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AGENCY AT THE MARGIN:
INDIGENOUS RESPONSES TO STATE EXPANSION IN A CONTEXT OF ONGOING CONFLICT

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Summary

This thesis comprises an exploratory analysis of state expansion, driven by armed conflict and a keen interest in natural resources, and the responses thereto by local indigenous communities. Asking 'how does state expansion in a context of ongoing conflict shape indigenous agency?', it examines whether and when responses are oriented 'towards' and as such in acceptance or acquiescence of the state or 'away' from or in opposition to the state. In doing so, the thesis focuses on two analytic dimensions, namely subjective inequality and identity, analysing how the expansion of the state influences the perception of inequality as well as local definitions of identity, and in turn, how inequality- and identity-related grievances relate to agency, respectively its direction vis-à-vis the state.

The analysis is located in Central India, specifically Chhattisgarh, the home of a large number of tribal communities who have remained largely removed from the Indian state and lived in relative isolation from the outside world. At the same time the epicentre of a Maoist insurgency and rich in natural resources, the state has over the course of the last decade however increasingly penetrated the interior areas of the region based on an expansion strategy centred on counterinsurgency, resource extraction and, in an effort to win over the tribals, socioeconomic development and welfare.

Predominantly drawing on primary data, the thesis uses a directed thematic analysis to categorise, systematize and analyse material from 61 interviews conducted during two phases of fieldwork in India, including in Narayanpur district, Chhattisgarh. In line with its primary theoretical objective of further refining theories on state expansion, it makes an orientative use of existing research on the subject, particularly by James Scott (2009) and Michael Hechter (1975), and builds on their insights by accounting for a wider repertoire of indigenous responses to an expanding state.

On the whole, the analysis of the Central Indian case suggests that the direction of tribal agency largely reflects local experiences of state expansion, or more specifically, the benefits and threats that state expansion brings. While agency is also a function of the extent of the state's reach, the identified pattern strongly mirrors the various ways and means through which the state is advancing, underscoring the role of its particular approach to expansion in shaping indigenous action.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Dissertation ist eine explorative Analyse der staatlichen Expansion, die durch bewaffnete Konflikte und einem starken Interesse an den vorhandenen natürlichen Ressourcen ausgelöst wird, und die Reaktion der lokalen indigenen Bevölkerung darauf. Die Forschungsfrage lautet: „Wie prägt staatliche Expansion in einem Kontext des andauernden Konflikts die Handlungen indigener Völker?" Die Studie analysiert ob und wann indigene Völker durch ihre Handlungen den Staat akzeptieren oder mindestens dulden, oder sich gegen den Staat richten und somit von ihm abwenden. Die Dissertation konzentriert sich dabei auf zwei analytische Dimensionen, nämlich subjektive Ungleichheit und Identität und untersucht, wie die Expansion des Staates die Wahrnehmung von Ungleichheit und die Definition von Identität beeinflusst, sowie deren Auswirkungen auf die Ausrichtung der Handlungen der indigenen Gesellschaften gegenüber dem Staat.

Diese Frage wird mit Bezug auf Zentralindien, genauer gesagt Chhattisgarh untersucht, wo eine große Anzahl von indigenen Völkern lebt, die weitgehend vom indischen Staat abgeschnitten und in relativer Isolation von der Außenwelt lebten. Die Region ist zugleich das Epizentrum eines maoistischen Aufstands und reich an natürlichen Ressourcen. Deshalb hat der Staat sich im Laufe des letzten Jahrzehnts zunehmend der Region durch eine Expansionsstrategie mit Schwerpunkt Aufstandsbekämpfung und Ressourcenabbau angenommen und in einer Anstrengung, die lokalen Gemeinschaften für sich zu gewinnen, die sozioökonomische Entwicklung und Wohlfahrt vorangetrieben.

Die Dissertation stützt sich hauptsächlich auf Primärdaten und verwendet eine thematische Analyse, um das Material aus 61 Interviews, die während zweier Feldstudien in Indien durchgeführt wurden, darunter im Bezirk Narayanpur, Chhattisgarh, zu kategorisieren, zu systematisieren und zu analysieren. Mit dem Ziel, Theorien zur staatlichen Expansion weiter zu verfeinern, verwendet die Dissertation bestehende Forschung zu diesem Thema, insbesondere die von James Scott (2009) und Michael Hechter (1975), und baut auf ihren Erkenntnissen auf, indem sie zusätzliche alternative Reaktionen der indigenen Völker auf den expandierenden Staat untersucht.

Die Analyse der Fallstudie legt nahe, dass die Richtung der Handlungen der indigenen Völker deren Erfahrungen, die die staatliche Expansion mit sich bringt und die von ihnen als Vorteil oder Bedrohung erlebt werden, wiederspiegelt. Während deren Handlungen auch eine Funktion des Ausmaßes der Reichweite des Staates ist, legen diese Ergebnisse nahe, dass die Art und Weise der staatlichen Expansion das identifizierte Muster stark beeinflusst, was wiederum die Rolle des gewählten Ansatzes des Staates unterstreicht.

To Manisha

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1. Introduction

Central India's interior regions, vast, densely forested and of rough terrain, are the homeland of several tribal communities, who have for decades existed largely outside the realm of the state – geographically, but also politically, economically, socially and culturally. The region, particularly the Abujhmad hills, is also the stronghold of the Maoist rebels, making it the reddest part of what has become known as the 'Red Corridor'. Filling a political vacuum, the insurgents recruit heavily among local tribes, who have constituted a reliable "ethnic mobilization structure"[1] for the movement, which has since the early 1980s expanded from West Bengal in the east across several states of Central India.

In an effort to extend and secure its political control in the face of 'the country's gravest internal security threat,' as famously stated by the former Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, in 2005, the state launched a counter-insurgency campaign that has brought it closer to the region's core than ever before, inter alia, giving rise to intense competition between the Maoists and the state for the trust and faith, and thereby allegiance, of the tribals. On the other hand, the state's expansion into the region is driven by a strong interest in the natural resource wealth of the tribal heartland, which harbours rich deposits of iron ore, limestone and coal.[2] Together, the battle for hearts and minds with the Maoists and the resource demands of a rapidly industrialising economy have turned the state into a mobilising actor that, as part of its expansion strategy, seeks to actively 'win over' the tribal community based on a combined policy of socioeconomic development and tribal integration into mainstream society.[3] At the same time, the state's approach to counterinsurgency as well as its efforts to "eliminate procedural hindrances and create the necessary environment"[4] for the extraction of resources have also rendered its expansion strategy both coercive and suppressive.

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[1] Mukherjee (2017:15)
[2] Mineral Resources Department, Government of Chhattisgarh (n.d.a)
[3] Eck (2014), for example, raises a similar question of how competitive recruitment environments with multiple rebel groups influence the choice of their mobilisation strategies.
[4] Mineral Resources Department, Government of Chhattisgarh (n.d.b)

This combination has had profound implications for the local tribal communities and in turn has influenced the ways in which they respond to (the effects of) the expanding state. It is this engagement that the thesis investigates more closely, asking 'how does state expansion in a context of ongoing conflict shape indigenous agency?' In studying this question, the thesis is principally interested in tribal agency vis-à-vis the state, examining whether and when this is oriented 'towards' and as such is in acceptance or acquiescence of the state or 'away' from or in opposition to the state, with the aim of identifying a general pattern in the way their actions manifest on the ground.

Taking an exploratory approach and grounding its analysis in primary data gathered in Narayanpur, Central India, the thesis' principal argument is simple and close to the ground: namely that the direction of agency by the local tribal communities is to a significant extent driven by their experience of the expanding state. Writing of the pre-colonial, colonial and early post-colonial periods, Scott (2009), in his classic account of state evasion, speaks of a valley state that, dependent on concentrated manpower in order to grow and consolidate, resorted to slavery, conscription and corvée labour as means of gathering people in and around its core. The peopling of the hills is, according to him, therefore largely a state effect: local communities retreated to higher altitudes and difficult-to-access locations in order to escape the state and its efforts to draw people close to the centre. While the contemporary Indian state's counterinsurgency strategy as well as its approach to resource extraction are coercive in their own way, its other means of expanding into the region represent a significant departure from those of the precolonial and colonial states described by Scott: whereas the latter sought to legitimate the state through "cosmological bluster"[5] and coercion, India seeks to bring the tribals into its fold by extension of the welfare state. Although intended to serve the similar purpose of transforming statelessness into 'stateness,' the effects of the latter approach in terms of the community's response are expected to differ substantially.

The thesis examines this with respect to two analytic dimensions (see figure 1 below), subjective inequality and identity, in a first step analysing the effects of state expansion on local perceptions of inequality and definitions of identity, and, in a second step, their respective effects on tribal agency, in line with the following set of sub-research questions:

1. What effect does state expansion have on the subjective perception of inequality by the tribal community?
2. What effect does state expansion have on tribal identity?
3. How are inequality-related grievances related to tribal agency and its direction vis-à-vis the state?
4. How are identity-related grievances related to tribal agency and its direction vis-à-vis the state?

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[5] Scott (2009:112)

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           ┌ ─ ─ ─ ─  Subjective inequality  ─ ─ ─ ─ ┐
           ╎                                         ▼
  ┌──────────────────┐                   ┌──────────────────────────┐
  │                  │ ─────────────────▶│  Direction of tribal agency │
  │  State expansion │                   │     vis-à-vis the state      │
  │                  │                   │                          │
  └──────────────────┘                   └──────────────────────────┘
           ╎                                         ▲
           └ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─  Identity  ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┘
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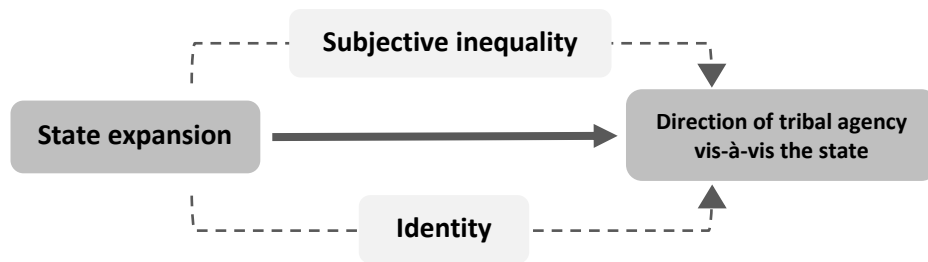
Figure 1 - Primary focus and analytic dimensions of the thesis

These questions are of social as well as theoretical importance. Eventual state expansion into previously ungoverned territory, whether driven by counterinsurgency campaigns, the resource demands of an industrialising economy or otherwise, seems increasingly inevitable. Understanding its consequences in terms of how it shapes the relationship between inequality, questions of identity and agency is therefore crucial. Moreover, the main research question locates the analysis specifically in a context of ongoing conflict, a setting that influences both the ways and means of state expansion and respective reactions thereto. Conversely, the direction of agency vis-à-vis the state undoubtedly also matters for the trajectory of the conflict, a better understanding of which is therefore valuable in anticipating the downstream implications of local political action. Overall, an in-depth comprehension of the effects of state expansion on affected communities as well as of their responses is in the interest of facilitating the expansion of the state 'without the backlash.'

The thesis' purpose from a theoretical perspective, on the other hand, is to further develop theories on state expansion by engaging particularly with two studies at the forefront of this debate, namely Scott's (2009) *The Art of Not being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* and Hechter's (1975) *Internal Colonialism: the Celtic Fringe in British National Development*, both which offer compelling accounts of the dynamics that arise following the entry and growing presence of the state in a region. Focusing on local reactions thereto, both authors largely theorise these as taking place 'away from the state' in the form of dissociation and dissimilation. However, projecting their theories onto the Central Indian case suggests that this unidirectional focus is limiting in that it neglects the critical possibility of peripheral groups going towards or with the state, this in the form of association and assimilation. This therefore suggests the need for a refined approach that accounts for a wider repertoire of indigenous agency by simultaneously allowing for action against and within state structures. Moreover, both studies tend to portray the state as relatively hostile. Yet, as suggested by the above comparison of the approaches of the early valley states and the contemporary Indian state, there is likewise a need for a more differentiated conceptualisation of the practices of the expanding state. Aiming to address these shortcomings, the thesis, by way of an in-depth study of the Central Indian case, adopts a broader perspective on the ways and

means of state expansion in order to generate further insights with respect to the effect of state expansion on the direction of indigenous agency vis-à-vis the state.

With regard to the literature focusing specifically on the Central Indian case, the main contribution of the thesis lies in its explicit focus on tribal agency: case studies, like the media, have a tendency to describe the tribals as 'sandwiched' between state forces and Maoist rebels, which, the thesis argues, not only oversimplifies but also denies agency and thereby underestimates the tribals' political engagement.

Overall, the thesis adopts a perspective as close to the ground as possible, endeavouring to understand local circumstances and dynamics from the point of view of the tribal community. In order to do so, it draws predominantly on primary data gathered in India, and as such builds on and reflects the viewpoints of those respondents who could be accessed. An effort was made to engage with individuals with a range of different standpoints and what follows is an attempt to leverage and reconcile them on paper to the best extent possible. However, the ongoing conflict and the role of the state therein are subjects of vigorous debate and counter-perspectives to many of those offered here likely abound.

The thesis proceeds as follows: chapter two discusses the literatures on state expansion and conflict, as well as studies focused specifically on the Central Indian case; chapter three outlines the research design; chapter four describes the geographic, cultural, socioeconomic and political characteristics of the case study region as well as the Maoist movement; chapter five delineates the various ways and means of the Indian state's expansion; chapter six analyses the state's effects on subjective inequality and definitions of identity and the tribal community's agency in response; and chapter seven concludes by iterating the thesis' main findings, discussing their generalisability and identifying avenues for future research.

2. Previous studies

In the first section, this chapter discusses a selection of previous studies from the state expansion and conflict literatures with the purpose of outlining how existing works have broached the subjects of state expansion and its effects on peripheral populations and the relationship between state capacity and conflict, respectively. In the second section, it turns to literature specifically on Central India, focusing on a number of studies that address the relationship between the local tribal communities, the Maoist insurgency and/or the expanding state, respectively state capacity. Both sections conclude by highlighting the gaps in these respective literatures to which the thesis seeks to contribute.

i.   Theoretical literature

Among the earlier classics on the subject is the book by Weber (1976), *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*, in which he describes the gradual absorption of rural communities into the French nation-state, based on a process of 'civilisation' and the spread of nationalist ideology from the urban core to the state's periphery. Weber construes this transformation as the combined result of industrialisation and deliberate state interventions that promoted the political, economic and social assimilation of the rural peasantry. The latter encompassed a centralized administration, the advancement of commerce, a compulsory education system, integration into the military service, and, perhaps most significantly, the development of transport infrastructure, which together led to growing interaction between the periphery and modern society and, in turn, eventually to the nationalisation of rural France.

Writing at a similar time, Hechter (1975), in his book *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development*, describes a largely similar process, albeit with the opposite result. Likewise emphasising an industrial setting, he compares and contrasts two models of national development, cultural diffusion and internal

colonialism, in an analysis of the relationship between the English core and the Celtic periphery. The former model, owing to increased interaction between the two regions in the course of industrialization, predicts an eventual transformation of peripheral social structures into "a mirror image of that of the core" (p.343), based on ethnic homogenization and the development of regional economic equality. The author, however, finds that the latter model persists: rather than rendering cultural differences meaningless, he observes that increased interaction heightens the economic dependence of the periphery on the core, reinforcing structural inequality and a cultural division of labour, and ultimately prompting reactive assertions of peripheral identities and potentially separatist sentiments.

In a similar vein, Weiner (1978) argues in his book *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India* that modernization-induced incentives and opportunities intensify internal migration from the core to the periphery, resulting in an ethnic division of labour through which migrants come to dominate the modern sector of the local economy. Perceived as foreign intrusion, this strengthens anti-migrant sentiments as well as ethnic identification and cohesion within the peripheral community, whose demand for protectionist policies heightens the potential for conflict between the two groups.

Another classic in the state expansion literature is Scott's (2009) *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. Scott (2009) argues that minority communities at the peripheries of states constitute not remnants of history but rather a people who fled from lowland plains to areas of higher altitude or otherwise inaccessible terrain during early periods of state formation in what he refers to as 'deliberate statelessness'. In other words, Scott (2009) claims their location to represent a political choice, and their physical dispersion, agricultural practices, social structures, cultural traditions, and ethnic and linguistic complexity to comprise adaptations to state evasion.

Together, the above works, each compelling in their own right, offer a well-argued and insightful range of theoretical perspectives on the effect of state expansion on peripheral populations, their reactions found to extend from assimilation and integration, to dissimilation and disassociation, to resistance and even evasion. Nevertheless, their respective tendencies to focus on a single kind of reaction vis-à-vis the state render these studies overwhelmingly unidirectional. Specifically, they neglect the critical alternative of the same groups, or parts thereof, associating with the state, integrating into its structures and assimilating into its society, or vice versa. An exception here is Hechter (1975), who does consider the acculturation of peripheral communities, albeit focuses primarily on the reactive assertion of identity in his analysis. The thesis contends that an intrinsic cause of this one-sidedness is that they analyse peripheral communities in their entirety, i.e. they largely assume them to be unitary in their actions and reactions. A more disaggregated view of the involved actors is therefore of great theoretical interest given that this would allow

for an understanding also of actions and reactions within the community, especially if these are found to diverge.

Another aspect is also that, in many cases, evasion is likely to be increasingly less of an option, given advancements in "distance-demolishing" technology and infrastructure - which remain as important a means of state expansion today as they have in the past[6] - that are likely to have enhanced the state's accessibility of previously un-reached territory.[7] Relatedly, the cited studies, but particularly Scott (2009), focusing on times much previous to the current period, largely centre on oppressive or even coercive means of state-making by "predatory states" (p. 162). According to Scott (2009), much in contrast to the relation by the precolonial padi states themselves of a "benign ingathering of peoples," this was in fact a "cruel parody of lived experience, especially at the frontier" (p. 161) by a largely captive population either won through war or bought from slaving expeditions. Although, as Mann (1984), for example, emphasises, elements of reward too were part of the means of social control exercised by states, and as Scott (2009) admits, "outlying populations in substantial numbers gravitated toward the opportunities and advantages at the court centre in good times" (p.161). Leading on from this, of theoretical interest is therefore also to conceptualise the entire range of approaches and strategies of state expansion, in order to disentangle their respective impacts on the various responses from the ground. At least in the Indian example, there is a strong emphasis on efforts to win tribal hearts and minds, albeit not necessarily with less of a vested interest, while the Indian state, enmeshed in conflict, too resorts to alarmingly oppressive tactics. Together, these are, in turn, reflected in patterns of agency within the tribal community. By closely studying this relationship, the thesis therefore seeks to contribute to both a more comprehensive understanding of the various ways and means of state expansion and a bidirectional perspective on tribal agency vis-à-vis the state.

Although several of the above studies account for conflict as an effect of the dynamics they investigate, the state expansion literature generally does not address contexts wherein state expansion is taking place in the midst of, or as part of, conflict. This stands in contrast to literature on state building that specifically investigates the effect of war on the development of the state. While much attention is given to the role of interstate conflict in strengthening state institutions, Thies (2007), for example, analyses this relationship also with respect to intrastate wars and their impact specifically on the ability of the state to extract resources from society in the form of taxation.

On the other hand, the literature specifically focused on conflict has a tendency to either assume the omnipresence of the state or to analyse conflict in terms of state failure. Specifically focused on ethnic conflict, an example of the former is the study by Cederman, Wimmer and Min (2010), in which they themselves emphasise that

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[6] See, for example, Weber (1976); also Mann (1984)

[7] Scott (2009:xii)

"[as] a consequence of the assumption of state breakdown […] research [has tended] to overlook the important role played by state actors in generating these conflicts in the first place" (p. 88). In response, they make state agency a central part of their analysis of the struggles over state power by competing ethnic groups, which they identify as a core cause of conflict. The latter approach is spearheaded by Fearon and Laitin (2003), who, focusing on state capacity as a determinant of civil war, argue that conflicts are more likely to break out in states that are financially, organisationally and politically too weak to prevent them, proposing limitations in the "government's police and military capabilities and the reach of government institutions into rural areas" to be "important prospects of a nascent insurgency" (p. 80).

Although without doubt important contributions to the study of civil war onset, given their focus, these studies tend not to address the impact of a state actively reinforcing its capacity in a region where it was previously weak in response to the outbreak of rebellion. Although Fearon and Laitin (2003), formulating their analysis in terms of insurgency and rural guerrilla warfare, argue that "inept and corrupt counterinsurgency practices […] often include a propensity for brutal and indiscriminate retaliation that helps drive noncombatant locals into rebel forces" (p. 76), their empirical strategy does not extend to an explicit analysis of the reaction of 'noncombatant locals.' In this regard, the counterinsurgency literature is, however, important to mention, a prominent example being Kilcullen's (2010) book *Counterinsurgency*, wherein he emphasises the importance of winning the hearts and minds of the population within which the insurgents are embedded, likewise stating that "violence against noncombatant civilians by security forces, whether intentional or accidental, is almost always entirely counterproductive" (p. 4).

Echoing the observations of Fearon and Laitin (2003) and Kilcullen (2010) that indiscriminate violence bears a high risk of pushing civilians into the opponent's ranks, Kalyvas (2006), in his book *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, advances a nuanced perspective on the alternative of selective targeting and the respective effects of both strategies on the local population's association with either side. He argues that, in contrast to random violence, selective targeting is a highly effective means of inducing the cooperation and collaboration of the population, emphasising the degree of territorial control as a key determinant of access to the information necessary to selectively apply violence.

Making conflict the central object of analysis, the perspectives gathered just above together make a range of valuable contributions to our understanding of the effect of the state both in terms of conflict onset and its responses thereto. However, as already alluded to, in contrast to literature on counterinsurgency, the first set of studies engages in a rather static assessment of the relationship between state agency and civil war owing to its tendency to focus on a given degree of state presence, respectively absence. This therefore largely forfeits an analysis of the effect of changing state capacity on factors that are pivotal to their arguments. A case in

point is political and economic inequality: although several studies have highlighted the relevance of related grievances for the outbreak of conflict,[8] their assumption of the presence of the state, and of the consciousness thereof on the part of the local population, prevents the respective analyses from duly accounting for contexts in which the state is absent or expanding and the effect of this on inequality and related political action.

In other words, conflict contexts characterised by a rapid advancement of the state into previously un- or less-governed territory, as is the case in Central India, remain understudied from an inequality-conflict perspective. Addressing this gap is, however, imperative to a more complete understanding of underlying dynamics: even a cursory look at the Central Indian example suggests that state expansion has brought with it a change in the local tribal community's perception and evaluation of its own circumstances, which, in turn, has altered the way in which the tribals approach and respond to the state, and as such patterns of tribal agency. In making this one of its main analytic dimensions, the thesis seeks to contribute insights on the effect of state expansion on local grievances and related political responses that are of relevance also to the literature on the inequality-conflict nexus.

Moreover, the literature referred to overwhelmingly focuses on agency in the form of mobilization into the ranks of either of the warring parties. Yet, in a conflict environment, forms of agency removed from the main issue of dispute that would under peaceful circumstances be perceived as wholly apolitical quickly take on significant political meaning. This is all the more so in a context of state expansion, where an increasingly stronger state challenges the opposition's social control, resulting in civilians being easily assumed agents of the opposition. Hence, also with regard to this literature, it is of interest to widen the repertoire of local political agency, as already argued above, which the thesis endeavours to do by accounting also for (a)political actions on the part the Central Indian tribal community.

The thesis' objective to similarly broaden the conceptualisation of the ways and means of state expansion is, on the other hand, of relevance to the counterinsurgency literature. In particular, by conceptualising the state as a mobilising actor interested in bringing the local population into its fold by means other than force, the thesis extends the analysis beyond the effect of retaliatory violence on the direction of agency on the ground. One way it approaches this is through the second analytical dimension – identity – and the effects the state's 'mobilising strategies' have on the local community's (or parts thereof) assimilation into and association with the state rather than with the opposition.

In sum, having highlighted gaps in the literatures on state expansion and conflict, the thesis seeks to address them by way of introducing a dynamic bi-directional perspective, the former with regard to the role of the state and the latter with regard

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[8] E.g. Cederman, Weidmann and Gleditsch (2011); Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug (2013)

to agency, that more holistically accounts for the range of actions on the part of the state and reactions on that of the communities directly affected by its expansion. Moreover, by situating the analysis in a context characterised by violent conflict, it seeks to bring the concept of state expansion into the conflict literature and the presence of conflict into that on state expansion.

ii. Case-based literature

Having discussed a selection of studies from theoretically-oriented literatures, it is pertinent to briefly also turn to studies concentrating specifically on the Central Indian case. Of relevance are particularly studies of two kinds, the first concentrating on the state and its bearing on the local populations and the second on the Maoist insurgency, including how it is linked to state capacity and the participation of the tribal community.

Among the first is, for example, the paper by Saha (1996), which concentrates on early state formation in the region (450 to 1320 AD). Based on the gradual transition of tribal elites into the *varna* (caste) differentiated society of early Hinduism, the author describes a process by which they consolidated their political power based on imitation of the power structures of plain-based classical Hindu states. Although large parts of the region remained outside their effective control, the early Hindu states offered an ideological role model for tribal chiefs. Nevertheless, the author concludes that local and regional states were "in the main home-grown political structures built by autochthonous leaders from below upwards" (p. 824). Given great spatial variation in the development of these early state structures, the integration of an undifferentiated tribal society into the Hindu mainstream occurred only partially, however, with large segments remaining distinctly tribal.

Without doubt the most renowned study on the topic is the book *Subalterns and Sovereigns: An Anthropological History of Bastar, 1854 – 2006* by Sundar (2007), which meticulously traces the expansion of the state in the greater Bastar region (today part of sought Chhattisgarh) during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Structuring the narrative in terms of the "dialectic of administrative intervention and popular resistance" (p. xiii), Sundar explores the constitution of the state and the critical moments in history when the region's colonisation was contested, discussing in detail particularly the two famous tribal rebellions of 1876 and 1910. Starting with the precolonial period, the author describes the maintenance of early kingship and polity, and changes therein over time, followed by an account of tribal resistance to the colonization process and the accompanying restrictions on access to forests and land. Ending in the early 2000s, the author concludes with a discussion of present-day state formation, focusing on the government of India's counterinsurgency measures and industrial policies and the resulting ambiguities the local community

is increasingly confronted with, including growing socioeconomic stratification and changes in tribal identity.

Also focusing on the colonial period, or rather its legacy, Mukherjee (2017) analyses the effect of institutions of indirect rule on the likelihood of conflict today, arguing that they gave rise to conditions that favour the emergence of insurgent (Maoist) groups. Specifically, he postulates that British rule through princely states and *zamindari* landlords, in contrast to forms of direct rule, resulted in lower levels of state capacity in the form of weak administrative structures and limited physical state penetration, as well as in a lower distribution of public goods, while at the same time they created conditions for land and caste inequalities and left local tribal populations untouched by modern state institutions. Persisting into the postcolonial period, these effects together provided the Maoists with an ideal opportunity structure specific to areas of previous indirect rule, which the author shows to reflect the spatial variation of the movement within the subcontinent.

Reflecting the prominence of the Maoist insurgency, there are several other studies that investigate its causes, although they do so rather on the basis of explanations rooted in the postcolonial period. Hoelscher, Miklian and Vadlamannati (2012), for example, analyse a range of factors related to state capacity, policies designed to reduce rural poverty, opportunities and incentives for rebellion, resource extraction, conditions that favour insurgency as well as the presence of significant populations of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). Based on a district-level analysis, they conclude that conflicts are more likely to occur in areas with aggrieved populations and where economic conditions favour insurgency. Specifically, they find that poorer, SC/ST majority districts are more prone to experiencing violence, while they also find a positive effect of forest cover and evidence of spill-over effects from neighbouring districts. Moreover, they find a negative effect of development programmes (specifically MNREGA[9]) that seek to address local grievances. The relationship between conflict and both state capacity and mining is, on the other hand, found to be relatively weak, although the latter is found to increase violence where there are already high levels of grievances related to socio-economic exclusion.

Focusing specifically on the effect of government development programmes on the occurrence of Maoist-related violence, Dasgupta, Gawande and Kapur (2017) similarly find a pacifying effect of MNREGA, although this particularly with respect to areas where local state capacity is sufficient to successfully implement the programme. The authors locate this effect especially in MNREGA's contribution to rural livelihoods, arguing that this "disincentivizes participation in the insurgency, bolsters the legitimacy of the Indian state [...] and addresses the roots of the Maoist conflict" (p. 611).

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[9] This refers to the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005, a scheme that guarantees 100 days of paid employment annually to rural households.

The relevance of large ST populations as an important support base of the Maoists, on the other hand, is also emphasised by Pasquale (2014), whose paper is likewise of interest from a state expansion perspective. Studying the effect of ethnic quotas in village councils on Maoist-related violence, his findings can be similarly understood to address questions of local state capacity. Inclusive electoral institutions are often expected to be an effective means of reducing political violence by enhancing local government legitimacy or access to services and facilities. Pasquale, however, finds that, although quotas do reduce violence, this does not mean that they decrease Maoist-support: rather than influencing tribal allegiance, the author argues that newly elected and correspondingly vulnerable tribal leaders represent an opportunity for the Maoists to gain local influence as well as to access development funds, leading to a change in their own behaviour rather than in that of the tribals.

Overall, these studies variously link state expansion/capacity, the Maoist insurgency and/or tribal participation therein, offering a range of important insights with respect to the topic at hand. While some trace the nature and impact of earlier phases of expansion, the latter both on tribal resistance thereto and the current Maoist insurgency, others address important aspects of the expansion of the state today. Focusing inter alia on the extension of development programmes and the integration of tribals into state institutions (see chapter 5), they analyse the respective effects on the incidence of Maoist-related violence and tribal support for the movement. Significantly, several also highlight the presence of large ST populations as a key determinant of the Maoist insurgency, as well as some of the factors that drive this.

Yet, with the exception of Sundar (2007) and to an extent Pasquale (2014), the majority of these studies do not accredit the tribals with a very active role. Mukherjee (2017), for example, describes them as providing the Maoists with an important "ethnic mobilization structure" (p. 15), while in Hoelscher, Miklian and Vadlamannati (2012) they are relegated to an 'aggrieved population.' Moreover, the studies, given their foci, tend to view their opportunities for political participation and allegiance as limited to the Maoist movement and/or the state, which resembles the common tendency to characterise the tribal community as caught in between battle lines.[10]

Hence, while some studies do not sufficiently account for tribal agency, others point to its complexity,[11] and as such to the need to theorise tribal agency, in the context of state expansion and conflict, to a greater extent. This is particularly so bearing in mind that the tribals do act and engage in their own right, and that in a variety of ways, as shown in the studies by Vaid (2009) and Poyam (2016), for example. Vaid (2009) analyses tribal electoral participation and party preferences, and although Central India sees a lower tribal turnout (53 percent) compared to the rest of the

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[10] For a debate on the 'sandwich' theory, as it is commonly referred to, see Sundar (2013) and Shah (2013).

[11] E.g. Pasquale (2014)

country (68 percent[12]), the ST community as a whole has a turnout of 57 percent. Poyam (2016), on the other hand, investigates the tribals' response to threats to culture and identity, analysing how cultural revivalism gradually gave rise to a larger political movement for autonomy.

Moreover, while the mentioned studies variously emphasise socio-economic vulnerability and political alienation as key drivers of tribal support of and participation in the Maoist movement, they say little about how these links are impacted by the increasing presence of the state, while identity-related concerns and cultural grievances do not feature at all in their theoretical propositions. While these may be beyond their purpose, they nevertheless remain important aspects to investigate.

With these limitations in mind, the thesis, following Sundar (2007) in her emphasis on tribal agency, studies the most contemporary phase of state expansion in order to trace its implications on inequality and identity, and as such to analyse in-depth some of the contradictions faced by the tribal community today, and the related effects on patterns of agency on the ground. On the whole, taking into consideration forms of agency beyond those addressed in the studies discussed just above, the thesis aims to develop a comprehensive perspective on tribal agency in order to better understand the social and political implications of an expanding state.

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[12] This figure excludes Central and Northeast India.

3. Research design

This chapter provides an overview of the overarching methodological approach of the thesis, discusses the significance of India as a case in light of the purpose of this research, and justifies the case selection within India. Subsequently, it describes the data collection process as well as the collected data, and then concludes with an outline of the different stages involved in the analysis of the field material as well as definitions of the main concepts used in the thesis.

i.   General methodological approach

In light of its aim to contribute to the further development of theories on state expansion, the thesis adopts a hybrid approach whereby it makes an orientative use of theory by drawing on existing research to inspire and direct a predominantly inductive analysis of primary data gathered during two phases of fieldwork in Central India.

As referred in the introduction, it engages mainly with Scott (2009) and Hechter (1975) as guiding works. Focusing primarily on the dissociation and dissimilation of peripheral groups vis-à-vis the state, they offer important insights with regard to the phenomenon of interest, and as such constitute a valuable point of departure for the thesis. Taking a case-oriented approach,[13] the latter explores a larger breadth of indigenous agency as influenced by an expanding state, thereby accounting for a more complete range of possible reactions and actions on the part of previously non- or less-governed groups. As outlined in the previous chapter, it does so by way of a broader conceptualisation of the ways and means of state expansion, on the basis of which it is able to address also the alternative reactions of association and assimilation by peripheral communities, or parts thereof. As such, rather than directly operationalising the existing theories in order to engage in their

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[13] See Miles, Hubermann and Saldaña (2014)

(dis)confirmation, the thesis analyses a contemporary case of state expansion with the aim of deriving further theoretical propositions regarding the direction of indigenous agency vis-à-vis an expanding state.

ii. Case selection

As the setting that initially motivated this research, Central India is a particularly interesting case given that it is the site not only of rapid state expansion into previously largely un-accessed territory but also of an armed insurgency, in which the local tribal communities are actively participating. Significantly influencing the expansion strategy of the state, this is, in turn, reflected in the direction of tribal agency, which is increasingly taking place both against and within state structures. Besides being of intrinsic interest, this also adds a further dimension to the study of state expansion, previous works generally not being situated in environments affected by armed conflict (as discussed in previous chapter). Moreover, the thesis' principle analytic dimensions, namely changes in the perception of inequality as well as local definitions of identity, play out in interesting ways, allowing for novel insights with respect to their effect on the pattern of tribal agency. Finally, the fact that these processes are taking place at the present time renders this case not only strongly relevant from a social perspective but also makes it theoretically compelling, allowing literally for a real-time observation of the phenomenon of interest.

Within Central India, Narayanpur district (Chhattisgarh) was selected as the primary fieldsite, based on a combination of scientific and practical considerations. From an analytical point of view, Narayanpur is an ideal case for the study of state expansion, given that the state, having been largely absent in the region, still only reaches certain parts of the district, while others remain 'stateless' to this day. This allows for a relatively precise tracing of the strategies and extent of expansion, as well as of its impacts on the ground, particularly with respect to the thesis' analytical dimensions: given that experiences among tribals living in different proximities to the state vary, this bears significant analytic potential. Moreover, Narayanpur has a strong insurgent presence, which has shaped both the state's approach and local reactions thereto. As such, this case offers ample scope for the study of the question(s) the thesis seeks to address.

On the other hand, compared to other districts in Central India, the choice of Narayanpur also brings with it two main limitations: firstly, although also rich in natural resources, no large-scale extraction projects have been initiated within the district to-date, this, however, being a key driver of state expansion as well as, generally, an important factor in terms of tribal agency. In view of prospective projects, the expansion of state reach into the interior areas of Narayanpur is likely to be strongly linked nevertheless. Secondly, and related to the first, is that reactions specifically to resource extraction are not (yet) observable on the ground. Therefore,

in order to account for both natural resource extraction and tribal agency in response thereto, the thesis also looks to other districts within Central India, where examples of both abound.

A chief reason why Narayanpur was chosen in spite of these limitations is practical in nature: as the site of an active conflict, the region as a whole is challenging to study from the ground, and security considerations have to be given primary importance. Hence, although Narayanpur is viewed as the epicentre of the insurgency, it has seen less violence than many of the neighbouring districts, in view of which it was deemed comparatively safer,[14] for both the research team and the respondents, to conduct the data collection there. Relatedly, the fieldwork was carried out in close collaboration with the Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies (CSSEIP) of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, whose Technical Advisory Committee suggested Narayanpur as a suitable field site. Besides advice with respect to the selection of the study area, the support of members of the CSSEIP was invaluable in establishing relations with the local officials, whose cooperation is critical in order to enter the region, especially for research purposes. It was owing to their efforts that such a relationship could be established, without which the data collection would not have been feasible.

Regarding the representativity of Narayanpur with respect to Central India, it is important to note that, besides the absence of resource extraction and related civil society-based action, variation between districts, and even more so between states, is significant throughout the region. Narayanpur and Chhattisgarh are part of larger trans-border geo-cultural areas, the former of Abujhmad, a densely forested area inhabited by tribal communities that covers parts also of Kanker, Bijapur and Dantewada districts (all within Chhattisgarh), and the latter of Gondwana, which is comprised of parts of the states Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, although there have been (as yet unfulfilled) demands for a separate Gondwana state on the grounds of identity, language and cultural traditions. Nevertheless, despite these commonalities, the region is extremely diverse, in ways that are also relevant to the focus of the thesis: on the one hand, although part of a movement that currently affects eleven states, the conflict is at the same time very localized, with dynamics varying even across districts. Also, given each district is separately administered, approaches by local officials to policy implementation and ways of 'bringing in the state' likely vary as well.

While this substantiates the focus on a single district, at least in terms of data collection, by minimising the effect of district- as well as state-level confounders, it also underlines the importance of abstraction by keeping closely to the topic of

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[14] For example, figures released by the South Asia Terrorism Portal indicate a much higher rate of fatalities in Sukma, Bijapur and Dantewada, all districts to the south of Narayanpur, over the period 2012 to 2017 (SATP, n.d.a).

research, maintaining emphasis on observable regularities, providing sufficient contextual information and accounting for idiosyncrasies.[15]

With regard to generalisability beyond Central India, the thesis' specific focus on a conflict environment and its in-depth investigation of a single fieldsite introduces important scope conditions that likely reduce the transferability of its findings to fewer cases. Yet, the situation of the tribal communities of Narayanpur is by no means unique: numerous indigenous communities across Asia, Latin America and Africa are experiencing increasing state presence in their homeland regions, and are as such likely to be similarly confronted with questions of inequality and identity. The analytical dimensions the thesis deals with are thus of great relevance much beyond Central India, addressing key concerns of indigenous communities around the world, whether or not they are enmeshed in violent conflict. Likewise, insights on the ways and means of state expansion, as well as its manifestations on the ground, are likely to apply to cases other than Central India, and thus comprise a contribution of broader applicability. Hence, while not all aspects of the analysis may travel equally well, many certainly do offer themselves to generalization outside the thesis' geographic focus.

iii. Fieldwork and data

As introduced, the fieldwork was conducted in two phases, the first in early 2016 and the second in early 2017, over the course of four and three months, respectively. Initially, it was planned so that the first phase would concentrate on the primary data collection, followed by expert interviews in the second phase. However, owing to a major incident in Narayanpur in early March 2016, a prolonged stay in the area was deemed risky, in view of which the schedule was adapted to focus on the expert interviews during the first phase instead.

In total, 18 interviews were conducted during this period, these with individuals of a range of different backgrounds and ties to Central India, including journalists and academics (14), as well as activists (4). The interviews were of a semi-structured nature, with the discussion topics adapted to the specific area of expertise of each respondent. Additionally, in view of the primary data collection being limited to Narayanpur, a particular effort was made to cover larger ground in these interviews, inter alia to be able to reliably place the findings on Narayanpur in the context of the larger region. The respondents were identified using snowball sampling, on the basis of which a relatively large network of contacts could be established. In that sense, although not as initially intended, the change in strategy proved advantageous, allowing for the laying of important groundwork for the second phase of fieldwork,

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[15] King, Keohane and Verba (1994)

particularly in terms of support but also general level of preparation.[16] The majority of expert interviews were conducted in Mumbai, while a smaller number were held in Bangalore (3) and Nagpur (3), as well as via Skype (2). All of them took place in English.

The second phase then concentrated primarily on primary data collection in Narayanpur, for which twelve days could be spent in the field. There, 28 in-depth, semi- to un-structured interviews were conducted with members of the local tribal community (11), tribal community leaders (5), members and representatives of political and civil society organisations (4),[17] as well as representatives of the local civil and police administration (8). In addition, three interviews were also held with (non-tribal) residents of Narayanpur who have substantial expertise on the local context. The interviews revolved around the respondents' general perception of the situation on the ground; issues of concern to the tribal community; the kind of inequalities faced by the tribals and their interpretations thereof; constellations of local tribal groups and tribal identities; activities of the district administration; local experiences of the state and the degree of tribal interaction and association therewith; the impact of the Maoist presence in the region; the mobilization efforts of organisations active in the area; and, of course, the political engagement by the tribals.

Although questionnaires for each respondent group were prepared in advance, these proved largely redundant in the field as they failed to capture the specificity of local dynamics. Hence, for the majority of the interviews the questionnaires were used only as a guide, so that the range of addressed topics could digress from the strict set of pre-formulated questions.[18] Moreover, the questionnaires were perceived as quite intimidating by several respondents from the tribal community, in view of which these interviews were held in the form of loose, but no less in-depth, conversations instead. While six of the interviews could be conducted in English, these primarily with district officials, the remainder depended on translation between English and Hindi, and in the case of two, between English, Hindi and Gondi. Notes were taken during all of the interviews, and, provided the respondents agreed, they were also voice recorded. This was helpful particularly in minimising the loss of information as a result of translation during the interviews, which, in the interest of time, was limited to the most pertinent parts of respondents' answers.

Regarding the sampling strategy, this ensued in part purposively since many of the respondents were considered key informants in light of the focus of the thesis. On the other hand, because the accessibility of villages as well as the mobility of the research team were severely restricted by the on-going conflict, almost all of the

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[16] Organising the data collection in two phases is generally recommended given that, based on a preliminary engagement with the data in the interim, the second phase can be approached much more strategically and systematically (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014).
[17] These included mainstream political parties, civil society organisations and movements, as well as the Communist Party of India – Maoist (CPI-Maoist).
[18] See Cohen and Crabtree (2006)

interviews with members and leaders of the tribal community had to be held in the district capital, where respondents were sampled non-randomly. Two interviews could be held in a village that was more remotely located, while two more could be conducted in interior villages by a field assistant, based on the questionnaire. Nevertheless, the potential of variation in terms of state reach within the district, and as such differences in views and experiences of people living in different proximities to the state, could unfortunately not be fully exploited. This could, however, be at least partially compensated by the fact that the majority of the tribal respondents had migrated to Narayanpur town from the more interior areas of the district, or were on a visit at the time of this research, in view of which they could be interviewed with respect to both contexts. In this regard, it is however necessary to account for the fact that several of these respondents are from 'Maoist-affected' families, who have come to the town to escape the violence, and may therefore relate more positively to the state. The shaded area of the map in figure 2 below indicates the physical range with respect to the district headquarter within which data could be gathered, both directly and indirectly.[19] Additionally, three further villages were visited by the research team, and although no interviews could be conducted, this was nevertheless beneficial to obtaining an impression of the district's interior areas.
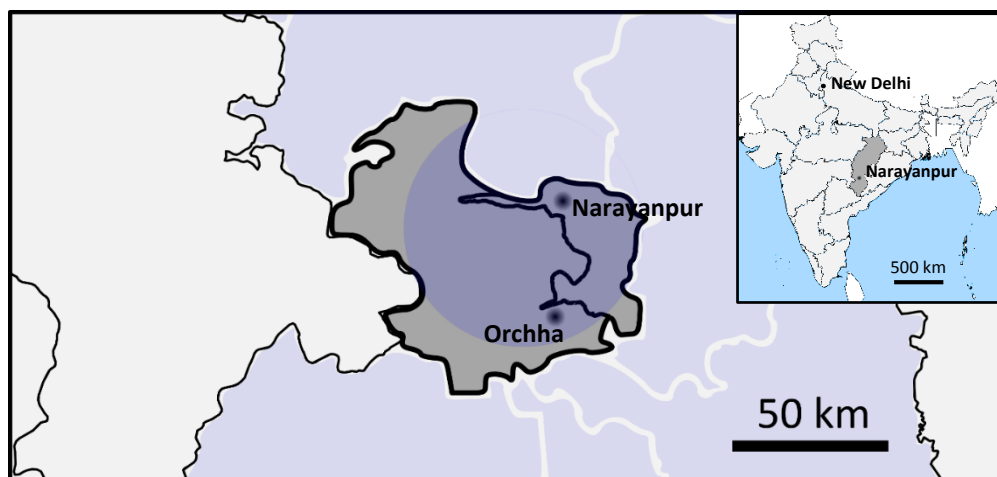
Figure 2 - The range within which data could be gathered, both directly and indirectly

Finally, of note with regard to sampling is also that a number of interviews were joined by several individuals and as such include multiple perspectives.

The research team assisting the fieldwork comprised of three members, including a translator (Hindi to English) and two assistants, the latter who were closely familiar with the local context as well as perceived as impartial by both sides in the conflict. The role of the two assistants was primarily to accompany the researcher and

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[19] The individual villages are deliberately not located on the map in order to protect the anonymity of the respective respondents.

translator, and as such had a crucial function as gatekeepers to the community. Moreover, drawing on their in-depth knowledge of local dynamics, they contributed many insights that were central to the understanding of the collected data. However, although the data collection would not have been possible without their assistance, a bias in the sample of respondents is likely to have been introduced given their influence over whom in the community could be accessed.

The data collection in Narayanpur was followed by a further series of interviews with academics (5) and activists (5), as well as with a representative of an organisation, many of whom could be accessed with the help of contacts established during the first phase. These interviews took place in Mumbai (2) and Delhi (8), as well as per telephone (1), and served primarily to gather additional expert perspectives as well as to verify interpretations of the data gathered in the field. Moreover, an additional interview with a community leader was conducted in Switzerland in Summer 2017. All of these interviews were again semi-structured, and took place exclusively in English.

Table 1 below summarises the total number of interviews conducted in both phases by respondent group.

Respondent groups	No. interviews
Tribal community members	11
Tribal community leaders	6
Representatives of Narayanpur civil and police administration	8
Representatives of political and civil society organisations	5
Experts (journalists, academics and activists)	31
Total	61

Table 1 - Number of persons interviewed, disaggregated by respondent group

Overall, the information gathered in Narayanpur combined with the expert interviews offers a comprehensive overview of state expansion and its impact on the local tribal community. In this regard, although challenging, the experience of fieldwork in Narayanpur was invaluable, not least for getting a sense of the local context. Moreover, engaging with members and leaders of the tribal community helped to understand their understanding of local circumstances and dynamics, which was crucial considering that the perspective from the ground is fundamental to the purpose of this thesis. On the other hand, given the constraints faced in the field, and the resulting limitations in the data, an effort was made to gather a wide range of perspectives among the experts in order to generate as balanced a view as possible on the whole. As such, while both the quality and quantity of the data across

the spectrum of opinions in each respondent group varies, they can at least be placed in and assessed with respect to the larger discourse on the subject.

Finally yet importantly, throughout the research process, a code of research ethics was strictly adhered to, which, although usually standard when engaging with respondents in the field, was particularly imperative in this case considering the ongoing conflict and the need to ensure the safety of both the respondents and the research team. The code encompassed the following set of principles, based on Gray (2009):

- *Voluntary and informed consent* was sought from all participants prior to each interview. All participants were informed about the content and purpose of the study, and were given the option to withdraw their consent at any time. Consent was sought only verbally, for security reasons.
- *Anonymity and confidentiality* were guaranteed and safeguarded throughout the research process.
- *Interviews were not conducted if there was reason to assume that the respondents or research team could be potentially harmed*, e.g. due to social or political reprisals, and research activities were adapted when deemed necessary.
- *Local routines and customs were respected at all times.* The interviews were arranged so as to cause minimum interruption of the daily schedules of the participants and were conducted in their preferred location in so far as that could be accommodated.
- *Access to the data was carefully managed* and, in the field, stored so as to minimise accessibility in case recording devices would have been lost or stolen. Translators and transcribers with whom the audio recordings were subsequently shared operated under a strict agreement of confidentiality.
- All information was carefully considered before it was brought to public knowledge, in order to *avoid any harmful consequences at the final stage of the research* process. As part of this, any information quoted or paraphrased from the interviews in the subsequent chapters is cited using anonymised reference numbers.[20]

iv. Directed thematic analysis of the primary data

The field material was analysed using directed thematic analysis, a method particularly recommended for the purposes of theory development based on qualitative data.[21] As a variant of qualitative content analysis, directed thematic analysis is a way of systematically interpreting meaning based on structuring, categorising and synthesising the full data body with the aim of identifying and

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[20] In cases where several respondents participated in a single interview, this number corresponds to the interview rather than the persons.
[21] Hsieh and Shannon (2005)

analysing themes, typologies and patterns.[22] Essentially, this process produces "an information base that is structured by categories and can be used in the subsequent search for patterns in the data and integration of these patterns into a systematic, theoretically embedded explanation."[23]

In contrast to purely inductive methods such as coding and grounded theory, which develop the analytic categories from the data and are therefore typically used in theory building, directed thematic analysis is both theory- and data-driven.[24] Relying on existing theory to derive initial categories, which are then inductively revised and refined based on the field data, the method is a means of simultaneously drawing on and adding to already established works in that "newly identified categories either offer a contradictory view of the phenomenon or might further refine, extend, and enrich the theory."[25] Besides suiting the purpose of the thesis, an advantage of this approach is that it is strongly structured, yet at the same time remains flexible to "make sure that the categories in fact match the data."[26] On the other hand, disadvantages of the method are that it potentially risks the imposition of pre-existing conceptual and theoretical perspectives as well as a certain 'blindness' to contextual detail,[27] making it imperative to carefully balance theory-based considerations and insights from the field.

In its implementation, thematic analysis consists of five main steps, counting also the preparation of the field material, and in this case largely followed a combination of the approaches in Schreier (2014), Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) and Hsieh and Shannon (2005). The centrepiece of the method is a well-structured coding scheme that defines the analytical categories already referred to above, and is discussed in detail in step 3 below. The overall analysis was conducted using Atlas.ti (version 8), a software designed specifically to support the organising, indexing, retrieving and querying of qualitative data, which proved extremely valuable in managing the large volumes of material.

Methodological rigour was prioritised throughout the research process in order to ensure both the validity and reliability of the findings. In the case of validity, this was particularly by way of a detailed documentation of the data, verification of the findings, including through triangulation[28] and respondent validation (where possible), and the relation of important context information to back the interpretation of the data. Moreover, an attempt was made during the data collection to obtain as complete and precise a picture as possible, and subsequently,

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[22] Schreier (2014); Hsieh and Shannon (2005)
[23] Gläser and Laudel (2013:1)
[24] Schreier (2014)
[25] Hsieh and Shannon (2005:1283)
[26] Schreier (2014:3); also Hsieh and Shannon (2005)
[27] Hsieh and Shannon (2005); see also Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014)
[28] Information was triangulated mainly by comparison across responded groups, as well as, where necessary, by crosschecking it with newspaper reports and academic writings.

to maximise the quality of the data processing, particularly the translation and transcription of the interviews, which is described in step 1 below.

On the other hand, reliability was sought through a detailed and transparent description of the entire research process, as well as an emphasis on consistency in the application of the coding scheme to the primary material. The means of data collection, particularly the sampling, being key to reliable research, an effort was also made to approach this as rigorously as possible, although given obvious constraints in the field, had to be in part adapted to the local conditions. This involved particularly the use of non-random sampling and the only partial reliance on pre-prepared questionnaires.

Turning to the analysis itself, this comprised of five steps, as mentioned, each of which is described in turn below:

Step 1: Processing of the field material

This step was mainly concerned with the transcription and translation of the recorded interviews, in total 60 hours of audio recording, as well as the typing of notes taken during the interviews and in the field journal. The interviews were all transcribed and, if necessary, translated, in full, those in Hindi by a team comprising of three professional translators and five student assistants, while those in English were transcribed by a professional transcriber as well as the author. To allow for a quality check, several of the interviews that were translated from Hindi were translated twice by different individuals and/or compared against notes taken during the interviews, and many of those transcribed in English were double-checked in full. Most of the interviews having taken place outside, the comprehensibility of the audio files varied greatly, resulting in occasional gaps in the transcriptions. An effort was therefore made to fill as many of these as possible using the interview notes.

Step 2: Recapitulation of entire corpus of field material

Having processed and prepared all the field material, this next step served primarily the re-familiarisation with the data based on a consecutive reading of all the transcripts and notes.[29] As an initial assessment of the content and structure of the data, this allowed for gauging the distribution of information across foci, getting an inkling of larger associations between factors and for the identification of aspects that stood out as particularly relevant to the case at hand. Specifically, bound and grouped by respondent type, each interview was accompanied with a table that listed themes (and aspects thereof) of interest to the thesis, which were then marked

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[29] See Hsieh and Shannon (2005)

if that particular topic was addressed in the interview and corresponding thoughts and observations taken down. These notes then also served as a means of crosschecking the coding of the data at a later stage, whereby initial impressions about the data could be compared with their subsequent assignment to categories, helping to maintain consistency throughout the analysis.

Step 3: Development of the coding scheme

The coding scheme, essentially comprising of a set of codes organised into categories and sub-categories,[30] was designed in line with the directed approach of the thesis, wherein both existing theory and the field material were given due consideration. In other words, the initial (sub-)categories were developed to reflect the research and sub-research questions and key concepts in the works by Scott (2009) and Hechter (1975),[31] as well as the observations made during the previous step.[32] Besides the codes and   (sub-)categories developed with a theoretical interest, another set of codes and categories was also generated for the indexing of information relevant to the description of various aspects of the local context. While the literature drawn on to develop the scheme variously recommends to begin with the (sub-)categories,[33] respectively the codes,[34] this was approached more loosely in the present study, meaning that in some cases (sub-)categories were divided into codes and in others, codes were grouped into (sub-)categories, as was deemed appropriate.[35] In a next step, definitions as well as descriptions (indicators) of each code were carefully formulated to serve as references in the coding process (step 4).[36]

Then, the coding scheme was assessed, and where found necessary revised, by way of a trial coding on a select number of interviews.[37] The test sample consisted of two expert interviews and one interview from each of the remaining respondent groups, amounting to ten percent of the total number of interviews. The sample was primarily selected to cover all types of respondents as well as to maximise the amount of codes that could be applied.[38] In addition, the selection also accounted for quality and relevance of content. Based on the application to the test sample, the scheme was progressively amended by adding, removing or adapting categories and sub-categories after each trial interview was coded, which, inter alia also served to ensure that the scheme was well grounded in the data. For this purpose, a strategy

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[30] "Main categories are those aspects of the material about which the researcher would like more information, and subcategories specify what is said in the material with respect to these main categories" (Schreier, 2014:7).
[31] See Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) and Hsieh and Shannon (2005); also Schreier (2014)
[32] Similar to Schreier (2014)
[33] Hsieh and Shannon (2005)
[34] Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006)
[35] Schreier (2014)
[36] See Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), Hsieh and Shannon (2005) and Schreier (2014)
[37] See Schreier (2014); also Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006)
[38] See Schreier (2014)

of subsumption was followed, wherein segments in the material found as relevant were subsumed into an existing sub-category if available, and if not, a new sub-category was created until a point of saturation was reached. Besides, as part of this process, decision rules were formulated in the case of potentially overlapping sub-categories.[39]

Once the coding scheme was set, another trial coding was done several days later on the same segments of data in order to gauge the consistency in the application of codes.[40] Found to be high, any inconsistencies were examined and, where necessary, definitions and decision rules revised, after which the coding scheme was then 'frozen', meaning that no further revisions were made in the remainder of the analysis.[41] While there are different approaches to this, with some scholars, including for example Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), keeping their coding schemes flexible throughout, a more rigid approach was chosen in the case of the thesis, inter alia, to maintain focus on the research question as well as to increase the transparency of the coding process.[42]

Besides ensuring that the coding scheme adequately reflected both theory and data, an effort was made to balance comprehensiveness with manageability, in view of which fewer but slightly more general sub-categories were decided on. Furthermore, an effort was made to meet the requirements of unidimensionality, i.e. that categories should cover one aspect of the material only; mutual exclusiveness, i.e. that sub-categories within a category are mutually exclusive; and exhaustiveness, i.e. that all relevant parts of the material are covered by a category, for which the notes made as part of step 2 were particularly useful.[43] Ultimately then, the final version of the coding scheme consisted of nine categories, including a residual category, which were further divided into 25 sub-categories. The corresponding codes totalled 74. The final version of the coding scheme is included in the Appendix.

Step 4: Coding and categorising the data

In this next step, the coding scheme was applied to the complete set of field material.[44] Referred to as 'coding', this essentially involved assigning all segments of the material to the (sub-)categories defined in the coding scheme as a means of structuring and synthesising the data. In the interest of time, although recommended by Schreier (2014), no double coding was done at this stage. Consistency in the application of codes was instead ensured by directly comparing

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[39] ibid.
[40] ibid.
[41] ibid.
[42] ibid.
[43] ibid.
[44] ibid.; Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006)

the coding of data segments of similar content whenever there was uncertainty with respect to the applicable codes.

Overall, the coding frequencies ranged from eight ('mobilisation strategies' of vigilante groups) to 272 ('background information' on the Maoist movement), reflecting variation in the relevance of the codes to the data, or, put differently, the distribution of data across the different codes. For the coding frequency of each code, see the coding scheme in the Appendix.

Step 5: Interpreting meaning from the data

Having coded and categorised the full data body, this final step was concerned with the interpretation of the field material in light of the research and sub-research questions. On the whole, it focused on the identification of patterns in the way tribal agency is taking place as well as of themes related to or associated with these patterns, a theme comprising of a related set of ideas that "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set."[45]

This was accomplished primarily based on an analysis of the co-occurrence of selected codes, in order to establish links and relations between (sub-)categories.[46] In other words, this was essentially a process of 'moving up' in the degree of abstraction to connect individual units of coding into an explanatory framework that is consistent with the original data.[47] For the most part, this ensued using Atlas.ti, which has several tools that are specifically designed for querying coded data. Those relied on most included the 'code co-occurrence explorer' and the 'code co-occurrence table'. The 'code co-occurrence explorer' separately lists the co-occurring codes for each code, and thereby allows for obtaining a relatively quick overview of associations between codes. Given that these are linked to the corresponding segments of data, this also facilitates a return to the underlying information and as such to the meaning behind the co-occurrences. The 'code co-occurrence table', on the other hand, is a tool for assessing the frequency with which a code co-occurs with another, and again, by, linking each cell to the corresponding data, allows for an analysis not only of numbers but also of meaning. In the literature referred to as a matrix, this is particularly useful for cross- as well as within-case analyses, the former which is an effective way of identifying patterns in the data, both across cases and categories, as well as for identifying any peculiarities and/or outliers. Particularly useful here are also comparisons across different sets of data, e.g. respondent types, with a focus on similarities and differences between them.[48] As stated, in the case of both these tools, it is imperative to relate the co-occurring codes back to the

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[45] Braun and Clarke (2006:82, emphasis original)
[46] Schreier (2014); Hsieh and Shannon (2005); Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006)
[47] Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006)
[48] ibid.

corresponding data segments in order to be able to interpret their meaning. In view of this, also helpful was the Atlas.ti function to produce reports of co-occurrences, with the option of including all the relevant quotations in a single file, which allows for a more in-depth and at the same time structured engagement with the underlying data.

The implementation of these tools in the context of the thesis was particularly guided by the sub-research questions, in a first step emphasising the effect of state expansion on subjective perceptions of inequality and the ways local identities are defined and lived. Of particular interest here were the codes grouped under the sub-categories 'subjective perception of inequality' and 'reactive identity formation' combined with those related to the ways and means of state expansion (sub-category 'ways and means (actions)'). Also relevant were the codes under the sub-category 'impact', i.e. 'state effects (inequality)' and 'state effects (identity)', which index parts of the data that directly relate to the effects of state expansion on the local tribal community, as well as the code 'rural-urban', which, inter alia, highlights differences in experience in terms of different (and changing) proximities to the state. Finally, of significance was also the code 'state effects (integration)', which documents the tribal community's view and experience of the expanding state, and as such also the extent of their transformation from 'statelessness' to 'stateness', i.e. their 'closeness' to the state.

The second step then concentrated on tribal agency, its direction vis-à-vis the state, and the role played therein by changing perceptions of inequality and reactive formations of identity. Closely analysed was the code 'action', which designates general information related to the incidence of tribal agency. Relatedly, of particular interest were also the codes under the sub-category 'motives for agency', which, in turn, were examined in relation to the code 'direction vis-à-vis the state', in order to derive what kind of issues precipitate what kind of tribal agency under what kind of circumstances. Turning to the thesis' primary foci, examined were also the data segments simultaneously tagged with codes related to inequality and identity and the code 'direction vis-à-vis the state' as well as the code 'action'. Finally, data regarding the mobilisation strategies of political parties, civil society organisations, vigilante groups and the Communist Party of India - Maoist was also considered, in order to discern their influence on the mobilisation patterns of the tribal community.

While implementing the above, attention was also paid to contextual information, in order to account for the local environment in the interpretation of the findings.

Unit of analysis

Throughout the analysis, the thesis concentrated on the individual in the context of his/her community as the unit of analysis. Although horizontal or group-level inequality and changes in traditional definitions of identity affect the tribal

community as a whole, the focus on the individual was deemed appropriate in view of the thesis' interest in the different forms of tribal agency. In this line, a focus on the individual also allowed the thesis to account for, and trace the effects of, existing and developing cleavages in the community.

v. Concept definitions

While the coding scheme separately defines and describes every code (see Appendix), this section focuses on the operationalisation of those concepts that are most central to the thesis. They include the following:

State expansion

State expansion denotes the growing presence of the state and its institutions in a region in which they were previously absent or present only to a limited extent. Indications of this include, for example, an increased reach of the state administration and security forces, a proliferation in public services and infrastructure, as well as a greater awareness among the local population of the state. While state expansion is intrinsically related to state capacity, and as such the "latent *capacity* of a government to implement its policy objectives,"[49] commonly measured on the basis of GDP per capita levels or taxation,[50] it also includes the physical manifestation of this capacity on the ground.[51] In other words, this definition accounts not only for a state's capacity to implement policy but also for the effect of this based on the state's presence, or tangibility, in an area. State expansion as understood here also differs from state formation in that it involves the penetration by a (relatively) consolidated central state into regions within its territory to which it previously had little to no access.

Tribal agency

Tribal agency is defined as uncoerced action with the intention of expressing and remedying a particular concern or grievance – be it political, economic, social or cultural. In other words, it denotes the engagement by tribals in actions that seek to effect a change in the status quo. It differs from political mobilization – defined, for example, by Barany (1998) as "the deliberate activity of a group of individuals for the realization of political objectives" (p. 309) – in two ways, namely that 1) it encompasses both political and unpolitical approaches, although the latter, given

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[49] Dasgupta, Gawande and Kapur (2017:617, emphasis original)
[50] Fearon and Laitin (2003); Thies (2007)
[51] Note, however, that Dasgupta, Gawande and Kapur (2017) also use physical infrastructure to measure state capacity.

objectives and circumstances, have clear political meaning, and 2) can be both individual and collective. 'Uncoercedness' of action, on the other hand, is understood in opposition to explicitly coerced forms of recruitment, e.g. forced recruitment into an armed group, and includes actions driven by circumstances, experience or lack of alternative.

Agency is conceptualised in terms of participation and resistance, including moderate and extreme forms of both. While the former takes the form of conventional political behaviour (e.g. voting, lobbying or petitioning), the latter involves non-routine and non-institutionalised political behaviour (e.g. unauthorised protests, demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, and sit-ins), and in its extreme form, engagement in violent activities.[52] Inactivity, in contrast, is related either to passivity, i.e. a general acceptance of circumstances, or impotence, i.e. a lack of ability to participate, and differs from the deliberate absence of agency – which can be as expressive as its presence.

While the examples listed above are distinctly political, an example of an unpolitical approach is the involvement in cultural activities with the larger goal of reasserting or reviving traditional practices and customs (see discussion on the assertion of identity below).

Subjective perceptions of inequality

Subjective inequality is concerned with how the effects of inequalities, i.e. of structurally asymmetric political, social, economic or cultural conditions, are experienced and perceived by the tribals, and particularly whether and to what extent they are viewed, and thereby assessed, relative to other members in the community as well as members of the non-tribal community. Inequalities are considered as perceived when asymmetries in circumstances, opportunities and well-being are recognised, i.e. when there is awareness of an inequality as inequality. Also relevant is how this is then interpreted and evaluated, meaning that whether and what is unjust about the status quo is identified as opposed to simply accepted or ignored. Related to this is the formation of grievances, which in contrast to inequality that remains unperceived, means that the status quo is evaluated as unjust and a complaint or call for redress is made.[53] The literature generally associates grievance formation with framing processes through which an understanding of the situation, how it needs to change and who is to blame is developed. Typically a process of politicization, blame tends to be laid on the state provided it becomes seen as the sponsor and protector of the political, social, economic and cultural arrangements that triggered this process in the first place.[54]

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[52] Adapted from Cunningham (2013)
[53] This conceptualisation largely follows Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug (2013:37-44).
[54] Goodwin (1997)

Reactive assertions of identity

Reactive assertions of identity, i.e. assimilation or dissimilation, refers to changes in the way identity is defined and lived, or responses thereto. Changes in identity manifest in the form of deviations from traditional customs, behaviours, beliefs and practices, as well as language and religion, in the case of assimilation towards those prevalent in the core (i.e. mainstream identity) and away from those common in the periphery (i.e. tribal identity). In other words, assimilation involves an acceptance of and integration into mainstream identity. Reassertion of identity in the form of dissimilation, on the other hand, involves the perception of a threat to traditional definitions and expressions of identity, and, in response, an emphasis on tribal identity as distinct and on efforts to strengthen and/or revive tribal culture and other defining features of tribal identity.[55]

Details on maps used

As a final note, the maps in figures 2, 3, 4, and 5 were created using data from the *Database of Global Administrative Areas* (version 3.6),[56] which includes information on the administrative boundaries for all countries, including their sub-divisions. All maps were coded with Python, using the shape-plotting function 'Basemap' from the 'matplotlib' library, with the kind assistance of Marc Reig Escalé.

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[55] The term 'dissimilation' was originally coined by Benjamin Geoffrey to denote the ecological, economic and cultural distancing from the state by a community (Geoffrey and Chou (2002) in Scott (2009:173)).
[56] Accessible on www.gadm.org

4. Narayanpur: tribal heartland and hotbed of rebellion

As described in the previous chapter, the fieldwork and the descriptive and analytical focus of the thesis are specifically with regard to Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh. Hence, what follows concentrates largely on this area and serves to introduce its geographic, cultural, socio-economic and political characteristics, but where relevant places these in the broader context of (Central) India. The final section in this chapter gives a brief overview of the Maoist insurgency.

i. The geography of Narayanpur or the geography of state absence

Narayanpur is located in the southern part of the state of Chhattisgarh, bordering the districts Uttar Bastar Kanker in the north, Kondagaon in the east, Bastar in the southeast, and Dantewada and Bijapur in the south, as well as Maharashtra state in the west. Originally part of Bastar, it was carved out as a separate administrative unit in 2007, with Narayanpur town as its official headquarter, at a distance of 245 kilometres from the state capital, Raipur.[57] The district comprises a total area of 4,653 square kilometres[58] and is further divided into Narayanpur and Orchha blocks or *tahsils* (see figure 3 below). Home to a population of 139,820, the region is sparsely populated with an average of 30 persons per square kilometre at the district level. While this is higher in Narayanpur block (84 persons per square kilometre), reflecting also the concentration of people in and around the headquarters, Orchha has an average population density of only 10 persons per square kilometre.[59] Part of the
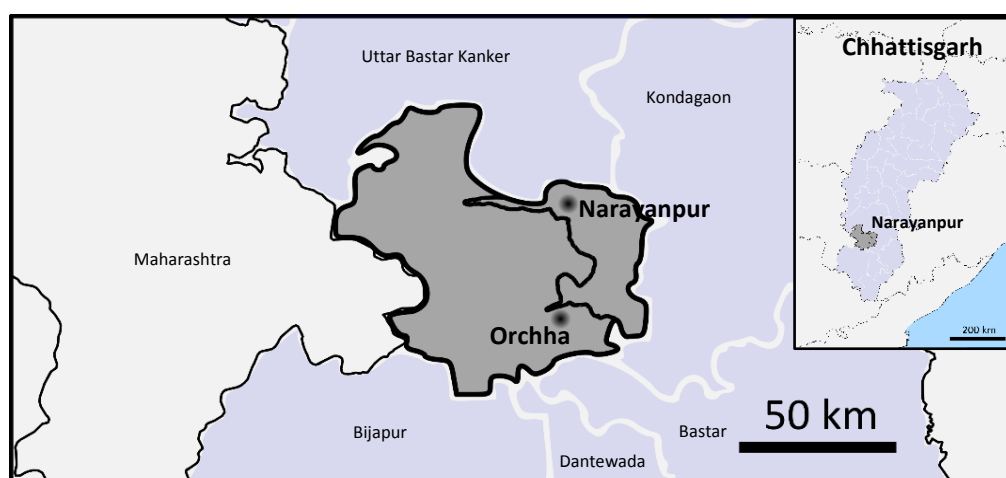
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[57] Directorate of Census Operations, Chhattisgarh (2011)
[58] Narayanpur and Orchha blocks have an area of 1,243 and 3,410 square kilometres, respectively (Indian Census, 2011).
[59] Indian Census (2011)

Central Indian Tribal Belt, over 77 percent of Narayanpur's population belong to Scheduled Tribes.[60]

Figure 3 - Map of Narayanpur and Orchha tahsils

Large parts of the district comprise a vast, undulating junglescape, at the heart of which are the remote Abujhmad hills.[61] Their densely forested slopes, dotted with isolated villages of seven to eight houses that are often spread across several kilometres,[62] are little-known - in fact, 'Abujhmad' literally means "the unknown hills" in the local Gondi language.[63] Many of the interior villages are accessible only via narrow footpaths and, at an average distance of 52 kilometres to the nearest town,[64] remain distant from the outside world.[65]

A key aspect of this has been minimal state reach. Owing to the area's sheer size and difficult terrain, as well as the Maoist presence,[66] the state has, for a long time, had only limited access to most of the district and as such has largely been "absent in the lives and consciousness of the tribals" living there.[67] According to a representative of the district administration (30), "fifteen years ago, there was […] no sign of the government." Other respondents mentioned a similar timeframe of seven to ten years,[68] which largely coincides with the creation of Narayanpur. Slightly further back, before the year 2000, when Chhattisgarh was still part of Madhya Pradesh, the

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[60] ibid.
[61] Abujhmad is variously transliterated as Abhujhmad, Abujhmarh, and Abujhmar. Similarly, Madia and Abujhmadia, the names of local tribes, are often also spelt Maria and Abujhmaria, respectively.
[62] Own observation; 24, representative of the district administration
[63] Mittal (2012)
[64] Calculated based on 2011 Census Data using 2009 as the reference year.
[65] 3, local tribal; 18, 19&21 representatives of organisations; 36&37 experts; 24, representative of the district administration
[66] 18, representative of an organisation; 24, 25&28, representatives of the district administration; 34, 36&50, experts
[67] 41, expert
[68] 13, community leader; 1, local tribal

region was even further removed: "before the bifurcation happened, Bhopal was the [state] capital and this place was almost 800 to 1000 km away. So it was very hard to reach such a far-off area."[69]

In the past, the presence of the state was customarily limited to forest officials "and in very few cases the police,"[70] and public services in the form of health centres, schools, electrification, water supply and other infrastructure, as well as facilities for the distribution of food rations, were quasi non-existent:[71]

> Our village had nothing.[72]

Indeed, the administration extended little beyond Narayanpur town.[73] According to a representative of the district administration (25), it has only been in the last four years that the state can be said to have really begun to reach beyond its 5-kilometre circumference, and although it is now expanding from the headquarters into the rural areas of Narayanpur block,[74] Orchha still has comparatively few signs of the state:

> There is no police presence. After Akabeda [a
> village in Orchha block, 21 kilometres from the
> headquarters], until the Maharashtra border,
> there is nothing.[75]

Orchha has to-date also not been surveyed from the ground,[76] remaining literally a "terra incognita of the state."[77] In contrast, "Narayanpur block is surveyed, there are interventions in Narayanpur block, you can reach up to these places."[78] Here, land records, or *pattas*, are documented, the state knows "who has what. Here, there is ownership, whereas in Orchha, there are no individual entitlements, no land or forest rights."[79] Similarly, a census of the interior areas, initiated in 2003, was for security reasons left incomplete, although the local administration repeated the data collection more successfully in 2016, upon which many eligible families who had by default been excluded from government benefits could be registered.[80]

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[69] 27, representative of the district administration
[70] ibid.
[71] 25, representative of the district administration; 38&53, experts; 1, local tribal
[72] 16, community leader
[73] 9, local tribal; 17, community leader; 36, 50 & 55, experts; 18, representative of an organisation
[74] 50, expert
[75] 27, representative of the district administration; 54, expert mentions a similar distance
[76] Although according to Ghose (2017), an effort to charter the area was initiated by the local administration in early 2017.
[77] Directorate of Census Operations, Chhattisgarh (2011:1); also 3, local tribal; 24, representative of the district administration; 50, expert
[78] 50, expert
[79] ibid.
[80] 24, representative of the district administration

Nevertheless, differences in the level of development between the two blocks are substantial, the line of the border being "literally visible on the ground."[81] As such, basic needs and requirements in Orchha remain largely unfulfilled and "the conditions in our village are still the same as before."[82] For example, although the number of ration shops, which supply rice at a nominal price as part of the Public Distribution System (PDS), has increased, "even today people have to walk long distances for collecting the ration."[83] An important part of this is the limited physical connectivity of the area given the near-absence of roads[84] – this itself being a symptom of state absence – as well as the persisting Maoist threat,[85] which is currently much greater in that part of the district.[86] It is also for that reason that government functionaries who have been appointed in Orchha do not actually operate from there.[87]

An outcome of this is the significant distance between the local communities and the administration,[88] and the related unfamiliarity of many tribals, particularly those from interior villages, with the state and its institutions: "they do not know who or what the government is."[89] Therefore, they often reduce the state to the police "because they have seen nobody else other than the police. For them, *sarkaar* [government] is the police, and not [...] the district administrator, or someone like the chief minister or prime minister - they are not aware of them."[90]

As mentioned just above, alongside the region's geography, the Maoist presence has had a strong impact on the presence and expanse of the state, "it is because of the Maoists, that the government has not really been able to reach out to the tribals."[91] According to an area expert (50), the Maoists used to restrict access to the district by placing roadblocks along the entire route from Raipur, and the District Collector used to have to be flown in by helicopter for intermittent visits; "earlier it was very difficult, the Naxals used to stay just four kilometres from the headquarters."[92] Although the state now has control of and, to an extent, beyond Narayanpur town, the implementation of development projects continues to depend on police protection.[93]

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[81] 50, expert
[82] 1, local tribal; similar statement by 25, representative of the district administration
[83] 24, representative of the district administration
[84] 24, 25&27, representatives of the district administration; 36&50 experts
[85] 25&26, representatives of the district administration; 34, expert
[86] 34, expert
[87] ibid.
[88] 38, expert
[89] 27, representative of the district administration; 57, expert
[90] 36, expert; similar statement by 35, expert
[91] 36, expert; similar statements by 24, representative of the district administration; 39, expert; see also Sundar (2007)
[92] 27, representative of the district administration
[93] 25&26, representatives of the district administration

Yet, at the same time it is the district's densely forested, rugged terrain combined with the absence of the state that has allowed the Maoists to gain a firm foothold in the region in the first place:

> The [...] jungle has given them a good cover, it is very easy to hide there. This gives them security and [...] time to reorganize their plans. Even their senior leaders stay in Abujhmad. At the same time it is very difficult for the police. 15 to 20 kilometres south of Orchha town, there are some villages which are very strong Naxal bases and it is very hard for the police to reach there. They have to travel for almost 60 to 70 kilometres, and it is a very hilly and dense forest area. In that entire area, the police force goes once or twice.[94]

However, it is not only the limited police presence that has given space to the Maoists to establish themselves, but the political vacuum more generally.[95] Early on, misconduct by the few police officers and forest officials appointed in the region was frequent[96] and they could "behave as per their whims and fancies because nobody would come to know about it."[97] Moreover, according to several respondents, the general neglect of the tribal areas as a result of state absence has played a fundamental role.[98] Again, this stands out when comparing the two administrative blocks, Narayanpur and Orchha: the former, having "experienced the worst of Naxalism" is today much less affected than the latter, where even the most basic requirements remain unfulfilled and there is still very little connectivity with the outside world.[99]

This was a void the Maoists filled, in part, by sanctioning and/or eliminating forest guards and through their *Jantana Sarkaar* – a parallel People's Government:[100]

> Earlier there was very minimal presence of the government [...]. So they thought these Maoists are the government. It was very easy for them.[101]

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[94] 27, representative of the district administration; similar statement by 50, expert

[95] 19, representative of an organisation; 24, 27&30, representatives of the district administration; 39, 51&55, experts

[96] 27, representative of the district administration; 49, expert

[97] 21, representative of an organisation

[98] 22, representative of an organisation; 29 representative of the district administration; 50&55, experts

[99] 50, expert

[100] 27, representative of the district administration; 21 representative of an organisation; 36, 39, 49, 52, 55&57, experts

[101] 27, representative of the district administration; similar statement by 36, expert

Although the level of maturity of the *Jantana Sarkaar*, as well as its impact on the ground, is disputed, many respondents did emphasise that it represents a real alternative in what the Maoists call the 'Liberated Zone', and is therefore important to briefly mention as part of the current discussion on state absence. Based on the self-government of the tribals,[102] the *Jantana Sarkaar* allegedly provides education and healthcare and has established mass organisations representing, for example, women, farmers, students, traders and labourers – all issues and initiatives that the Indian state has not been able to provide or cater for in that area.[103] They also operate *Jan Adalats*, or People's Courts that adjudicate on local disputes, as part of this system.[104]

ii. The tribal community: culture, socio-economics and politics

This section discusses the tribal community, both in terms of the larger indigenous community of India – the Adivasis, as well as and in particular the tribals of Narayanpur and surrounding areas, describing their sociodemographic and cultural background, their means of livelihood and socioeconomic circumstances, as well as the local political context.

Sociodemographic and cultural characteristics

Counting over 104 million people, or 8.6 percent of India's total population,[105] the Adivasis are spread across various regions of the subcontinent, with noticeably high concentrations in the Northeast and the Central Indian Tribal Belt. Part of the latter, the states of Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh alone account for almost 40 percent of the total tribal population.[106] Narayanpur district, located at the heart of this region, is home to 108,161 tribals, their concentration being as high as 94 percent in Orchha block.[107] Then again, in-migration, particularly of trader castes from the Indo-Gangetic plains, as well as migrant labourers from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in the south, has changed local ethno-demographics. In Chhattisgarh, this is particularly the case in and around Raipur and other larger cities in the centre of the state,[108] but also in the more peripheral, and as such 'corer' tribal areas,[109] including Narayanpur town.[110]

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[102] 39, 52&57, experts
[103] 21&22, representatives of organisations; 39, 52&55, experts; see also Sundar (2007)
[104] Pasquale (2014)
[105] Indian Census (2011)
[106] ibid.
[107] At 72 percent, this is slightly lower in Narayanpur *tahsil* (Indian Census, 2011).
[108] 54, expert
[109] ibid.
[110] 15, community leader ; 46, expert

The Adivasis – a collective term for a large number of tribal and indigenous communities – are an extremely heterogeneous group characterised by a myriad of different identities. Across India, the three major tribes are the Bhils, Gonds and Santhals, although, overall, there are several hundred constitutionally recognised tribal groups.[111] The Gonds are largely concentrated in Central India, and also constitute the most populous tribe in Narayanpur – accounting for 89 percent of the local tribal population, followed by the Halbas (10 percent).[112]

The Gond tribe is itself relatively heterogeneous given numerous sub-tribes and up to 750 clans.[113] In Narayanpur, the major sub-groups are the Murias and Madias, as well as the Abujhmadias – or Hill Madias – who inhabit the more interior areas of the district and are officially classified as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG).[114] Traditionally all forest dwellers,[115] their identity is very much tied to what they refer to as *jal, jangal, jameen* (water, forest, land), reflecting the integral role that nature plays in their lives.[116]

As a group, they differ greatly from the larger Indian society, "from their Gods and rituals of worship,[117] their way of life in the forests, their social practices, how they educate themselves, the kind of desires and ambitions that they have, their value system, to their general pace of life."[118] Another key difference is language: "Chhattisgarhi [the regional language of Chhattisgarh] and Gondi are different like heaven and earth. There is no connection between the two."[119]

The various local tribes and sub-tribes similarly differ amongst themselves, particularly in terms of language,[120] their cultural traditions, the deities they worship – each village or group of villages has their own God or Goddess[121] – their dress and even their agricultural practices.[122] Reflecting this, local definitions of community, at least in the more interior areas, are narrow[123] and often limited to their immediate surroundings: "they just know that this is their village and that they belong to this village."[124] Nevertheless, solidarity among the tribals within the region is strong and socially they form a relatively cohesive group.[125] Identification with the more general Adivasi identity, on the other hand, is comparatively low, given that the tribals tend

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[111] Chandramouli (2013)
[112] Indian Census (2011)
[113] 48, expert
[114] 5, local tribal; 50, expert
[115] 5, local tribal; 18, representative of an organisation; 50 expert
[116] 13&14, community leaders; 36, expert
[117] Tribal, respectively Gondi, religion emphasises their close relationship with the environment, and worships nature – the hills, the rivers, the trees and the rocks – as well as their ancestors (13, 14&15, community leaders; 36, 46&54, experts).
[118] 54, expert; similar statements by 13, 15&17, community leaders and 36, expert
[119] 13, community leader; similar statement by 17, community leader
[120] For example, Gonds speak Gondi, Madias and Abujhmadias speak Madiya and Halbas speak Halbi.
[121] 3&4, local tribals; 46, expert
[122] 1, 3, 4&7, local tribals; 16, community leader; 21, representative of an organisation; 41&55, experts
[123] 4, local tribal; 38, expert; see also Sundar (2007)
[124] 5, local tribal
[125] 7, local tribal

to identify much more strongly with their tribe, if not with their clan.[126] In fact, "there isn't really a larger Adivasi identity on the ground, there's no reason for it to exist."[127] A key reason for this is that even just the Gonds live divided between different states, as a result of which not only their language has developed differently in line with the respective regional languages, but there are also very little means of communication between them.[128] As for the national Indian identity, "people here don't realise that there is an India,"[129] and as such, "before, the tribals used to perceive people staying [even] in Narayanpur town as foreigners. There was that little interaction."[130]

Nevertheless, with their growing proximity to the outside world, a change in tribal cultural practices is gradually taking place.[131] The fact that these communities are increasingly and simultaneously living in multiple centuries[132] has affected how local identities are defined and lived, and has caused particularly the younger generations to distance themselves from their traditional practices.[133] "The villages close to the roads, they all have TVs, they all see the advertisements", which is "making sure that their desires are changing."[134] In this regard, migration – whether conflict-induced or for economic reasons[135] – from the interior villages to, in this case, Narayanpur town, has also played a big role:

> After moving to the city and seeing all the bright lights and big buildings, [...] life seems more attractive in the town compared to what's there in the village.[136]

Away from their traditional habitat, the tribals, and again particularly the younger generations, not only lose touch with tribal life in the forests[137] but "have also forgotten our Gondi language. [...] So not only is the tribal way of life gone, but also their language."[138] In this regard, education has played a particularly important role, given that schools operate in Hindi or one of the regional languages, rather than in the vernacular.[139] Those who receive education in urban areas therefore not only get accustomed to speaking in mainstream languages, but also "get acquainted with the

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[126] 36, expert
[127] 54, expert
[128] 43&48, experts
[129] 50, expert; also 5, local tribal and 38, 57&60, experts
[130] 30, representative of the district administration
[131] 37&38, experts
[132] 41, expert
[133] 14, community leader; 37&46, experts; see also Sundar (2007)
[134] 54, expert; similar statements by 46&47, experts
[135] 2, local tribal; 13, community leader; 36, expert
[136] 13, community leader; similar statements by 14, community leader and 37, expert
[137] 36, expert
[138] 13, community leader; similar statement by 43, expert. Similar observations are made with regard to knowledge and practice of traditional medicine and engagement in traditional craftsmanship (37, expert).
[139] 43, expert

outer world. They observe the lifestyle of people living in other parts or cities, and adopt it."[140]

Cultural change is, however, also brought about through religious conversion by Christian missionaries[141] and Hinduisation drives, especially by conservative Hindu organisations like the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) and related groups such as the *Vishva Hindu Parishad* and its youth wing *Bajrang Dal*.[142] These organisations are increasingly gaining a foothold in the area,[143] "they are present in almost every Adivasi village, at least those near the roads. And the Adivasis who have not converted, it's less that they have refused than the RSS not having reached them strongly enough yet."[144] Also, Missions, by offering services like boarding schools, convert and distance Adivasis from their social and cultural roots at a very young age.[145] An interesting manifestation of this can be seen in tribal naming practices,[146] with names like *Ram*bati, Mangu*ram* or Gudh*ram* becoming increasingly popular – Ram being a Hindu God, whose mythology plays out, at least in part, in Central India.[147] However, often it also happens that tribal children with traditional names are assigned a new name by their teachers as soon as they enter school:

> In the Ashram, if you ask the kids, they will tell you their name. Then if you ask them their original name, they will tell you a different name.[148]

More apparent is, however, the increasingly widespread adoption of Hindu rituals and practices,[149] as well as the celebration of festivals like *Holi* and *Diwali*, this particularly, but not only, by tribals who have migrated to more urban areas.[150]

Together, these changes in the practice of culture and religion, and the growing adoption of Hindi, involve the tribal community in a growing struggle for its identity and leaves it with increasingly little space to engage in its own traditions:

> [...] their culture is vanishing. Maybe the future generations will not remember anything about their own culture.[151]

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[140] 46, expert
[141] 2, local tribal; 13, community leader; 46&54, experts
[142] 54, expert; 13, community leader; Sundar (2007); general assimilation into Hindu society is also emphasised by 46&58, experts
[143] 36, expert
[144] 54, expert
[145] 5, local tribal; 13, community leader
[146] One traditional practice is to name a child according to the day of the week he or she was born on. For example, Somaru is likely to be derived from *Somvaar*, meaning Monday (1, local tribal; 46, expert). Another practice is to use the names of ancestors or trees (46, expert).
[147] 54, expert; see also Sundar (2007)
[148] 46, expert; also 5, local tribal; 13, community leader
[149] 14&15, community leaders; 36&46, experts
[150] 14, community leader
[151] 46, expert; similar statement by 15, community leader

Finally, with regard to relations between the tribal and non-tribal communities, the latter tend to look down upon the tribals,[152] viewing them as backward, uncultured and uncivilized.[153] Reflecting this, "in the social ladder, the Adivasis are at the absolute bottom"[154] – they are ranked even below Dalits, the lowest group in the caste system.[155] On the ground, this manifests itself in the persecution and discrimination of the tribals, who are, for example, often not allowed to enter houses or places of worship.[156] In fact, "social inequalities are so high [...] that Adivasis face persecution even at the hands of Dalits."[157] In the cities and towns of Chhattisgarh where the population of traders and merchants of the Vaishya caste, i.e. upper caste Hindus, is substantial, these kind of social hierarchies very much exist.[158] Yet, significantly, in the areas where the tribals are in the majority, as in the case of Narayanpur, this dynamic is inversed and plays out against economically-weak non-tribals: here, owing to differences in occupations, members of the Scheduled Castes as well as Other Backward Castes tend to be disfavoured and treated as inferior by the tribal community, and are, for example, not allowed to sit inside classrooms or discriminated in the distribution of food rations.[159]

Means of livelihood and socioeconomic circumstances

Traditionally, the tribals practice subsistence agriculture,[160] commonly in the form of shifting cultivation,[161] which is locally known as *penda kheti*.[162] Using slash-and-burn methods, they regularly relocate to prepare and plant new fields,[163] and typically use only very little technology,[164] the extent of the latter varying from tribe to tribe. While some use a plough, others rely on more simple tools like the hoe,[165] reflected in statements like "in the villages beyond Orchha, they don't know agriculture."[166] Entirely dependent on rainfall,[167] they grow predominantly millet or *kosara,* as well as vegetables.[168] Nowadays, local farming practices are beginning to change, however, with, for example, the Ram Krishna Mission, as well as the local administration training the tribals in settled and more diversified agriculture.[169]

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[152] 37, 46&54, experts
[153] 43, 44&55 experts
[154] 54, expert; similar statement by 37, expert
[155] 54, expert
[156] 34, expert
[157] 54, expert
[158] 46&54, experts
[159] 50&51, experts
[160] 9, local tribal; 50, expert
[161] 4, local tribal; 13, community leader; 41&46, experts
[162] 2, local tribal; 17, community leader; 46, expert
[163] 1, 2&4, local tribals; 13&17, community leaders; 41&46, experts
[164] 7, local tribal
[165] 37, 41&46, experts
[166] 16, community leader
[167] 2, 4&9, local tribals
[168] 1, 2&4 local tribals; 16, community leader; 46&50, experts
[169] 4, local tribal, 46, expert; 18, representative of an organisation

> Earlier our village was surrounded by jungle,
> but [now] we have brought most of the land
> around our village under farming.[170]

An additional important source of livelihood for the tribals is minor forest produce (MFP), such as tendu leaves, emblic, mahua, chirongi, sal seeds, tamarind, honey and bamboo,[171] which they gather and sell to contractors[172] as well as, together with surplus produce[173] and craft items,[174] at the weekly markets or *haats*.[175] Besides an outlet for their produce, these *haats* are important meeting places, where the different tribes interact and information is exchanged.[176] Traditionally bartering[177] and generally self-subsistent,[178] the tribals have not been much connected to the monetized system in the past,[179] leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, inter alia because they lack information on market prices:[180]

> They used to trade anything for a fist of
> salt.[181]

Although increasingly integrated, subsistence agriculture still remains their main source of livelihood, as is the case for all respondents from rural areas, who named 'agriculture' as their primary or only occupation, followed by 'collection of MFP' in the case of some of them.[182] This also reflects the fact that, especially in the interior areas, employment opportunities are relatively rare.[183] There are government initiatives like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MNREGA) scheme,[184] and some respondents indicated that they are employed as daily wage labourers, including under MNREGA.[185] However, the scheme is often only partially or irregularly implemented,[186] and opportunities for work tend to coincide

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[170] 4, local tribal
[171] 3&4, local tribals; 17, community leader; 18, representative of an organisation; 27, representative of the district administration; 40, expert
[172] 27, representative of the district administration
[173] The sale of surplus produce has been possible especially since the extension of the Public Distribution System, which allows the tribals to replace some of their produce with subsidised rice (4, local tribal).
[174] Own observation; 37, expert
[175] 4, local tribal; 17, community leader
[176] 50, 54&56, experts
[177] 20, representative of an organisation; 31, representative of the district administration
[178] 1&8, local tribals; 18, representative of an organisation; 27, representative of the district administration; 34, 36, 49&50, experts
[179] 9, local tribal; 16, community leader; 27, representative of the district administration; 47, expert
[180] 31, representative of the district administration; 36&51, experts
[181] 31, representative of the district administration; similar statement by 36, expert
[182] 4, 7, 9, 10&11, local tribals; also 13&17, community leader
[183] 4&9, local tribals; 16, community leader
[184] 16&17, community leaders
[185] 2, 7&10, local tribals
[186] 2, 9&10, local tribals

with the farming season, when the tribals need to prioritise work in their fields instead.[187]

While the forest caters for most, if not all, of their needs in the villages,[188] a fundamental change in livelihood is experienced by those who migrate from the interior areas to the towns. There, the tribals find themselves in a situation in which they "have to buy each and everything, which has been very difficult."[189] Indeed, in contrast to their means of subsistence in the jungle they need to earn not only for daily requirements, but, as some respondents emphasised, also for expenses like rent.[190] At the same time, traditional means of catering for certain needs are no longer practicable, as for example in the case of herbal medicines, which can only be found inside the forest.[191]

In the towns, wage labour is the most common source of income,[192] although, here too, opportunities for daily work remain limited and/or irregular.[193] Although a more diverse portfolio of occupations is evident among the younger, better educated generation, with some respondents or their family members working as rural health workers, teachers, or with the local administration,[194] unemployment is quite high.[195] Hence, families often also engage in other or additional economic activities, such as handicrafts – in so far as they can access the necessary materials,[196] gathering firewood, selling refreshments or vending vegetables, in order to make ends meet.[197] Moreover, some respondents, both rural and urban, indicated participation in self-help groups that provide financial assistance in the form of interest-free loans.[198] Limited livelihood opportunities are, however, also encouraging tribals to migrate to neighbouring states, where they feel they can access relatively better jobs.[199]

> They feel that there are more opportunities outside their village, that there are more opportunities outside their forest. [...] So migration is also quite prevalent.[200]

Imperative to local socioeconomic conditions is also the distribution of land and the related issue of land rights, which, a concern in both rural and urban areas, has several facets and affects the tribal community in various and profound ways. As

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[187] 7, local tribal
[188] 2, 3&8, local tribals; 34&50, experts
[189] 3, local tribal; similar statements by 1&2, local tribals; similar observation by 34, expert
[190] 1, 8&9 local tribals
[191] 2, local tribal
[192] 1, 3, 6, 8&9, local tribals
[193] 1, 8&9, local tribals
[194] 1,3, 5&9, local tribals
[195] 2&3, local tribals
[196] 1, local tribal
[197] 2, 3, 6&9, local tribals
[198] 6, local tribal; 16, community leader
[199] 36, expert
[200] ibid.

already remarked on in section 1 above, one aspect concerns the registration of title deeds, which is often irregular, as in the case of Narayanpur, where there is great discrepancy between the two *tahsils*, as well as a concern among many families who migrated to the headquarters and now stay in settlements like *Shanti Nagar*. Another aspect relates to land acquisition, an issue that goes back to the British colonisation of India and the ensuing introduction of the concept of eminent domain.

Traditionally, consistent with their practice of shifting agriculture, the tribals did not have stable land rights.[201] Instead, land was generally thought of as commonly owned, and cultivated by the entire village; whenever the land was (re)distributed, this was done according to the needs of individual families:[202]

> The entire village or farmland was thought to belong to the community. [...] decisions about who needed more land, and who could do with less, were taken in open meetings in the village. Requirements used to be placed in the meetings, and decisions were taken.[203]

Nevertheless, despite thought of as very egalitarian owing to this traditional land distribution system,[204] the tribal community too has certain land-related hierarchies within:[205] for example, the founding families of villages were generally assigned more land.[206] Also, among the tribes that practice settled agriculture, intra-group land inequalities tend to be more pronounced,[207] although an even greater difference in land ownership is that between the tribal and non-tribal communities:

> You'll find that the best lands are owned by non-tribals.[208]

Moreover, more recent post-independence state efforts to register land records have institutionalised geographic differences and as such, to an extent, the stratification between tribes, particularly between the Gonds living in the plains of Narayanpur and the Madias inside Abujhmad, Orchha:[209] while Narayanpur *tahsil* has now been surveyed and *pattas* have been registered, in Orchha there are still no land records, whether at the individual or community level.[210] Not only does this mean that there

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[201] 41, expert
[202] 40&41, experts
[203] 13, community leader
[204] 40&45, experts
[205] 5, local tribal; 41, expert
[206] 51, expert
[207] ibid.
[208] 41, expert; similar statement by 51, expert
[209] Based on 3, local tribal
[210] 50, expert; evident also in the responses of local tribals regarding whether they have title deeds (1, 7, 10, 11); also 17, community leader

is no recognition of ownership but also that government schemes cannot be allocated, and hence do not reach those who would, in principle, be entitled to state benefits,[211] this despite the fact that the concerned areas are primarily inhabited by tribes classified as PVTGs.

In *Shanti Nagar*, people have "settled wherever they found space"[212] and as such generally also do not have official ownership of the plots on which they are staying in Narayanpur town. Although there is a government rehabilitation programme, not all families have received support, and many continue to live with the possibility of being evicted from their homes:[213]

> No one here has any *patta*. Though we have
> land with us, we can't call this land ours.[214]

The issue of land acquisition, on the other hand, has its roots in the natural wealth of the tribal homeland. As mentioned in the introduction, many areas of Central India are extremely rich in timber and valuable forest produce in addition to extensive deposits of a variety of mineral resources.[215] Their survival being dependent on the land,[216] land acquisition for the extraction of these resources has enormous socioeconomic consequences for the tribal community. The irrevocable environmental damage caused by large-scale resource extraction in the region[217] is significantly threatening local livelihoods by polluting streams and rivers as well as the agricultural land lining the floodplains.[218] The displacement and re-settlement of tribals in camps and towns[219] is not only removing them from their means of existence but also from their social and cultural roots:

> [...] for them to settle down in other places,
> where they would be treated as a
> marginalised community, where they would
> not have their own ways and means of
> governance, of leading their social life, it's a
> big problem for them.[220]

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[211] 18, representative of an organisation; 50, expert
[212] 13, community leader
[213] ibid.; also 1, 2, 3&9, local tribals
[214] 3, local tribal
[215] Mineral Resources Department, Government of Chhattisgarh (n.d.a); also 38, 40, 41&50, experts
[216] 34, 38 &52, experts
[217] Although there has been no large-scale resource extraction in Narayanpur district to-date (13, community leader) and land acquisition has therefore not been an issue so far (17, community leader), according to an area expert (50) and a local community leader (15), mining projects are in the process of being planned. There are, however, already two large iron ore mines, Rowghat and Bailadila, near the borders of the neighbouring districts of Dantewada and Kanker (50&54, experts).
[218] 54&55, experts
[219] 54, expert
[220] 52, expert

Compensation for those affected is very narrowly defined and limited to a close range of the extraction site, this despite the fact that "anyone who is downstream of an iron ore mine, no matter how many kilometres, is going to be affected."[221] Moreover, particularly the tribes living in the very interior of the forests, "you cannot compensate with money … for them, money cannot replace what is gone."[222] Employment opportunities, both skilled and unskilled, created by resource extraction projects are generally given to migrant labourers from other states, particularly Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, rather than to local tribals.[223] A combined effect of displacement and unemployment is that tribals then often become vulnerable to debt bondage, where they are "taken away by some contractor to Chennai or somewhere and there they do very very hard work, physically very hard work, […] and become totally dependent on whoever is the contractor."[224]

Lastly, an important aspect of the local socioeconomic circumstances to address in more detail is the general level of development in the region. As already briefly described in section 1, the provision of basic social services and amenities, as well as the availability of infrastructure, is relatively limited in Narayanpur, particularly in Orchha *tahsil*, as table 2 clearly shows:[225]

	Inhabited villages	Education facility	Medical facility	Drinking water	Post office	Phone	Public transport	Bank	Pucca road	Power supply
Narayanpur	175	165 (94)	38 (22)	174 (98)	16 (9)	41 (23)	33 (19)	1 (0.6)	51 (29)	142 (81)
Orchha	200	132 (66)	46 (23)	188 (94)	2 (1)	1 (0.5)	2 (1)	1 (0.5)	6 (3)	28 (14)
Total	375	297 (79)	84 (22)	362 (96)	18 (5)	42 (11)	35 (9)	2 (0.5)	57 (15)	170 (45)

Table 2 - Availability of services and facilities in Narayanpur (% in parentheses)[226]

With regard to education, primary schools, operated either by the government or the Ram Krishna Mission,[227] are relatively accessible in the rural areas, and according to the Indian Census of 2011, almost 80 percent of the villages have some kind of

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[221] 54, expert
[222] 52, expert
[223] 14, community leader; 54, expert
[224] 52, expert; see also Sundar (2007)
[225] 18, representative of an organisation; 36, 38, 49&53, experts
[226] Figures exclude Narayanpur town and are taken from the *District Census Handbook* for Narayanpur (Directorate of Census Operations, Chhattisgarh, 2011), which is based on the Indian Census of 2011. Note: the district administration itself questions the reliability of the figures for Orchha (24, representative of the district administration).
[227] Own observation; 1&9, local tribals

educational facility.[228] There are, however, doubts as to whether all of these schools are fully operational,[229] and some respondents emphasised that schoolchildren often need to walk considerable distances to reach a school.[230] Also, education beyond the primary level is, bar very few cases, not available outside Narayanpur town.[231] In the latter, there are 13 primary schools, 9 middle and 7 secondary schools per 10,000 population.[232] While the quality of education and school infrastructure is debated[233] – teacher absenteeism often being an issue,[234] it is generally considered to be better in the Ashram schools, which tend to "have more facilities and take better responsibility."[235] Regardless, several respondents also emphasised that, in the past, a key issue has been the certain reluctance among tribal families to send their children to school, even if facilities were available in their vicinity. Nowadays, although there has been a significant increase in the number of enrolled pupils,[236] they often do not complete their education, usually for economic reasons: "once they study 'till 4th or 5th standard, they will involve them in farming."[237] Another obstacle has been the fact that education is imparted in Hindi, which, as Gondi- or Madia-speakers, represents a significant challenge for the tribals.[238] Overall, this manifests in very low literacy rates, as shown in Table 3: in Orchha block, for example, only 27 percent of the population is literate, compared to 60 percent at the level of Chhattisgarh state.

	India	Chhattisgarh	Narayanpur (district)	Narayanpur (tahsil)	Orchha (tahsil)	Narayanpur (town)
Literacy rate (%)	63	60	40	45	27	73

Table 3 - Literacy rates in Narayanpur compared to Chhattisgarh and India[239]

With a coverage rate of 22 percent of villages,[240] the availability of medical facilities in Narayanpur is, on the other hand, extremely low; "there's [hardly any] access to

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[228] Directorate of Census Operations, Chhattisgarh (2011); respondent's answers (1, 7&9, local tribals and 17, community leader) with regard to the availability of schools in their villages suggest a similar coverage rate.
[229] 14, community leader
[230] 17, community leader; 36, expert
[231] Indian Census, 2011; emphasised also by 9, local tribal
[232] Directorate of Census Operations, Chhattisgarh (2011); emphasised also by 1&6, local tribals. Based on own observations, there is also at least one college that offers graduate as well as postgraduate degree programmes in Narayanpur town.
[233] 3, 7&10, local tribals; 17, community leader; 53, expert
[234] 2, local tribal; 26, representative of the district administration
[235] 9, local tribal; similar statement by 2, local tribal
[236] 16, community leader; 23, representative of an organisation
[237] 16, community leader; also 7, local tribal
[238] 43&46, experts
[239] Figures taken from the Indian Census (2011). Note: the District administration itself questions the reliability of the figures for Orchha (24, representative of the district administration).
[240] Directorate of Census Operations, Chhattisgarh (2011)

healthcare services,"[241] again, especially in the rural, interior areas.[242] Hence, to avail of medical care, the tribals are in most cases compelled to travel significant distances, and in serious cases all the way to Narayanpur town, where also the Ram Krishna Mission is running a hospital.[243] Although an ambulance service has now been established for the rural areas,[244] they still need to bring the patient on foot,[245] usually on a *khat*, or bed, until "the location where the ambulance can reach."[246] Hence, reliance on traditional medicines and faith healers is extremely common, and often also preferred:[247]

> The major relief with regard to our health
> issues comes from *Baiga-Gunia* [faith healers]
> and ayurvedic medicines.[248]

While the quality of the health services provided by both the administration and the Ram Krishna Mission is again debated among the villagers,[249] a key impediment in the provision of healthcare has been the unavailability of doctors as "no doctor wishes to go there" given the local working and security conditions.[250]

With regard to housing conditions, accommodation tends to be very simple and is usually constructed of mud and wood (*kuchha*), or, nowadays more rarely, bamboo and thatch.[251] Over 96 percent of villages have access to drinking water,[252] although the water sources vary, with some households relying on rivers and streams while others have been supplied with borewells.[253] According to several respondents, whenever they face issues in accessing water, it is usually due to broken handpumps.[254] Although recently improved,[255] electricity supply has, on average, a much lower coverage: while it is relatively high in Narayanpur *tahsil* (80 percent), only 14 percent of villages in Orchha have power.[256]

As emphasised by several respondents, it is, however, particularly families who have migrated to Narayanpur town who, like in sustaining their livelihoods, face difficulties in terms of housing, water and electricity:

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[241] 36, expert; similar statements by 3, local tribal and 41, 49, 50, 53 &55, experts
[242] 9, local tribal; 17, community leader; 50, expert
[243] Own observation; 3, 4, 7&9, local tribals. Respondents residing in the town, therefore, did not mention any issues in accessing clinics and hospitals (2, 3, 6&8, local tribals).
[244] 4, local tribal; 25, representative of the district administration
[245] 9, local tribal; 55, expert
[246] 2, local tribal; similar statement by 3, local tribal
[247] 2, 4&8, local tribals; 16, community leader; 37, expert
[248] 17, community leader
[249] 4, 7, 8&11, local tribals
[250] 34, expert; similar statements by 11, local tribal and 18, representative of an organisation
[251] 17, community leader; 43, expert
[252] Directorate of Census Operations, Chhattisgarh (2011)
[253] 4&7, local tribals; 17, community leader
[254] 10&11, local tribals
[255] 18, representative of an organisation
[256] Directorate of Census Operations, Chhattisgarh (2011)

> Earlier, the people who lived there had access
> to rivers in their villages and there was no
> problem of water. But once they came here,
> they started having a problem with shelter,
> food and water and various other problems.
> Now, they have electricity, so when there's a
> power cut, it's a problem; in the village,
> there's no issue of power cuts! The natural
> system is such that there is adequate light.
> But here, there is no electricity; when there's
> no electricity, there's no water.[257]

However, while many initially faced issues of this kind, respondents who live in the town also stated that, now, many of these problems have been solved.[258]

A final set of amenities relate to transport, communication and connectivity more generally. As already discussed, many areas of the district are largely inaccessible, with only 15 percent of villages approachable by a *pucca* road.[259] Connected only via footpaths, entire villages are often completely cut-off by rising rivers and impassable routes during the monsoon, although in certain locations bridges have now been completed or are under construction.[260] Public transport is extremely limited and available in only 33 villages (19 percent) in Narayanpur *tahsil* and in two in Orchha.[261] Hence, the tribals mostly travel on foot, and if they have and paths permit, by bicycle:[262]

> To reach Narayanpur, they first crossed a hill
> on foot and then picked up their bicycles and
> cycled the rest.[263]

Services like post offices and banks are near to non-existent,[264] with a coverage of 5 and 0.5 percent of villages, respectively. Similarly, telephone communication is very restricted, with 41 villages covered by a network in Narayanpur *tahsil* and only one in Orchha.[265] Finally, with regard to sources of information, some respondents said that they have access to a radio, and only very few to a television:[266]

> Yes, some of us have radio and some of us
> don't, so not all can listen to the radio.[267]

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[257] 13, community leader; similar statements by 1, 8&9, local tribals

[258] 2, 3 & 6, local tribals

[259] Directorate of Census Operations, Chhattisgarh (2011)

[260] 4, local tribal; own observations

[261] Directorate of Census Operations, Chhattisgarh (2011); availed of by some respondents

[262] 1,7, 9, 10&11 local tribals

[263] From field notes, based on a conversation with a group of Madia tribals who had come to the District Collectorate. Similar statements by 4&9, local tribals and 16, community leader.

[264] 1, local tribal

[265] Directorate of Census Operations, Chhattisgarh (2011)

[266] 4, 7, 10&11, local tribals

[267] 4, local tribal

The tribals therefore generally rely on information being shared by word of mouth, both in the rural areas and in *Shanti Nagar* in the town.[268]

Overall, the tribal communities of Narayanpur, comprising a large majority of the district's total population, tend to fare significantly less well in terms of accessing services and related infrastructure compared to the larger populations of Chhattisgarh state, as well as India:

> Differences between the tribal communities are negligible.[269] But compared to the non-Adivasis, there are lots of differences. There is a huge gap.[270]

The political context and the tribals' position within it

As a Fifth Schedule Area, a constitutional status that applies to regions with significant tribal populations,[271] the region falls under the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act of 1996, which seeks to promote tribal self-government through locally elected administrative units at the village (*Gram Panchayats*), block (*Panchayat Samiti*) and district (*Zilla Parishad*) levels. More specifically, it mandates the devolution of certain political, administrative and fiscal powers to the local *Panchayati Raj Institutions* (PRIs), with a particular emphasis on issues key to the tribal community, such as the management of community resources, including minor water bodies and forest produce, the operation of village markets, and the approval of development projects. It thereby also seeks to protect local customs and traditions as well as traditional governance mechanisms. In addition, the Act provides for a mandatory consultation in land acquisition in order to safeguard against land alienation.[272] Another key law in this regard is the Scheduled Tribe and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, or Forest Rights Act (FRA) for short, of 2006, which recognises, and restores, the right of the respective communities to the use and management of land and other resources, stipulating both individual rights to cultivated land and community rights over common property resources.

Both considered landmark acts, particularly against the rampant land acquisition in tribal areas that had been previously legitimated by both colonial laws and laws enacted by the Indian state, implementation on the ground has been weak in many

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[268] 9, local tribal
[269] Some respondents did emphasise differences between the Gond, Madia and Abujhmadia tribes, mentioning, for example, the categorisation of the latter as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribe, on the basis of which its members are eligible for more government schemes (3, local tribal).
[270] 9, local tribal; similar statements by 15, community leader, 26, representative of the district administration and 34&50, experts
[271] The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution deals with the administration and control of the areas with a tribal majority, inter alia, through the establishment of a Tribes Advisory Council.
[272] 34, 37&52, experts

states, including Chhattisgarh, even though 60 percent of its area comes under the Fifth Schedule:[273]

> Officially it is all *Panchayati Raj*, but this is only on paper. There is actually no ground work in *Panchayati Raj*.[274]

The implementation of PESA being the task of state governments, respondents emphasised particularly a lack of political will on the part of state-level politicians to devolve power to the local level as the main reason for the limited functioning of the PRIs on the ground.[275] As such, "the village *panchayats* have been made, all this is okay. But the real power has not been given."[276] This is, however, not only an issue at the level of the state governments, as even at the district level political initiative on the part of community leaders is often supressed by the local administration.[277]

Nevertheless, the village *panchayats* are the most likely place where the tribals have at least some representation. As soon as one moves to or above the block level, "all the offices, like the revenue office, the forest department, everything, all government offices, most of these are headed by non-Adivasis. These are posts that are filled by the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), the elite core of the Indian bureaucracy."[278] Hence, even if there are tribal representatives, "it's the creamy layer getting in", inter alia because a high degree of education is required to clear the exams necessary to become an IAS officer.[279] As the tribal elite, they are therefore in their own ways removed from the local communities and their problems.[280] As stated by a local Madia (1), "no one has become an officer of higher rank from our community 'till now who can bring things forward for us."

However, even at the *panchayat* level, once elected, the *sarpanches* (village heads) often move to the district headquarters, either due to security concerns or in pursuance of their own ambitions, where they are then likewise removed from their community:[281]

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[273] 18&22, representatives of organisations; 34, 39&52, experts

[274] 24, representative of the district administration; similar statements by 13, community leader and 50, expert

[275] 13&15, community leaders; 22, representative of an organisation; 34, expert. They also linked this to the natural resource wealth of the region, the extraction of which would likely be much more restricted under fully functioning PRIs and a "powerful tribal lobby" (13&15, community leaders; 34, expert).

[276] 15, community leader

[277] ibid.; 18, representative of an organisation

[278] 54, expert; similar statements by 41&50, experts

[279] 54, expert; similar statements by 1, local tribal and 37, 43&50, experts

[280] 54&57, experts; also 55, expert. However, at the time of this research, officers at the district administration were deemed exceptionally approachable by the local community (4&8, local tribals; also 50, expert), but given frequent rotations, some have since been assigned elsewhere.

[281] Own observations; 24, representative of the district administration; 50&55, experts

> In that sense, politically, the local Adivasis become even more disenfranchised than before. They are becoming more and more marginalised. The people in power don't understand their problems.[282]

Among the tribals, experiences and opinions vary: while some find that representatives at the local level "do listen to our problems and also try to address them,"[283] others feel that they have been very neglected by them:[284]

> Our elected representatives from our own community forget us and our society once they gain some political positions.[285]

At the state and national levels, the tribals have similarly little (meaningful) representation.[286] Despite a policy of reservation for Schedules Castes and Tribes (8.6 percent in the case of the latter), true tribal representatives have been few and far between,[287] their representatives either being "disinterested, differently motivated, non-Adivasis,"[288] or, if they are of Adivasi background, they tend to be "either side-lined or quickly overturned by non-Adivasi political forces."[289] In other words, even if they are elected, "they are not able to break the social dynamics of power, even within their party."[290] Hence, although there are tribal representatives in all the major political parties,[291] they often tend to follow the party line, even if this runs counter to tribal interests.[292] Consequently, there is very little discussion of tribal rights or issues of their concern, whether in the *Lok Sabha* (House of the People) or the *Rajya Sabha* (Council of States).[293] Overall, therefore, "people feel that their representatives do very little for them."[294]

A related issue is the fact that administrative and political representatives, especially at the higher levels, are generally inaccessible to the tribals,[295] on the one hand because of physical distance,[296] and on the other because they often face a language barrier.[297]

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[282] 54, expert
[283] 7, local tribal; similar statements by 3&4, local tribals
[284] 8&11, local tribals
[285] 10, local tribal; similar statement by 5, local tribal
[286] 41, expert
[287] 54, expert; similar statement by 31, representative of the district administration
[288] 54, expert; similar statement by 55, expert
[289] 54, expert
[290] 40, expert; similar statements by 43&49, experts
[291] 47&49, experts
[292] 47, expert
[293] 55, expert; similar statement by 49, expert
[294] 54, expert
[295] ibid.
[296] 6, local tribal; 36, expert
[297] 1, local tribal; 43, expert

As such largely excluded from the political process, the tribal community as a whole also has noticeably little knowledge and awareness of their political representatives as well as of the political process more generally:

> Most tribals don't know what happens at the state level; their knowledge is with the neighbouring village, that's all. [....] And they don't care so much who is sitting in Delhi.[298]

Although there is greater engagement with politics at the local *panchayat* level, where the tribals are more aware of who their representatives are, or at least where they can be found,[299] there too, understanding is often limited, including among those who are part of the political system:

> In my community they are totally unaware about politics, they don't know what I have become, [...] what is its importance and [...] what are the benefits. [...] I myself did not know. Even now sometimes I don't understand many things.[300]

On the one hand, this reflects the fact that leaders are elected into political positions without the necessary political know-how due to a lack of capacity building measures.[301] On the other hand, the general unfamiliarity with the political system as well as with their rights and entitlements[302] ensues from the fact that "the tribes were never told that they have PESA"[303] or the FRA.[304] Indeed, access to political information is significantly limited, "we are not aware of the various government schemes [...]. Neither do we get this information from the *panchayat* nor through any other medium of communication."[305]

iii. The Maoist insurgency

In terms of the local context, a final and in many ways defining aspect to consider in more detail is the ongoing conflict between the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) – the armed wing of the Communist Party of India – Maoist – and the Indian

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[298] 34, expert
[299] 4, local tribal; 34&35, experts
[300] 16, community leader under the PRI; similar statements by 13&17, community leaders and 26, representative of the district administration
[301] 34, expert; see also Pasquale (2014) for a discussion on the vulnerability and limited capability of newly elected leaders.
[302] 26, representative of the district administration
[303] 34, expert
[304] 13, community leader; 54, expert
[305] 7, local tribal; similar statement by 54, expert

government, which has not only embroiled the local tribal community but also, as argued in the next chapter, significantly influenced the expansion strategy of the state.

The origins of the Maoist insurgency, also known as the Naxalite movement, are traced back to Naxalbari village of West Bengal, where in 1967 disputes over land reform sparked a larger-scale movement against unjust agrarian practices associated with the *zamindari* system.[306] Spreading from there across eastern India, including to other districts in West Bengal, as well as Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, the movement was suppressed by the state in 1972, leading to ideological splintering and general disorganisation. The movement then re-emerged in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh in the early 1980s, and eventually consolidated in 2004 when the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC), the People's War Group (PWG) and Party Unity (PU) merged to form the Communist Party of India – Maoist (CPI-Maoist). It was also in this latter phase that the movement diffused throughout east-central India, particularly to the states of Telangana, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, which, together with Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, comprise what has become known as the 'Red Corridor.' In its course, the movement then converged around two epicentres, one in the north that includes Jharkhand and southern Bihar, as well as districts of West Bengal and northern Odisha, and one in the centre, which includes Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Chhattisgarh, but also eastern Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and further parts of Odisha, these also being the states with large tribal populations.[307]

Commenting on this, respondents emphasised that the movement has become noticeably fragmented between these two centres,[308] with the upper one comprising mostly of smaller rivalling groups who are primarily engaged in extortive activities.[309] But also in the centre, "Naxalism is [to a large extent] a local phenomenon. [...] There are different Naxal groups operating in different areas. So the ones which are operating in Narayanpur are certainly not those who are operating in Malkangiri, Orissa, that part, maybe in Andhra [Pradesh], Telangana, or even in southern most Bastar."[310]

Nevertheless, according to figures released by the Ministry of Home Affairs in early 2018,[311] ninety districts spread across eleven states are presently under Maoist influence; thirty of these are considered 'worst-affected' and account for 90 percent

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[306] The *zamindari* system refers to a land tenure system wherein the aristocracy owned large amounts of land and exercised great control over the local peasant population, including through taxation.
[307] Hoelscher, Miklian and Vadlamannati (2012); Pasquale (2014); Mukherjee (2017)
[308] 38, expert
[309] 50, expert; see also Pasquale (2014)
[310] 50, expert
[311] Note: government figures are likely to underestimate the number of incidents and deaths, in view of which the figures used here should be interpreted with caution. Such under-reporting is also emphasised by Sundar (2007).

of all Maoist-related violence.'[312] In terms of fatalities, 13,834 people lost their lives in over 27,700 incidents in the past two decades, including 7,869 civilians, 2,691 security force personnel and 3,274 Naxalites.[313] Listed among the severely affected states, Chhattisgarh accounts for 3,497 fatalities during the period 2003 to 2016,[314] and is considered the hotbed of the insurgency.[315] Although not the most violence-struck district within Chhattisgarh,[316] Narayanpur is included in the category of 'worst-affected districts', and, owing to advantageous geographic and political conditions, as discussed above, serves as the movement's headquarter: "the central leadership [...], Ganapathi[317] and all, they are here. In Farsabeda and Kutul. They are here. [...] Abujhmad is where they could find a safe home."[318]

While the leadership is said to come mainly from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana,[319] the base of the movement is, in the main, tribal.[320] Actively seeking their allegiance, the Maoists, from the very beginning of their presence in the region, engaged with tribal concerns,[321] broaching a narrative of an exploitative state and the need for armed rebellion to overturn it:[322]

> First they told them how the kings exploited them, then how the British killed their people. Then the Naxalites also told them that today's government is also exploitative. They were helpless, and in such a situation, these people stood for their help. [...] they believed in what they said.[323]

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[312] In comparison, in 2015, when the state launched the National Policy and Action Plan, 106 districts were considered as 'affected' and 35 as 'worst-affected'. In 2017, the former figure rose to 126 and the latter to 36 due to the bifurcation of states and districts (Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018).

[313] Figures from the Ministry of Home Affairs published by the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP, n.d.b).

[314] Figures from the Ministry of Home Affairs published by the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP, n.d.b). The corresponding figure compiled by the SATP based on news reports is 2,821 fatalities, but covers the period 2005 to late 2018 (SATP, n.d.c).

[315] 36, 43&51, experts

[316] 40, expert. Figures released by the South Asia Terrorism Portal indicate a much higher rate of fatalities in Sukma, Bijapur and Dantewada over the period 2012 to 2017 (SATP, n.d.a).

[317] Muppala Lakshmana Rao, more commonly known as Ganapathi, is the leader of the Maoist Movement and the present Secretary General of the CPI-Maoist.

[318] 50, expert

[319] 16, community leader; 28&30, representatives of the district administration; 36, 39, 46, 50&53, experts. The larger CPI-Maoist, however, has a broader leadership from across India (50, expert).

[320] 27, representative of the district administration; 53, expert. In this regard, it is however important to note that while the senior leadership in the Politbureau and Central Committee is almost exclusively non-tribal (36, 40&55, experts), over time, tribals did rise in the organisation, according to two respondents to the level of deputy commander (28, representative of the district administration; 53, expert). On the other hand, the CPI-Maoist also has an urban network and engages in efforts to put forward its ideology in the cities (19&21, representatives of organisations).

[321] 36, expert; see also Sundar (2007)

[322] The overthrowing of the Indian state through armed struggle as the Maoist's guiding objective was emphasised by several respondents, including by 19, representative of an organisation and 39, 40&41, experts.

[323] 21, representative of an organisation; similar statement by 40, expert

As mentioned above, they took action against the (misbehaviour of) forest guards and police officers,[324] and established an alternative system of government, the *Jantana Sarkaar*, as well as, perhaps most significantly, sided with the tribals in their fight for their *jal, jangal, jameen* (water, forest, land).[325] Moreover, they negotiated fairer prices for forest produce, particularly the *tendu patta* (tendu leaf) and drought compensation,[326] and engaged in the re-distribution of land as well as food reserves within villages.[327]

Another noteworthy aspect of their mobilization strategy is their effort to demonstrate closeness with the tribal community, and, relatedly, their focus on tribal culture. Regarding the former, particularly significant is their acquaintance with local tribal languages:

> [...] the Maoists live with them, so there is no problem of distance, and Maoists have learned their languages, so there is no problem of language.[328]

At the forefront of the latter, which is largely an attempt to win tribal hearts and minds, is the *Chetna Netya Manch*, a Maoist cultural group that performs plays, songs and dances at festivals and gatherings, activities that have also traditionally been central elements of tribal culture.[329]

Organising at the village level, tribals have thus been integrated into the movement in large numbers,[330] including as members of the guerrilla army, but also of the *Jan Militia* (People's Militia), which is armed only with bows and arrows, and the unarmed village committees of supporters known as *Sanghams*.[331] Reflecting their mobilisation strategy, tribals often begin their engagement with the Maoists by participating in cultural programmes or providing logistic support, and only later are recruited into their rank and file.[332] However, the Maoists are also said to implement a policy of compulsory enlistment, whereby one member of each household is obliged to join their ranks.[333] Overall, this has led to a high level of integration of

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[324] 27, representative of the district administration; 21 representative of an organisation; 49, expert; see also Sundar (2007)
[325] 17, community leader; 41, expert
[326] 51, expert; see also Sundar (2007)
[327] 21, representative of an organisation; 51, expert; see also Sundar (2007)
[328] 43, expert; similar statements by 40, 46&55, experts. 43 and 55 emphasised that this stands much in contrast to the approach of the Indian state, whose representatives communicate with the tribals in Hindi. According to 46, the Maoists also typically adopt tribal names as their *noms de guerre*.
[329] Brar (2014); 17, community leader; 21, representative of an organisation; 27, representative of the district administration
[330] 49&55, experts
[331] 50, expert; also Brar (2014)
[332] 21, representative of an organisation
[333] 16, community leader; 50, expert

tribals, who, according to one respondent, account for up to 75 percent of the movement's lower cadre.[334]

With regard to their strategy, the Maoists engage both in violent and nonviolent activities, the former predominantly in the form of ambush-style attacks directed at state security and police forces, although they also carry out targeted killings of rivals and use IEDs (improvised explosive devices) to destruct infrastructure, in particular roads and bridges. Their non-violent activities include, for example, the announcement of general strikes (*bandhs*) and the organisation of rallies – in which they themselves, however, seem not to participate:[335]

> Here we have seen many big rallies of the
> Naxalites. The Naxalites send their people in
> Narayanpur to take out a rally to demand for
> a hike in *tendu patta* rates, for the protection
> of land. [Though] they will never come
> themselves, they will send villagers.[336]

Given their initial engagement with and for the community, the tribals were "impressed"[337] and "convinced that they work for them,"[338] "that they are fighting for us"[339], a valuation that has been crucial for their perseverance in the region, not only in terms of political support but also because they depend on the tribals for their daily needs: "everything, their food, everything, comes from the villages."[340] With time, however, some among the tribal community have also begun to question the movement,[341] stating that, in the end, "[...] we never felt they did anything [...] for us."[342] Instead, many perceive them to have become more of a problem:

> In the village, the only issue was the
> Naxals.[343]

One commonly cited issue is precisely in relation to their taking of food rations and other supplies, which some respondents confirmed but others also relativized (and the security forces are equally accused of).[344]

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[334] 61, representative of an organisation
[335] 19, representative of an organisation; see also Pasquale (2014)
[336] 46, expert
[337] 49, expert
[338] 39, expert; also 45, expert
[339] 36, expert
[340] ibid.; also 27, representative of the district administration
[341] 36&39, experts
[342] 1, local tribal
[343] 9, local tribal
[344] 1&3, local tribals; 50, expert; 14, community leader. Growing reservation among the tribals has also been observed on the grounds of anomalies such as the following: although levying taxes and protection levies from industry (55, expert), as well as earning commission from forest produce (17, community leader), the tribals feel that the Maoists have invested little, if at all, in the villages (27, representative of the district administration; 46, expert), and while they are told not to send their

Even more significant, however, is the fact that, facing increased opposition from state forces, particularly in the last decade,[345] the Maoists "are resorting to tactics of violence, intimidation and fear"[346] to keep the tribal community on their side, not stopping short of "killing everyone who is against them."[347] Tribals who leave their villages are issued notices,[348] while those suspected of having links with the police are threatened or killed, as are community leaders whom they consider not to be cooperative enough;[349] the families of those who surrender are "hounded out of the villages."[350]

This, together with the more general disillusionment among the community, is causing many to distance themselves from the movement:[351] according to a state representative (27), "[...] in the last two to three years, their recruitment has gone down like anything. [...] A lot of tribal youths from their cadre are leaving the organization. [Among those who remain] it is only fear and intimidation that is holding them."[352] Inter alia, this has caused many families to flee from their villages:

> [...] out of fear of being falsely labelled as a
> police informer, villagers either join the
> Naxalites or migrate to the town area, leaving
> their place.[353]

This stands much in contrast to the situation fifteen years ago, when the tribals "used to seek them out to join – but fifteen years ago, there was also no sign of the government."[354] Now, with the growing expansion of the state, it is not uncommon that "[the] police goes in the village during daytime and [the] Naxalites come in [the] night,"[355] both sides accusing the tribals of siding with the other. It follows then that the tribal community is increasingly caught between battle lines while the conflict between the Maoists and the state is increasingly also one of competition for tribal

children to government schools, the children of senior Maoist cadre are enrolled in good colleges in the cities or abroad, and then go on to work for multinational corporates (27, representative of the district administration; 36, expert). Similarly, while the latter are taking flights across India (27, representative of the district administration), their troops burn public buses as a result of which transport services in rural areas are terminated, the brunt of which is borne by the local tribals (39&45, experts). Finally, while the tribals are recruited as the movement's footsoldiers, their representation in the organisation's central organs, the Politburo and Central Committee, is minimal at best (40&55, experts). For a similar discussion, see also Vij-Aurora (2017).

[345] Sundar (2007)

[346] 27, representative of the district administration; similar statements by 36&49, experts

[347] 46, expert; similar statements by 27, representative of the district administration and 46, expert

[348] 27, representative of the district administration

[349] 38&41, experts

[350] 27, representative of the district administration

[351] ibid.; 39, 49, 50&55, experts. This is, however, countered by some respondents, including 14, community leader and 52, expert; also Sundar (2007).

[352] Similar statements by 30, representative of the district administration and 46, expert. 27, however, also mentioned that recruitment is likely to have remained more stable in the more interior areas of the district.

[353] 17, community leader; similar statement by 1, local tribal

[354] 30, representative of the district administration

[355] 46, expert; similar statement by 27, representative of the district administration

allegiance,[356] the state's approach to which is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

[356] See, for example, Hoelscher, Miklian and Vadlamannati (2012), Pasquale (2014) and Brar (2014)

5. State expansion in a context of conflict

Having been virtually absent from the remote jungles of Central India in the past, the Indian state has, over the course of the last decade, rapidly expanded into tribal heartland. Analysing this process, this chapter outlines the broader context that has both motivated and shaped the state's advancement into the seemingly-impenetrable hills and forests as well as the different ways and means of its expansion, and then concludes with a brief comment on the ways in which the state is, at present, manifesting on the ground and the significance of this in terms of local tribal agency.

i.   Intentions mediated by context

In his in-depth account of precolonial statecraft, Scott (2009) writes of a context characterised by a bewildering number of continuously waxing and waning state centres, whose very foundation of power – then the only guarantee of property and wealth – rested on the concentration of population. A time before warfare was technologically revolutionized, manpower was their main means of defence and as such the substance of their existence and survival. Seizing and holding populations at their core was therefore among their main objectives. Writing of a later period, Hechter (1975) emphasises outward state expansion as a means of strengthening central political authority, securing coastal boundaries and promoting stability at geographic extremities, in addition to the economic advantages such expansion seeks and brings, the latter being key to the processes of industrialisation that were under way at that time.

Although the context differs in significant ways, the reasons for the state's expansion are no less instrumental in the contemporary Indian case, and are similarly shaped by the prevailing political and economic climate. The region being the epicentre of the Maoist insurgency, securing territory and political authority is undoubtedly a central objective of the Indian state, and an important aspect of its

expansion into the area. Symbolic of this is that its military operations, previously referred to as 'combing operations', have only recently been renamed 'area domination exercises.'[357] On the other hand, economic liberalisation following reforms in the early 1990s having spawned a strong demand for natural resources, the expansion process is also driven by present and prospective projects related to the extraction of the region's rich mineral deposits:

> Narayanpur came into limelight [...] once they identified that there are good resources in this area.[358]

Aspiring a double-digit rate of growth, the Indian state has been in a "great hurry to expropriate as much minerals from the tribal areas as possible,"[359] bringing it deeper and deeper into the region.

Driven by political as much as by economic reasons, analytically, the Indian state's expansion into the region can be reduced to two principle intentions: one, it strives to gain control over the respective territory, and two, it needs to bring the local population into its fold. While territorial control is in the state's interest both in view of the Maoist threat and its demand for natural resources, so is winning over the tribals: given that the Maoists mobilise heavily among the tribal community, weaning the tribals into the mainstream brings them away from the risk of Maoist recruitment, and simultaneously serves to bring them off the land, making its natural wealth accessible for extraction.

As such, whereas the precolonial states described by Scott (2009) strove to concentrate their population by bringing it into the core or 'peopling the centre', the contemporary Indian state instead seeks to bring the tribals out of the periphery, or to 'de-people the jungle'. While the effect on the ground may be similar, the underlying principle differs, which is reflected in the respective strategies of the early precolonial state centres and the colonial as well as post-colonial Indian state.

ii. The ways and means of state expansion

While both strove to strengthen and/or extend the core's administrative reach, the former relied predominantly on coercive strategies like slavery and corvée labour as means of bringing and keeping subjects in the centre. The Indian state, on the other hand, seeking to win the tribals' hearts and minds, has placed strong emphasis on the provision of services and the development of public infrastructure in order to bring the tribals into its fold. At the same time, particularly its counterinsurgency

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[357] Speaker at the book launch of *Bearing Witness: Sexual Violence in Chhattisgarh* (Murthy, 2017), organised by Women Against Sexual Violence and State Repression, on 10th March 2017 in Mumbai.
[358] 50, expert
[359] 39, expert; similar statement by 38, 40&50 experts

measures and efforts at instating law and order, as well as its drive to industrialise the region, have, however, also introduced coercive elements into its expansion strategy.

Expansion of the state's administrative reach

While Hechter (1975) emphasises outward expansion into a state's geographic periphery, the Indian state is, in this case, expanding inwards. A key aspect of this has been the division of administrative units to create new states and districts, which has brought previously un-accessed regions within its reach, not least through the establishment of additional state and district capitals. As already mentioned in chapter 4, this has also been the case of Narayanpur, Chhattisgarh state having been carved out of Madhya Pradesh in 2000, and the district itself from the larger Bastar district seven years later. The location of new administrative boundaries was, according to experts (36&50), highly strategic, and took into consideration both the geography of the conflict and the location of existing resource extraction sites.

The creation of new state and district capitals at Raipur and Narayanpur, respectively, brought the administration, and as such the state, significantly closer to the area, the previous state capital, Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh), being at a distance of over 700 kilometres (see figure 4 below). In that way, the local district administration serves as an important extension of the central state, as well as of the state government. Tasked, inter alia, with the implementation of government schemes and development projects, it also played a key role in carrying out the survey of Orchha *tahsil*,[360] this being a classic state activity that goes back even to the precolonial state centres discussed by Scott (2009).

Moreover, the district administration is seen as having an important function in winning the trust of the local population:

> People had a negative experience of the administration. [...] they did not trust the administration and I had to make them trust us.[361]

As the administrators in office at the time of this research themselves emphasised, the approach of different officers varies greatly, and often they are not very accessible to the public.[362] They, on the other hand, were said to be particularly

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[360] Although attempted already in 2003, then by the administration of the larger Bastar district, the survey could not be completed at the time, inter alia due to security concerns (24, representative of the district administration).
[361] 28, representative of the district administration. Similar observations regarding negative experiences of the state, for example due to corrupt and exploitative practices, by 21, representative of an organisation and 13, community leader.
[362] 24, representative of the district administration; 50, expert

approachable,[363] an important aspect of which has been their open-door policy and their efforts to reach out to the local population:

> People can directly approach me. [...] And we have our officers in the field to listen to people's grievances.[364]

An example of the latter are their annual *Jan Samasya Nivaran Shivir*, or public grievance redressal camps, which they organise in the interior areas of the district.[365] Afterwards, they try to follow-up on needs and demands as soon as possible and "the people are realising the benefits of these changes."[366] Altogether, these efforts have, despite the Maoist presence, not only enabled the administration to reach locations that were previously not within its reach, but also to extend its control over the district, which has been "possible because people have developed faith in us. [...] Now they want to get rid of the Naxals."[367]

Figure 4 - Map showing the location of national, state and district capitals

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[363] 4&8, local tribals; 13, community leader; 50, expert

[364] 24, representative of the district administration; similar statement by 25, representative of the district administration

[365] 25, representative of the district administration

[366] 24, representative of the district administration; similar statement by 25, representative of the district administration

[367] 24, representative of the district administration

Expansion of the welfare state or "making the tribals dream"[368]

As the above already suggests, the state has also relied on the extension of the welfare state and the development of infrastructure in order to establish itself in and gain control over the region. The former, essentially the provision of state services, ensues through a variety of government schemes, several examples[369] of which are the following: the Public Distribution System (PDS), already mentioned previously, is a scheme that supplies subsidised food and non-food items via fair price shops. Health care services and facilities are, for example, extended through the ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activists) initiative, which trains and engages community health workers, and centres like the *anganwadis*, which provide basic health care, nutrition education and pre-school activities.[370] The *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana* (PMAY) is a housing scheme that, together with related schemes, provides affordable housing and facilities like electricity and water and sanitation. Lastly, MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005), also already mentioned, has the dual purpose of providing 100 days of wage employment annually while supporting the creation of durable assets like roads, ponds and wells.

Besides through these schemes, infrastructural development has also been pursued as part of the central government's Integrated Action Plan, which has since 2009 been an important part of the state's battle against the Maoists. Providing insurgency-hit districts with additional funding, this particularly foresaw projects like the digging of bore wells and the installation of handpumps, the supply of electricity and the construction of school buildings, primary health centres, roads and bridges.[371]

Besides the construction of schools, the provision of education is an important area of focus more generally, the administration also offering vocational training and skills development programmes[372] as well as training in dual crop farming and other agricultural techniques, as mentioned.[373]

Due to opposition from the Maoists to development projects initiated by the administration, some of their schemes, such as the operation of *anganwadis*, are, at

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[368] Bhattacharya (n.d.:11)
[369] There are a large number of schemes, initiatives and programmes besides the ones mentioned here. The ones listed are those referred to most often by both local respondents and experts: PDS (1&4, local tribals; 25, representative of the district administration; 50 expert); ASHA and *anganwadis* (4&7, local tribals, 24, representative of the district administration; 46, expert); PMAY (24, representatives of the district administration); MNREGA (4&7, local tribals; 16, community leader).
[370] The ASHA initiative is part of the larger National Health Mission and the *anganwadi* scheme of the Integrated Child Development Services.
[371] 4&7, local tribals; 13&16, community leaders; 24, 25, 26&27, representatives of the district administration; 18, representative of an organisation; 50, expert; see also Press Information Bureau, Planning Commission (2010). See Dasgupta, Gawande and Kapur (2017) for a more detailed discussion of the role of MNREGA in the government's counterinsurgency strategy.
[372] 50, expert
[373] 4, local tribal, 18, representative of an organisation. A related initiative is the supply of farm machines to self-help groups (18, representative of an organisation).

least for certain areas, outsourced to the Ram Krishna Mission (RKM).[374] However, the RKM also runs several of its own schemes, and as such plays an important role in the development of the region,[375] particularly in the fields of education and health.[376] Moreover, it too runs training programmes, including in settled agriculture.[377]

With regard to the significance of these initiatives from the point of view of the local administration, several officers emphasised that they are pivotal to winning over the tribal community:

> The tribals are now getting all these facilities.
> So they are getting connected and are developing more trust in the administration.[378]

This has been particularly important vis-à-vis the Maoists and their mobilisation narrative of a failing Indian state. In this regard, the grievance redressal camps discussed in the previous section have also had an important function, not only as an alternative for people to vent their grievances,[379] but also for legitimating the state's presence:

> For the government, these camps are about showing the people why the government should be there: roads, buses, mobile networks, etc.[380]

Winning the tribals' hearts and minds via extension of the welfare state as a central objective of the administration is also emphasised by several experts: although there is in fact often no demand for things like modern healthcare on the ground, "here the question is different. It's not a question of providing something that they don't need, it's a question of linking them to the administration by creating those demands. See, if they have this need then only they'll ask for someone like an ANM [auxiliary nurse midwife] to be present in their region. [...] And she'll need a room to work from, she'll need a way for the ambulance to come, and by that mandate, the villagers will be more closer to the government. That's strategy."[381] A similar

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[374] 24, representative of the district administration. Complications in the implementation of development and infrastructure projects due to interference and opposition by the Maoists was mentioned by several other respondents, including 25, representative of the district administration and 19, representative of an organisation. On the other hand, development interventions by the administration are also said to have pushed back the Maoists (50, expert).
[375] 8, local tribal; 17, community leader
[376] 1, 2&9, local tribals; 46&49, experts
[377] 46, expert
[378] 25, representative of the district administration; similar statements by 24&27, representatives of the district administration
[379] 50, expert
[380] ibid.
[381] ibid. More generally, several respondents drew attention to the fact that there is often a mismatch between development schemes and the tribal community's needs: the tribals sometimes

observation is made by a local community leader, who feels that "what they are teaching them in those schools is just propaganda in favour of *vikas* [development]. So the children come back home and demand *vikas*."[382]

Besides winning over the tribal community, some of these initiatives have simultaneously served the purpose of bringing the tribals closer to the mainstream. In this regard, the provision of education has been particularly significant: the language of instruction is Hindi[383] and the textbooks and syllabi place emphasis on the Indian state's history rather than on the tribals' role within it.[384] Moreover, the RSS has a growing presence in rural schools, where now 'you'll find photographs of Hindu idols."[385] In this respect, the Ram Krishna Mission is, of course, also playing an important role, and "these people are now reading the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Gita*, which are Hindu books. This is not tribal culture, they only worship their own ancestors. All this has reached to them through the Mission."[386]

As such, the dominance of, and the superiority ascribed to, the majority Hindu culture appears to form an important strand in the initiatives that have been introduced in the region, i.e. certain initiatives seem to seek change by 'developing' or 'civilising' the tribals.[387] The latter is again particularly evident in developments in the provision of education, whereby a growing emphasis is placed on educating tribal children in boarding schools in urban centres and bigger villages.[388] Away from their traditional environment, not only are they taught to demand *vikas*, but also to assimilate into a modern, urban way of life:[389] they "show them all of the advancements in big cities…the big buildings […] plush offices and uber residences […]." [390]

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do not make use of MNREGA to spend their day in the forest instead (16, community leader), roads are by some perceived as more of an "inconvenience" (35, expert), and even though "the government gives them a lot of things, they don't understand what to do with what" (16, community leader), an example being the farm machines supplied by the administration (18, representative of an organisation). Reasons given for this include a general distance between the administration and the tribal community (15, community leader) as well as a top-down approach in the formulation of policies (26, representative of the district administration): "that is the major problem with the government programmes, they do not ask them whether they want it or not. [… They] don't let [them] decide" (34, expert; similar statements by 39&55, experts; also 15, community leader).

[382] 14, community leader

[383] 43, expert

[384] 53, expert. Moreover, the schools often change children's traditional tribal names to ones that are rooted in Hindu mythology, as discussed in chapter 4.

[385] 38, expert

[386] 46, expert

[387] 38, expert. Sundar (2007) similarly describes the government's development initiatives as couched in "the language of a civilizing mission" (p.251). See also Hechter (1975), who makes similar observations regarding the dominance and ascribed superiority of the mainstream culture vis-à-vis that in the periphery.

[388] 14, community leader; 53, expert. Also 25, representative of the district administration, who, however, emphasised that this is because they face opposition from the Maoists, who resist the construction of permanent structures in interior villages.

[389] 14, community leader

[390] Bhattacharya (n.d.:11) quoting a teacher-administrator. Similar statement by 24, representative of the district administration; similar observation also made by Sundar (2007).

However, besides encouraging tribal assimilation, those more sceptical of the government's initiatives also emphasise that, precisely by winning tribal hearts and minds, they eventually serve to bring the tribals off the land:

> [...] they are opening big residential schools, clusters, along the roadside so that young tribal children come out of their village, [...] away from their families, and they stay with the government for 12, 13 years. And then they are cut off from their culture, agriculture, forest produce collection activities and all. And after 12, 13 years, then they will ask for jobs. And then the government can easily say that 'give your lands, we will open industry and you'll get jobs. [...]. So through [...] education they are pushing their agenda in those areas.[391]

Expansion of state control through counterinsurgency and law and order

Intensifying its counterinsurgency operations in Central India in 2009, the state launched what unofficially became known as 'Operation Greenhunt',[392] an all-out military offensive that included the heavy deployment of central paramilitary troops: according to figures published by *The Hindu*, 20 battalions comprised of the CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force), ITBP (Indo-Tibetan Border Police), BSF (Border Security Force) and SSB (*Sashastra Seema Bal*), together with 6,000 members of the local police, amounted to a fighting force of roughly 20,000 troops alone in the greater Bastar division, which also includes Narayanpur.[393] Besides road security operations and the identification of ambush prone areas, they were particularly involved in conducting 'search and comb' operations in and around villages in order to penetrate and clear Maoist-dominated areas of rebel presence.[394]

Subsequently, following up on the Integrated Action Plan, security measures were explicitly merged with development efforts in 2015 through the Union Ministry of Home Affairs' National Policy and Action Plan (NPAP). Covering the 36 'Most Affected Districts', the NPAP allocated resources both for security-related expenditures such as transportation, communication, temporary infrastructure for the security forces and stipends for surrendered Maoists, as well as for the development of public

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[391] 53, expert; similar statement by 14, community leader
[392] "Operation Greenhunt is Purely a Media Invention" (2009)
[393] Sethi (2010); similar figures cited by Swami (2017). Further battalions of the paramilitary were sanctioned at a later stage (Dahat, 2014). 22, representative of an organisation and 54, expert also mentioned a large number of troops stationed in the region, although not specifically in relation to Operation Greenhunt.
[394] Sethi (2010)

facilities and amenities.[395] In addition, it also underlined public perception management and good governance.[396]

Two years later, the Ministry of Home Affairs launched a new doctrine, which, known by the acronym SAMADHAN, promotes **S**mart leadership, an **A**ggressive strategy, **M**otivation and training, the use of **A**ctionable intelligence, **D**ashboard-based performance indicators, the **H**arnessing of technology, an **A**ction plan for each theatre, and a cessation of Maoist funding sources, i.e. **N**o access to financing. Besides up-scaling the use of advanced military technology,[397] it also plans for the establishment of 400 fortified police stations within the Red Corridor as well as, again, the development of infrastructure, this time with a focus on connectivity, both in terms of communication and road and rail accessibility.[398]

With regard to troop deployment, according to the latest figures published by *The Indian Express* there are currently 31 battalions of the CRPF, including teams of its jungle warfare squad CoBRA, stationed in Chhattisgarh.[399]

On the ground, these policies have led to a very heavy militarization of the area; according to one respondent, the highest level of militarization in the country:

> Nowhere else in India, even on the border
> with China, with Pakistan, do we have that
> much militarization.[400]

One visible manifestation of this are the military camps, with security forces stationed every few kilometres in certain parts of the region, in the case of Chhattisgarh particularly in the southern districts:[401]

> Sometimes you will find that even within a
> village, within a *panchayat*, there would be
> multiple camps.[402]

By way of its design, the counterinsurgency has facilitated the expansion of the state both in terms of securing territory and bringing the local communities into the state's fold. With regard to the former, a representative of the district administration (27) mentioned that as little as three to four years ago, the Maoists had a presence even within four kilometres of Narayanpur town, but have since, given resolute

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[395] Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs (2018); Tripathi (2018)
[396] Vij-Aurora (2017)
[397] The use of advanced technology was also mentioned by 54, expert.
[398] Sandhu (2017); Gurung (2017)
[399] "Anti-Naxal Operations: CRPF to Replace 12,000 Older Troops" (2018)
[400] 54, expert. Heavy militarization of the area was also emphasised by 22, representative of an organisation and 38, expert.
[401] 13&15, community leaders; 38, 50, 54&55, experts
[402] 40, expert

police action, been pushed back "quite far". The areas in and around Narayanpur town are therefore now fully under state control:

> [...] they kept expanding. 'Till 2007 or 2008, they reached 'till the national highway, the Jagdalpur highway. After that, the government took a lot of action and they are now pushed back. Earlier they had control of the Narayanpur-Kondagaon road also, but now it is free. Now you can move at two or three in the night but earlier it was not safe to move after five in the evening, they were roaming on the road. This was just three years back.[403]

The security forces have also been able to penetrate to some of the very interior villages, bringing areas out of Maoist domination that were earlier considered their strongholds:

> The police has started going in such interior villages, where they never expected us to be.[404]

Significant in this regard is also the establishment of three permanent security force camps in the Abujhmad area earlier this year. Whereas previously the security forces used to conduct patrols and return after a number of days due to a lack of infrastructure deeper inside the jungle, these camps have great bearing in terms of "making their presence felt."[405] Nevertheless, there are still many places, particularly south of Orchha town, where the security forces can patrol only during daytime, if at all, and as such still remain largely out of the state's reach.[406]

Regarding the latter, there are several ways in which the counterinsurgency has functioned as a means of bringing the local tribal communities closer to the state. Besides infrastructural development as part of Anti-Naxal Operations, a very direct measure has been the integration of tribals into the state's security and police forces,[407] both through targeted recruitment and as part of its surrender policy. Exemplary of the former is the recently formed Bastar Battalion of the CRPF, which incorporates 744 tribal youths, including 83 recruits from Narayanpur, 36 of whom come from the very interior areas of Abujhmad.[408] Specifically trained by the administration, their incorporation is significant bearing in mind that it is precisely

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[403] 27, representative of the district administration
[404] ibid.
[405] "Anti-Naxal Operations: CRPF Sets Up Permanent Camps" (2018)
[406] 27, representative of the district administration
[407] 36&38, experts
[408] 50, expert

the Abujhmad area where the Maoists remain strong.[409] Moreover, tribals, including many ex-members of the *Salwa Judum* (details below), have been recruited into the state's forces as Special Police Officers (SPOs), as have many among those who surrendered.[410] Besides incorporating surrenderers into its own ranks, the state also seeks to "bring Left Wing Extremists into the mainstream", as officially communicated by the Press Information Bureau of the Ministry of Home Affairs (2014). Reflecting this, its surrender-cum-rehabilitation policy includes a financial reward as well as a monthly stipend for housing, vocational training and other livelihood needs, in addition to incentives for the renunciation of weapons and information.[411]

Formerly predominantly non-tribal,[412] the implication of recruiting tribals into the state's security and police apparatus is much broader than the mere effect of incorporating those who are hired, again both in terms of territory and people: on the one hand, given their knowledge of the terrain and the local community,[413] it is "because of their help [that] we could advance this far."[414] On the other hand, a significant number of tribals now forming part of state ranks,[415] their inclusion has also been important in terms of public perception management:

> Earlier people never believed in the police, they used to just run away whenever they saw a policeman. At that time, the police force was from Nagaland, they looted people's money, harassed the locals. So the people never trusted them, they were afraid of the police. But since tribals have been included in the police, they are not afraid, they think this is our own person, he cannot [harm] us.[416]

At the same time, however, the state, through its security and police forces, has also resorted to coercive and at times brutal practices that stand much in contrast to some of its other measures, and particularly the statement just above, but equally form part of its counterinsurgency efforts. For example, although conducted in the name of security, 'search and comb' operations tend to assume the form of

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[409] ibid.
[410] 38&56, experts; 13, community leader
[411] Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs (2014). Additional information from 27&30, representatives of the district administration; also 13, community leader. On the other hand, the state also offers financial compensation to civilians who were threatened by the Maoists as well as accommodates community leaders who fear Maoist retaliation in Narayanpur town, which similarly serves to bring them into the state's fold (9, local tribal; 15, community leader).
[412] 50, expert
[413] 56&57, experts
[414] 27, representative of the district administration
[415] 21, representative of an organisation
[416] ibid. At the same time, this has also served to abate the Maoists in their reliance on distance between their cadre and the security forces to vindicate their use of violence vis-à-vis the tribals (50, expert).

"crackdowns" during which entire "villages are surrounded and cordoned off by the paramilitary."[417] Moreover, particularly during the time of *Salwa Judum*, entire villages were razed and the tribals brought into roadside camps, where they are not only within easier reach of the state but also away from Maoist influence.[418] Allegations of ill-treatment, misconduct, excessive use of force as well as sexual violence during these incidences abound.[419] Similarly, a surge in human rights violations has also been associated with the establishment of army and police camps in the area.[420]

Also, officially declaring the insurgency a law and order problem,[421] the instatement of law and order – this being in the interest of an expanding state more generally – has been the focus of many of its activities on the ground: "we have to maintain law and order, if anyone is doing [an] unlawful activity, then we have to do something."[422] Still, the system that has been implemented has "implied a particular order,"[423] the maintenance of which has given the state much scope in bringing the tribal population under its authority. An implication of this has been that tribals, even those unconnected or only tenuously connected to the Maoist movement, have become targets of the state's counterinsurgency measures[424] "on [the] false assumption that they have links with the Naxalites."[425] While police operations tend to target *Sanghams* – Maoist village level bodies whose members are unarmed[426] – the tendency of state representatives to quickly label tribals as Maoist sympathisers and to "make sure that the person [gets] punished,"[427] results in, for example, the criminalisation of tribal youth simply for having Maoist literature in their possession.[428] Even more disconcerting, however, are the frequent arbitrary arrests and imprisonment of tribals under false charges,[429] as well as the occurrence of forced surrenders and extrajudicial killings:

> So the police ask: "will you surrender or do you want to end up in jail?" But the person says why would he surrender or go to jail, he is just an Adivasi cultivating [...] his land. But the police say that he has to choose one of the two, either surrender or go to jail. [...] Under

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[417] 38, expert

[418] 13&14, community leaders; 46&56, experts

[419] 50, expert; see also Sethi (2010)

[420] 38&54, experts

[421] 59, expert

[422] 27, representative of the district administration

[423] 51, expert

[424] 4, local tribal; 36&50, experts

[425] 17, community leader; similar statements by 36&56, experts

[426] Sethi (2010)

[427] 15, community leader

[428] 50, expert

[429] 14, community leader; 52&55, experts

tremendous pressure, often torture, the
person would then 'surrender.' [430]

Unlawful killings, on the other hand, take place, for example, in the form of fake encounters whereby they capture and "kill innocent people [...], dress them up in uniforms and claim they have killed Maoists."[431]

The state's efforts to maintain law and order have also encompassed the imposition of laws that, inter alia, prohibit the gathering of people.[432] The media has been largely silenced,[433] while numerous activists who raised issues of concern and civil society actors engaged in the provision of services and rehabilitation of tribals have been accused of partiality and either jailed or driven out of the state.[434]

To be sure, given the competition for tribal allegiance, the Maoists are equally quick in labelling tribals as police informers – a trip to Narayanpur town, be it for medical or business purposes, is often suspect enough for them to torture or even kill (see also chapter 4).[435] However, "[...] the hypocrisy of the state forces stands out because they claim to be working within the parameters of the constitution and democracy, and murder Adivasis in the name of fighting Naxals, in the name of securing people."[436] According to an expert respondent (39), it is precisely questions like these that are at the roots of the *Salwa Judum* ('Purification Hunt'), a state-sponsored vigilante group that was initiated in 2005 and has since been outlawed by the Indian Supreme Court. Functioning as part of anti-insurgency operations, this group was, in the opinion of this expert, a means for the state's forces to escape the responsibility for the consequences of their actions because vigilante groups are located outside the legal framework.[437]

Expansion in the name of economic interests

The final means of the Indian state's expansion is argued to occur in the name of economic interests. This goes back to the colonial era, when, in need of raw material for ship- and railway-building, the British passed the Indian Forest Act of 1865, which declared the forests as national property, as well as the Forest Act of 1878, through which forest reserves and protected areas were demarcated. Together, these Acts established the state's monopoly over the forests, and marked the beginning of its encroachment onto tribal land.[438] Later, by passing the Land Acquisition Act of 1894, the British also introduced the concept of eminent domain, an "idea [that] is still

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[430] 14, community leader
[431] ibid.; see also Sethi (2010) and Pasquale (2014)
[432] 14, community leader
[433] 38, expert
[434] 13, community leader; 36, 52&53, experts
[435] 27, representative of the district administration; see also Sethi (2010)
[436] 14, community leader
[437] This is also emphasised by Sundar (2007)
[438] 41, expert

being continued [today], except that now the colonisers are not the British, it is the Indian corporates or the corporates who are in India."[439]

More specifically, the British Land Acquisition Act was recently replaced with the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act of 2013 by the Indian state, which regulates land acquisition by laying down procedures for the compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement of those affected by the acquisition of land. In practice, however, it is often considered a carte blanche for industrial companies, which are "more or less free to walk into any land and take it over."[440]

This has, in large part, been possible owing to the weak implementation of safeguards like the PESA and Forest Rights Acts, whose provisions are often diluted or evaded in order to facilitate the acquisition of land for industrial purposes:[441]

> The government is not interested in the implementation of PESA on the ground, especially in Schedule V areas. If they do, all power will shift to the *panchayat* bodies, which they don't want. Because they fear that in such a scenario they won't be able to open industries in the forest.[442]

For example, the consultation of the community being mandatory, particularly relevant in this regard is the way *Gram Sabhas*, the meetings of all adults who live in the jurisdiction of a respective *panchayat*, are conducted: any resolution passed by the *Gram Sabha* has to be signed by a quorum of villagers present. Called the 'Gram Sabha Proceedings Register', this is maintained by the *sajiv*, or secretary of the *Gram Panchayat*, who is a government employee. Driven by alternative interests, what typically happens is that an "empty register is floated around and everyone is asked to sign, and then the proposals are filled in later."[443] Moreover, the members of the *Gram Sabha* are often placed under intense pressure during the public hearings, and then feel too intimidated to express their true opinions.[444]

As a result of practices such as these, "land acquisitions have been happening here [(Chhattisgarh)] at an enormous pace. [First] there were lots of acquisitions [...] for sponge iron plants and so on, which is more or less the area in between Raipur and Bilaspur. And then, in the second round, there were all the power plants, which is Janjgir-Champa and Korba and so on. And in the third round there has been the mining. So you know, actually there has been acquisition all over the state."[445]

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[439] 40, expert
[440] ibid.; see also Sundar (2007)
[441] 22, representative of an organisation; 39, expert
[442] 13, community leader
[443] 54, expert; similar statements by 15, community leader and 39&52, experts
[444] 13&15, community leaders; 39, expert
[445] 52, expert

So too in the districts bordering Narayanpur, there being two large mining complexes, the Bailadila and Rowghat iron ore mines, in Dantewada and Kanker, respectively.[446] In Narayanpur itself, no large-scale resource extraction has to-date taken place – partly an artefact of how its boundaries were drawn – although it is getting increasing attention as a potential extraction site, with a number of mining projects already in the process of being planned.[447]

It is in this regard that several respondents suspect an important connection with the development efforts and counterinsurgency measures that are underway in Narayanpur, as elsewhere, emphasising that the construction of roads and the establishment of security camps are just as much, if not more, in the interest of accessing the region's mineral wealth:[448]

> [...] the development process has not started because there is a lack of development in this area. It has started [...] once they identified [...] good mineral resources. These Rowghat mines, a place around 80 km from Narayanpur town, there had not been any camp, military camp. There had been none. But when the Rowghat mines, on the northern border of Narayanpur, were discovered [...], say in one or two years, the complete road from Rowghat [...] till Narayanpur was secured by more than 20 camps.[449]

Viewed in terms of an expanding state's intentions, the legislation related to land acquisition is innately a means of accessing territory, although its application also has the effect of displacing the local population - directly as well as, given environmental damage and the related loss of tribal livelihood, indirectly.[450] Displaced from their habitat, and often moved into camps, this again also serves to bring them into state reach.[451] However, several respondents emphasised that the rehabilitation of villagers is often haphazard, if not hostile – "they are more serious about how to displace them than to compensate them, just to give land to the corporates"[452] – while resistance is repressed and/or persecuted, be it through the prohibition of assembly, the suppression of leadership, lathi charge, or the creation of false cases.[453]

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[446] 50&54, experts
[447] 13&15, community leaders; 50, expert. One respondent did, however, emphasise large-scale deforestation (11, local tribal).
[448] 13, community leader; 36, 38, 53&55, experts
[449] 50, expert
[450] 22, representative of an organisation; 54&55, expert
[451] 54, expert
[452] 22, representative of an organisation; similar statement by 53, expert
[453] 13&14, community leaders; 38, 52&55, experts

iii. Manifestations of the state

As the above discussion has shown, the expansion of the Indian state even into the remote areas of Narayanpur is progressing rapidly. Reflecting its means, this manifests on the ground in a variety of ways, be it in the form of grievance redressal camps, schools and *anganwadi* centres, the presence of police and security forces or of mining corporations.
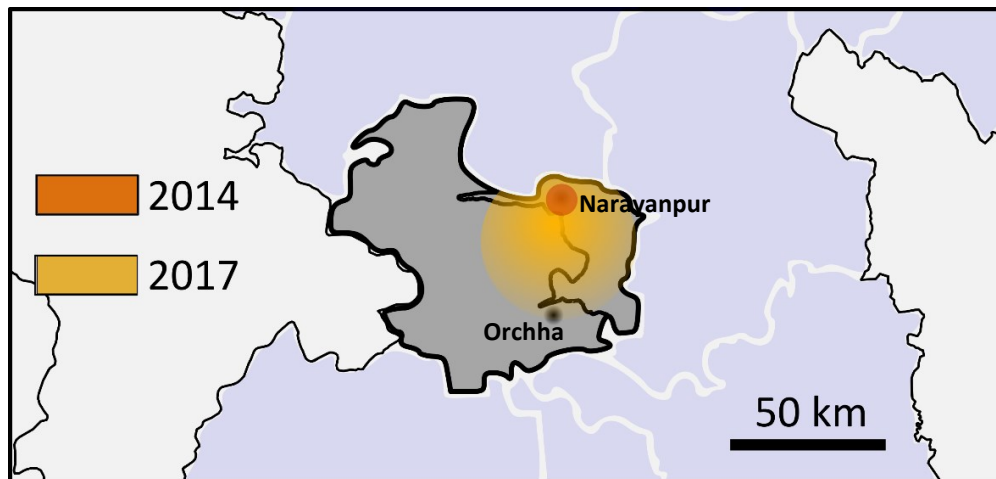
Figure 5 - Map of Narayanpur district showing the extent of state reach[454]

Although there are still large tracts of jungle that remain beyond its reach, the state has undoubtedly made significant inroads into the territory: based on statements of several representatives of the district administration, the map in figure 5 approximates the extent of the state's progression into the district's interior, suggesting a substantial advancement over the course of only a few years. As such, driven by political as well as economic intent, the various strategies employed by the state are together making physical evasion by moving deeper into the jungles or higher into the hills – the response of many of the hill communities examined by Scott (2009) – increasingly less of a possibility, as is the tribals' retreat by means of moving into the neighbouring states of Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha – all which are making their own expansion efforts, including through the maintenance of law and order:

> […] fleeing from this war and then going into Andhra Pradesh and Orissa and so on, most of them are going to their own kins people […] who are also in the forest. But now increasingly the governments of [Andhra

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[454] As estimated by representatives of the district administration (24, 25&27).

Pradesh] and Orissa are cutting down on all of them and saying you have to report in the *thana* [police station] who are the new people who are coming to stay with you and are they Naxals. They have to go to the *thana* and register their names.[455]

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[455] 52, expert

6. Indigenous responses to state expansion

Having analysed the ways and means of expansion into the interior regions of Central India by the state, this chapter discusses the effects of this on local perceptions of inequality and definitions of identity and assesses the tribals' response thereto in terms of their integration into the structures and society of the state. Based on this, it then proposes an overarching pattern of tribal agency, focusing particularly on whether and when tribal action goes towards or away from the state. Comprising the main empirical chapter, the insights and propositions it makes are derived entirely based on the primary data from the field. The concluding section then evaluates the theoretical significance of these findings with reference to the state expansion literature.

i.   State effects on subjective inequality

As the discussion on the local context in chapter 4 has shown, the tribal community as a whole has not only been geographically isolated, but also politically excluded, economically marginalised, socially alienated and culturally viewed as largely inferior. As such, their situation is in great asymmetry with that of other communities in India. However, while this certainly amounts to inequality from an objective point of view, "if you ask them, [...their way of life] is not only [...] very sustainable but they would probably not consider it any inferior to a comfortable urban life, in their own way of looking at it."[456] Yet, as already introduced in chapter 1, one of the sub-research questions the thesis poses relates to whether and how the growing presence of the state in the region has affected this perception: specifically, 'what effect does state expansion have on the subjective perception of inequality by the tribal community?' While the advancing state undoubtedly has an effect on

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[456] 52, expert; similar statement by 34, expert

inequality more generally, this sub-research question focuses specifically on its subjective perception in line with the thesis' contention that it is ultimately the latter that matters for agency. In other words, the thesis argues that as long as inequality remains unperceived, it is unlikely to engender action given that the respective situation is not assessed as necessarily requiring change, even though it may from an objective point of view.

Reflecting this, the subjective perception of inequality is conceptualised as the product of the direct experience of the effects of inequality and a comparison of one's own situation with that of others (see chapter 3). Specifically, comparison is viewed as a means of appraising one's own status or wellbeing by offering a point of reference, and as such is necessary for the awareness of an inequality as inequality; relatedly, it also allows for an evaluation of whether and "what is unfair about the status quo."[457] In the absence of either, people may simply interpret their situation as unfortunate or inevitable, i.e. as 'just the way things are.'[458]

In the case of the tribal community, the latter seems to have long prevailed. Described by expert respondents as based on an alternate system of values, and desires and ambitions that differ from those of the mainstream, the tribals feel that "this is the way we live. We are happy. We are developed. We don't need to fit into your definition of development."[459] In other words, their standard of living has, for a long time, remained perceived simply as their way of life.[460] For many this still seems to be the case, which was clearly reflected in some of the interviews with tribals and tribal leaders themselves, many of whom seemed unfamiliar with the notion of inequality, and often remained unsure when asked about the circumstances of their community vis-à-vis that of others.[461]

Settled in a predominantly tribal region dotted with sporadic, remotely located villages, it seems they rarely had opportunities for comparison, particularly with non-tribal communities, in view of which what amounts to objective inequality has remained widely unperceived on the ground.

However, findings from the field suggest that this has begun to change, a process which the thesis closely relates to the growing presence of the state in the region. Specifically, the field data indicates that state expansion has rendered visible existing inequalities, this principally by increasing the tribals' exposure to the outside world. Succinctly put, it has created a "consciousness that there is a world where things exist. Before it was the village and what's there in the village."[462] In other words, the expanding state, or rather its particular ways and means, has

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[457] Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug (2013:40)
[458] Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug (2013)
[459] 36, expert; similar statement by 54, expert
[460] 41, expert
[461] E.g. 5, local tribal and 16, community leader; emphasised also by 50, expert
[462] 35, expert

impacted the tribals' perception of inequality by creating possibilities for a comparison of their situation with that of others:

> [...] with satellite television and things like that there is much greater awareness of what is happening in the world. They see that some of the benefits have accrued to other communities and not to them, so they are resentful of that. And they would like to have those certain things.[463]

According to a different respondent, 'things' here refers to items like owning a motorbike, or being able to shop in malls or going to the cinema.[464]

Besides television, several of the state's efforts at bringing the tribal community within its arm's length have been crucial aspects of this. The construction of transport infrastructure has, for example, in a very physical sense made the outside world accessible to the tribals, while other initiatives, like the provision of education in urban centres, have brought the tribals into direct contact with mainstream society, and as such with alternative ways and standards of living.

As already alluded to in chapter 4, this has led to a change in the ways the tribals evaluate their own situation, causing a change in their desires and ultimately prompting a re-definition of their needs.[465] In this regard, it is not only a comparison with other communities that has been important, however, but also the many development schemes the Indian state has initiated in the region. While of course in principle a measure of addressing the inequalities that persist, analysing them purely in terms of their effect on the subjective perception of inequality suggests that the provision of welfare schemes and public facilities and amenities have likewise served to render visible a gap between what is and what could be, and as such to promulgate ideas of a different and previously less known way of life – as well as to raise the prospects thereof:

> [...] today they find that they are backward and that they do not have access to education, they do not have access to healthcare. It's expected, I mean, there are these dichotomies: you have this national rural health mission and women are supposed to have institutional deliveries, but [...] institutions do not exist in many situations. So suddenly they find that they are expected to have certain entitlements on paper but the entitlements are not there. [...]

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[463] 41, expert
[464] 54, expert; also 46, expert
[465] 54, expert

> So these things are now beginning to hit.
> Earlier people probably had less contact with
> mainstream society, […] and they did not
> necessarily see these as problems. It was just
> accepted as a way of life. But today they are
> seen as problems, yes.[466]

Closely related to this are of course what in chapter 5 are described as concrete efforts by the state to bring the community into its fold by "making the tribals dream,"[467] i.e. by way of actively creating needs and demands.

Overall, the above discussion suggests that inequality is more strongly perceived, as well as questioned, in the presence of the state, inter alia because the means of its expansion offer an alternative to the tribals' own understanding and definition of 'development.' However, of note in this regard is that this therefore varies with the extent of the state's reach, respectively among tribals living deep inside the forest and those who live on its fringes or outside it in towns and cities, as well as that an important difference remains with regard to the perception and evaluation of inequality between the tribal community and other communities and within the tribal community itself. With regard to inter-group inequality, there are also voices that question different ways of life and in so doing reject their assumed superiority:

> The Adivasis tell me "I'm happy with one
> meal. Why do you want me to go there, work
> more, get more money, eat three times a day?
> I don't want it. Why are you asking me to earn
> money to build a concrete house in which I
> am not going to be happy?"[468]

Relatedly, and with regard to intra-group inequality, several respondents emphasised that inequality, although perhaps observed and questioned, causes comparatively less resentment when it is between tribals and non-tribals compared to when such asymmetries exist within the tribal community:[469] socioeconomic stratification between better-educated and better-off tribals who have moved to bigger towns and cities and "can afford amenities […] like television, motorbikes, phones,"[470] and those remaining in the villages, leaves the latter with a feeling of having been left behind, given their situation has, in comparison, remained largely unchanged.[471] There is also a strong perception of differences between the various tribes, the circumstances of the Gonds being generally perceived as better compared to those of the Madias and Abujhmadias, but also that the latter, in turn, "get most

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[466] 41, expert
[467] Bhattacharya (n.d.)
[468] 34, expert; similar statement by 36, expert
[469] 23, representative of an organisation; 50, expert
[470] 46, expert
[471] 41&46, experts

of the [state] benefits."[472] Similarly, while political inequality was rarely referred to with respect to other communities, the tribal community is said to be resentful of tribals who have integrated into the political system of the state and thereby consolidated their political position, and are, as a result, also "materially and in other ways on a different level."[473]

In response, insights from the field indicate that, where available, the tribals generally do make increasing use of facilities and services offered by the state, and seek or demand their provision when they are absent.[474] However, as alluded to just above, this varies with the extent to which the tribals are in interaction with the outside world in the sense that those deeper inside the forests need to be actively made aware of the benefits of government schemes, as well as, at times, incentivised to use them.[475] Nevertheless, on the whole, this suggests that raising the tribals' perceptions of an alternative standard of living has brought about their association with the state: based on re-defined needs and aspirations, and seeing the impact of government initiatives, the tribals tend to turn to the state because they find that "we [the local government] are fulfilling all their demands."[476]

Although the tribals do express concern over the damage particularly infrastructural development is causing the environment, emphasising that "we do want development, but not the kind that destroys our villages and communities to make space for big buildings,"[477] their growing association with the state represents a significant change bearing in mind the relatively limited knowledge they previously had of the administration, in the past often equating it with the police.

It is, however, precisely interaction with the state's security and police forces that is, in contrast to the above, simultaneously causing their dissociation from the state, this quite literally:

> Men are not actually facing the police
> anymore these days, when the forces come
> they all run into the forest.[478]

Although many equally fearful of the Maoists, several respondents emphasised that, given the often excessively brutal practices of the security forces, the tribals wish for

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[472] 3, local tribal
[473] 41, expert; similar statement by 54, expert
[474] 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8&9, local tribals
[475] 16, community leader; 37, expert
[476] 24, representative of the district administration; similar statements by 27&30, representatives of the district administration and 36, expert. This has, moreover, supported their incorporation 'into the state' in that the receipt of state benefits is linked to their possession of an *Aadhaar* card, which requires registration with the Indian government.
[477] 14, community leader; similar statement by 46, expert
[478] 40, expert; similar statement by 14, community leader; see also Brar (2014)

the "SPOs and CRPF to leave the forest."[479] Similarly critical of large-scale resource extraction from the area, the state's expansion into the region therefore places the tribals into a dilemma succinctly summarised by an expert respondent as follows:

> I think there's a dichotomy here. At one level, they feel that the state is much closer to them now, which leads to some problems. For example, this conflict over natural resources and how they're being removed. So at one level they feel the conflict. On the other hand, the benefits of the welfare state they do realise and those things they would like to have. There is a kind of a duality. They appreciate some things and they don't appreciate some other things.[480]

ii. State effects on definitions of identity

As already emphasised in chapter 4, the tribal community is experiencing significant change also from a cultural perspective, which the thesis argues, is, like changing perceptions of inequality, closely related to the growing proximity of the tribal community to the outside world. This itself being largely an effect of the advancing state, insights from the field suggest that its means of expanding into the region influence the ways local identities are defined and lived in various and specific ways, and strongly reflect the state's aim of weaning the tribals into the mainstream. With many of these already alluded to in the previous chapters, this section explores this more explicitly, in line with the second sub-research question 'what effect does state expansion have on tribal identity?'

State effects on identity can be traced back at least to the early post-colonial period, when the British administrative state *Central Provinces and Berar* was sub-divided into several independent states, leading to the division of the tribal community across different administrative units. Causing not only geographic segregation, this also led to a certain localisation of identity, as can be seen, for example, in differences in language: as mentioned in chapter 4, Gondi transformed into Marathi Gondi, Oriya Gondi, Chhattisgarhi Gondi, etc. in line with the regional languages of each respective state.[481] During the British colonisation, the work of anthropologists-cum-administrators is, on the other hand, said to have "overwritten and overridden the way these societies look at themselves."[482] Looking for means of classifying the local

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[479] 56, expert; similar statement by 15, community leader. Negative experiences of the security forces emphasised, inter alia, also by 3, local tribal and 14, community leader. Note, however, that tribals are at the same time also being recruited into the ranks of the state's security forces.
[480] 41, expert; similar statement by 47, expert
[481] 43&48, experts; 22, representative of an organisation
[482] 54, expert

tribal populations into different groups, the names assigned to them are "not the names that they are using. [...] Like, the Abujhmadias don't call themselves Abujhmadias. And we call the Bisonhorn Madias that because we see them wearing bison horns during festivals. [...] But they don't call themselves that [...] because for them that's a normal thing to do."[483]

As stated just above, effects of the more recent phases of expansion, on the other hand, relate principally to the tribal community's growing proximity to the outside world. Reflecting the region's increased accessibility and industrialisation, central to this has been the in-migration by other communities,[484] particularly trader castes and migrant labourers. Combined with the migration by the tribals into towns and cities, usually for economic and/or security reasons, this has brought the latter into contact with mainstream society, with which it previously had much less interaction.[485] In consequence, tribal culture is "undergoing transformation. Their traditions, their customs, their rituals, all are changing."[486] Two commonly cited examples in this regard are marriage ceremonies, which are increasingly aligned with those common in the larger Hindu society,[487] and changes in clothing styles:

> In the forest, my identity used to be through
> my language and the way I dressed. I wore
> long hair with a turban, a necklace made of
> beads and a dhoti. I only learnt to wear shorts
> here [in Narayanpur town].[488]

An important part of the state's expansion strategy, the provision of education was highlighted as similarly significant by several respondents. Imparted in Hindi[489] on the basis of textbooks that relate the dominant view of history,[490] and often in boarding schools in urban centres,[491] the tribals "lose touch with [their] family, with [their] village, with [their] community, and [they] learn Hindi or Telugu or Marathi. So [the tribal] languages are dying. These communities are dying."[492] As emphasised by a group of tribals themselves, it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish the different sub-tribal groups on the basis of their language, adding that their own children now much prefer to speak in Hindi.[493] Moreover, as one community leader said, after attaining even just a few years of education, the tribal youth no longer

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[483] ibid.; similar statement by 48, expert
[484] 13, community leader
[485] 30, representative of the district administration
[486] 37, expert; similar statements by 13, community leader and 26&28, representatives of the district administration
[487] 14, community leader; 37&46, experts
[488] 9, local tribal; similar statements by 3, local tribal, 49, expert and 28, representatives of the district administration
[489] 43, expert
[490] 53, expert
[491] 14, community leader
[492] 43, expert
[493] 4, local tribal; similar statement by 13, community leader

wish to live in the jungle,[494] despite the fact that "in a typical Adivasi life, the forest plays a very very important role."[495] In short, with education, they "tend to forget their original thoughts."[496]

As such, those who are educated are becoming increasingly distant from those who are not, an effect that was also mentioned with respect to other government schemes:

> Many kinds of developments are happening, like there are the *anganwadis*, where kids are provided a nutritional meal. [...] *Ashramshalas* [Ashram schools] are being opened, they are providing education and food too. [...] So this has a positive impact on kids' health. However, no impact is seen on elders. This means that the next generation will be developed. But afterwards they will adopt mainstream culture leaving behind their own traditions. [...] The tribal culture will vanish away this way.[497]

In addition to the above are the efforts at religious conversion in the region by both Hindu and Christian missionaries.[498] Although not directly practiced by the state itself, Hinduisation was nevertheless associated with its presence:

> It's not as if Hinduisation is happening [only] now. It's been happening slowly in different [...] forms over centuries. [But] it's taking a very militant form right now, because there is impunity from the centre.[499]

Accordingly, it is increasingly common for the tribals to follow typical Hindu practices,[500] performing *havan* (vedic fire rituals) at funerals and celebrating festivals like *Holi* and *Diwali*,[501] while those who have come in contact with Christian missions engage in Christian services and prayers,[502] even though these are alien to tribal forms of religion.[503] In short, "they're converting the tribals [...] and obliterating their identity by doing that."[504]

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[494] 14, community leader
[495] 36, expert
[496] 46, expert
[497] ibid.
[498] 43, expert
[499] 54, expert; similar statement by 50, expert
[500] 36, expert
[501] 4, local tribal; 14&15, community leaders
[502] 46, expert
[503] 15, community leader
[504] 38, expert

While the above seek the tribal community's integration largely by way of enticement, other aspects of the state's expansions strategy have inflicted tribal identity much more directly. An important example of this is the destruction of tribal places of worship as a result of industrialisation and resource extraction projects.[505] Often causing large-scale environmental damage, this also harms tribal identity more generally bearing in mind the centrality of *jal, jangal, jameen* (water, forest, land) to its traditional definition:

> If we don't have *jal, jangal, jameen*, we cannot remain tribal. They are identifiers for tribals. Whoever does not have a relationship with *jal, jangal* and *jameen* cannot be called a tribal.[506]

Moreover, often causing the displacement of entire villages, such projects also uproot the tribals from their traditional habitat and removes them from their social and cultural roots.[507]

The latter was also emphasised with regard to the re-settlement of tribals into roadside camps as part of the state's counterinsurgency measures,[508] a practice that was particularly common during *Salwa Judum*.[509] The state's counterinsurgency measures have, however, also impeded tribal culture in other ways, an example being that large gatherings for festivals, but also simple village meetings, are increasingly abstained from, for fear of being misinterpreted as Maoist gatherings by patrolling police,[510] even though they are fundamental parts of the tribals' way of life:

> Nowadays we cannot dance all the night, throughout the night in a wedding, because the police will come, the police will arrest and take us. This fear is always there.[511]

A similar example is that many young, unmarried girls have started to wear a *mangal sutra*, a necklace usually worn by Hindu women after marriage, in response to sexual violence by the police and security forces.[512]

In sum, the data gathered in the field suggests that state expansion, or rather its specific ways and means, have had a significant impact on tribal culture, language

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[505] 54&55 experts
[506] 13, community leader; similar statement by 11, local tribal
[507] 54, expert
[508] 36, expert
[509] 56, expert
[510] Speaker at the book launch of *Bearing Witness: Sexual Violence in Chhattisgarh* (Murthy, 2017), organised by Women Against Sexual Violence and State Repression, on 10th March 2017 in Mumbai.
[511] 15, community leader
[512] 14, community leader

and religion, which are all traditionally constitutive elements of tribal identity. These changes have, in turn, had a substantial effect on the tribal community as a whole, introducing new and important faultlines among the local population:[513] closely intersecting, these lines largely distinguish the tribals who are living outside the forest along the roads and in the cities, are educated and speak the mainstream languages, and/or have integrated into the Hindu or Christian faith, from those who remain deeper inside the jungle, have little or no education, speak their own native language and practice their own rituals.[514]

Overall, this general pattern also coincides with a growing generation gap:[515] the younger generation has an increasing tendency to view the tribal way of life in the forests as primitive and backward,[516] and is more and more oriented toward an urban lifestyle instead:[517]

> The younger generation is changing very fast. Whether they can afford or can't afford, they will go for better dress than the tribal communities would use, they will purchase a motor vehicle, or mobile [...], and they are moving away from the traditional lifestyle that includes all traditions, cultures, customs, beliefs.[518]

In contrast, the elderly tend to oppose or question these "new ways of being and living"[519] as imports from a, to them, alien culture:[520]

> The elders in the community oppose the celebrations of festivals like *Diwali*, *Holi* or *Raksha Bandhan*. [...] they instead emphasise our Adivasi way of life and the integral role of *jal, jangal* and *jameen* in our lives. .... They frown [at the] bursting of crackers and fireworks and worry about the damage it causes to our land and forests. And that it's premised on a materialist way of life which is not ours.[521]

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[513] ibid. ; similar statement by 13, community leader
[514] 43, expert; also 18, representative of an organisation and 46&54, experts
[515] 14, community leader; 37, 46&54 experts
[516] 3, local tribal; 13&14, community leaders; 28, representative of the district administration; 40&46, experts
[517] 13&14, community leaders; 37&54, experts
[518] 37, expert; similar statement by 14, community leader
[519] 13, community leader
[520] 14, community leader
[521] ibid.

Both comprising reactive assertions of identity, the thesis contends that the former reflects a process of assimilation, whereby the lifestyle and culture of the mainstream are not only accepted but also, to a significant extent, adopted, this as a result of growing interaction of the tribals with non-tribal communities, but also due to religious conversion and a general distancing from their own community, not least because of education and the specific form in which it is imparted.

Largely a response to this, the latter reaction resembles dissimilation in the sense that tribal identity is perceived as distinct and its traditional attributes are emphasised. Moreover, shared also by many community leaders, this perception at the same time reflects changes in tribal identity more generally, including due to threats posed thereto by industrialisation and resource extraction projects and the heavy presence of the state's security forces.[522] Observing the gradual dilution of their culture,[523] they fear that "our identity is being demolished [...]. We are tribal people. Our culture, our tradition, our way of life, are totally different. But now it has reached a stage where [these are] no longer alive."[524] Emphasised as part of this is particularly the loss of tribal languages and religious practices, because "then, they will not be tribal in any way because they will have no identifiers."[525] This has brought them to strongly reassert their identity,[526] stressing that "we are not Hindu or Muslim, we are Madias."[527] There is also a growing inclination specifically among the Gonds to refer to themselves as *Koiturs*, the name of their tribe before anthropologists began to call them differently, along with efforts to standardise the Gondi language across various states in Central India with significant Gond/Koitur populations.[528] Moreover, at the local level, firmly committed to their ancient customs and rituals,[529] they also actively engage in sustaining tribal practices by organising cultural campaigns and festivals, during which their own dance forms, songs, traditional dress and food habits are celebrated,[530] because "all these need to be preserved."[531]

iii. Tribal agency towards and away from the state

Tribal agency in terms of its direction vis-à-vis the state as it is currently manifesting in the Central Indian context follows an overarching pattern wherein actions seeking a change in the status quo, both minor and major, are principally oriented either away from or towards the state. Essentially amounting to a continuum between

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[522] 13, 14, 15&17, community leaders
[523] 13, community leader; 37, expert
[524] 15, community leader
[525] 13, community leader; emphasised also by 43&46, experts
[526] 43&58, experts
[527] 1, local tribal; similar statements by 13&15, community leaders
[528] 48, expert; also 13, community leader
[529] 3, 8&9, local tribals
[530] 13&15, community leaders
[531] 1, local tribal

these two poles, a close examination of the field data suggests that this pattern can be further disaggregated into four types of actions, namely those that go expressly against the state, those that take place through state structures albeit in resistance to the state or manifestations thereof, those that take place within state structures and as such in general acquiescence of the state, and those that are arranged or sponsored by the state itself. Figure 6 offers a graphical representation of this pattern. As suggested therein, the forms of tribal agency examined as part of this analysis ensue also through a variety of entities and organisations that are not necessarily established by the tribals themselves, but in whose activities they actively participate.
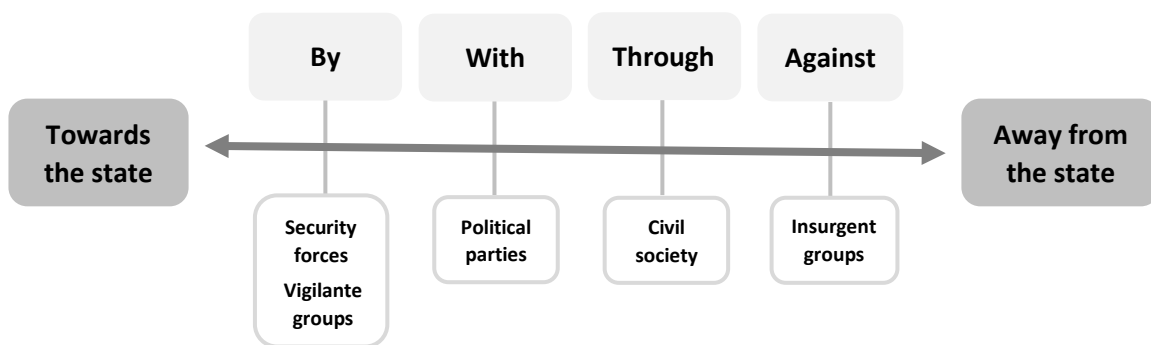
Figure 6 - Observed pattern of agency with respect to its direction vis-a-vis the state

To explicate the identified pattern, as well as illustrate its manifestation on the ground, it is helpful to briefly describe several examples. Starting from the left-hand-side of figure 6, the category 'by the state' denotes, for example, the entry by tribals into the state's security forces, which currently tends to take either of two forms: they are recruited into the Bastar Battalion of the CRPF or they join the ranks of the police as Special Police Officers. In the case of the Bastar Battalion this reflects deliberate recruitment efforts by the state, whereas the SPOs are generally previous members of the *Salwa Judum* or surrenderers of the Maoist movement, for whom it is not uncommon to subsequently enlist into the state's ranks,[532] a form of agency that then goes inherently 'towards the state.' *Salwa Judum*, initially depicted as a spontaneous citizen-led initiative against the Maoists, was a vigilante group that operated particularly in the districts of Bijapur and Dantewada with the active support of the state's security forces. Its main purpose to quash rebel support, the group, whose leaders and members were primarily tribal, conducted village raids targeting suspected Maoist sympathizers, as well as played an important role in the re-settlement of entire villages to roadside camps with the aim of distancing their residents from Maoist influence.[533] Initiated in 2005, *Salwa Judum* was disbanded by the Indian Supreme Court in 2011 following allegations of severe human rights

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[532] 38, 50&56, experts; 13, community leader
[533] 14, community leader; 44, 46&56, experts

violations, but later re-surfaced, first under the name *Samajik Ekta Manch* and then *Agni*, both which have, however, been dissolved again since.[534] Given its status as a state-backed initiative, *Salwa Judum* is an important example of tribal agency instigated by the state, and, as such, like enlistment into the security forces, denotes action 'towards the state'. A final example of this category is the tribals' use of the state's grievance redressal mechanisms, such as by attending the *Jan Samasya Nivaran Shivir* (public grievance redressal camps) or by directly approaching the district administration, this commonly with grievances related to public facilities and amenities provided via various government schemes. While agency to claim these entitlements may resemble the second category of going 'with the state', the fact that these mechanisms of redress are arranged by the state arguably renders it an example of the first.

An example of the second category are political parties and, relatedly, the electoral participation by the tribals. In contrast to the previous category, this form of agency is not initiated by the state itself, although its means comprise an integral part of the state system, in view of which it is considered to take place 'with the state' and as such to likewise go 'towards' it. In Chhattisgarh, the dominating parties are the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) and the Congress, with a respective vote share of 24.83 and 19.55 percent in the last General Elections.[535] Another party is the *Gondwana Gantantra Party* (GGP), which, although much less significant from a vote-share perspective, is interesting theoretically given its agenda of political autonomy, a demand that is rooted primarily in questions of identity and tribal social development.[536] Categorised as 'with the state' on the grounds of its status as a political party, given its objective of separate statehood it could likewise be argued to be representative of agency that takes place 'through the state'. With regard to the tribals' electoral participation, although the majority of respondents said they vote, and Vaid (2009) found the tribal turnout to be at 53.3 percent for Central India,[537] limited access to political information as well as a lack of knowledge of the system means that they are easily swayed during election campaigns, voting for "whoever everybody else asked us to vote for,"[538] while candidates are known for bribing them by handing out goods in kind or cash.[539] On the other hand, in contrast to the tribals' relative subjection is the agency by tribal leaders, who integrated into the state's political system immediately after independence as well as through the *Panchayati Raj* of the present period, and as such are not only politically active but also maintain important ties to political parties.[540]

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[534] Mishra and Kareemuddin (2017)
[535] Election Commission of India (2014a)
[536] 48, expert; see also Poyam (2016). In the 2014 General Elections, the GGP had a countrywide vote share of 0.15 percent (Election Commission of India, 2014b).
[537] Note: this figure refers to the year 2009 and is specific to the Central Indian region.
[538] 35, expert
[539] 3, local tribal; 14, community leader; 34, expert
[540] 41, 54&57, experts

The third category, 'through the state,' includes forms of agency that, like the above, make use of state mechanisms and instruments, but do so in resistance rather than acquiescence of the state, in view of which they are categorised as going 'away from the state'. An important example of this kind of agency is civil society action. The tribal community is engaged in a range of small- and larger-scale organisations and movements across Central India, an example at the very local level in Narayanpur being the *Abujhmad Samaj* ('Abujhmad Community'). This association has as its main objective to "save [our] culture and traditions,"[541] while at the same time it advocates on behalf of less-well-off members of the community, particularly with regard to education and healthcare, in an effort to "bring them on par with rest."[542] Another example is the *Gondwana Samaj* ('Gondwana Community'), which, active throughout the region since the mid-1990s, "takes problems of the people of Gondwana to the government."[543] Working on issues like land acquisition, socio-cultural conflicts and "any losses to the society caused by the administration,"[544] they generally seek redress at the local district level, but if necessary also lodge appeals with the state administration or organise demonstrations and rallies.[545] An interesting effort that is taking place across the states of Central India that specifically addresses issues of culture and identity is a project that aims at the standardisation of the Gondi language, already referred to above. Working on producing a consolidated dictionary, this initiative seeks not only to preserve the language but also to give it constitutional recognition, as is the case of other languages spoken on the subcontinent: "we will print it, and create an appeal to include Gondi in the Eighth Schedule and submit it to parliament."[546] Finally and importantly, an example of a civil society initiative that works on issues related to industrialisation and resource extraction is the *Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan*, a broad platform of organisations, including tribal associations, NGOs and mass movements, in addition to a large number of small community- or village-based organisations. Focusing in particular on the implementation of the PESA and Forest Rights Acts, they provide legal support, conduct fact-finding missions and organise workshops on forest rights, while also engaging in protest actions like rallies, *yatras* (footmarches) and *dharnas* (sit-ins).[547]

Lastly, the fourth category, 'against the state', is exemplified by the Maoist movement, in which the tribals are actively partaking, this at various levels of the organisation, as described in detail in chapter 4.[548] Given the Maoist's objective of

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[541] 1, local tribal
[542] ibid.
[543] 5, local tribal
[544] ibid.
[545] ibid.; 54, expert
[546] 13, community leader; discussed also with 43&48, experts
[547] 52, expert
[548] Although there is a growing disillusionment among the tribal community with the Maoist movement, as a result of which many are seeking to distance themselves (as mentioned in chapter 4), the Maoists, given their extensive presence in the region, still remain of great significance in terms of tribal agency.

overturning the Indian state through a protracted People's War, this form of agency takes place expressly outside the state system, and is therefore located at the very right-hand-side of the agency continuum proposed above.

Having interpreted and described tribal agency as a continuum that has 'towards the state' and 'away from the state' at its extremes, three aspects are worthy of note: firstly, bearing in mind the tribals' knowledge of the state and its system, the significance of their actions as deliberately 'state-embracing', respectively 'state-rejecting', is, in certain cases, debatable. An example is their electoral participation, which could be argued to be less in acceptance of the state than a response to political parties' campaigns.[549] Secondly, their participation in the Maoist movement is over and above a rejection of the manifestations of the state than of the state as an entity in itself – as it is the case for the Maoists – in the sense that there is a "two-way perception of one helping the other in their own struggle," in the case of the tribals this being their fight for their *jal, jangal,* and *jameen* (water, forest, land).[550] In contrast to this, the fact that the tribals have engaged in rebellions against centralized state-formation in the past should, however, be borne in mind.[551] Thirdly, due to intense competition between the state and the Maoists for tribal allegiance, uncoercedeness of action is increasingly limited at the extreme ends of the continuum, with both the state (including through *Salwa Judum*) and the Maoists taking reprisal for affiliation with the other side. The thesis, however, nevertheless contends that the tribals, waging their own struggles on several fronts – as the above discussion clearly shows – are agents in their own right, and concurs that "viewing the tribals as non-political is a misnomer."[552]

Undertaken with this closely in mind, further analysis of the coded field material built on the above insights regarding state effects on inequality and identity with the aim of tracing the ways in which they influence the observed pattern of tribal agency. This reflects the remaining two sub-research questions posed at the beginning of the thesis:

3. How are inequality-related grievances related to tribal agency and its direction vis-à-vis the state?
4. How are identity-related grievances related to tribal agency and its direction vis-à-vis the state?

In line with the exploratory approach of the thesis, the findings with respect to these two questions comprise a series of observations and postulations concerning the direction of tribal agency, focusing on its general tendency more so than its specific forms, rather than a set of established causal relationships between specific factors.

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[549] 35, expert
[550] 39, expert; similar statements by 52&57, experts
[551] See, for example, Mukherjee (2017) and Sundar (2007)
[552] 60, expert; similar statement by 57, expert

Overall, the analysis suggests that subjective inequality is primarily associated with tribal agency towards the state, whereas the reassertion of identity is generally related to tribal agency away from the state. An example of the former association are situations in which the tribals directly approach state representatives to demand entitlements in the form of services and facilities provided under the various government-run programmes and schemes, in an effort to align standards of living with re-defined needs and aspirations. A similar example, which was of great significance from a political point of view, is an incident that took place in Narayanpur, where villagers, despite Maoist propaganda for a boycott of the event, participated in a grievance redressal camp organised by the district administration:

> The Naxals had put up these banners to convince people that this camp should not happen. But the local *panchayat* insisted [...]. So all of the district administration [went]. [...] And now [there is] a bus moving there, [they] have works going on in that village.[553]

Grievances related to questions of identity, on the other hand, tend to direct tribal agency away from the state, the tribals harbouring a strong sense of frustration at the perceived lack of respect for their culture, as poignantly expressed by an expert respondent:

> So why do you want to take away our land? Our forest? Our river? We have our own way of living, we have our own culture, we have our own language, we have our own songs. So why does the state not recognize them? Why is there no respect for us? Why are we always perceived as backward or undeveloped or uncivilized? They have all these perceptions.[554]

According to the same respondent, this drives the tribals to join the Maoist movement. There are, however, also other examples of tribal agency initiated in reassertion of their identity and culture vis-à-vis the state, like the initiative to standardise Gondi language and the efforts by associations such as the *Abujhmad Samaj* mentioned above. While these are inclined towards the centre of the continuum of agency, there are also actions that very explicitly move 'away from the state.' An important example here is the *Gond Mahasabha*, which has its roots in the division of Gondwana across several states during the early post-colonial period and the resulting dilution of Gond identity. Initially a sociocultural movement, it later evolved into the *Gondwana Gantantra Party* and thereby into a movement for

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[553] 50, expert
[554] 43, expert

cultural and political autonomy, reflected in the party's demand for a separate Gondwana state.[555]
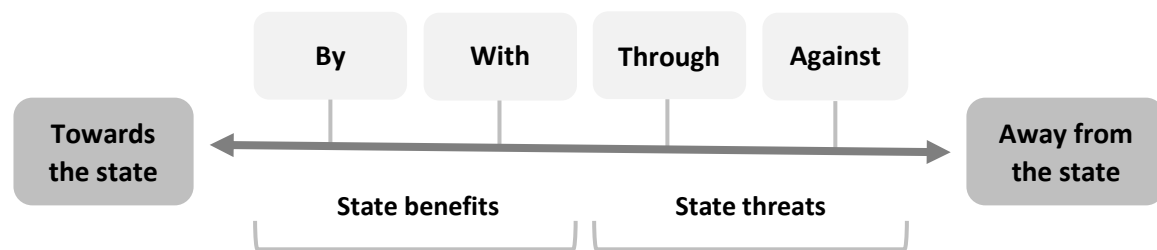
Figure 7 - The direction of agency as influenced by notions of benefits and threats

Based on these observations, the thesis posits that the direction of tribal agency in response to inequality- and identity-related grievances can be understood in terms of notions of benefits and threats (see figure 7 above). Further, abstracting from this to account for agency related to issues other than inequality and identity, it proposes that the observed pattern of tribal agency is driven by the benefits and threats associated with the (expanding) state more generally. For example, while tribal enlistment with the police and security forces is often associated with the state's surrender policy as well as the dissolution of *Salwa Judum*, respondents at the same time emphasised that tribals join because doing so represents an opportunity for economic and social mobility:

> [...] a lot of [tribals] see this as a very lucrative option. [...] 6,500 rupees is what they're supposed to get. So they feel that this is very good money. [...and] they also see a lot of honour in- they feel whenever a police officer or an SPO is passing by, everyone gets kind of scared and intimidated, and they say 'hello sir' or whatever, so [they] also are looking at that and they feel that 'wow, I want to be him! Why would I go back to my village and work when I'm getting this here?' So that's also quite prevalent.[556]

Another example are tribal political leaders, many, though certainly not all, of whom see their integration into the *Panchayati Raj* system as an opportunity for personal enrichment and relocating to urban centres. [557] Moreover, "you will find that the *sarpanches* [...] are young, none of them are old. [...] Now it's not about leading the

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[555] 48, expert; see also Poyam (2016)
[556] 35, expert; similar statement by 50, expert
[557] 50, expert; similar statement by 53, expert

community, it's about political ambition and clout for power."[558] Similarly, traditional rulers tended to integrate into the state's political structures at the time of independence in order to "maintain their power in a different formation, in a different century and in a different context."[559]

Hence, while benefits in the form of opportunities appear to drive agency towards the state, threats in the form of exploitation do the opposite: tribal agency in response to resource extraction and industrialisation, for example, reflects concerns over the loss of their land and livelihood (as well as, bearing in mind its inherent relation to the tribal way of life in the forest, of their identity). Tribal movements related to *jal*, *jangal* and *jameen* go back to the 19th century, when they mounted resistance against the nationalisation of the forests by the British,[560] and remain a central element of tribal agency 'away from the state' today. By most respondents cited as the strongest grievance harboured by the tribal community as a whole, contemporary tribal action in response takes place through organisations such as the *Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan*, as mentioned above. However, several experts also emphasised that "if the government would properly manage the effects of resource extraction, the Maoist movement would not have expanded in the area. Now, all affected villages are supporting the Maoists,"[561] whose narratives of exploitation easily strike a note with the tribals,[562] who largely view their participation as a liberation struggle for their own land.[563]

Having argued that the direction of tribal agency vis-à-vis the state ultimately reflects the benefits and threats associated with its expansion, it is of interest to relate this back to the previous discussion on the tribals' tendencies to associate with and assimilate into, respectively dissociate or dissimilate from, the state. Doing so suggests that the faultlines identified as an important state effect in the latter are mirrored in the pattern of tribal agency and underscore the relevance of benefits and threats for the ways tribals engage with the state. This is most clearly observable at the extreme ends of the continuum: *Salwa Judum* was generally joined by tribals who live near roads and in cities,[564] are educated, speak in Hindi, and who "have become rich […] and politically powerful."[565] Profiting from proximity to the government system,[566] their engagement with the state represented an opportunity for them to secure their property and position,[567] bearing in mind also that *Salwa Judum* was, inter alia, about "arming the landed against the landless."[568] In contrast to this, viewing the Maoists as a means of averting perceived threats to *jal*, *jangal*

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[558] 54, expert
[559] 41, expert
[560] 41&48, experts
[561] 55, expert; similar statement by 37, expert
[562] 37, expert
[563] 52&57, experts
[564] 43&46, experts
[565] 43, expert
[566] 53, expert
[567] ibid.
[568] 54, expert; similar statement by 53, expert

and *jameen* on the grounds of the state's land policies and practices, validated by the movement's efforts to redistribute land,[569] the tribals who join their ranks generally live deeper inside the forests,[570] and are less educated and less familiar with the mainstream languages.[571]

Overall, therefore, this suggests that tribal agency reflects in large part the benefits and threats associated with state expansion, and in turn, bearing in mind the tribals' tendencies to associate or dissociate and assimilate or dissimilate and the reasons for this identified and discussed above, essentially the extent of the state's reach.

iv. Theoretical contribution

To briefly summarise, based on a delineation of the various ways and means through which the Indian state is expanding into the rural areas of Central India, including through the extension of its administrative reach as well as the provision of a variety of public goods and services, combined with Anti-Naxal Operations and legislative action that favours the industrialisation of and resource extraction from the region, close engagement with the field material has served to highlight a range of reactions thereto on the part of the tribal community. Focusing particularly on subjective inequality and definitions of identity as its primary analytic dimensions, the analysis has shown that state expansion brings the tribals to both associate and dissociate with the state, as well as to assimilate into and dissimilate from its society, giving rise to important faultlines in the community as a whole. Moreover, posited to reflect the benefits and threats associated with the expanding state, the analysis has shown the tribals to be engaged in a variety of actions in response to changing perceptions of inequality and shifting delineations of identity, giving rise to a pattern of agency wherein tribal actions are principally inclined either towards or away from the state, depending on whether they are arranged by, undertaken with, conducted through or carried out against the state.

Adopting a dynamic perspective with regard to the role of the state and allowing for a bi-directional view on tribal agency, inter alia by studying individuals in the community rather than the community as a whole, the thesis' approach stands in contrast to previous studies on the subject, allowing it to more holistically account for both state action and tribal reaction. This is significant from a theoretical point of view bearing in mind that, as already argued in the discussion of the literature, previous works on state expansion are largely unidirectional in their focus, while the conflict literature usually adopts a static conceptualisation of the state.

Relatedly, the fact that the present study is situated in a context characterised by an ongoing armed conflict enables it to contribute to both literatures in that this aspect

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[569] 54, expert
[570] 43&46 experts
[571] 43, expert

was found to significantly influence the expansion strategy of the state, which, given competition for tribal allegiance from the Maoists, combines efforts to win hearts and minds with an incursive counterinsurgency. While this allowed for an analysis of changing state capacity, which stands in contrast to the assumption of a given degree of state presence or absence by studies focused specifically on conflict, it also sets the present study apart from the works by Scott (2009) and Hechter (1975), whose focus on exploitation, oppression and subordination by or as a result of state expansion corresponds with their emphasis on the dissociation and dissimilation by peripheral communities. The above analysis has likewise found the tribal community, or rather parts thereof, to dissociate and dissimilate from the state, this too in response to perceived threats, and as such is in line with these previous findings. However, accounting also for state attempts to win over the tribals, it simultaneously suggests that they also tend to associate with and assimilate into the state and its society, in this case in response to perceived benefits.

More specifically, having explored this with a particular focus on the effects of state expansion on subjective inequality and identity, the thesis propositions that the tribals, in response to changing perceptions of inequality produced particularly by a growing exposure to the outside world, tend to associate and engage with the state, seeing this as a means of fulfilling re-defined needs and aspirations. In contrast, it posits that it is particularly the heavy militarization of the region as part of the state's counterinsurgency strategy and the threats posed to the tribal way of life in the forests by industrialisation and resource extraction that tends to drive their dissociation. In the case of identity, the thesis posits a similar mechanism, wherein close interaction with mainstream society and a (state-induced) distancing from their own community tends to effect assimilation, while dissimilation reflects both a response to the former and, again, both the state's approach to counterinsurgency and resource extraction.

With regard to the conflict literature focused on the relationship between inequality and conflict, an interesting observation made based on this analysis is that changing perceptions of inequality as a result of state expansion tend to effect agency toward rather than away from the state, while it is grievances rooted in perceived injustices, particularly those related to concerns over the loss of land and livelihood, that engender agency against the state. In other words, while grievances certainly matter, it is not necessarily those rooted in perceptions of inequality but rather in issues perceived as unjust. While the latter may be strongly related to structural asymmetries, this suggests that there is a likely difference in the ways subjective and objective inequality matters for agency.

With regard to inequality, important to briefly refer to is also the study by Weiner (1978), or more specifically, the related notion of 'sons-of-the-soil.' While sons-of-the-soil sentiments were expressed by some community leaders (13&14), and respective dynamics were mentioned by an expert respondent (54) as well as reflected in some forms of tribal agency, members of the tribal community interviewed appeared to

be questioning the effects of in-migration by other communities to a much lesser extent, and instead expressed much greater concern over the social and economic mobility of their own leaders[572] than the fact that most administrative positions are occupied by 'outsiders'. While the data gathered in this regard is relatively weak, this likely being a function of the fact that Narayanpur specifically has not yet seen as much industrialisation as other parts of Chhattisgarh, it at the same time reflects the finding that inequalities within the tribal community tend to be viewed much more critically compared to those between the tribal and non-tribal communities.[573]

On the whole, by closely analysing data gathered in the field, the thesis contributes important and empirically grounded insights with respect to the effects of state expansion on the direction of indigenous agency, and by exploring specifically the two dimensions of subjective inequality and identity highlights interesting nuances in the ways they influence the manifestation of the observed pattern on the ground.

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[572] Emphasised also by 28, representative of the district administration.
[573] 50, expert

7. Concluding remarks

Comprising an in-depth analysis of state expansion in the Central Indian context, the thesis principally shows that the local tribal communities, embroiled in a protracted armed conflict between the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army of the CPI-Maoist and the Indian government, actively engage with the state, practicing agency both in acquiescence of and opposition to its growing presence in the region.

Broadly stated, this manifests in the following ways: while some tribals accept and endorse the state, supporting, for example, political outfits with close ties to the government; others use state institutions and mechanisms, commonly via political parties and civil society organisations, and as such act with or through the state; while others also willingly join the rank and file of the Maoists in their battle against the state. This the thesis conceptualises in the form of a pattern wherein actions principally go either 'towards the state' or 'away from the state.'

Interested specifically in how the state's expansion into a region in which it had been virtually absent in the past shapes and influences this direction, the thesis examines the effects of the expanding state on local perceptions of inequality and definitions of identity, and, in turn, the tribal community's response thereto. The thesis' findings suggest that state expansion, particularly the related prospects and means of development together with a growing proximity to the outside world, have brought to the fore inequalities and perceptions thereof, which has, in turn, prompted a re-definition of needs and concerns. Seeking to fulfil and address these by availing of government schemes and programmes, this tends to bring about the tribals' association with, and as such agency 'towards,' the state. While some tribals also question the state's approach to development, their dissociation manifests particularly in response to the heavy militarization of the area as well as the negative implications of large-scale resource extraction, which then finds expression in their agency 'away from the state,' for example through civil society organisations that address land acquisition by national and international corporations.

On the other hand, assimilation as a result of changing definitions of identity reflects the tribals' increased interaction with mainstream society and, relatedly, growing aspirations for an urban lifestyle, combined with a general distancing from their own community, this due to religious conversion as well as state initiatives like the education of tribal youth in boarding schools in bigger towns and cities. While dissimilation is to a large extent a response to this, it is also triggered by overt threats to tribal culture, such as the destruction of a place of worship as a result of deforestation and mining. Concerns such as this then lead to agency directly built on tribal identity and culture and the need to protect them both, which tends to take place 'away from the state'.

Based on these observations, the thesis proposes that the direction of tribal agency largely reflects their experience of the expanding state, or more specifically, the benefits and threats that state expansion brings, while agency per se is as such also a function of the extent of the state's reach. On the other hand, the benefits and threats reflect the various ways and means through which the Indian state is advancing, including through the extension of its administrative reach, schemes and programmes for the socioeconomic development of the region, counterinsurgency and the facilitation of resource extraction, which underscores the crucial role the state's particular approach to expansion plays in shaping patterns of local responses.

It is here that the thesis' main contribution lies: basing the analysis on a broader conceptualisation of the ways and means of state expansion, the thesis is able to account for both agency away from and towards the state and therefore, compared to works such as those by Scott (2009) and Hechter (1975), for a more complete repertoire of tribal agency. Moreover, the Indian state's strategy being in large part a response to the ongoing conflict, and strongly influenced by its competition with the Maoists for the tribal community's allegiance, a deeper understanding of tribal actions in response to the state's particular expansion strategy is of relevance also from a social perspective given that this is likely to influence the trajectory of the conflict.

At the same time, however, the fact that the analysis is situated in a conflict setting introduces scope conditions that are likely to reduce the applicability of its findings to fewer cases. Nevertheless, one such case are the Asháninka of Peru and Brazil, whose circumstances bear strong resemblance to that of the tribal communities of Central India: an indigenous community living in the depths of the Amazon rainforest, they too were enmeshed in a conflict between the *Sendero Luminoso* – the Maoist guerrillas of the Partido Comunista del Perú – and the Peruvian government. Moreover, next to state efforts to gain political control over the area, its neoliberal policies have given way to the extraction of natural resources by international corporations, likely raising similar dynamics as state expansion has raised in the case of the Gond and Madia tribes of India.[574]

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[574] Minority Rights Group International (n.d.a); Kulow (2018)

While both these cases exhibit state expansion in response to an insurgent presence and local reserves of natural resources, there are numerous further cases, spread across Africa, Asia and Latin America, where it is particularly the latter that has attracted the interest of the state. Examples include the Himba in Angola and Namibia,[575] the Khants and Mansi in Russia,[576] and the Mapuche in Chile,[577] all who have been facing similar consequences in terms of land, livelihood and ways of life, suggesting that the thesis' analytic dimensions of subjective inequality and identity are of much broader relevance. In view of the thesis' exploratory approach to theory development as well as limitations in the data (see chapter 3), it would therefore be useful to investigate further cases such as these in order to assess the robustness of its findings as well as the extent to which they are transferable beyond the Central Indian case.

Moreover, further research on the subject could examine important nuances that proved beyond the scope of this thesis. One of these is the investigation of changes in tribal agency between the different categories of the identified pattern (i.e. by, with, through and against the state), particularly when they take place 'across' battle lines, in order to account for shifting and double political identities. In this regard, it would be particularly interesting to examine the effects of state repression as well as of its surrender policy. Second, while the thesis explored subjective inequality and identity independently, it would be important to also study their interaction, bearing in mind that inequality, particularly at the group level, and identity are closely linked.[578] As such, further insights could be developed with regard to their conjoint effect on (the direction of) tribal agency by more closely investigating the relationship between a re-definition of needs and concerns and the ways tribal identities are defined and lived, and vice versa. Third and also with respect to inequality, it would be interesting to more specifically examine the effect of political asymmetries and, relatedly, of political decentralisation, the latter being an important part of state expansion. This is of special interest in the Central Indian case, where the devolution of political power has been institutionalised to different degrees in the states that make up the region. A cursory comparison of tribal agency in Gadchiroli district in Maharashtra and Narayanpur district in Chhattisgarh suggests that action on the ground is significantly influenced by the degree political institutions are meaningfully devolved to the local level, representing an opportunity to investigate how more inclusive state-building can encourage nonviolent collective action based on state institutions. Fourth, and related to the third, of significance to a more nuanced understanding of tribal agency in response to state expansion would also be to account for patterns beyond its direction vis-à-vis the state, including whether and when it is unitary or collective, reactionary or sustained, and most importantly, violent or nonviolent.

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[575] Minority Rights Group International (n.d.b)
[576] Minority Rights Group International (n.d.c)
[577] Minority Rights Group International (n.d.d); Jarroud (2013)
[578] See, for example, Sen (2008) and Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug (2013)

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Appendix: coding scheme

Category	Sub-category	Code	Definition	Indicators	Coding rate
State expansion	State presence	**State absence**	The absence of the state and its institutions in a given region.	Information that suggests the non- or limited presence of the state, such as the lack of awareness and knowledge among the tribals of the state, limited access by state institutions to all or certain parts of the region, the absence or limited availability of state services, bounded capacity of the state to exercise its monopoly on the use of force, etc.	**91**
		Manifestations of the state	Signs of the (growing) presence of the state in the region.	Indications of state expansion such as development of the road network, extensions in service delivery, growing reach of the administration and security forces, etc.	**163**
		Parallel state structures	The establishment of a 'People's Government' as a parallel state by the Maoists in areas under their control.	Information on the Jantana Sarkaar, its functioning, reach and impact.	**21**
	Ways and means (actions)	**Administration**	Role and functioning of the local government as an important arm of the central state.	Information on the engagement and impact of the local administration on the ground.	**117**
		Legislation	Use and role of legislation in introducing and establishing the state and its system in the region.	Information on the purpose, design, scope, implementation and impact of legislation, including tribal-specific laws.	**26**

		Development	Development of infrastructure, generation of livelihood opportunities and increased service provision by the state.	Information on the state's development initiatives, including schemes such as MNREGA, PMAY, ASHA, PDS, etc., provision of skills development and vocational training, improvement of road networks and public transport, etc. Includes information also on work done by and through the Ram Krishna Mission.	95
		Industrialisation	Promotion of industrial development by the state.	Information on state initiatives that support the development of industry in the area and the effect thereof on the tribal community.	14
		Resource extraction	Facilitation and promotion of the extraction of natural resources from the area by the state.	Information concerning existing and prospective resource extraction projects, including details on extant mines, etc., as well as on the impacts thereof on the local population and environment.	50
		Law & order	Efforts by the state to establish and maintain law and order in the region.	Information on the police, their mandate, activities and influence, as well as relevant legislation.	34
		Counterinsurgency	Measures undertaken by the state as part of its counter-insurgency campaign.	Information on the state's counter-insurgency strategy, including details on the measures undertaken and the impact thereof on the conflict trajectory as well as on the local community, composition and mandate of the security forces, etc.	76
		Assimilation	Efforts by the state to increasingly integrate the tribal community into mainstream society.	Information on state (and organisations like the RKM and RSS) initiatives that directly or indirectly (seek to) bring tribals out of the forest and into mainstream society.	68

		Agenda	**Intentions**	Aims and objectives of the state's activities in the region.	Information on the state's agenda as implemented through the policies, measures and initiatives listed above. Also, information outlining the state's account of the legitimacy of its agenda and the ways and means it is pursuing it.	**100**
			Winning hearts and minds	Activities carried out and/or narratives used by the state specifically with the purpose of 'winning over' the tribals.	Information on activities and initiatives of the state with regard to tribal issues with a view to winning the trust and faith, and hence allegiance, of the tribal community, including actions undertaken in direct response to tribal concerns. Also information on the state's portrayal of the circumstances of the tribal community and ways and means of addressing their grievances, as well as the state's framing of tribal identity and the need of 'civilising' their culture.	**96**
		Impact	**State effects (integration)**	The tribal community's view and experience of the expanding state, including their transformation from statelessness to stateness.	Information on how state expansion has affected the tribals through the changes it has brought for their community, and how they interpret and respond to the growing presence of the state in the region as well as information on their identification with, acceptance of and/or integration into the Indian state system, i.e. their 'closeness' to the state'. How do the tribals define the state?	**212**

		State effects (inequality)	Effect of state expansion on the presence and perception of inequality.	Information on how state expansion has (re-)shaped inequalities on the ground, both among the tribals and between the tribal community and other ethnic groups as well as the circumstances in which inequalities are perceived and evaluated as unjust.	96
		State effects (identity)	Effect of state expansion on tribal identity.	Information on how state expansion has influenced tribal identity, particularly as part of its efforts to wean the tribals into mainstream society, and how this has reinforced or precipitated cleavages in the tribal community.	46
Indigenous agency	Incidence of agency	**Action**	Occurrence of tribal agency.	Information on the practice of agency, i.e. the uncoerced engagement by tribals in actions that seek to effect a change in the status quo.	230
		Inertia	Absence of tribal agency.	Information on the inaction of tribals, for example, due to passivity (a general acceptance of circumstances) or impotence (lack of ability or helplessness).	71
	Opportunities for agency	**Channels for action**	Range of channels and actions through which tribals can voice and seek redress for their grievances.	Information on state grievance redressal mechanisms as well as means and strategies of political opposition or resistance.	39
		Political consciousness and strategic awareness	Knowledge and understanding of the ways and means of politics as well as the strategic capacity to engage in agency.	Information on the tribal community's awareness, understanding, knowledge and use of the political system, their political representatives and channels for political participation; information on their 'knowhow' of agency.	167

	Characteristics of agency	**Agency characteristics**	Traits and attributes of tribal agency, particularly the range of actions and activities they undertake.	Information on the ways and means of tribal agency, including their use of conventional channels of political participation and their strategies of (political) resistance, but also information on the background of the leaders/initiators of tribal agency, and the level of support they and their activities have in the community.	**228**
	Motives for agency	**Causes of agency**	Range of issues and circumstances that precipitate tribal agency.	Information on the kinds of grievances (incl. those related to inequality and identity), experiences and practical considerations that impel tribals to become active.	**122**
		Purpose of agency	Aims and objectives of tribal agency.	Information on the purposes tribal agency is intended to fulfil, i.e. the outcomes that they seek to effect. This may include also the fulfilment of personal vested interests.	**113**
	Patterns of agency	**Direction vis-a-vis the state**	Agency that goes towards or away from the state.	Information that indicates whether and when responses are oriented 'towards' and as such in acceptance or acquiescence of the state or 'away' from or in opposition to the state.	**245**
		Political vs apolitical	Agency that is based on political or apolitical action, although the latter may have strong political meaning.	Information on, for example, cultural activities that seek to reassert tribal identity.	**33**
		Grassroots initiative vs 'outside' leadership	Agency that is initiated and led from within the tribal community or by non-tribal leaders and/or organisations.	Information on the actors involved and their relationship to the tribal community.	**77**

		Unitary vs collective	Agency that is carried out by individuals or collectively by a group of tribals.	Information on who is involved in a particular activity or action as well as on the general level of organisation of the tribal community.	32
		Reactive vs sustained	Agency that constitutes a single action or activity or is part of a larger campaign.	Information on whether actions and activities are sustained over a longer period of time or whether they constitute one-off responses to certain situations or events. Relevant is thus also information concerning relationships between actions and activities and between the people involved.	21
		Violent vs nonviolent	Agency that is carried out through violent or nonviolent means.	Information on the kinds of strategies used, where nonviolent forms of agency include conventional political activities (voting, lobbing, petitioning, etc.) and non-routine and non-institutionalised behaviour (protests, demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, sit-ins, etc.). Violent forms, on the other hand, include both the threat and use of physical force. (Cunningham, 2013)	42
	Causes and consequences of agency	Drivers of patterns	Factors that drive patterns of indigenous agency.	Information on factors that influence patterns of tribal agency.	198
		State response	Response by the state to the different forms of tribal agency.	Information on the state's perspectives on, framing of and reactions to tribal agency, particularly when this goes against the state.	72
Political organisations, movements & initiatives	Maoist movement	Background info	Background information on the Maoist movement and the ways and means in which it engages the state and pursues its political objectives.	Information on the formation and genesis of the movement, its political objectives, organisational structure, leader- and membership, tactics, strategies and activities (violent and nonviolent), etc. Also includes information regarding the tribals' experience with the Maoists.	272

		Mobilisation strategies	The ways and means in which the Maoists mobilise the support of the tribal community.	Information on how the Maoists engage with the local tribal community to build up a network of support, whom in the community they approach, the kind of activities they undertake and narratives they use to 'win over' the tribals, and their use of conventional means of military recruitment. Narratives refers to their framing of the circumstances of the local communities and their grievances, i.e. how they approach local issues, which issues they 'pick up' and the terms of reference they use in highlighting them as unjust, as well as their use of local identities to unify and mobilise the tribal community.	**100**
	Political parties	**Background info**	Background information on political parties active in the region.	Information on their political orientation, local representatives and membership, presence at the local level, the kinds of issues they address, etc. Also includes information regarding the tribals' experience with political parties.	**89**
		Mobilisation strategies	The ways and means in which political parties mobilise the support of the tribal community.	Information on how political parties engage with the local tribal community with a view to winning their support and votes, including details on their campaigns and activities, and the ways in which they frame and approach tribal grievances and questions of identity.	**51**
	Civil society & grassroots	**Background info**	Background information on civil society initiatives from the region and the ways and means in which they are active on the ground.	Information on their raison d'être, objectives, leader- and membership, structure, activities, the kinds of issues they address, etc. Also includes information regarding the tribals' experience with civil society and grassroots organisations.	**114**

		Mobilization strategies	The ways and means in which civil society and grassroots initiatives mobilise the support of the tribal community.	Information on how they engage with the local tribal community and the kind of activities they undertake with a view to mobilising the tribals; information on how they approach the issues they are working on and the terms of reference they use in addressing them (framing), as well as on how they engage with, frame and use local identities.	25
	Vigilante groups	Background info	Background information on vigilante groups active in the region and the ways and means in which they are active on the ground.	Information on their formation and raison d'être, their objectives and political alignment, their leader- and membership, organisational structure, their activities and the impacts thereof, etc. Also includes information regarding the tribals' experience with vigilante groups.	29
		Mobilisation strategies	The strategies employed by vigilante groups to mobilise the tribal community.	Information on how they engage with the local tribal communities and the kind of activities they undertake with a view to mobilising the tribals, including whom in the community they approach and the ways in which they frame tribal grievances and identity.	8
Inequality	Objective perspective on inequality	Objective political inequality	Disparities in the extent of political representation and participation at all levels of governance; asymmetries in access to information.	Objective information on the degree of political representation and participation of tribal communities relative to other groups, and the impact thereof.	133
		Objective economic inequality	Disparities in economic well-being and livelihood opportunities.	Objective information on the degree of access to income, assets (e.g. land, livestock), markets and employment opportunities relative to other groups.	87

		Objective social inequality	Disparities in access to social goods and services.	Objective information on the degree of access to goods and services such as education, health, housing, water and sanitation, transport, credit and financial services, communication technology, etc. relative to other groups, as well as information on differences in levels of socio-economic development (e.g. literacy levels, housing conditions, etc.).	130
		Objective cultural inequality	Disparities in the recognition and acceptance of cultural practices and traditions.	Objective information on the degree of freedom in practicing tribal culture, including the use of tribal languages, the following of tribal religions and the celebration of tribal traditions.	34
		Source of inequality	Reasons for the emergence and development of inequalities.	References to the sources of inequality, excluding state expansion and the ongoing conflict, as well as references to interactions between the different types of inequality whereby one causes, facilitates or reinforces another.	66
	Subjective perception of inequality	Experience of inequality	Experience of the impact of inequalities in everyday life.	Information on how inequalities manifest in people's everyday lives. For example, economic discrimination in terms of assets such as land and livestock significantly restricts people in securing their livelihoods on a daily basis as well as reduces their ability to cope in crisis.	227
		Comparison with others	Comparison with others as a source of information for the appraisal of one's own situation.	The assessment of circumstances and wellbeing of tribals relative to the situation of others.	81

		Perception of inequality	Consciousness or awareness of inequalities as inequalities.	Recognition of asymmetries in circumstances, opportunities and well-being; references to specific types of (perceived) inequalities by respondents.	77
		Evaluation of inequality	Interpretation of inequalities and identification of whether and what is unjust about the present state of affairs.	Whether inequalities are regarded as unjust or whether they are simply accepted or ignored, e.g. regarded as unfortunate or inevitable, as 'just the way things are'.	164
		Politicization of inequality	Processes of framing and blaming.	Information on framing processes through which an understanding of the situation, how it needs to change and who is to blame is developed.	83
Identity	Local identities	**Attributes**	Means of identification of and with the different groups in the region.	Language, religion, cultural traditions & practices, values & attitudes, dress, diet, etc.	104
		Social change	Changes in identity and group identification, including in relation to the core.	Changes in social structures, behaviour, beliefs, and practices that affect the ways local identities are defined and lived.	63
	Local constellation of identities	**Ethnic & tribal heterogeneity**	The constellation and inter-mixing of local tribes and non-tribal communities.	Details on the communities inhabiting the area (tribal and non-tribal), including their relative sizes, settlement patterns, interactions with and proximity to other groups, social structures and hierarchies, etc.	115
		Group cohesion	The extent to which the local group(s) comprise a cohesive social and political community	Degree of group identification, presence of cleavages and crosscutting identities; strength of social networks, expression of solidarity, and signs of friction and fragmentation.	114

	Reactive identity formation (Hechter, 1975)	**Dissimilation**	The perception of threats to and reassertion of tribal identity.	Emphasis on tribal identity as distinct, them-and-us conceptions of identity, efforts to strengthen and/or revive tribal culture.		**39**
		Assimilation	Acceptance of and integration into mainstream identity.	Tribals identifying as Hindu/Christian; tribals engaging in non-traditional practices and customs; tribals looking down on tribal culture as backward.		**35**
Grievances	Grievance types	**Grievances rooted in inequality**	Grievances that emerge in response to perceived inequality.	Grievances harboured specifically with regard to inequalities in the current state of affairs, i.e. the status quo is evaluated as unjust and a call for redress is made.		**33**
		Grievances rooted in questions of identity	Grievances that emerge in response to questions of identity.	Grievances harboured specifically in relation to changing identities, i.e. questions of identity give rise to concern and a call for (re)action is made.		**14**
		Other grievances	Grievances rooted neither in inequality nor in questions of identity.	Grievances harboured in relation to, for example, issues of exploitation or the ongoing conflict, but are not directly associated with inequality and/or identity.		**49**
		Sons-of-the-soil sentiments (Weiner, 1978)	Grievances rooted in sons-of-the-soil/anti-migrant sentiments.	Expression of demands for protectionist politics and policies in favour of the local tribal communities.		**21**
Political decentralisation	PESA/FRA	**Implementation of PESA/FRA**	The degree to which the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act and/or the Forest Rights Act are implemented at the state and local level.	Information on the establishment, functioning and use of *Panchayati Raj Institutions*; application of the FRA.		**14**

		Impact of PESA/FRA on agency	Opportunities that decentralisation via PESA and the clauses of the FRA create for participation and organisation.	Tribals using PESA and/or the FRA to organise and mobilise their community for action.	**38**
Background information on the fieldsite	Context information	**Context geographic**	Background information that describes relevant aspects of the geographic setting of the fieldsite.	Information on location, topography, accessibility, settlement patterns, etc.	**49**
		Context historical	Background information on the history of the fieldsite.	Information on important historical events and developments in the region, including the history of tribal struggles against the state.	**39**
		Context political	Background information that relates relevant political attributes of the fieldsite.	Information on the local administration, 'ways of doing politics', traditional governance structures, etc.	**126**
		Context economic	Background information that relates relevant economic attributes of the fieldsite.	Information on traditional sources of livelihood, participation in the formal and informal sectors, economic development of the region, etc.	**127**
		Context social	Background information that relates social characteristics of the fieldsite.	Information on the local social fabric, migration, levels of socio-economic development, etc.	**198**
		Context cultural	Background information that describes relevant cultural aspects of the fieldsite.	Information on local languages, religious practices and cultural traditions, including differences to the mainstream due to the relative isolation of the periphery from the core.	**71**

	Spatial-political aspects	**Tribals as a state evading group**	Tribals not as a left behind remnant of civilization but rather as a community that deliberately avoids incorporation and appropriation into state structures (deliberate and reactive statelessness; statelessness as a political choice). (Scott, 2009)	References to escape settlements (remote and rugged locations, and high mobility), escape agriculture (swiddening/hunting/foraging), escape social structures (acephalous, egalitarian, heterogeneous and dispersed communities with loose and pliable kin- and leadership structures), escape cultures (oral histories, ethnic and linguistic complexity and fluidity, and a drive for freedom/traditions of autonomy).	29
		Rural-urban	Differences between life in the villages and towns and experiences of shifting from the former to the latter.	Information on experiences in each setting, interpretations of the circumstances there (e.g. differences in perceptions of inequality) and the changes and challenges a shift from one to the other brings as well as the reasons for migration.	81
	Political environment	**Political culture of opposition**	The practice and existence of a political culture of opposition and/or a politics loaded with suspicion.	Information on the position of conflict actors as well as the division of the tribals between fronts and the impact this has on the community, i.e. narratives and activities that indicate and/or foment political division and prevent the opposition from engaging with the community and vice versa.	176
		Competitive recruitment environment	Political organisations and groups, as well as the state, competing for the same pool of tribal supporters.	Information suggesting interest, attempts and strategies to mobilise and as such 'win over' tribals.	45

	Conflict	**Conflict trajectory**	History and evolution of the Maoist insurgency in general and in Central India in particular.	Information on the causes, onset and intensity, and the geographic diffusion of the Maoist movement.	**69**
		Conflict impact	Impact of the conflict on the politics and people of the region.	Observations and responses that indicate a direct relation between a situation/experience and the ongoing conflict.	**96**
Residual category		**Residual**	General observations given by respondents that aid the understanding of the research questions but do not fit into one of the defined categories.	n/a	**69**