From this new perspective, we are not only able to understand contemporary processes but also to reinterpret the past. Instead of treating the national as the dominant scale until recently, we can ask about how the national has long been produced in concert with other scales: the national as a particular dimension along with more local and more global scales. This is not to say that the national (or any scale) has always existed and will always exist. Not only does this ignore the insight that scales are social relations – not

ontologically prior objects given in nature – but, empirically, we know that there was no ‘national’ 500 years ago, and that what we mean by the national has changed significantly over the centuries, even during the period in which the national was supposedly dominant. This itself indicates that scales are always produced in complex interrelation with, and as aspects of, other scales, and this is true even when those other scales might be less visible. It is important not to confuse that which is less visible with that which is less important. It is in these ways that thinking in terms of multidimensional scalar relations, rather than in terms of shifts from one scalar regime to another, is useful for analysing sociospatial dynamics, both contemporary and historical. If contemporary change has led to new insights about scalar dynamics, the production of space, and political economic territoriality, then we should use these insights to interrogate the national anew, rather than ignore it in favor of other, seemingly more exciting, scalar arrangements.

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