7. Front-staging Nonhumans: Publicity as a Constraint on the Political Activity of Things

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Over the last years, a sizeable publicity machine has been set up by governments, energy companies, and environmental organizations to promote reductions in domestic energy consumption as a way for people to help "combat global warming."[1] These initiatives have been criticized on various grounds, not in the least because of the lack of credibility of their hyperbolic claims such as the assurance that fixing energy-efficient lightbulbs or routinely unplugging one's mobile telephone charger "helps repair the planet"[2]—claims that for a while were endlessly repeated on billboards, in the press, and so on, in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Perhaps most important, social critics have charged these media campaigns with trivializing the ideals of citizenship and public participation. Thus it has been pointed out that because of their focus on basic household interventions, as a way of making it "feasible" to do one's share for the climate, these environmental campaigns in effect redefine civic involvement as an atomized, isolated, and individualistic activity. They are then seen as "privatizing" citizenship to the point that effective intervention on the part of the public actually becomes less rather than more feasible (for a discussion, see Clarke et al. 2007). Interestingly, however, publicity campaigns seeking to "green" the home are equally

vulnerable to almost the opposite criticism, namely, to the charge that they promote the invasion of private places by public authorities and thus amount to a "de-privatization" of the home. There is certainly no lack of concrete examples to support such a claim, such as the "DIY Repairs" communications initiative of the mayor of London, launched in June 2007, which offers free house visits by a "green homes concierge service" to provide practical advice on how to make your home more energy-efficient, and yes, to help "save the planet."[3] Around the same time, the department store M&S announced that its textiles will soon carry a new label: "Think Climate—Wash 30 C."[4] Considering the ubiquity of such attempts to insert environmental considerations into the fabric of everyday life, it certainly seems important to be able to draw on critical repertoires that allow us to question the intrusion of public authorities into intimate places. However, it seems equally important that such campaigns can be seen to *problematize* the understanding of citizenship and the distinction between the public and the private domain on which such critical repertoires tend to rely.

Projects that define the home as a site where people can do their bit for the climate can be said to challenge certain classic assumptions regarding the proper locations and formats for public involvement in politics. As Andrew Dobson and Derek Bell (2006 [1]) have pointed out, contemporary practices of environmental citizenship invite consideration of the special affordances of practices that are traditionally defined as private for engagement with public affairs. Thus they make it clear that one of the defining features of environmentalism is that the sphere of "the reproduction of everyday life" here comes to the fore as an important setting for citizenly action. For this reason, environmental practices can seem to scramble the neat geometry that provided the scaffolding for classic republican conceptions of citizenship, as in the work of Aristotle and Rousseau. The republican tradition firmly anchored civic action on one

side of the divides between the public and the private domain, between matters of general concern and mere particularities, and between the lofty questions of the common good to which the leisurely classes dedicate themselves and the mundane troubles and worries that keep working men and women busy. These distinctions can easily start shifting around when considering environmental practices, and more specifically, the connections that climate change campaigns establish between this global issue and domestic energy practices. Moreover, such campaigns could be said to actively contribute to the production of confusion regarding the distinction between the public and the private realms. Thus it is possible to understand green-the-home campaigns like that of the mayor of London as an attempt to actively transform the intimate sphere of the household into a very public place indeed, and this not only in the sense that the home in these campaigns becomes subject to extensive attention from public entities like governments, news media, and their audiences. As mentioned, domestic practices here also come to be defined in terms of their impact on common goods like the global climate and the planet, and as private practices are thus evaluated in terms of their public effects, the former could be said to acquire a public aspect themselves.

It may obviously be necessary to take such unsettling effects of environmental practices on established political distinctions into account when seeking to evaluate these practices. In this respect, green-the-home campaigns draw attention to yet another feature of environmental practices that may also deserve consideration: in these campaigns, *material things* are placed in the forefront as crucial tools or props for the performance of public involvement in issues. Mobile phone chargers, thermostats, lightbulbs, and water cookers are here presented as so many "technologies of citizenship" (Rose 1999) that may equip individuals to practically intervene in, or at

least relate to, global public affairs. These campaigns thus attribute special affordances to domestic technologies in terms of their ability to help bridge the divide between people "in here," in the home, and issues "out there." However, though it thus seems clear that the role of domestic technologies in the performance of environmental citizenship deserves appreciation, it is far from self-evident how we should conceptualize their role as mediators of public involvement in issues. The reasons for this should become clearer later, but it has to do with the exclusion of material things from civic practices in classic conceptions of citizenship alluded to earlier. According to the republican tradition, material practices clearly belong in the private, noncivic domain. Just as important, an instrumentalist explanation of the role of things in politics, which would straightforwardly define domestic technologies as neutral tools for problem solving, that is, for alleviating the causes of climate change, is not satisfactory for a number of reasons. Moreover, postinstrumentalist frameworks that have been developed in recent decades to account for the role of technology in politics are equally difficult to apply to this case. As I will discuss in this chapter, post-Foucauldian studies of the politics of technology have importantly drawn attention to the capacity of objects to mediate political relations, but in doing so they suggested that this capacity is predicated on their "clandestinity," that is to say, on the circumstance that technologies are *not* usually recognized as political agents. This requirement, however, clearly is not met in the case of publicity campaigns to green the home, in which domestic technologies feature as major protagonists on billboards, in the press, and so on. In this chapter, I therefore turn to the work of the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey to explore how to conceptualize the relation between publicity media, material practices, and public involvement in politics. In particular Dewey's concept of the public provides a crucial conceptual resource for understanding how material

things may acquire the capacity to mediate people's involvement in political affairs under conditions of publicity. Moreover, such a detour via the work of this classic pragmatist can also help to make clear how post-Foucauldian studies of technology contribute to the understanding of public involvement in politics.

Household Devices as Technologies of Citizenship?

Media campaigns that focus on doable interventions in the home can partly be understood as a particular solution to the *problem* that citizen involvement in climate change presents. Thus the literature on the public understanding of climate change has put much emphasis on the obstacles there are to the effective public communication of this issue such as its scientific complexity and theoretical abstractness. These features have been widely understood as placing climate change at a great, perhaps unbridgeable distance from people's everyday concerns (Trumbo 1995; Weber 2006). Partly in response to this problem, several authors have pointed at the capacity of visual media to lift complex environmental affairs out of the domain of abstract scientific calculation and to transpose them into the realm of human experience (Allan [2], Adams, and Carter 1999; Jasanoff 2001 [3]). Resisting rationalist discourses that would exclude aesthetic and affective modes of concern from the "proper" registers of citizenship, these authors write affirmatively about the affordances of media like television, newspapers, and the Internet for the cultivation of environmental citizenship. Thus Szerszynski and Toogood (1999) have pointed at the opportunity that visual media provide for expanding the repertoire of civic concern with environmental problems to include sensory and emotive forms of sensibility, which are closer to lived experience. The focus on domestic practices as sites of environmental involvement can

be understood in the light of further elaborations or radicalizations of such claims. Phil Macnaghten has argued that visual imagery of natural disasters, though appealing to the emotions, ultimately fail to inspire sustainable forms of environmental concern in people. Though such natural events may be within the realm of human experience, they too are distant from everyday life, and they do not create room for personal agency vis-à-vis environmental problems. Claiming that concern about environmental problems begins with *personal* experience, Macnaghten (2003, 80–81) has concluded that environmental publicity campaigns should "start from people's concern for themselves, their families and localities as points of connection for the 'wider' global environmental issues." Moreover, in his account, such an approach should involve a focus on feasible interventions: "people are seeking credible solutions, 'in bite sized chunks,' where the material effects of individual action become visible and enduring" (81). It seems no exaggeration to say that organizers of recent climate change campaigns that focus on the home have at least in some respects heeded this call. Thus the aim of the "DIY Repairs" campaign of the mayor of London "is to raise awareness of climate change in a positive 'can do' sense," and the organization has justified this orientation in reference to survey findings that Londoners are most likely to be willing to do something for the environment if this does not require much effort.[5]

A particular understanding of the challenge that environmental issues present for everyday people then seems to be involved in efforts to define the household as a site for the performance of "climate citizenship." However, the preceding sociological accounts of this challenge do not tell us very much about the role of material entities like lightbulbs and phone chargers in this regard. They situate citizenship somewhere between "phenomenology" and "agency," between the human experience of environmental problems and the practical opportunity to act on these problems. As

Macnaghten suggests, by redefining environmental citizenship in terms of practical interventions in the life world, citizenly action is displaced onto the plane of physical practice, where interventions have "material effects." However, in the case of climate change, the notion of material or physical action on environmental problems cannot be understood in any straightforward sense. With respect to this issue, it is highly problematic to attribute to individual interventions "direct material effects" that are "visible" and "enduring," to use the terms in which Macnaghten characterized "credible" forms of environmental citizenship. Climate change campaigns that promote energy saving in the home do involve attempts to make such effects more tangible, for instance, by providing calculations of the number of tons of CO_2 in emission reductions that would be accomplished if a certain percentage of Londoners would "turn the thermostat down one degree." But the effects this would have on climate change generally remain shrouded in silence. Still, it seems a mistake to conclude from this that the project of establishing material or physical connections with the issue of climate change is only marginally relevant to the campaigns that focus on greening the home. It precisely seems to be one of the distinctive affordances of household devices, in the context of climate change, that they somehow enable people to "relate" to the issue via material and physical linkages, that is, via the technologies that connect them with energy infrastructures. However, it seems difficult to account for this if we understand the recent focus on the home as a site for civic involvement in climate change as principally an attempt to bridge the *phenomenological* gap between citizens and the environment.

The significance of domestic technologies, as material or physical objects, does become clearer when we consider the recent turn in climate change campaigns to the domestic setting in a broader political and economic context. Thus climate change today

serves as a major justification for large-scale projects of regulatory, financial, and industrial restructuring that are to facilitate the transition to a "green energy economy." In this context, the home has been singled out as a major location in which this transition is to be undertaken. Thus around the same time that energy companies and governmental bodies launched climate change awareness campaigns centered on the home, the new U.K. prime minister, Gordon Brown, announced that the building of carbon-neutral homes would be a central policy objective of his government.[6] In this context, publicity campaigns that articulate the home as a site for civic involvement in climate change can be understood as part of the wider project of "preparing the ground" for a new political-economic regime organized around sustainable energy. More particularly, they can be understood as helping to facilitate the emergence of the "green energy consumer," a subject for which there is an obvious need in the low-carbon economy of the future. Importantly, Elisabeth Shove could argue only a few years ago that the "energy user" did not really exist as such, as few people approached domestic practices in terms of the consumption of energy involved in them, and most did not pay much attention to their electricity and gas bills (Shove 2003). From this perspective, publicity around the "simple steps" that can be taken in the home "to help save energy, and the environment" can be understood as an effort to articulate situations in everyday life where (sustainable) energy consumption takes place and where, accordingly, people may adopt and cultivate a new identity as (green) energy consumers. Domestic technologies like energy-efficient lightbulbs and mobile phone chargers may then be understood as devices that can help to make energy consumption "legible" as part of daily life, providing the means with which the "new" activity of sustainable energy consumption can be performed. These devices then enable people to undertake, simply by installing or unplugging them, their own personal transition to

becoming active and responsible subjects under the new sustainable energy regime (Rose 1999; Shove 2007).

Such a widening of perspective brings into view close continuities between environmental awareness campaigns and processes of the material organization of social life. Among others, it suggests that household technologies can be understood as material "extensions" of technologies of publicity. With the aid of publicity media, these devices can be repurposed as civic technologies that practically enable people to adopt the identity of "low-carbon" citizenship. But an approach that focuses on the role of "technologies of citizenship" in the management of political economic regime change also has important limitations insofar as it favors a reductive account of civic involvement in climate change.

Thus such an approach defines citizens as subjects that principally exist in relation to the state, or at least to a political economic regime of "green" governmentality, rather than in relation to issues. That is also to say, the relations that people may seek to establish with an environmental problem like climate change, via the home, here appear as essentially mediated by political economic regimes. Indeed, this issue here seems to matter only to the extent that it is mobilized as a relevant "framing" in political and economic discourses on the transition to the low-carbon economy. Thus consideration of the transition to a green political economy may help us appreciate the significance of material practices for projects of civic involvement in climate change, but it leaves unclear how material connections might mediate people's involvement *in this issue.*

Some authors have sought to develop more constructive accounts of issues as objects of public involvement and the importance of publicity media in this regard. Thus Andrew Barry has argued that the mediatization of environmental issues, as, for

instance, air pollution in west London, presents an opportunity for inventive forms of civic engagement. He has pointed out that public reporting, however much it may be geared to the stabilization of problems, solutions, and identities, enables third parties, such as activist groups, to use the media to open up these stable definitions for criticism (Barry 2005). Importantly, Barry has drawn attention to the fact that such practices of public contestation may themselves take the form of material practices, as in the case of roadblocks undertaken by activist groups in southern England in the late 1990s (Barry 2005). He describes how in situ protests in this case became media events and, under these conditions, the protestors could make use of the material setting (road construction sites surrounded by English landscape) as an instrument for the articulation of environmental concerns. In a review of Barry's work, Michel Callon has further elaborated this point by suggesting that the articulation of nonhuman entities in publicity media, like air quality, presents an important enabling condition for public debate about environmental issues (Callon 2004). In the view of Barry and Callon, then, the publicization of physical and material entities in the media should not only be understood in terms of institutional efforts to "govern," though this is certainly an important aspect of it. It also presents a condition of possibility for public involvement in issues to the extent that the publicization of entities enables people to relate to them in their capacity as members of the "public." Barry and Callon thus open up a constructive approach to the mediatization of material practices in the context of environmental politics. However, it is also striking that in conceptualizing public involvement, Callon and Barry principally use discursive metaphors, characterizing it in terms of debate and contestation. In this respect, their studies cannot tell us to what extent material practices can themselves be understood as forms of public involvement in issues.

From Clandestinity to Publicity: A "Coming Out" for the Politics of Technology

That it is difficult to account for material practices as sites of public involvement in issues may have to do with a broader conceptual problem. It may have to do with the fact that in recent social and political theory, the relations between politics and material practice have been understood in a way that *excludes* consideration of publicity. Under the influence of Michel Foucault, sociologists have from the late 1980s onward turned their attention to the affordances of material arrangements and, in particular, technologies for the pursuit of political projects (Winner 1986; Latour 1992). An important assumption of this line of work has been that the success of material politics partly depends on a circumstance that is almost the opposite of publicization: the fact that things are not generally recognized as significant "agents" of politics. Thus Langdon Winner's seminal text on "the politics of technology" focused on a relatively unassuming aspect of the built environment, traffic bridges, which were constructed in the 1930s on Long Island, where they prevented buses, and thereby black people, from visiting the peninsula. In Winner's account, the fact that few people would suspect bridges of pursuing a "racist" politics comes to the fore as an important precondition for the production of political effects by material means. And subsequent work in the sociology of technology, as that of Bruno Latour (1992) on speed bumps, has equally suggested that the ability of technologies and material artifacts to intervene "politically" in the world depends on their relative unobtrusiveness, on their clandestine status, as active components of social and political arrangements.[7] This assumption is also present in studies of the role of material entities in the mediation of *civic* relations, and more particularly, of energy technologies as devices of citizenship. Madeleine Akrich has

suggested that the installation of electricity meters in homes in Côte d'Ivoire in the 1980s should be understood as an attempt to foster citizenship. As the government of Côte d'Ivoire had few resources at its disposal for involving people as citizens in the state, the national electricity grid became an important means for implicating people in the political order. Thus, in the very process in which people were enlisted as consumers of electricity, Akrich writes, they were also enrolled as subjects of a nation-state in the making (Akrich 1992). Thus, in Akrich's study, energy technology acquires an important role as a technology of citizenship in a context in which publicity media are absent.

This preoccupation, in recent literature on the politics of technology, with the clandestine production of political effects may help to clarify why it is difficult to account for the forms it takes under conditions of publicity. Authors like Winner, Latour, and Akrich have done crucial work in elucidating how material practices may serve as sites for political intervention, but their studies exclude consideration of the role of publicity in this respect. As they conceive of material politics as a form of subpolitics that plays itself out below the threshold of public perception, their approaches do not help to make it clear how to conceive of the role of publicity in this context. One could say that the materialization of politics, in work on the politics of technology, coincides with its evasion from sites of publicity, its *depublicization.* A related problem with the account of the politics of technology as subpolitics, in this regard, is that it does not consider material politics in relation to *democracy*; rather, this line of work continues to feed suspicions that a politics pursued by material means presents a non-, post-, or even antidemocratic form of politics as it is clearly out of line with familiar understandings of democratic politics as involving collective processes of will formation, institutional evaluation, and public debate. Importantly, attempts to

address such suspicions in proposals for the "democratization" of the politics of technology do not necessarily dislodge the association of material politics with clandestine, not quite kosher, forms of intervention. This is because such proposals have mostly taken the form of procedural designs for events of "stakeholder participation" and "public debate" concerning technology, and as such they suggest that democratization of the politics of technology requires its displacement away from material practices to settings of discursive engagement (Marres 2005; de Vries 2007). In presenting discursive processes of negotiation and debate as the principal conditions for democracy, such proposals then leave the understanding of material politics itself to a large extent untouched. Interestingly, however, a number of authors have more recently begun to address questions of the place of materiality, and the nonhuman world more broadly, in democracy.

Sociologists, geographers, and political theorists have over the last years drawn attention to the fact that modern understandings of politics and democracy limit participation in it to human actors (Latour 1994 [4]; Mol 1999; Whatmore 2002; Bennett 2001). Interested in the potential gains of redressing this imbalance, these authors have explored the possibility of reconfiguring concepts of political community to include nonhuman entities. Perhaps most important, they have proposed the concept of "heterogeneous assemblages" as a way of taking into account that physical and material entities may figure as active elements in political configurations. In adopting concepts like this, these theorists could be said to undertake a "Gestalt switch" from a human-centered conception of community to the notion of configurations of human and nonhuman entities as a notable site where politics plays itself out. This shift has the potential to recast many of the questions of political theory (Latour 2004a; Mol 2002; Bennett 2001). It suspends the belief that nonhumans can be contained in essentially

passive categories like the "topics" of political debate and the "means" and "objects" of political action; that is, it presents a break with the instrumentalist assumption that insofar as politics is concerned, nonhuman entities can be principally characterized in terms of their susceptibility, or lack thereof, to manipulation by human actors, in their role of participants in debate, and decision and policy makers. Focusing on heterogeneous assemblages is, then, a way of recognizing that nonhuman entities are capable of actively making a difference to the organization of social, political, and economic arrangements. For this reason, these authors propose, they must be taken into account as active elements in these arrangements. Importantly, as this line of work is concerned with the "coming out" of nonhumans as significant members of social and political formations, it encourages us to consider how nonhumans are articulated as such in the realm of publicity media. However, this certainly does not mean that the association of material politics with subpolitics is ruptured in this line of work.

Thus some students of heterogeneous assemblages have expressed positive appreciation for the covert status that nonhumans enjoy in the world of politics. Thus Hinchliffe et al. (2005) have emphasized that the relative clandestinity of nonhumans in the political realm does not only signal their undesirable "marginalization" but has affordances as well. Perhaps most important, it opens up a space for situated involvements with these entities as singular beings. As nonhumans prove resistant to assimilation into preexisting definitions of either the subjects or the objects of policy, they must be engaged in their idiosyncrasy. The political affordances of clandestinity have also been stressed with respect to the role of physical entities in democratic politics. Thus, drawing on the work of Jacques Ranciere, Jane Bennett (2005) has argued that the location of nonhumans below the threshold of discourse enables them to interfere surprisingly in political force fields, an event that in her view is crucial to

democracy. Work on heterogeneous assemblages, then, does not necessarily dissolve the notion that the politics of nonhumans operates primarily on the subpolitical level. Indeed, it suggests that publicization of nonhuman entities may hamper rather than amplify their capacities to produce political effects. This position raises some difficult questions such as whether the commitment to recognize nonhumans as constitutive elements of social and political worlds does not require some kind of commitment to publicity as one of the principal instruments to bring such recognition about; that is, one can ask whether a positive appreciation of heterogeneous polities, on theoretical grounds, does or should not imply an appreciation of the practical means by which the "coming out" of heterogeneous assemblages can be realized, that is, publicity media?[8]

However this may be, other work in this area *has* made the public articulation of assemblages its explicit concern. Thus, in work that has close affinities with that of Barry and Callon discussed earlier, Bruno Latour has proposed the notion of "matter of concern" to describe the emergence of issues in which human and nonhuman entities prove to be intimately entangled (Latour 2004b). Drawing on the example of the Columbus space shuttle disaster in 2003, Latour shows how in this event a tangled "object" was articulated, with the aid of live media, which included an impressively wide range of elements, from insurance companies to the gods that live in the heavens. His account of this process of public articulation emphasizes that as these divergent but entangled elements came into public view, a multiplicity of issues became subject to scrutiny all at once: the scientific methods of monitoring spacecrafts during flight, the economic question of the costs and gains of the implementation of safety measures, the moral issue of whether individuals should be held responsible for the accident, and the religious concern of how one relates to the gods in the case of human deaths. Importantly, this means that matters of public concern in Latour's account are no pure

entities that would fit one rather than another concept of the common good but rather present messy bundles of things and questions of which it is still to be seen with which understanding of "morality" or "science" they could be made to comply. However, Latour's suggestion that the emergence of a matter of concern involves the simultaneous "activation" of scientific, economic, political, moral, and religious issues raises the question of what exactly is specific about the mode of entanglement he calls a matter of concern, and about our way of relating to it. Importantly, Latour highlights that our relation to these matters—whether it takes the form of attention, interest, or involvement—should be understood in terms of *attachment;* that is, to be concerned, in his view, is a matter of being noticeably entangled with entities that are at risk and that may well put one's mode of existence at risk. However, Latour's account of matters of concern does not sharply distinguish a mode of attachment that is characteristic of publics or citizens, as opposed to persons in their capacity of scientific, mortal, economic, or private beings.

In this way, Latour's notion of matters of concern, like other studies of the role of nonhumans in politics mentioned earlier, to an extent leaves undiscussed the specific features of heterogeneous assemblages as objects of publicity, and of public involvement. In other work, Latour does develop a conception of the public, which he derives from the political theory of the American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey (Latour 2004c). In Dewey's work, Latour finds an important precedent for a definition of the public as an attached being, whose concerns derive from the entanglements of everyday life. That is also to say, Latour turns to Dewey for an alternative to the republican conception of the public as consisting of actors who are detached from the concerns of everyday life and concern themselves with matters of general as opposed to particular concern. Dewey's political theory dissolves the notion of two distinct

domains, the public and the private, and indeed, in doing so, he directs attention to something that we can retrospectively recognize as "heterogeneous assemblages," as one of the key sites in which political relations are constituted. Dewey's work thus presents a crucial point of reference for those with an interest in developing a constructive account of the role of nonhuman entities in politics (Bennett 2005; Marres 2005; Stengers 2006; Dijstelbloem 2006). However, his political theory may also be a helpful guide in exploring the more specific question of how to distinguish "public involvement," as a mode of relating to heterogeneous assemblages, from other modes—a question that becomes crucial when we recognize that public involvement practices are performed *in media res* and not only in dedicated domains distinct from social life. Thus I would like to suggest here that Dewey's theory of the public can productively inform an account of material practices as sites of public involvement and of the importance of publicity media in this respect. Moreover, such a reading of Dewey may also help to make it clearer what the distinctive contribution of studies of heterogeneous assemblages to the study of public involvement in politics consists of.

John Dewey's Heterogeneous Public

Those with an interest in the roles of nonhumans in politics are certainly not the only ones to have turned to the political theory of John Dewey in recent years. A wide range of authors in contemporary political theory draw on his work for a variety of purposes: to expand and strengthen the deliberative conception of democracy as anchored in public debate (Festenstein 1997), to establish the importance of technological innovation as an occasion for public participation experiments (Keulartz et al. 2002), or to conceptualize minority politics as a practice grounded in experience and not doctrine

(Glaude 2007). However, recent readings of Dewey's political theory, and in particular of his theory of the public, in the light of work on the role of nonhumans in politics offer a distinctive interpretation. As they highlight that Dewey conceived of the "public" as constituted by materially and physically embedded actors, they break with an assumption shared by many interpreters of his work, namely, that to participate in a public is principally a matter of participating in discursive exchange (Marres 2007). As will become clearer later, such differences among interpretations can to a great extent be accounted for in terms of the different books, or even passages of books, on which different interpretations focus. Thus Dewey (1927) introduced his "heterogeneous public" in the first chapters of *The Public and Its Problems.* The book opens with the outline of a speculative history of the emergence of political formations, and befittingly, Dewey develops an account of the public as emerging from the ever-shifting relations between humans and nonhumans as part of this historical exposé. The public, Dewey argues here, can be defined as a particular type of distribution of the consequences of human action: "the public consists of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions, to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for" (15).

A lot is packed into this brief definition, with the noteworthy nonhumans hiding, for the moment, in the notion of the consequences of action that actors are harmfully, or at least disturbingly, affected by. But it seems most useful to begin picking Dewey's concept of the public apart by considering how it resists reduction to another familiar understanding of the public, even if it bears similarities to it. Thus Dewey's public can in some respects be understood as an elaboration of the liberal ideal that says that the interference of government in private affairs should be limited to those situations in which persons suffer as a consequence of the actions of third parties.

Dewey, one could say, transformed this regulative principle, designed to *limit* state involvement in "private matters," into a constructive principle that can account for the empirical process of the formation of publics—and that indeed *extends* the range and number of empirically existing publics in comparison to other definitions. Dewey does this by concentrating on the type of consequences that in his view call the particular figure of the public into existence. These are consequences that are (1) harmful or even "evil" (Dewey 1927, 17), (2) indirect, and (3) extensive and enduring. And in focusing on these effects, Dewey dismantles the particular opposition between the public and the private that is central to this liberal project of restricting "incursions" of the former into the latter. (That is also to say, Dewey was at least as much concerned with questioning liberal as republican concepts of the public.)

Thus, rather than presenting us with two domains, one in which we deal with personal matters and another in which we deal with common affairs, Dewey presents a world in which actions continuously produce actor groupings by way of their *effects,* some of which will go by the name of "public." Dewey singles out two critical features of such public-generating effects: he distinguishes first between consequences that are direct and can thus be controlled by those involved in their production and those that cannot, and second between consequences that are erratic and somehow can be accommodated as part of social life and those that produce enduring harm. Consequences that have the latter features generate publics. Dewey thus exhaustively defines the public in terms of a particular chain of effects, which can be differentiated from other such chains, but both of which proliferate across one and the same worlds. Thus, as he situates the public in effects and affects that are continuously produced as part of daily life, the notion that the public refers to a domain that exists apart from private worlds loses much of its sense. Moreover, Dewey is clear that the type of

consequences that produce publics can be expected to be generated everywhere all the time. He inferred from this that problems of democracy are in fact not likely to stem from a shortage of publics but rather from their radical *multiplication* and excess (126). Thus, far from limiting the breadth and scope of the public, in line with the classic liberal objective, Dewey radically extends them. Furthermore, Dewey could also be said not just to redefine the opposition between public and private but to replace it with a different one; that is, in some respects, it makes little sense to oppose Dewey's public to the "private." In Dewey's account, the event of "incursion," that is, when people experience harmful indirect effects, does not present a situation in which private actors are threatened by an external force. It rather transforms social actors who more or less "routinely" went about their daily lives into a public that must take it upon itself to organize into an external force (vis-à-vis the actions that must be intervened in, if harmful effects are to be addressed). Thus, rather than the intrusion of the public into the private, the central event of his account of the public appears to be the rupture of habitual ways of doing, which results in the formation of a public. In Dewey's account, the state of being harmfully affected by events beyond actors' control requires the formation of a collective agency and, more generally, the need to get involved in something like politics. Dewey's theory of the public could thus be said to replace the opposition between the private and public domain with the notion of a shift from working social routines to their disruption.

Importantly, Dewey's emphasis on the disruptive events in which publics come into existence also sets his account apart from other consequentialist approaches to morality and politics such as utilitarianism. Dewey *did* follow utilitarianism by concentrating on consequences, but he certainly did not subscribe to its conception of politics as principally concerned with the maximalization of "agreeable" consequences

of action and the prevention of disagreeable ones. In other work, Dewey expressed great appreciation for the fact that utilitarianism, by focusing on the consequences of action, was able to recognize the "empirical character" of morality and politics. But he was extremely critical of the utilitarianist notion that it is possible to *calculate* future consequences of action and also of the distinction between means and ends on which such a calculative approach is predicated (Dewey 1922); that is, Dewey rejected the utilitarianist definition of politics and morality as concerned with the determination of the proper means that will help to realize specifiable desired ends because he could not accept the instrumentalist's carving up of the world into means and ends that this implied. He criticized the role that the means-end distinction was made to play in politics and morality by utilitarianists because of the way in which it precluded recognition of the fact that things designated as "means" are likely to have consequences that are not included among its "ends." To approach such things as "mere means" to "certain ends only" for Dewey presented a disingenuous justification for excluding these consequences from consideration (222–27). (This is also to say, while Dewey called his own philosophy instrumentalism, it is clear that he meant something quite different than the utilitarian brand of "means-ism.") In *The Public and Its Problems,* this criticism of the notion of "mere means" also returns, when Dewey highlights the relevance for politics of the situation in which things that are designed to function as means of human action produce unanticipated effects. Indeed, it is in his discussion of this situation that Dewey comes to recognize the formative influence of nonhuman entities on the organization of publics. Thus, in specifying the conditions in which publics come about, Dewey directs attention to the tendency of technological means not only to produce consequences that cannot be classified among those that are desired but also to produce new types of consequences: "industry and invention in technology, for

example, create means which alter the modes of associated behavior and which radically change the quantity, character, and place of impact of their indirect consequences" (30).

Passages like this help to make clear how a definition of the public in terms of a particular type of consequence involves recognition of the role of nonhuman entities in the formation of publics. First, it highlights Dewey's conviction that it is unhelpful to define nonhuman entities as mere means in the political context. Technologies, substances, and objects play a crucial role in the formation of publics because they actively participate in the production of the consequences that call publics into existence. Second, it also shows that Dewey includes, or even privileges, among the consequences that produce publics material and physical effects that have to do with activities like manufacture, transport, and communication. Indeed, one of Dewey's aims in *The Public and Its Problems* is to direct attention to changes in "the material conditions of life" as a crucial occasion for the formation of publics (Dewey 1927, 44) and for the development of democratic societies more broadly. Thus, by defining the public in terms of adversely affected actors, Dewey suggests that we should look for a distinctively public mode of association not, in first instance, in features like shared membership in clubs and other social associations or in shared discourses. We should rather focus on the social fact of the joint implication of actors in the infrastructures, technological, natural, and otherwise, that sustain social life. In this respect, it is important to note that Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems* is for a large part concerned with problems of democracy in technological societies. By defining the public as he does, Dewey in effect breaks with the tendency in political theory to model the public on preindustrial communities of either the aristocratic or agricultural variety. Dewey does not, at least not initially, mold his public after a particular social community, be it

the community of notables (citizens of the polis) or the New England village (meeting in the town hall). He opens up the concept to the ever-shifting and complex interdependencies that are characteristic of industrial societies.

However, Dewey's emphasis on the material and physical connections by which publics, in his view, are held together does not entail a disregard for the importance of discourse. Interestingly, and it could make sense to call this Dewey's genius, he makes it clear that the "material public" conceptualized by him needs *more rather than less publicity* to sustain itself, compared with communities that are principally held together by discursive or social bonds. The notion of publics called into existence by material effects opens up the possibility that publics proliferate in the absence, or below the surface, of the usual support systems that these other publics require: a shared way of life, discourse, institutions, assembly spaces, publicity media. But in *The Public and Its Problems,* Dewey utterly refuses to view this possibility of what could perhaps be called the subpolitical mode of existence of the public in a positive light. Instead he argues that publics that configure around the harmful consequences of human action depend for their survival and their "effectivity" on publicity media. In Dewey's view, material publics are condemned to lead only an inchoate, obscure, staggering, and unstable existence, as long as they remain aloof from the symbolic circulations facilitated by publicity media, and this for at least two reasons. First, the consequences that call publics into existence are unlikely to be recognizable as such if they are not documented in information media. This is because these consequences, being indirect, are likely to transgress the boundaries of existing social groupings. In industrial societies, moreover, with their longer and more complex associative chains, these effects also tend to be extensive, connecting actors that are separated from one another by long distances. And they should be expected to contain an element of novelty. From this Dewey infers that

in the absence of attempts to trace indirect and harmful consequences with the aid of information technologies, the formation of a public is likely to go unobserved (Dewey 1927, 177). Second, it also follows that a public is unlikely to recognize itself as long as the effects that call it into being are not made *widely* observable. As Deweyian publics are not likely to map onto existing social groupings, they should be expected to consist of strangers who do not have at their disposal shared locations, vocabularies, and habits for the resolution of common problems (Warner 2002; Dobson and Bell 2006). From this Dewey concluded that if publics are to "recognize themselves," platforms for the wide and open-ended circulation of information concerning consequences must be in place. And more generally, he argued that an extensive and developed communication infrastructure is a central requirement for the organization of publics. It thus seems fair to say that he was not in the least seduced by the political possibilities inherent in an exclusively subpolitical form of organization for which his concept of material publics can seem to allow. Publicity in his view was an absolutely necessary condition for the endurance or sustainability of material publics, that is, if they were to develop capacities to "hold themselves," as well as for any possible effective action on the part of the public.

This brings us to a point at which Dewey's theory of the public at once touches most closely on questions in contemporary political theory regarding materiality and politics and begins to recede from them. On one hand, Dewey's concept of material publics—and, perhaps especially, his claim that they depend for their sustenance and effectivity on the publicization of the effects that call them into existence—seems to contain the seeds of answers to these questions. It suggests how a special combination of material effects, intimate affectedness, and mediatization comes together in the figure of the public. It distinguishes, within the wider field of subpolitical formations

involving things, humans, and environments, a particularly problematic type of entanglement of humans and nonhumans, simply and elegantly called "public," the articulation of which requires publicity. I will further discuss subsequently how these Deweyian concepts can help to address a number of conceptual complications regarding materiality and citizenship. However, on the other hand, it should also be noted that Dewey's claims about the dependency of material publics on publicity media present the point in *The Public and Its Problems* at which his argument starts to be less and less relevant to these complications. Indeed, it seems that, partly because of his preoccupation with the communicative dimension of the public, Dewey was unable to fully appreciate its heterogeneous character. Thus, once Dewey has established the importance of informational and communicative practices in this book, his account begins to move away from the idea that the public is constituted by human as well as nonhuman entities. Indeed, it subsequently becomes clear that Dewey in certain respects remains firmly committed to a humanist understanding of the public.[9] Thus, in *The Public and Its Problems*, he eventually comes to define social and political groupings in terms of the "conjoint activity of humans." Moreover, in doing so, he makes the demarcationist move of distinguishing human communities from nonhuman ones rather than continuing to explore their mutual imbrications. He places great emphasis on humans' exclusive mastery of language and symbolic communication. Dewey thus ultimately came to define political groupings in terms of associations among distinctively human beings, and the notion that nonhuman entities make a difference to the political formations they help to constitute disappears from his argument. That is also to say, Dewey at no point addresses the question whether the participation of nonhumans in the public has consequences for the forms that practices of publicity may take. However, in the context of the recent turn to material practices as sites of

citizenship, this seems to be one of the central questions raised by Dewey's theory of the public: once we recognize that publics are heterogeneously constituted, must not publicity itself—the process in which publics come to "recognize themselves" and somehow acquire the capacity to act—be rethought along materialist lines?

Before further discussing what inferences can be made from Dewey's political theory regarding this question, I want to briefly point out that in other work, Dewey did emphasize the special affordances of objects as mediators of normative engagement. Thus, in his *Theory of Valuation,* Dewey (1939) developed a moral theory that without much exaggeration can be characterized as object oriented. Here he proposes that values as well as the desires and interests that guide their articulation are first and foremost attached to objects and that they are most productively defined in terms of those objects. Interestingly, *Theory of Valuation* was published in the famous series edited by the Viennese logical positivists, *The Encyclopedia of Unified Science*, and its general argument can be understood in relation to the commitments of logical positivism. Thus one could say that Dewey, in this little book, presents an alternative to the positivist project of purifying the domain of factual truth and excluding from it anything "subjective," which logical positivists famously equated with thoughts and feelings that are merely "confused." In sharp contrast to this, Dewey proposed to include affectations, whether confused or not, in the objective realm. As he puts it elsewhere, "such things as lack and need, conflict and clash, desire and effort, loss and satisfaction [must be] referred to reality" (Dewey 1908, XX [5]). In *Theory of Valuation*, he specifies this general claim by suggesting that values, desires, and interests must be appreciated as aspects of "objective situations." These normativities in his view first and foremost connote "an active relation to the environment" (Dewey 1939, 16); they must be stated "in terms of the objects and events that give rise to [them]" (16); and the

tendency to define them as "something merely personal" must be resisted (16). For Dewey, the content of "values" is then best conceptualized in terms of the specific situational objects to which people attach them, and he suggests that processes of valuation should themselves be understood as processes in which the worth of this type of objects becomes clear. Thus, regarding interests, Dewey states, "When [they] are examined in their concrete makeup in relation to their place in some situation, it is plain that everything depends on the objects involved in them" (18). This is not the place to examine this moral theory in detail. But I hope that this brief sketch is enough to make it clear that Dewey's philosophy contains further conceptual elements to help account for, if not material, then at least object-oriented practices as sites of normative engagement. One last point, which Dewey derives from his object-oriented conception of values, seems especially relevant in this respect. This conception led him to express a strong commitment to *action* as the appropriate register for the expression of value. As he put it, "the measure of a value a person attaches to a thing is not what he *says* about its preciousness, but the care he devotes to obtaining and using the means without which it cannot be attained" (27).

Thus Dewey's object-oriented understanding of values led him to foreground practical efforts to obtain valued things as a privileged mode of moral action. He was critical, certainly not of moral discourses in general, but of a particular tendency in the expression of moral sentiment, one that ends up "merely wishing" that "things were different" (Dewey 1939, 15). The problem with wishing, Dewey points out elsewhere, is that it may all too easily entail a disregard of the issues people are confronted by, as people "tend to dislike what is unpleasant and so to sheer off from an adequate notice of that which is especially annoying" (Dewey 1933, XX [6]). For Dewey, valuation crucially involved an acceptance of the practical costs of engaging what he famously

called problematic situations, those involving "lack and need, conflict and clash, desire and effort, loss and satisfaction."

The Particularity of Material Politics

Dewey's philosophy is a productive one also in the sense that there can easily seem to be no end to the connections that can be explored between his various concepts. But I hope that the preceding goes some way toward making clear how his theory of the public can help to elucidate contemporary questions about the relations between materiality and publicity. It can do so not in the least because it opens up a perspective on the role of materiality in politics that breaks with the tendency, present in post-Foucauldian work on the subject, to understand this role as antithetical to publicity. Crucially, to adopt the Deweyian concept of "material publics" does not imply a rejection of the association of material politics with clandestinity, with the idea of a force at work below the surface of publicized reality; rather, Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems* proposes that among the many different types of human and nonhuman entanglements that exist, there is a *distinctive type*, simply and elegantly called public, of which the articulation requires publicity. This also means that Dewey's work raises a slightly different question than the one on which authors concerned with the politics of technology have focused. The latter were interested in the question whether assemblages of humans and nonhumans can be ascribed a politics *generally speaking* (Harbers 2005). By contrast, Dewey directs attention to a specific type of assemblage to describe how heterogeneous assemblages may become politically charged. Because of this, Dewey's theory of the public also opens up an alternative interpretation of the idea of subpolitics. The latter notion has been criticized for suggesting that politics happens

everywhere all the time, and it has therefore been said to contribute to the dismantling of the concept of politics (de Vries 2007). Such a critique gives rise to the temptation to confine the politics of technology to a particular institutional domain, where the specificity of politics can be safeguarded. In contrast to this, Dewey's concept of the public suggests that it is certainly not necessary to relegate politics to a separate domain, if the point is to acknowledge its specificity. Indeed, the project of restricting politics to an institutional domain is precisely the kind of classic liberal move that Dewey's concept of the *infrapublic* is designed to undermine. This concept captures the specificity of political relations by directing attention to a particular mode of association among social actors: that of being jointly affected by actions beyond their control.

Furthermore, though Dewey rejects the understanding of the public in terms of a separate domain, he nevertheless emphasizes that there is something distinctive about being implicated in heterogeneous assemblages *as a member of the public*. In his account, the public's position is marked by a special combination of being both an insider and an outsider to public affairs. Thus Deweyian publics are internal to public affairs to the extent that they are *intimately* affected by social problems, which put their livelihood, in the broad sense, at stake. But they occupy an external position to the extent that the sources of social problems are beyond their reach and control, and, we should add, so are the resources required to address them. In this way, Dewey makes it clear that the public's mode of involvement in social problems should be differentiated from those of social actors and other particular actors like professionals. This distinction is not always made in studies of heterogeneous assemblages, which tend to focus on the situated involvements of various social actors in them. Also relevant in this respect is that it is Dewey's insight in the singularity of the public's position that subsequently leads him to recognize the importance of publicity media. The location of the public as both an

insider and outsider to social problems raises the question of how such a position can be sustained, and Dewey's answer is to point at publicity media. He arrives at the intriguing position that the existence of material publics, which are called into being by harmful consequences, depends at least partly on their articulation in media. Because the effects that call publics into existence are so obscure—that is, precisely because they present "clandestine" formations—Dewey suggests, they can only exist coherently in these distributed, formal, artificial platforms. As I mentioned, Dewey's recognition of the importance of publicity media led him away from his earlier concerns with the materialities that mediate the formation of publics. But his initial account of their role does suggest an approach to material practices as sites for public involvement. Taking a cue from *Theory of Valuation*, in which Dewey argued in favor of practical interventions as a mode of normative involvement in things, we can ask whether this argument cannot be extended to the mode of involvement characteristic of the public. Thus, in the light of Dewey's definition of the public in terms of its state of "being affected" by public affairs, object-oriented practices appear to have special affordances. *The Public and Its Problems* makes it clear that this state of "affectedness" cannot be adequately understood in factual terms only but also refers to the affective states of being touched, implicated, and indeed moved in the sense of being mobilized by public affairs. So how is the state of affectedness that is characteristic of the public performed and made productive? Specific objects may have crucial enabling features in this respect.

But before saying a final word about the affordances of material things for the performance of public involvement in issues, I would like to point out that studies of heterogeneous assemblages in their turn also suggest a particular elaboration of Dewey's theory of the public. This is because these studies have a particular way of dealing with critiques of "naive objectivism," to which Dewey's pragmatism has been

subjected. They accommodate these critiques without letting go of the object-oriented approach that is characteristic of Dewey's philosophy, as has been rather more customary. Thus Dewey's political theory has been called historically dated, on the ground that his objectivist approach to democracy can no longer be maintained, for historical, epistemic, and political reasons. Sheldon Wolin (2004) and Yaron Ezrahi (1990) have emphasized that Dewey promoted a scientific approach to democracy that aimed to transform politics and morality into objective practices, dedicated to tracing, documenting, and remedying "harmful" consequences rather than to subjective processes of will formation and making value judgments. Such a characterization makes Dewey's pragmatism seem more utilitarian and positivistic than is perhaps justified. But it is certainly not entirely wrong. Wolin has described how Dewey's problem-centric understanding of democracy became problematized historically: the adoption of a problem-centric approach by progressive U.S. administrations after the Second World War did not result in the type of enlightened, participatory form of rule to which Dewey was committed (Wolin 2004, 518–19). Thus Dewey's object-oriented politics, Wolin suggests, came down in practice to a form of technocratic government that idealized expert-driven forms of policy making dedicated to narrowly defined ideals of "problem solving." Ezrahi has pointed out that Dewey's objectivist understanding of politics also became problematic toward the end of the twentieth century, epistemically speaking. His belief in the traceability of "harmful" consequences, he notes, involves a commitment to an empiricist ideal of accountability, that is, a belief in the possibility of documenting events and "locating the trouble" without getting caught up in confusing complexities involving interests, obscure motives, and political games of assigning blame. This kind of empiricism has become deeply problematic, if not untenable, Ezrahi points out, as the constructivist commitment to recognize the influence of "paradigms"

and "frames" on the formulation of facts has become widely adopted. Finally, both Ezrahi and Wolin have pointed at the *political* impossibility of Dewey's objectivist ideal of democracy. As Wolin puts it, democracy inevitably involves the clashing of views and interests and upheavals having to do with struggles for influence, and Dewey's scientific understanding of democracy failed to make room for such events (Wolin 2004).

As mentioned, one possible response to these critiques is to point out that Dewey was not the utilitarian or positivist that he is sometimes taken for, designations that the preceding critiques perhaps do not do enough to dispel. However, it seems equally important to recognize that the preceding "problematizations" of Dewey's philosophy tend to result in a stalling or even a reversal of the objectivist turn that he proposed. Thus Sheldon Wolin concludes his essay on the fate of Dewey's scientific ideal of democracy in the late twentieth century by advocating a return to the ideal of solidarity, as it was expressed in the protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s. In this context, the attempts of students of heterogeneous assemblages to adapt Dewey's political theory to their purposes present a clear alternative. This line of work has been committed to demonstrating that it is possible to address critiques of positivism and utilitarianism, while further radicalizing the object-oriented approaches that these schools of thought opened up. Thus the notion of heterogeneous assemblages has been developed as part of a broader critique of instrumentalism: it is all about recognizing the fragility, volatility, and recalcitrance of entities, both human and nonhuman, in the face of attempts to define them as means toward pregiven ends. However, in this case, the critique of instrumentalism does not lead to less but rather more attention being paid to the capacities of objects to mediate political relations.

To Conclude

But what about the home as a site of public involvement in climate change? Dewey's theory of the public, when read through the lens of recent studies of heterogeneous assemblages, suggests a particular approach to the role of domestic technologies in this regard, namely, to consider them as "devices of affectedness." We then enrich Dewey's definition of the public as held together by the indirect and intimate connections that make up social problems with a decidedly postinstrumentalist emphasis on the active role of things in the mediation of political relations. From such a perspective, energy technologies in the home, like thermostats and water cookers, may perhaps be ascribed special affordances for the performance of the specific mode of involvement in social problems that is characteristic of the public, that of being both intimately and externally affected by issues. It is then certainly not impossible that the little act of "turning down the thermostat" deserves appreciation as a more or less successful attempt, not to save the planet, but to transform the state of being affected by the "impossible" issue of climate change into a viable practice. In the light of the various critiques of instrumentalism discussed earlier, it is clear that the affordances of domestic settings for the articulation of the material and physical modes of being implicated in climate change cannot possibly be approached in the register of facticity as given; that is, the capacities of domestic energy technologies to mediate involvement in climate change can only be understood, to use Dewey's vocabulary, as a situational achievement. The material and technological arrangements that make up homes must then be examined further, if we are to determine their relative capacities for dramatizing connections between practices "in here" and changing climates "out there." Perhaps it is not completely anachronistic to suggest that Dewey has made it clear that the capacity of

the home to function as a device of issue affectedness depends crucially on the articulation of connections, between domestic practices and issues out there, in publicity media. Whether recent publicity campaigns, with their focus on a limited number of feasible, stereotypical interventions—washing at low temperatures, unplugging mobile phone chargers—succeeded in mediating affective relations with climate change, and thus in bringing the issue home, must remain an open question here. However, to leave this question open is to consider it a real possibility that the endless repetition of suggestions of "what you can do" activates a different, more classic function of the home: that of a machine of disaffectedness, which has the special affordance of providing shelter against the lures and risks of public life, not the least of which seems to be hyperbole and thereby the loss of connection with its objects.

Notes

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1 The strong language was used by British Gas as part of its advertising campaign "Make It Greener Where You Are," http://www.makeitgreenernow.co.uk/.

2 As the campaign "DIY Planet Repairs" of the mayor of London claimed; see "Make Six Small Changes to Help Repair the Planet Says Mayor," press release, Mayor of London, June 6, 2007, http://www.london.gov.uk/view_press_release.jsp?releaseid=12230.

3 The GREENhomes Concierge service, http://www.london.gov.uk/diy/offers/green-homes.jsp [7].

4 "M&S Helps Customers to 'Think Climate' by Relabelling Clothing," press release, Marks and Spencer, April 23, 2007, http://www.marksandspencer.com/gp/browse.html?ie=UTF8&node=55319031&no=5

1444031&mnSBrand=core&me=A2BO0OYVBKIQJM; see also http://www.together.com/solutions/9.

5 Marketing Plan: Planet DIY Repairs, Mayor of London, May 2007.

6 "Brown Outlines 'Eco Towns' Plan," BBC News, May 13, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6650639.stm.

7 Latour and other actor-network theorists have been criticized in the past for giving too much credit to nonhumans by effectively approaching them as "actors." Such a critique, it seems to me, does not sufficiently appreciate that actor-network theorists tend to limit the agency of nonhumans to "acts" that are precisely not conventionally defined as such.

8 Another way of phrasing this problem is that work on heterogeneous assemblages does not always provide a clear answer to the question of whether these assemblages are best appreciated as polities *by designation only* or whether the shift in perspective it proposes also invites or necessitates appreciation of attempts at the articulation of assemblages as "objects of politics" in social, political, and public settings.

9 This is also suggested by the fact that Dewey excluded natural events from the range of actions that could bring a public into existence. Only human deeds could in his account give rise to a political community. This limitation may have to do with Dewey's understanding of politics in terms of care for consequences, as an intrinsically human capability. But considering the centrality of "harmful indirect effects" to his definition of the public, it is hard to see how Dewey could deem it justified.

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