Chapter I
Introduction and literature review

I. Background and brief introduction

This thesis looks at emergent forms of governmental action by taking a watershed development project being implemented in a district in Odisha as a case. The project is the Western Orissa Rural Livelihoods Project (WORLP), and the district is Kalahandi, located in the South-West corner of Odisha. Kalahandi is the Somalia of India; the name evokes a geography of hunger, a history of backwardness where repeated droughts have broken the backbone of a long-suffering population. Its image is that of a place where development has failed, where the state does not reach and cannot deliver its services, a place characterised by failure of governmental action. News reports continue to find their way from either Kalahandi or the Greater Kalahandi region into the national media, narrating stories of distress sale of children, hunger and of starvation deaths.

Despite the surfeit of stories in the media coming out of the region, the total volume of academic work on the region is relatively limited. Two books, one academic and the other journalistic, appear to have shaped the narratives surrounding the region to a considerable extent. Bob Currie’s (2000) book The politics of hunger in India, located in the discipline of political science analyses the rise of hunger and starvation in Kalahandi as a public policy issue, and blames the failure of governmental action for the

1 The name of the state of Orissa has recently been changed officially to Odisha and the name of the official language of the state has been changed to Odia from Oriya. This thesis title was registered before this change happened. Therefore, the thesis title maintains the older spelling whereas inside the text of the thesis the new spelling Odisha is used apart from places where the older spellings continue in the name of governmental projects and organisations.

2 Kalahandi is an erstwhile princely state that got incorporated into the Indian state of Odisha in the post-independence period. Kalahandi joined with the Union of India on January 1, 1948, and it was subsequently merged with the state of Odisha on November 1, 1949. The subdivision of Nuapada was added to it to create the district of Kalahandi. In the 1960s the zamindari of Kashipur, that was originally a part of the princely state of Kalahandi, and subsequently had formed a part of the Kalahandi district of the state of Odisha, was separated from the district and incorporated into the then undivided Koraput district for purported reasons of administrative efficiency. The district of Nuapada was carved out of Kalahandi in 1993 during a process of reorganisation of districts in Odisha when the 13 districts of the state were divided to create 30 districts to facilitate effective administration. Kashipur, after this process of reorganisation, forms a part of Rayagada district. The greater Kalahandi region, thus, comprises the present districts of Kalahandi and Nuapada, and the Kashipur block of Rayagada district.
continuation of deprivation in the district/region. Far more influential has been *Everybody loves a good drought* (*ELAGD*) by the journalist P. Sainath (1996). *ELAGD* is a collection of reports from the poorest districts of India, and has many stories from the Greater Kalahandi region. During the initial days of fieldwork in the region scholars, activists and NGO professionals would refer to these two texts as if Kalahandi can only be known when filtered through these stories/texts.

But these two texts are not radically different from most other academic and public policy literature on Kalahandi, which has primarily focused on issues of hunger and starvation (Mishra 2010, Banik 2008). These narratives frame Kalahandi as a land of drought and deprivation, starting in the mid-1980s. A large part of this literature takes the work of Amartya Sen (1977, 1981, 1982) on famines and his capability approach as a point of departure. By focusing on the failure of public action as well as that of the state, this literature points at the broader failures of the development process.

Such a framing does two things. First, by keeping the focus on hunger and starvation in Kalahandi, it manages to ‘naturalise’ the issue and sees the social reality of Kalahandi through the dominant optic of starvation—Kalahandi becomes the place where people starve. Second, it makes for a normative approach with prescriptions varying according to the ideological and political positioning of the relevant social actors. The reasons behind the persistent poverty and deprivation in a region such as Kalahandi need to be understood by interrogating the consensus on Kalahandi’s deprivation. Reading the situation in Kalahandi as one of state failure and failure of governmental action assumes what the state is and that it is useful to understand and interpret governmental action in terms of success and failure. This is not to argue that there is no hunger in Kalahandi, but to posit that political-economic arguments that purportedly explain this hunger and deprivation need to be supplemented by accounts that aim at understanding the state, in terms of its everyday functioning with respect to governmental action.

Over the last decade or so a small body of scholarship has emerged on the everyday state in India, especially in the discipline of social anthropology, that has used multisited
ethnography as a method and tries to understand the effects and meanings of governmental actions. But there are serious gaps in these accounts (Mukhopadhyay 2011). This study tries to fill such a gap by trying to break out of the constraints of normative accounts of the state by giving processual accounts of newly emergent forms of governmental actions. To interrogate these normative accounts, and to understand governmental actions better, the methodological stance of multisited ethnography has been adopted for the purpose of this study.

The framing of Kalahandi as a case of developmental failure had led to many different kinds of interventions in various sectors. Amongst these water-related interventions assume salience because of the image of Kalahandi as a land of drought. It is argued that watershed related interventions are more appropriate to the topography and climate of Kalahandi as opposed to dam-based canal irrigation (Pradhan 1993). Therefore, interventions related to watershed development become an important site for studying governmental actions in the context of Kalahandi.

To understand emerging forms of governmental action in the field of watershed development in Kalahandi, this thesis aims to answer three key research questions:

1. How has Kalahandi been framed as an iconic backward and marginal district, and how to locate this framing within broader shifts of governmental action?
2. What are the emergent forms of governmental action that try to reach out to marginal areas such as Kalahandi and to marginal communities, and how do the effects of such emergent governmental actions map out on the ground?
3. What are the vernacular perceptions of these emergent forms of governmental action in Kalahandi, and how to study the state through the forms and perceptions of these governmental actions?

In answering these questions in the specific social context of Kalahandi and the sectoral context of watershed development this thesis contributes to the understanding of the state in India.
This chapter of the thesis provides a framework for locating the study. This introductory section has provided a background to the thesis, whereas the second section provides a review of relevant literature. The third, fourth and fifth sections provide the rationale, objectives and methodology of the study respectively. The sixth section of this chapter discusses the key terms developed by the researcher and introduced in the thesis. The seventh and the final section discusses the schema and the logic of the chapterisation of the thesis, and provides some details regarding the chapters and the arguments that they make.

II. Review of literature

As discussed in the previous section, failure and success of governmental action, and the reading of Kalahandi’s poverty and destitution as a failure of governmental actions, calls for a discussion of the role of the state in development.

Development and the state

Development emerged as a project of international governance after the Second World War; at least some narratives posit that it emerged directly out of the policy of strategic containment that the US government followed for limiting the spread of communism. Other narratives of development as a process and a project posit a more ancient lineage. In the post-WW-II period this ‘developmental thrust’ by the US government was paralleled by certain broad trends in social science theories. This period was marked by the growth and spread of, what were termed as modernisation theories. These theories were essentially stage theories that were teleological in nature; they made the varying geographies of the world into a function of teleological time. Thus, the present of Western Europe and Anglophone America became the desired and possible future of the recently decolonised societies (Leys 2005).
The ascendance of modernisation theories in the social sciences problematised what they saw as tradition. They did this by theorising that rapid economic growth and the attendant capitalist transformation was difficult in the newly decolonised nations due to traditional beliefs and practices. This reading provided for the postcolonial states a central role in development (Edelman and Haugerud 2005; Leys 2005). Modernisation theories were challenged vigorously by Marxist anthropologists and dependency theorists. The latter showed that the historical and political roots of underdevelopment in many of the newly decolonised countries did not lie in the absence of capitalist modernity. They argued that the underdevelopment of the non-West was actually produced by their incorporation into a world-wide capitalist economy. Much of dependency theory literature, especially the later works of André Gunder Frank, was very pessimistic about the role of any state acting within the broad framework of world capitalism to function as an agent of autonomous development (Menzies and Marcus 2005; Peet and Hartwick 2005). The challenge of dependency theory fractured the dominance of modernisation theories, and led to the now-famous crisis of development theory in the 1980s (Manzo 1991). This period was paralleled by the growth of neoclassical economics that challenged much of development economics (Kay 1993).

Apart from the arguments offered by neoclassical economists, postdevelopment theorists also challenge much of extant development theory by taking a self-consciously poststructuralist stance. These theorists legitimately focus on both ‘the project’ of development and projects of development and point out their failures. Much of the postdevelopment literature presents a homogenous view of development (Corbridge 1998) that romanticises what it sees as local traditions, and tends to reify categories such as community. Some strands of such scholarship glorify the role of grassroots NGOs and social movements, and pitch them against the state as more acceptable actors towards achieving desirable social change (Schuurman 2000). Postdevelopment critiques of development see the role of the state in promoting human welfare in negative terms. Development is increasingly seen as a discourse or disciplinary apparatus for control by the state (Willis 2005). These two critiques, although deceptively dissimilar share many characteristics such as analyses that are marked by an antipathy towards the state as a
legitimate social actor, and by the privilege accorded to abstract operations of entities such as discourse or market as opposed to nuanced understanding of actual development practices (Cooper and Packard 2005). But with state authority being eroded in many parts of the world, especially in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, questions surrounding the feasibility of governmental action have become coupled with questions surrounding its desirability (Saha and Mallavarapu 2006). Both the critiques discussed above can be seen as varieties of state pessimism.

But the actual experience on the ground is mixed, with countries with varying political regimes ranging from the socialistic countries such as China to the apparently ‘capitalist’ economies such as South Korea (Cowen and Shenton 1996), and ‘mixed’ economies like India (Mukherji 2008) delivering high rates of economic growth and some improvements in human development. Discussions on the ‘role of the state’ in development, (if the issue is posited in such a manner) have focused more on the role of the state than on the state per se (Lange and Rueschemeyer 2005). To explicate, the overall thrust of the arguments about the role of the state have been about strategic state action, the extent to which governments interfere in economic activities, and the desirability of such interference. Thus, to a large extent the role of the state has been seen from a teleological, normative optic; once a certain desirable societal outcome has been set as a goal, the debates have been about the possibility and desirability of initiatives by the state in achieving such a goal (Lange 2010). The state as a relatively autonomous actor and the changes and transformations in its functioning remain relatively undertheorised in development literature (Migdal 2001).

In the contemporary conjuncture, the state has again started getting a lot of attention and its importance is being recognised by both theoreticians and practitioners (Roy Chowdhury 1999). But parallel to these shifts in academic theorising, the state as an entity is facing important challenges from widespread transnational migration, globalisation, ethnic movements and separatist movements. This has been parallel to the growth of demands on the state to ensure the exercise of an ever-expanding array of rights and entitlements for citizens (Edelman and Haugerud 2005). Despite the
experience of state failure, the state still exercises a great hold on people’s imagination of what a good society is, and ‘good governance’ is high on the agenda of both multilateral agencies such as the World Bank as well as national governments (Chandhoke 2003, 2005). The desire for development and the concomitant demand for good governance by states for achieving developmental goals (for example, the Millennium Development Goals or MDGs) increasingly shape not only public policy but also what people expect of and the ways in which they perceive and experience the states they live in.

The postdevelopment impasse and points of departure

The demands for good governance among supra-national organisations and policy think-tanks have been accompanied by a growing disquiet about the state in much of academic literature. This has been coupled with an increased and persistent interrogation of the entire developmentalist framework (Schuurman 2000).

The poststructuralist scholars who critique development as discourse primarily borrow from the early and middle phases of work of Foucault and shift the focus from developmental intentionalities and the achievement or non-achievement of such intentions to the unintended consequences of various development projects. These analyses mimic Foucault by describing the disciplinary discourses that produced the modern subject. They tend to focus on the discursive and rhetorical strategies of development rather than empirically deal with the ways in which development projects affect communities. Besides, they challenge the normative desirability of development as a goal by critically examining the process of knowledge production inside the development apparatuses (Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1996).

These critiques have been in turn criticised for being theoretically over-determined. It has also been argued that the object of methodology—development—and the method used to analyse it—discourse analysis—do not make for a very productive fit (Agrawal 1996). As mentioned by some scholars (Agrawal 1996; Brigg 2002), the poststructuralist reading of development deploys an understanding of power that is
representative of what has been called the ‘middle phase’ of Foucault’s theorising, which formulated, comparatively speaking, the more repressive notions of power. The more mature formulations of power by Foucault, such as bio-power and governmentality, do not find an echo in the work of these scholars.

The poststructuralist turn in the anthropology of development in particular and development studies in general has led to a proliferation of debates surrounding issues of development, power and agency. Scholars have critiqued proponents of postdevelopment for dealing with what are termed as unhelpful binaries (such the ‘Third World’ and the ‘First World’) and for basing their arguments on grand generalisations (Corbridge 1998). Much of poststructuralist development theory is criticised for sharing some characteristics of dependency theory by buying into the self-perception (widely shared) of global institutions and multinational corporations as being all powerful, for being based on inadequate fieldwork, and for being disciplinarily blind to the insights of other disciplines such as history and economics (Lehmann 1997). Other problems identified with respect to the application of the poststructuralist perspective to development include theoretical overdetermination, the replacement of one set of metanarratives by another, and the collapsing in theory of multiple and often contradictory discourses surrounding development as singular and homogenous (Agrawal 1996; Corbridge et al 2005).

Important strands of postdevelopment literature give a generalised account of development as discourse. There have been two ‘answers’ to criticisms on this count within postdevelopment: one is by keeping the focus on the effects of such interventions, the other is by providing a more detailed and nuanced history of development theory and practice (Nustad 2001). Other points of departure have been offered from the postdevelopment impasse plaguing development studies. Some commentators suggest that Gadamer’s notion of fusion of horizons by positing a new hermeneutical understanding of the self and the other can reinvigorate development thinking

3 In 20th century German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer’s writings, tradition does the same conceptual work that discourse performs in Foucault’s scholarship. Gadamer’s idea of fused horizons, in which self-knowledge and knowledge of the other are fused together in a dialectic, allows for human subjectivity (Graaff 2006).
2006). Other scholars borrowing from ideas of a reflexive postmodernity, especially the theories of Ulrich Beck, have argued that contemporary social struggles and concerns will be increasingly about managing risks engendered by modernity and not the achievement of utopian imaginaries such as development (Pieterse 1998).

Other commentators argue that development studies can gain by engaging with postcolonial studies. Development studies is seen as traditionally not being concerned with questions surrounding the voice and agency of subaltern groups, and the engagement of postcolonial scholars, by raising these issues and by their creative grappling with them, is expected to offer valuable insights for scholars in development studies (Sylvester 1999; Kapoor 2002). Those proposing a postcolonial point of departure for proceeding away from the impasse induced by the postdevelopment turn do not tell us how to synthesise these two diverse fields, and empirical studies offering some kind of dialoguing are also not generally offered.

It is necessary to shift the analytic gaze from studying only the effects (intended or unintended) of development actions to studying the ways in which their logic and the new spaces opened by them are used and abused by people who are the objects and agents of such projects. This will involve seeing institutions and processes meant for development not merely as sites where exercise of state power or resistance to such an exercise take place, but as malleable new symbolic and material resources that lend themselves to be used for different kinds of assemblages of social action.

Nustad (2001), in this context, argues for a more field-based, actor-oriented approach, which recognises that formal institutions/mechanisms instituted by development for its own purposes can be and are used for other purposes by both subaltern and other groups (ibid). This means not merely shifting the focus from discourse to practice, but also a shift from politics to state. This thesis makes the claim that most anthropological literature (and a large strand of literature from other disciplines as well) focuses on politics when purportedly the attempt is to provide an account of the
state. Instead of descriptions of changing forms of governmental action, what are offered are narratives of political dynamics with respect to claim-making on the state.

There is already a strand of ethnographic scholarship (although marginal) on development that tries to do precisely this. This is a critique of Foucauldian appropriations in the study of development and governmental action that, comparatively speaking, privilege governmentality as a project of rule rather than as contingent accomplishments in specific cultural contexts (Li 1999). Mosse’s (2005) work can be located in the same strand. Discussing the experience of an externally funded development project in India, he argues that development policy should not be seen as a blueprint that gets implemented; rather, development policy is a contested domain that is constantly produced and reproduced by the competing and contingent pulls and pressures exercised by a varied sets of social actors. In a similar fashion, Li (1999), while discussing the resettlement of an isolated social group in Indonesia, characterises the experience of this community as a compromise, and thus, as neither accommodation nor resistance. Gupta (1998), focusing on farmers in a north Indian village, explores how their hybrid and opportunistic practices as agriculturists involve a constant reworking of the logic of agricultural developments as promoted by the state. Bandyopadhyay (2010, 2009), while discussing the street politics of hawkers in postcommunist Calcutta, shows how such politics is differentiated, and the ways in which a group of hawkers has been able to successfully contest the imperatives of the state by arrogating to themselves, what he calls, the archival function. Appadurai (2001) has shown how NGOs have been able to deepen democracy by globalising from below, and by successfully articulating and mediating the demands of the urban poor. This thesis locates itself in this tradition of ethnographic studies of development that critically engages with the situated practices and imbrications of development as an unfolding process.

From politics of development to the everyday state

Most of the literature in the poststructuralist strand of development theory over-ascribes agency to macro-level institutions and discourses, and obscures the actual operations of
the everyday. It also fails to provide us with a map of the ways in which targets and agents of development are not merely objects of disciplinary power, but also the subjects of its active co-constitution into more productive forms (Li 1999).

Understanding development: from politics to state

To be able go beyond the impasse of extant development theory one needs to shift the focus of the analytical gaze from politics, or development politics in this specific instance, to the state itself. Most of the extant literature on development that studies it ethnographically has focused on ‘politics’ and not the state per se. This is because, as some scholars have argued (Dhareshwar 2010; Subramanian 2009), politics in the Indian context has for its domain claim-making upon the state. This is not to reduce politics to the realm of the state, but to posit that if ‘the state’ continues to remain the political actor par excellence and remains the node around which politics in the form of claim-making takes place, then there is a need to understand the ways in which the state itself is morphing. Another imperative for marking such morphings is a reason that Srirupa Roy (2007) puts forth in a slightly different context: unlike in modern Europe where there was a temporal lag between the formation of the nation and the creation of the modern nation-state, the nation and the state came to be simultaneously constituted in postcolonial India and in many other parts of the Third World. Therefore, in postcolonial India, ‘the political’ trails the state. Despite narratives surrounding state withdrawal, the state even now remains the development actor par excellence. Thus, there is a need for good accounts of how state-led development works on the ground.

Passive revolution: a dominant theoretical paradigm

In the Indian context, the theoretically dominant accounts of the state and the political in India have come from political theory and history and not from sociology or social anthropology. This literature runs the danger of turning the state into a master concept that is then expected to carry a large explanatory charge (Fuller and Harriss 2000: 10). Ethnographic discussions surrounding the state have traditionally focused on politics in
tribal and peasant societies, and the development of modern state forms in these societies (Gailey 1985). Till very recently the discipline has not focused on the workings of the modern state, and the ways in which it is experienced by its subjects. This has been true in the case of social anthropology/sociology of India as well. In the immediate postcolonial period ethnographic works by F.G. Bailey, Anthony Carter and M.N. Srinivas, among others, focused on politics rather than on the state in India (Fuller and Harriss 2000: 10–14).

But the dominant narratives surrounding the Indian state originate in the discipline of political science. In the immediate aftermath of decolonisation the discipline was preoccupied with questions surrounding tradition, modernity and development, and concerned itself with interactions of modern political institutions of state-making with ‘traditional’ sources of identity such as caste, ethnicity and region. A large part of this literature was of American provenance, although Indian scholars such as Rajni Kothari played an important role in this conjuncture. From the mid-1980s, with the work of scholars such as Partha Chatterjee and Sudipta Kaviraj, the subject of analysis changed from nation building to the fragmentation of the national project. This was accompanied by work in other disciplines that interrogated the state; for example, the psychologist Ashis Nandy and the sociologist T.N. Madan critiqued the statist project of secularisation as being related to the growth of communalism in India over the last 25 years or so, whereas critiques in the discipline of economics brought into sharp focus the alleged inefficiencies of the developmental state (Menon 1999).

Coming from within the discipline of political science, one dominant and productive theoretical strand of looking at the state in India has been the one that is identified with the work of Chatterjee (1999a, 1999b) and Kaviraj (1988), and can be called the ‘passive revolution thesis’. Borrowing from Gramsci’s idea of historical block, the theorists of this school argue that the inability of the postcolonial nation-state in India to undertake a bourgeois-led transformation of Indian agriculture and Indian society can be characterised as passive revolution (ibid).
Passive revolution was a concept of Gramscian provenance, and it arose out of a specific conjuncture in Italian history where the absence of a bourgeois-led revolution and the growth of fascism needed to be made sense of. Passive revolution as a category in this context has two important markers. Negatively, this concept sets out the absence of a bourgeois-led revolution in Italy. Positively, it is an explanation of how hegemony is established through the building of a broad-based class coalition with the bourgeois functioning as the nucleus, and the older feudal classes being reduced to a governing class from an earlier position of dominance (Gramsci 1997). After Gramsci, many scholars, especially in postcolonial societies, have tried to engage with the processes of social transformation and political change through the ideas furnished by him. The idea of passive revolution has been marshalled by these scholars to explain the incomplete transitions of their societies into capitalist modernity (Morton 2003; Tuğal 2009; Gray 2010; Simon 2010).

**Passive revolution, state and political society in India**

In India one of the most widely cited and used descriptions of passive revolution to understand the dynamics of postcolonial politics is given by political theorist Sudipta Kaviraj (1988). He used a coalitional class model to make sense of state and politics in India after decolonisation. He tried to show how the bourgeois-led dethroning of the older feudal classes in postcolonial India from an earlier position of exclusive dominance can be characterised as passive revolution. The temporal location in the morphing of the state and politics in India is located around decolonisation, that is, in the period 1945–1952 (ibid).

The body of scholarship on the state in India that applies this extension of the passive revolution thesis to the Indian case has been influential. It reflects and has consolidated three broad kinds of theoretical orientations in social sciences in India concerning the state. First, debates surrounding the state in India have happened around

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4 For a recent restating of this position with the first amendment to the Indian Constitution as a case study, see Menon (2004).
its ‘nature’. Second, it has displaced questions surrounding the state into the realm of politics. Third, it has led to a historicist bias (that looks for historical continuities in the workings of the state), and sees decolonisation as a significant watershed.

A particularly important and influential extension of the passive revolution thesis in terms of understanding the state in India has been the political society formulation by Partha Chatterjee. The way Chatterjee (2004) argues out the theory of political society is by constructing a narrative of difference through dichotomies such as the First World and the rest of the world, civil society and political society, citizens and populations, corporate capital and non-corporate capital. Political society is the scaffolding that holds up this theoretical architecture by allowing the elaboration of this narrative of difference. In contemporary India, according to this formulation, the communities that are targets of governmental action for the purpose of the perpetuation of passive revolution constitute ‘political society’, whereas members of the bourgeois and the forms of associational politics that this class indulges in constitute civil society.

Although the theory of political society is an attempt at speedbreaking the seemingly smooth onward march of ‘global’ theories of politics and the political, it often mimics the theories that it tries to challenge, both in terms of the level of abstraction at which it operates and the degrees of explanation that it offers. The question to ask is this, if the dominant way of perceiving and experiencing the state in the non-West does not follow the templates set in the West, is there a generic ‘non-Western’ way of articulation of politics and the political? The work of Partha Chatterjee and other heterodox Marxist scholars suggests a positive answer to this question. The overall argument posited by this formulation is that although the diagnosis of the problem (in terms of theories of state and civil society that are of Western provenance failing to capture political realities in the ‘third world’ countries) is valid, the theoretical solution offered is not adequate.

If politics is the craft of using and abusing the state as undertaken by communities, then these vernacular articulations of ‘politics’ do not happen at the level of the non-West or at the level of the state in India. This happens at the level of specific
regional articulation of perceptions and experiences of the state as the peculiar mode of creation of the nation-state in India is conjoined by the vernacular and the regional in a foundational sense (Kaviraj 2010b). One such vernacular articulation is detailed in Chapter VI of this thesis, and is offered as a corrective to the political society formulation.

Going beyond passive revolution: the promise of ethnography

One way of providing a corrective is to change the methodological stance from a historical to an ethnographic one. Hence the literature which this thesis engages with and locates itself in is the newly emergent ethnographic scholarship on the everyday state in India. Over the last two decades the work of scholars such as James Manor, Paul Brass, Akhil Gupta, Barbara Harris-White, Robert Wade and Jonathan Parry has taken the state itself as an object of study and analysis by focusing on the various omissions and commissions by which the workings of the state play out on the ground, and the ways in which such actions are perceived and imagined by people (Fuller and Harriss 2000: 10–14). This thesis and its arguments are located within this broader ethnographically-oriented literature that takes the state itself as an object of study.

Apart from this literature on the everyday state, over the last decade or so, there has been the growth of a literature surrounding postcolonial governmentality in India that can be seen as addressing these sets of problems. These appropriations from ‘late Foucault’ and his productive notions of power and governmentality have been used to explain the differential demographic trajectories of religious communities (Jeffery and Jeffery 2005), the production of docile, individuated work forces in the spaces of the new economy (Gooptu 2009), the production of environmental subjects through participation (Agrawal 2005), the unwitting production of politicisation and empowerment by strategies of neoliberal governmentality (Sharma 2006) and the production of civic governmentality through technologies of governing and norms of self-rule (Roy 2009). These scholars take debates surrounding the state in India forward by critically examining the tactics of doing government and people’s perceptions and experience of it. But there
have generally been very few accounts of the actual morphings of the state on the ground. Studying these is also methodologically helpful as this move makes multiple ethnographic sites available for studying ‘the state’, its effects, and the way governmental programmes and policies get shaped (Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Ferguson and Gupta 2002).

Borrowing from de Certeau (1988) this thesis argues that to study the state as it morphs on the ground one cannot use only statistical abstractions or merely give accounts of the ‘distortions’ produced in ‘the state’ by ‘the social’ (this is the position of most ‘institutional’ perspectives on Third World states). What one needs to do is to undertake an act of ethnographic interrogation of the state complicit in the act of developing. This refocusing on the everyday state with a methodological stance of multisited ethnography helps make sense of the perceptions and practices of beneficiaries and agents of the state’s projects and the way they make sense of these projects (Krohn-Hansen and Nustad 2005).

**III. Rationale of the study**

The ways in which the postcolonial state in India makes itself available to people has undergone many changes in the more than six decades of its existence. Starting from the mid-1980s the ‘colonial bureaucratic straitjacket’ is overreaching itself to enter society by reinventing organisational forms and modes of operation. It is now making itself available through wall-paintings of discrete projects, as the manager of ‘cultural events’ in district headquarters, and through many new ‘sites’ such as details of projects under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on the website of the central Ministry of Rural Development. The formation of various missions such as the National Rural Health Mission and the district and state level watershed development missions for the delivery of governmental services, programmes and projects has been a key development in this regard.
The state is now available in a dispersed manner and is imbricated in the daily life of its citizens. For example, a woman in a village in Kalahandi, might get up in the morning, eat *pakhāla*\(^5\) cooked with rice that she bought for two rupees a kilo in the government ration shop in a neighbouring village, take her three-year-old anaemic child to the nearest *anganwadi* for polio drops, attend a meeting of the Watershed Committee of the village of which she’s a member, go to work, and in the evening meet up with women from her clan for the self help group (SHG) that has been formed under the aegis of another government programme. It is not merely that the state is making itself available to communities that it had not reached earlier, it is also getting slowly imbricated and written into the very texture of rural social life. The various governmental missions are playing an important role in this. To make sense of what is happening on the ground what one needs is a ethnographic engagement with the developmental activities of the everyday state.

Since the continuing deprivation in Kalahandi have been framed in terms of failure of public action and governmental interventions, studying an ongoing governmental development project becomes relevant in such a context. The district and the region have also been framed as a land of drought and starvation; studying a water-related intervention is therefore pertinent. Because of these reasons the thesis focuses on an ongoing watershed development project - WORLP – in the district. Such a focus on the everyday functioning of the state is also important from a theoretical point of view.

Since NGOs are increasingly seen as better delivery agents of developmental action (White 1999), including governmental initiatives, this thesis studies two project implementing agencies (PIAs) in the district – one governmental and the other one an NGO – to map the possible differences and similarities with respect to project implementation and everyday organisational practices.

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\(^5\) Pakhāla means rice with water. Leftover rice is mixed with water and salt and eaten as a staple in most parts of Odisha, especially during summer. It can be eaten fresh or after being fermented for a day or two.
Apart from this there is also the fact of social scientific neglect of Odisha as a region. One cannot negate or belittle the work of sustained initiatives such as the Orissa Research Project of Heidelberg University, and the work of many Western scholars such as F.G. Bailey and F.A. Marglin. But Odisha as a region has been neglected by mainstream social science academics in India, especially in the last two decades or so (Routray 2008). This study provides fresh points of departure for studying the society and culture of Odisha.

IV. Research objectives

1) To study the framing of Kalahandi as an iconic backward and marginal district and to understand this framing in the context of the broader shifts in governmental action in India.

2) To understand the emergent forms of governmental action on the ground with specific reference to watershed development in Kalahandi.

3) To study the similarities and differences in the interventions of governmental organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with respect to watershed development in Kalahandi.

4) To study the vernacular perceptions of these emergent forms of governmental action in Kalahandi, and to study the state through the forms and perceptions of these governmental actions.

V. Methodology of the study

Methodological strategy

The methodological strategy utilised for the doctoral work was that of multisited ethnography. The general mix of methods used in ethnography such as in-depth unstructured interviews, interviews with semi-structured interview schedule, participant observation, observation, and life histories was used for collection of data. One of the aims of this thesis has been to unravel the ways in which agents of the developmental
state and beneficiaries of its projects make sense of a specific development project, and the ways in which they are able to tactically use the spaces opened up by such a project. To be able to do this, qualitative methods used in doing ethnography have been adopted. Apart from this a varied set of sources on Kalahandi such as archival material, journal articles, academic books, news reports, governmental publications, material produced by an NGO, literary prose and poems produced by writers from Kalahandi were also collected.

Details of fieldwork strategies

For the duration of the study this student shifted base to the district of Kalahandi. Doctoral fieldwork was done in the project sites of two Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) of WORLP: one governmental and one non-governmental. This was done to be able to trace the variations of the work of the project across both these types of organisations. The PIAs were chosen in the same part of the district in two bordering blocks in the same sub-division. They also belonged to the plains area of the district and shared similar geoclimatic conditions. Both these PIAs handled 10 village-level microwatershed development committees (henceforth referred to as Committees in this thesis) each. These Committees are the lowest level functional unit of WORLP, and effective work of the project was undertaken at this level.

In the project site of each PIA, one village was chosen for extensive study. The Committees of WORLP were of two types: some were composed of only one village, while others were composed of more than one village. In both the governmental and non-governmental PIAs, a Committee with only one village was chosen. This was done so as to focus on the way the day-to-day working of the project played itself out in a village. Within these villages, the study tried to understand the social dynamics between the

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6 The NGO PIA was an established NGO in the district with some experience of watershed related work. It has a significant presence in the districts of Kalahandi and Nuapada and in a few other districts in Western Odisha as well. It is headquartered in Bhubaneswar. This organisation, Centre for Development Inclusion (CDI), has been involved in advocacy and interventions with respect to village self-government, and community-based, small-scale natural resource management. CDI is a pseudonym. Because of reasons of research ethics all names or organisations, people and places (sub-district) level in this thesis are pseudonyms, unless specified otherwise.
numerically dominant social groups. The villages having adequate representation of the numerically important jāti and tribal groups in Kalahandi were chosen for the study.

A total of 125 interviews with different types of project beneficiaries were conducted with a semi-structured interview schedule in the two villages chosen for intensive ethnographic study. Out of these 59 were followed up using the method of in-depth unstructured interview. An additional 95 villagers were interviewed using the same method. Thus, in-depth unstructured interviews were conducted with a total of 154 villagers including project beneficiaries. Apart from this 31 village-level functionaries of the project were interviewed (using the method of in-depth unstructured interviews) with follow ups; out if this 19 were members, secretaries and presidents of the Committees of the two villages under study. 13 PIA-level staff and six district-level staff of the District Watershed Mission, Kalahandi were interviewed (with many follow ups) using the method of in-depth unstructured interview. Three staff members of the Orissa Watershed Development Mission (OWDM) from the state-level office at Bhubaneswar were also interviewed. In addition to these interviews of project related people in-depth unstructured interviews were conducted with two senior members of the district administration not directly related with WORLP or DWM, Kalahandi. Thus, in-depth, unstructured interviews were conducted with a total of 54 people from the district administration out of which 52 were directly related to the functioning of WORLP.

29 social activists, politicians, NGO personnel, journalists, and writers from the district of Kalahandi and the greater Kalahandi region were also interviewed, some with follow ups.

Observations were made of 15 monthly meetings of Committees out of which eight took place in the two villages under study. Three district-level review meetings of DWM, Kalahandi were observed. Seven PIA-level review meetings were observed. Two training programmes held under the auspices of DWM, Kalahandi were observed out of which one was a three-day long affair. 15 monthly meetings of SHGs of women were observed in the villages under study.
Apart from observing these formal processes a large part of the ethnographic fieldwork involved watching and following the village-level, PIA-level and district-level staff (related to WORLP and DWM, Kalahandi) doing their routine activities. Often this researcher helped these staff and villagers do their work related to watershed development. Therefore, a large part of the insights gained were through the method of participant observation. For example, he participated in the process of preparing business development plans for the beneficiaries receiving small grants under WORLP in one PIA along with other PIA-level staff. Additionally, he participated in and observed the everyday life of the villagers, project beneficiaries and lower-level project staff, and the insights gained from these observations were used for analysis of the data collected.

Duration of fieldwork

Doctoral fieldwork was done in the period between June 2008 and February 2010. In the initial months the work involved collection of secondary and archival material at various private and public libraries in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack and at Orissa State Archives (located in Bhubaneswar), and in making pilot field trips to Kalahandi. During this 19 month period fieldwork using ethnographic methods was done across six sites: Bhawanipatna (the district headquarters of Kalahandi), the project sites of both the government and NGO PIAs, the two villages chosen (one each in the two PIAs) and in Bhubaneswar.

Apart from intensive ethnographic work done in the two chosen villages, extensive amounts of time were spent in the offices of these PIAs, as well as in other villages of the Committees that these PIAs had to manage. The largest part of the time was spent in living in the two villages chosen for intensive study followed by block-level PIA offices and the living quarters of their staff, and then at Bhawanipatna, the district headquarters of Kalahandi.
VI. Key concepts developed by the researcher and introduced in the thesis

Logic of concept development

This researcher introduces six key terms in this thesis; these are state-fabrication, regimes of state-fabrication, modes of state-fabrication, logistics of state-fabrication, tactics of state-fabrication, and toutary. All of these six terms are defined in the sequence listed above as a part of the next sub-section. These terms have been developed by this researcher as a part of an exercise of concept building by using ethnographic data to make better sense of people’s own practices and perceptions related to the state. Since these could not be explained adequately by using the conceptual languages of state formation, the notion of fabrication has been used to describe processes and effects of forms of governmental action. Often senior governmental staff of WORLP would try and monitor the activities of PIA-level staff of the project in terms of the number of SHGs and families of beneficiaries that the latter had been able to ‘touch’ (in original Odia) over a certain duration of time. Often villagers and project beneficiaries would talk in terms of certain governmental interventions under WORLP in their villages or in neighbouring villages as being or not being ākhi drusiā (eye-catching or visible). The persistence of the framing of the actions of the state and the perceptions of people of these actions in terms of a certain sensory metaphor led to the development of the concept of regimes of state-fabrication in terms of regimes of visibility and tactility. Similarly, a large part of the vocabulary that the staff (both senior and junior) of WORLP used for describing their work practices involved the language of logistics – operation, strategy, tactic, proper targeting etc. Thus, this researcher introduces the term logistics of state-fabrication based on analysis of such usages of certain terminologies and related practices. Similarly toutary is a word that villagers cutting across various social axes and project staff of WORLP used very frequently to frame their own perceptions and practices related to the state. Thus, these six concepts developed by this researcher and introduced in the thesis were developed through a process of ethnographic engagement and analysis of qualitative material collected through this methodology.
List of concepts with definitions:

1. State-fabrication

Narratives of about the state are generally framed as narratives of state formation. These discussions often of a Marxist and/or structuralist provenance, tend to discuss what they see as the nature of the state, and see the state as reflecting a certain class dynamic and class coalition in society (Joseph and Nugent 1994; Sayer 1994; Krohn-Hansen and Nustad 2005). In this context, this thesis takes a self-consciously poststructuralist turn, and tries to displace questions surrounding state-formation by providing descriptions of state-fabrication. In doing this, it borrows from the understanding of gender as fabrication as formulated by feminist scholar Judith Butler (1988; 1999). According to Butler (1988: 528) ‘Genders, then, can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent.’ Further - ‘that the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality’ (Butler 1999: 173). Following Butler, this thesis argues that questions surrounding the state need to shift from concerns surrounding its nature and its ontological status to the various acts that constitute it.

Accounts that have tried to bring the state back as an object of enquiry have tried to study it as an actual organisation. These approaches have in turn been critiqued for not taking into account the boundary problem between state and society. Instead powerful poststructuralist arguments have been made to see the state as a structural effect of practices that make the state appear to exist (Mitchell 1991). But even seeing the state as an effect of actions sees it as being separate and distinct from these actions. Therefore, here the parallels with Butler’s notions of fabrication to understand gender are of help. Butler does not merely argue that gender is an effect of a set of actions; instead she argues for a notion of gender that is constitutive of these actions. Therefore, the analytical move that Butler makes is to shift the focus from body to performativity (Butler 1988, 1999). It is in this sense that this thesis sees the state as being fabricated and not as being
formed by trying to shift the focus of debates from the body\textsuperscript{7} of the state and its nature to the actions that seem constitutive of it and the forms and other characteristics of governmental action. Hence, it describes processes of state-fabrication rather than state-formation.

2. *Regimes of state-fabrication*

Regimes of state-fabrication refer to the perceptual domain of the processes through which state is fabricated. In other words regimes of state formation refer to the processes by which the state is made available for perception and action by the people. In the Indian context this thesis identifies two such regimes; regime of visibility and regime of tactility.

3. *Modes of state-fabrication*

If ‘the state’ is a fabrication then this thesis argues that it can be fabricated in many ways. A mode of fabrication specifically refers to the organisational forms and technologies of government through which such fabrication takes place. In the Indian context this thesis identifies two modes of state-fabrication one of which is the mission mode through which processes of state-fabrication started operating starting in the mid-1980s. This mode of state-fabrication uses social technologies to a much larger extent than the other extant form, the departmental mode of state-fabrication.

4. *Logistics of state-fabrication*

The logistics of state-fabrication, in a given temporal context, refers to the operational manoeuvre corresponding to a specific regime through which a particular mode of state-fabrication functions on the ground. This thesis identifies two different kinds of logistics – symbolic logistics and quotidian logistics - corresponding to the regimes of visibility and tactility respectively. Quotidian logistics is imbricated in the functioning of mission-mode of state-fabrication.

\textsuperscript{7} Here the word body is used with reference to the state in a purely heuristic sense. This usage does not have any commitments towards the ontological status of the state.
Despite the military connotation of the word logistic that refer to operations in a strategic space, logistics of state-fabrication are contingent upon tactical manipulations of time rather than creating strategic spaces that allow for intentionalities to manifest themselves.

5. **Tactic of state-fabrication**

A tactic of state-fabrication refers to a procedure through which the state is fabricated within a certain logistics. Therefore, a tactic of state-fabrication is not reflective of specific intentionalities; rather it refers to an operational procedure that allow for the coming into being of certain regimes of state-fabrication and makes for certain morphings of the state.

6. **Toutary**

Toutary is an Odia word that does not have any English equivalent. On being asked about the effects of WORLP villagers would invariably reply that the project has increased toutary in the villages. Most project beneficiaries and lower-level project staff see the growth of toutary as the single most important result of the penetration of the state into village society through interventions such as WORLP. Toutary is a domain of action and perception which lies in the zone of interpenetration of state and village society, and is produced by the very fact of this penetration; the ‘state in society’ is described as toutary. The social agents that populate this domain are called touters.

**VII. Chapterisation**

**The logic of chapterisation**

This thesis provides an extended counter-case to a certain dominant strand of theorising surrounding the state in India which it terms as the passive revolution thesis. It does this by identifying some key aspects of this thesis and building an argument against each one of these strands. The key aspects of this strand of theorising are; (a) in terms of
disciplinarity one needs a historical approach informed by political theory to understand the nature of the postcolonial state in India, (b) the key period of shift in the functioning of the state in India is the period surrounding decolonisation, (c) to make sense of the state in postcolonial India one needs to give an account of politics, and (d) such politics can be understood as operating along a subaltern vs. elite axis with the elites being recognised by the state as proper citizens constituting the civil society whereas the subaltern masses constitute political society.

This thesis provides arguments against all the four key aspects of the passive revolution formulation as identified above. Chapter II of this thesis locates Kalahandi and the new forms of governmental interventions in the sector of watershed development there in the context of broader changes in the processes of state-fabrication in India. This chapter locates the shift in state-fabrication in the period it identifies as the long eighties (1977-1991), and sees the emergence of the mission mode as a key aspect of the shift in the processes of state-fabrication. But it must be foregrounded here that the understanding of such changes was gained through an extensive ethnographic engagement. Chapter III studies the ways in which Kalahandi has been framed as a district plagued by drought and deprivation, and its emergence as a site for the operations of the mission mode of state-fabrication.

Chapters IV, V and VI draw almost exclusively from ethnographic data, and show the value that an ethnographic approach can have in understanding processes of state-fabrication. Chapter IV gives a formal description of the mission mode of state-fabrication as opposed to a substantive one depending upon descriptions of politics and power. Chapter V traces the effects of such emergent modes of state-fabrication as evidenced through two key processes. Chapter VI shows that the actions and perceptions that frames peoples’ interface with emergent forms of state-fabrication operate at a regional level, and in the case of Odisha the vernacular domain of toutary seems to frame the processes and practices surrounding state-fabrication. This chapter provides a counternarrative to the political society extension of the passive revolution thesis.
The schema of chapterisation

Chapter I of the thesis provides a brief introduction to the thesis. It then undertakes a review of relevant literature and then discusses the rationale, objectives and methodology of the study. It also provides working descriptions of the key terms introduced in the thesis by the researcher, and a discussion of the logic and schema of its chapterisation.

Chapter II challenges a key assumption of the passive revolution thesis on the state and politics in India, as exemplified by the work of scholars such as Partha Chatterjee and Sudipta Kaviraj. This scholarship borrowing from the Gramscian tradition locates a significant morphing of state and politics in India during the period of decolonisation, i.e. between 1945 -1952. This chapter shows that more momentous changes happened during the period 1977 to 1991, a period that it calls the long 1980s. The emergence of the mission mode of state-fabrication is a significant aspect of the changes that have taken place during this period. This morphing of the state and the emergence of the mission mode of state-fabrication can be located within a broader process of changes in the functioning of the developmental state (from a regime of visibility to a regime of tactility) and the logistics of state-fabrication governing governmental tactics (from symbolic to quotidian logistics).

The mission mode of state-fabrication can be seen at work in varying sectors of governmental activity including that of watershed development. In the context of Odisha this has involved the formation of the OWDM, a state-level mission and district-level missions such as DWM, Kalahandi for the delivery of various watershed projects and programmes. A large number of these watershed development projects now focus on marginalised areas and communities. This includes WORLP that is specifically targeted at four districts of Western Odisha, including the districts of Kalahandi and Nuapada that formed a part of the undivided district of Kalahandi till the early 1990s. This chapter provides brief introductions to OWDM and DWM, Kalahandi as organisations and WORLP as a project.
Chapter III studies the emergence of Kalahandi as a deprived district ripe for governmental developmental interventions, especially in the mission mode. It traces the various narratives that have framed the discussions surrounding Kalahandi. This chapter argues that Kalahandi emerges around the year 1985 as a marginal area plagued by drought and starvation, a site *par excellence* for the workings of the emergent mission mode of state-fabrication. It gives schematic accounts of the various kinds of narratives that have framed such an emergence. These narratives have diverse points of origin. Some narratives emerge from the media, others from within academy, whereas others come from organs of the state itself. Most of these narratives play the role of framing Kalahandi as a land of droughts, hunger and starvation deaths, as a place where governmental action has failed. Otherwise like narratives produced in the annual souvenir *Kalā jharan* (published by the district administration of Kalahandi), they shift the discussion to the realm of culture by portraying the district as materially poor but as being rich culturally. Therefore, these various kinds of narratives end up constructing Kalahandi as a region that is backward in developmental terms, a region where traditional governmental action has failed and as a region that is in need of new kinds of responses by the government. It is in this context that the choice of watershed development and DWM, Kalahandi as objects of study assume importance as they provide us with key sites to study and understand the operations of this emergent mode of state-fabrication that attempt at rectifying the problems associated with earlier kinds of governmental actions.

Chapter IV extends the argument made in Chapter II that over the last two and half decades there has been the growth of the mission mode of state-fabrication in India involving the growth of various missions in a large number of sectors of governmental activity such as health, education, livelihoods and natural resource management. This chapter provides a formal account of the process by giving details of the tactics through which the state has been morphing. In the contexts of the social world and the sector that this thesis deals with, that is, Kalahandi and watershed development through WORLP, the changes brought about by the mission mode of state-fabrication can be understood through five principal tactics of operation. The first one is that of multiplication of nodes
of contact with society, the second is the **expansion** of the body of the state by incorporation of other types of organisations such as NGOs into the ambit of the state, the third is **pluralisation** of logics of governmental actions, the fourth is that of **provisionalisation** of governmental practice, and the fifth is **textualisation and visibilisation** of governmental processes. This is not to say these are the only tactics that are available, or that these five are always dominant, but that in this specific context these five seem to give shape to governmental practices and perceptions of people of the state. But the deployment of these tactics, by allowing for the transformations of the body of the state, opens up spaces for articulations of practices and logics of a variety of social groups.

Following the overall theoretical and methodological turns detailed in chapters I, II and IV, Chapter V shifts discussions surrounding the politics of various social groups and the way they make claims and act upon the state to a discussion surrounding the effects of tactics of state-fabrication. This chapter showed that two key effects of the mission mode of state-fabrication through the quotidian logistics are the growing convergence between governmental and non-governmental organisations and the emergence of ‘the social’ as a site, object and trope of governmental action.

This chapter details the creation of new village-level institutions such as microwatershed development committees, user groups, and self-help groups, as well as the incorporation of civil society organisations such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) into the ambit of the state. These processes help the governmental apparatus to be imbricated deep inside hitherto marginal rural areas and communities, and have led to the growth of ‘the social’ as a terrain and object of state-fabrication as identified by local agents of governmental action. One effect of such emergent forms of state-fabrication has been that of convergence. By ethnographic comparisons of the workings of one governmental PIA and one non-governmental PIA of WORLP, this chapter shows that there is an increasing convergence in the workings of governmental and non-governmental organisations in terms of profile of the staff, and everyday practices.
Chapter VI shows that the practices and perceptions of people related to the state, especially those associated with the state-fabrication in the mission mode as exemplified in projects such as WORLP, are framed through toutary. Toutary is a localised, region-bound, vernacular social domain of action and perception related to the state that has emerged out of the penetration by the state into village society, which has intensified under the mission mode of state-fabrication. This chapter shows that it is not always necessary to introduce theoretically over-determined categories such as political society or moral society to be able to provide descriptions of state–society relationships with respect to emergent forms of state-fabrication. Vernacular categories such as toutary can help us with such descriptions as well. The popular narratives surrounding toutary as a domain and touters as social agents also have an analogical resonance with people’s perceptions of other domains of sociality such as that associated with the local deities.

Toutary does not merely frame people’s perceptions and practices related the state and its agents. Narratives surrounding it provide a space for an ethical critique of the expansionary developmental state. Narratives of corruption are attempts at restoring the idea of normative state practice. But stories of toutary rupture these normative narratives by positing a vernacular domain of ethical critique, if not of ethical practice. Thus, this discussion surrounding toutary enables to undertake a cartographic exercise of state–society interactions that go beyond the standard formulations of corruption and/or state-failure.

Chapter VII summarises the arguments of the thesis, and shows how the various insights developed in the preceding six chapters coalesce into a broader critique of the dominant passive revolution strand of theorising the state in India. It argues for theorising that takes into account vernacular perceptions and practices related the state. It restates the advantages of an ethnographic approach towards studying the everyday state, and posits the implications of such an understanding of the state in India for ‘underdeveloped’ regions such as Kalahandi. In the final section of this chapter, the relevance of the doctoral work is shown, its limitations are discussed and potential lines for productive enquiry opened up by the doctoral work are listed out.