Citizenship as a Communicative Effect

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ABSTRACT

Using ethnographic field notes on the media circulation and uptake of two specific government orders in Hyderabad, India, I propose a semiotic approach to looking at how emblems of citizenship are not simply products of state ideologies, but rather products of a dialogic relationship (sometimes contentious, often ordinary) between "state" and "citizens," and always with reference to a history of communicative events between the two. I argue that citizenship should be understood as a communicative effect that is mediated not solely by sovereign power and strident collective movements, but more often through everyday processes by which emblems of citizenship are entextualized and the discursive interactions through which substantive claims are mobilized, negotiated, and contested. Such an approach can add both epistemological and methodological specificity to political anthropology and push it beyond the limitations of an anthropology of the state.

Scholars in urban studies have moved beyond a conception of "citizenship" as a disembodied set of rights toward thinking of dynamic and dialogic processes of claim-making (Chatterjee 2004; Holston 2008). Building on these approaches, I argue that citizenship is the cumulative effect of a series of communicative events between agencies that are segmented as "state" and "citizen." Each event results in reflexive reanalyses of social or governmental categories, which are mobilized and appropriated as emblems of citizenship, to concomitantly re-

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analyze citizens' positions in governmental discourses. I frame the relationship I'm describing as state-citizen communication for heuristic purposes, but following Akhil Gupta's (2012) call to "disaggregate the state," I will use the term "government" to discuss specific state agencies in the rest of the essay and will specify the branch and department of government being discussed as far as possible. However, I will continue to use the word "citizen" rather than "person" or "subject." While "person" and "subject" index a historically and structurally constructed figure, I use the term "citizen" to index the role that can be inhabited by persons/subjects to exercise limited agency to negotiate their historical/structural positionality through dialogic processes of claim-making. In contrast to thinking about "neoliberal states"[1] and the deleterious effects of its exception-making on citizens and the very notion of citizenship (Ong 2006), this semiotic approach will be a useful way of looking at how emblems of citizenship are not simply products of state ideologies, but a result of dialogic relationships (sometimes contentious, often ordinary) between state and citizen, and always with reference to a history of communicative events between the two. This approach also opens up the possibility of decentering the state from how we understand citizens' everyday civic and political claim-making.

In this essay, I will look at the issuing of two specific government orders (commonly referred to as GOs, including in this essay) in Hyderabad, India, as specific events of communication by the government and use ethnographic field notes to examine how messages of the government's intent circulated through various media, how they were taken up and analyzed in light of preexisting policies and practices, and how a reanalyzed meaning circulated through social media and in public meetings. The GOs classified the population into two broad categories of those below (poor) and above (nonpoor) the poverty line, each entailing a different set of concessions and entitlements. I will discuss how, despite the poverty line being fixed,[2] *poor* and *nonpoor* were neither objective nor predetermined categories. Instead, various individuals and groups made claims to identify as either one by citing the historical term in which they have engaged with the government (citing oral communications, documents, photographs, recordings, etc.) to reflexively reanalyze their positions as citizens and to contest the government's stereotypical formulations of the concessions

1. I use the term "neoliberal" to index a set of assumptions about state forms and sovereign power that persist in academic discourse despite growing disfavor toward the term.

2. The fixity of the poverty line is itself contextual. There have been many changes in the methodology for calculating it in India, and debates about their efficacy or lack thereof are abundantly found in the *Economic and Political Weekly*.

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and entitlements they are owed. This reanalysis is made possible by appropriating social and governmental categories like "poor," "taxpayer," and "voter" as emblems of citizenship and negotiating their construal, and not simply by acquiring exceptions for particular individuals or groups.

In lieu of increasing terror regarding the lack of agency for citizens in contemporary state-forms (e.g., Brown 2015), this approach offers a different account of agency. It is not one that is interested in disembodied rights and mandated freedoms, or some authoritative textual notion of them, but rather one that attends to the dialogic production of rights and duties, freedoms and constraints. The works of Partha Chatterjee (2004, 2011) and James Holston (2008) have greatly enriched the study of citizenship and state-citizen interactions by highlighting this dialogic nature of citizens' claim-making and the various strategic rationalities that underlie it. However, despite their careful historical framing, they do not sufficiently describe the mechanics or dynamics of claims-making, which semiotic anthropology is uniquely positioned to do, as I hope to show in this essay. Other recent work in the anthropology of the state has also dealt with the communicative aspects of citizenship, but they focus more prominently on other aspects such as the systematic arbitrariness of bureaucratic procedure (Gupta 2012), the materialities of the media and milieus of communication between state and subject (Hull 2012), or the affective dimensions of state-subject communication (Navaro-Yashin 2012). I wish to build on these frameworks but also take a further step to think about the figuring of citizenship through chains of communicative events (I elaborate on this in the next section). I find it useful to understand citizenship as the cumulative effect of a series of communicative events between government agents or agencies and citizens. Similar to Francis Cody's (2011, 42) analysis of publicity as a communicative effect, that is, an effect that "relies on a reflexive recognition of textual circulation among indefinite addressees," I argue that citizenship too, is similarly affected.

I am interested in citizens' and governments' agency not just in terms of political economy or sociopolitical structure, but more fundamentally in semiotic terms; that is, agency defined as "the capacity to construe one's semiotic environment and to respond intelligibly to it" (Agha 2007, 231). This agency is enacted by taking up emblems of citizenship in either new or unintended ways (Anjaria and Rao 2014), but also crucially in older ways that refer back to older practices and promises. Thus, I am interested in the uptake of the GOs and the speech chains produced by them. Agha describes uptake as a phase-segment of semiosis where a participant is both receiver and sender of a message, and he describes a series of such uptakes as a speech chain through which shared,

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recontextualized meanings emerge (Agha 2011). Katherine Mortimer (2013) has likened this process to the game of Telephone, where the eventual message differs from the source message after being passed on by a series of receivers/senders. Beyond speech chains, I am also interested in processes by which discourses and emblems of citizenship get "entextualized." Bauman and Briggs define entextualization as "the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit—a *text*—that can be lifted out of its interactional setting" (Bauman and Briggs 1990, 73). Both governments and citizens, through various techniques of recording, certification, documentation, and other textual production, render instances of communication decontextualizable and circulable. I will look at how different kinds of documents and records influence uptake of new texts such as the GOs, and how citizens reanalyze the GOs by relating them to other texts. Finally, the practices of discursively relating texts themselves have patterns, which Francis Cody (2011, 43) calls "regimes of circulation" or "cultivated habits of animating texts."

In the context of Hyderabad, and likely many other contexts, these textual habits involve persistent historicization. First, governmental functioning itself relies on citational practices that refer to established precedent or existing rhythms of interaction and functioning. Second, citizens animate governmental texts by putting them in relation to older laws and policies, and also older or existing forms of everyday governmental practice. Hence, any new executive order must contend with its own historical production. As Bauman and Briggs point out, "entextualization may well incorporate aspects of context, such that the resultant text carries elements of its history of use within it" (Bauman and Briggs 1990, 73).

The data for this essay were collected as part of a collaborative research project on housing rights conducted by the Hyderabad Urban Lab. I participated in this project from June 2014 to June 2016 and had carried out multisited ethnographic research in various slum settlements in Hyderabad. After the announcement of the GOs discussed in this essay, I visited five different slum settlements over six months and interviewed local leaders and activists about their positions and strategies regarding the orders. In this essay, I use field notes from this period of my research.[3] From my field notes, I examine three variants of the uptake of the GOs to illustrate how the categories of "poor" and "nonpoor" were reflex-

3. The questions raised by this research and engagements made with communities, then, have shaped my broader research questions and are becoming a crucial part of my PhD dissertation research, which has started with summer research conducted in 2017.

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ively reanalyzed by corresponding (counter)publics by referring to histories of communication with various governmental agents and agencies.

The rest of the essay is organized in three sections. In the next section, I review some of the key contributions to the anthropology of state and citizenship and show how my approach emerges out of them but also differs from them in crucial ways. Section 2 will briefly discuss the issuing of the orders and the various media through which they were communicated to citizens. Section 3 will detail three cases of its uptake and recontextualization: by (1) those who define themselves as dutiful taxpayers deserving fair (i.e., special) treatment, (2) those who over two generations have otherwise moved away from claiming concessions for being "poor" but in the context of the GOs mobilized narratives of their historical roots in poverty, and (3) those who made active political claims to being "poor." Section 4 will elaborate on the theoretical implications of conceptualizing citizenship as a communicative effect for the study of the state, cities, and politics more broadly.

1. Citizenship as a Communicative Effect

In this section I engage with some key contributions to the anthropology of citizenship and the state in recent years. I highlight some of the key theoretical interventions that have significantly shaped the field and some of their insights that resonate with or inform my own observations. I also offer some critical comments on this literature and offer suggestions as to how my own approach might address the existing limitations. What follows are two subsections: the first engages with anthropological theories of citizenship; the second engages with ethnographies of bureaucracy.

A. Dialogic Citizenship

The idea of citizenship as a communicative effect is significantly inspired by anthropological theories that have highlighted the contested and negotiated nature of citizens' claim-making and their, at least partial, effectiveness. Partha Chatterjee observes that "the governmental administration of development and welfare [has] produced a heterogeneous social, consisting of multiple population groups to be addressed through multiple and flexible policies" (Chatterjee 2004, 136). For Chatterjee, these flexible policies are a result of contestations from "political society," defined as a multiplicity of subaltern publics, against the aspirations of "civil society," which for him is a bourgeois public. Although he tells us that considerations of electoral results compel state responsiveness, he does not specify how publics are constituted out of a heterogenous social, nor how the

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influence of contesting publics reaches state policies, that is, how they communicate with the state. However, Chatterjee offers a unique conceptualization of the subject of political practice, "neither as abstract and unencumbered individual selves nor as manipulable objects of government policy, but rather as concrete selves necessarily acting within multiple networks of collective obligations and solidarities to work out strategies of coping with, resisting, or using to their advantage the vast array of technologies of power deployed by the modern state" (2011, 207). Through such a formulation, Chatterjee points to dialogic processes whereby state technologies become resources for political subjects who put them to unintended uses and apply pressure for exceptional applications. Although Chatterjee eloquently describes the general outlines of the process, he reduces political negotiation to an electoral calculus and to the strategic supplication of political patrons by citizens, not considering other strategies that might be more strident or sophisticated.

For such reductive tendencies, Chatterjee has also been criticized by Holston, who argues that "there is a need to analyze the complexities of formal incorporation and substantive distribution, in order to avoid reducing politics to dichotomous and homogeneous categories [civil/political society]" (2012, xi). In his own formulation, Holston provides a useful framework for understanding citizenship by defining it as "a relation of state and society" (2008, 9), explicitly acknowledging its dialogic character. Further, he emphasizes that citizenship is figured through an everyday performance of objective and subjective claims. However, despite these strengths, Holston goes on to define the relation between state and society too stringently; he says that "the compact of citizenship [is] a specific distribution of various kinds of power in society (political, economic, repressive, sovereign, legal, and so forth)" (16). Thus, citizenship is defined as entrenched and static, and its everyday performance is a process of reinforcing its objective and subjective dimensions. The dynamism in his theory is found in performances of "insurgent citizenship," which is explicitly disruptive to entrenched power. Holston, then, faces a problem opposite to that of Chatterjee's, in that he does not consider political negotiations by the marginalized that might use entrenched power for unintended uses, and he also does not clearly distinguish insurgent performance from performances that actually *induce* entrenched powers to act in certain ways. Although there is no doubt that insurgent tactics are often used to effect certain ends, as Lisa Mitchell (2018) would argue, they are rarely a rejection of the state (insurgency) and might rather be seen as an intensified call for an audience with the state, a call to be heard and benefited, what she cogently terms "hailing the state."

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This latter consideration would make for a richer account of dialogic processes of citizenship. In this regard, a recent article by Jonathan Shapiro Anjaria and Ursula Rao also takes a crucial step. They are interested in the "contextual self-making of citizens" (Anjaria and Rao 2014, 414) and the ways in which citizens "talk back to the state." Using two ethnographic case studies in Mumbai, India, to tackle the question of neoliberalism, they put forth a more generally applicable observation: they argue that focusing only on state ideologies and state agents "overlooks the way people make sense of state practices and influence the direction of change by re-appropriating policy towards unlikely ends" (423). They show, first, how social behavior and habitus, by deviating from ideologically defined roles, impel changes in policy itself and, second, how citizens bring their own interpretations to a policy, sometimes using it against the interests of the state itself, by inducing it to work toward ends specified by citizens. While their ethnographic observations resemble my own, in this essay I am trying to offer a method for thinking about dialogic citizenship in a broader frame than the "social confrontations that shape the trajectories of projects" (423).

Thus, although citizenship is already studied in terms of *claims*, a semiotic approach to the sheer discursivity of citizens' claim-making can specify how different claim-making publics or subjects get constituted. Citizenship as a communicative effect is mobilized selectively in different situations, it can be studied in terms of chains of uptakes, and it can be specified as relationships between actors in historically conditioned contexts. This approach does not treat certain documents (passports, ration cards, etc.) as privileged emblems of citizenship; rather, it foregrounds the larger communicative chains within which these documents are entextualized as emblems in the first place. Another area that receives considerable academic attention is collective assemblies (Butler 2015). Building on the work of Lisa Mitchell (2018), I will also argue that collective assembly is a particular strategic maneuver that must be contextualized within a broader framework of state-citizen communication. Citizenship, understood as an everyday discursive relationship to the state, and not just a process of subject-formation through governmentality, or reacting to governmental ideology, opens up new ways to see how state-citizen relationships evolve through friction and over time.

B. The Discursivity of Government

The everyday operations of government are everywhere already discursively organized; through notices, announcements, decrees, and orders put forth by governments, and letters, representations, petitions, requests, and complaints

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from citizens. There is a wealth of recent research that attends to this discursivity of governments, albeit they focus mostly on specific aspects of governmental operation. I refer to this literature as the ethnographies of bureaucracy. The most generative feature of this literature for a semiotic approach to citizenship is the light they shed on the discursivity "internal" to the government. While my ethnographic vignettes focus mostly on discourses among citizens and dialogic relations with the government, a greater attention to how these two relate to the internal discursivity of government itself would add more richness to my framework.

Akhil Gupta tells us that "the state consists of congeries of institutions with diversified levels, agencies or bureaus, agendas, functions, and locations" (Gupta 2012, 45). Strongly advocating for disaggregating "the state," he calls for "[thinking] of the manner in which routinized practices enable [grand] illusions, acts of magic, or fantasies [of the state] to be created, sustained, and resisted" (55). He builds on Timothy Mitchell's (1991) suggestion that the line separating state and society is a society-internal ideological construction, but conceptualizes it in terms of "representations" *of* and *by* the state, once again reifying what he set out to deconstruct. Instead of representations and images, this line might be discerned in terms of certain kinds of discourse and a certain distribution of semiotic agency. In Gupta's account, the capacity to construct and represent categories is overwhelmingly with the state, whereas I am suggesting that there is a more complex distribution of these capacities.

Matthew Hull combines semiotic anthropology and science-and-technology studies (STS) to offer an ethnographic account of bureaucracy in Islamabad, Pakistan. I read him as describing entextualization of governmental practices and the dialogic nature of citizenship, when he says that documents "work not only as instruments of bureaucratic control but also as media of dissent and negotiation between the government and populace" (Hull 2012, 66). In studying the materiality of the bureaucratic milieu, he offers keen insights into the discursivity of government. He suggests that "graphic artifacts translate and displace social relations within government . . . they do not simply reproduce them in another media" (19). This point is related to his definition of graphic ideologies, which "define the normative relations between discourse genres and graphic forms . . . and the sort of person associated with a particular graphic form" (14). Using this framework, Hull discerns and explains ways in which citizens strategize their communication with bureaucrats; that is, whether they wish to present themselves as supplicant, strident, or mostly, in his view, as a combination of dissenting voices open to negotiation (101). Thus, Hull attends

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to the crucial negotiations of footing in encounters between citizens and government workers, and how even the graphic organization of a document can index social relations or claims to them.

Francis Cody's ethnography among neoliterates in Katrampatti in Tamil Nadu, India, similarly illustrates but also troubles the relation between graphic artifacts and citizenship. He argues that "postcolonial statecraft . . . rests on the persistent premise that the subaltern classes do not *yet* have the full capacity to represent themselves as rights-bearing citizens" (Cody 2013, 12). Through a vignette where neoliterate women sign a petition for the first time and, with great ceremony, go to the collector's office to hand it to them personally, Cody asks whether being able to sign and hand over this petition makes these women citizens/agents as opposed to subjects. He is doubtful because the petition was produced in two drafts, the first dictated by the women, which had a supplicant tone, while the latter was edited by their teacher, who altered the tone to sound more entitled. Cody asks whether the simple act of signing means that these women have performed citizenship, or was it an act of faith (2013, 203)? Or are they replicating a subjecthood that is more suited to the erstwhile royal palace and royal audience hall that the district collector occupies? In response to these incisive questions, I would argue, first, that the supplication of citizens to government servants or politicians as patrons might be more than a vestige of a feudal past. It might itself be a mode of politics and a mode of inhabiting the role of citizen (Piliavsky 2014). Second, unlike rural India, where this vignette is drawn from, a wide range of subaltern urban classes have evolved a repertoire of strategies for self-representation, including supplication among many others. Perhaps this has to do with the nature of urban space; for instance, Holston suggests that "cities provide the dense articulation of global and local forces in response to which people think and act themselves into politics, becoming new kinds of citizens" (Holston 2008, 23).

Building on this literature, I also attend to the lesser acknowledged discursive site of government: the executive branch or bureaucracy. The executive branch of government consists of bureaucrats, local offices, and the conductors of all the mundane tasks of government and is a site for massive discursive production; the GOs I discuss are a good example. Further, not only is the executive necessary for producing orders, but—more importantly—for the iterative interactions through which orders are implemented, contested, and revised. In my view, this iterative discursivity of the executive branch of government offers insight into the situated everyday negotiations that configure citizenship. In general, documents or texts such as government orders or internal circulars

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and memos of state have been neglected in the literature, aside from Hull (2012), who actually looks at current government documents. Although the texts of legislations, technocratic policy visions, and jurisprudence are highly significant, the discursivity and documentation of the executive offices are also crucial because it is here that notions of citizenship being put forth in law and policy are distilled into everyday practices and entextualized as circulable documents that perdure in practice and in archives. Additionally, the structures of its functioning and its everyday interactions with citizens embody bundles of practices of documentation and communication in relation to paper, as Hull describes it; also, "regimes of circulation" or "cultivated habits of animating texts," in Cody's (2011, 43) terms.

2. Two Government Orders in Hyderabad, India

On December 30, 2014, the revenue department of the Government of Telangana issued two government orders with the objective of regularizing land ownership: GO 58 and GO 59 of 2014.[4] GO 58 set out to grant nonalienable titles to families living below the poverty line who lay claim to less than 125 square yards of "unobjectionable government land." GO 59 provided for the regularization of unauthorized occupations of government-owned land for those above the poverty line on payment of a certain percentage of the value of the land.

Telangana is a recently formed state in India. It attained statehood on June 2, 2014, by separating from the state of Andhra Pradesh based on a protracted and widespread social movement. It is important to note that the demand for the state was built on massive popular support and with the demand for more benefits to the people of Telangana. The distinction was not linguistic, as is the case for most separate-state movements in India, but rather was one based on claims of uneven socioeconomic development and cultural hegemony (Haragopal 2015). The new government formed by the Telangana Rashtra Samiti, or TRS Party, was therefore under significant pressure to live up to expectations, including the election-time promise to authorize irregular land occupations. It thus sought to cash in on, first, the revenue from the middle classes who would pay up under GO 59, and second, the favor it would garner from its "poor" vote bank who are eager for legal sanction. But these government orders were simply one in a chain of such orders that have been issued since the mid-1990s by various regimes. Indeed, a GO 60 had to be published the very next day acknowledging

4. The full text of the GOs can be accessed on a government portal: http://goir.telangana.gov.in/reports.aspx. Select Department: Revenue; GO Type: MS; Search in the time interval of December 2014 and enter 58, 59, or 60 as the GO no. to view the GOs cited in this essay.

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this fact, because there were several applications pending from previous regularization drives.[5]

The orders invoke specific categories of persons in their formulation. By issuing two orders—one for the poor with a limited extent of regularizable land, and the other for the nonpoor with no specified limit (the latter based on monetary contribution, the former being a grant)—the government calls forth the categories of "poor" and, by negation, "nonpoor" citizens with corresponding expectations of entitlements and duties. It is presumed that the poor should be occupying less than 125 square yards of land and that the nonpoor should be willing to pay the exorbitant penalty amounts. Focusing only on the text, it seems that by invoking these categories, the orders are hailing citizens to respond in specific ways, to interpellate them into the project of regularization based on a prescribed social order. However, as Agha points out, this idea of interpellation wrongly "presumes that the response to being hailed is always to 'recognize and accept' the role formulation indexed by the initiation, and to treat the models of conduct normatively associated with the role as the limits of one's own actual conduct" (Agha 2011, 168). In the case of GOs 58 and 59, it soon became evident that the reception of the orders led to a reflexive reanalysis of these categories.

They led to interpellation insofar as specific social categories of persons were animated by the government orders as their publics (or perhaps as their counterpublics): potential applicants identified as either "poor" or "nonpoor" responded by reanalyzing and contesting the government's expectations. Their contestations relied on a history of communication with the government through documents and various other media.

To the leaders of the TRS Party, the orders appeared to be intended to symbolize the party's and, hence, the new state's[6] progressive stance toward the poor and its lenience toward the nonpoor occupying land illegally, all toward a project of making a world-class Hyderabad with clean land records. The opportunity presented by the GOs received widespread media coverage in Telugu, Urdu, and English media (newspapers, television, etc.). In the case of GO 58,

5. The way GOs 58 and 59 were printed had an unconventional graphic organization to make them look almost like legislations. They did not refer to a lengthy list of previous government orders that attempted regularization (as they should have), under which several applications were still pending. The normal convention for a government order, even if it is enacting a new policy, is to cite relevant preceding orders. The issue of pending applications under previous orders was swiftly brought up, and thus GO 60 was published stating that applications from the immediately preceding government order would be considered as per the terms of that order, and that older applications would be dismissed. GO 60 also furnished a list of citations to many previous regularization orders.

6. Here I mean "state" as a territorial unit.

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the government received a flood of applications; within a month, on January 31, 2015, 63,582 households submitted applications in the core Hyderabad city alone.[7] However, many of the applicants were not officially below poverty line. And in the case of GO 59, the government faced vigorous resistance. The initial reasons for resistance were the exorbitant costs, but other rationales, or speculations about reasons for such resistance, emerged in the course of its circulation.

Opposition parties heavily criticized the removal of a limit on the extent of land that can be regularized, claiming that this condones practices of land-grabbing. On the other hand, the chief minister (CM), according to reports on Telugu news channels, lashed out at people resisting application and called them land-grabbers. Talk about the CM's comment spread widely, and some middle-class homeowners at a public meeting I discuss below even claimed to have heard that the CM had threatened to book offenders under the "PD Act," although they couldn't tell me what that stood for. Yet, for the middle-class households who were expected to apply, being called land-grabbers struck a nerve and resulted in vocal protests in public areas and on the media. They argued that they were in fact dutiful taxpaying citizens who are willing to pay a reasonable price for regularization and will not stand for being vilified. They defined their positions in contrast to the ultra-rich who grab land through political connections, or the poor who are less deserving because they do not pay taxes.

There were many poor households in the slums of Hyderabad who would not officially qualify under GO 58, nor could they afford the fines involved in GO 59. Besides, they still identified as poor or had barely entered the middle class. They mobilized a discourse of their historical disadvantage as *poor citizens* to argue for concessions, or exceptions. Among inhabitants of informal settlements, who largely identified as poor, there was also deep discontent over the nonalienability clause on the titles they were to receive. They contested the clause by claiming that their being unable to assetize land would trap them in poverty. These debates occurred in various media: through face-to-face interactions at revenue offices, at public demonstrations communicating with the ruling party, and eventually through the news media, resulting in some specific variants of uptake based on the poor or nonpoor identification of the receiver. This extended the chain of uptake events to reorient the initial orders.

7. These data were released by the Revenue Administration of Hyderabad district and Rangareddy district. Hyderabad city covers all of the Hyderabad district and also stretches significantly into Rangareddy district. Visualizations of these data can be found on the Hyderabad Urban Lab website at http://hydlab.in/visuals/g-o-58-applications-in-hyderabad-and-ranga-reddy-districts.

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Thus, the GOs engendered a variety of uptakes with broad convergences along certain axes. Publics contesting the attendant meanings of the categories *poor* and *nonpoor* were animated by the media discourse on the orders, and crucially shaped by nonmediatized discourse. Three such variants of uptake are discussed in the next section.

3. Uptake of the Orders

As Nakassis and Dean point out, "we understand spectatorship as made up of actual *events* of reception by viewers of a text, or some component of that text" and, similar to their own essay, the issue in this essay is "how social interaction is oriented to texts through . . . actual responses" (Nakassis and Dean 2007, 78). These actual responses of people are crucial in my case studies because they tend to converge around specific textual habits. As mentioned before, these habits converge around the practice of historicizing governmental discourse in terms of actually existing practices and records of past communication. Attending to these habits gives us a new insight into the much-studied relationship between state and citizens. Below I present three vignettes to highlight how these textual habits were employed in the discourse that ensued around GOs 58 and 59.

A. "We Are Not Encroachers. We Are Buyers."

At 9 a.m. on February 21, 2015, the M. E. Reddy Function Hall in Vanasthalipuram, Hyderabad, normally a wedding hall, had been prepared for a meeting of the L. B. Nagar wing of the Federation of Associations of Colonies and Apartments (FACA).[8] About 300 chairs were neatly arranged in rows facing a stage with a banner that read, "We are not encroachers. We are buyers." By 10 a.m., a crowd of about 200 people—all men, but for a couple of women (including a colleague of mine)—gathered in the hall and awaited the commencement of the program.

The agenda of the program was to form an action group that would approach the government with different demands for amending GO 59. The first speaker for the morning was Mr. Sarma, the president of FACA, who invited colony representatives in the gathering to come up on stage and share their views on possible strategies for the action group.

8. Owners of apartments in a single building or complex, and owners of independent houses in a demarcated complex called a "colony," often form cooperative bodies known as Co-operative Housing Societies. FACA is a federation of such societies. Its regular activities involve campaigns around clean neighborhoods, repurposing of public spaces as parks, etc. These associations have themselves inspired a vast literature in Indian urban studies (Anjaria 2009; Roy 2009a; Ghertner 2015).

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The first colony representative to speak on the stage gave an elaborate account of the predicament he faces, along with other members of his colony. He spoke of having purchased the land 30 years ago, of having registered the sale deed and even having formed a cooperative housing society along with other homeowners in the colony, and of having been served a notice, more recently, which informed him that the land he has been calling his own on the basis of the registered document is actually government land; that the registration document (normally considered the most legitimate certificate of ownership of land) is now said merely to indicate that *the transaction* was registered as legitimate; that it does not attest that the seller or buyer actually has any right over that land because according to the government, until 1999 the registration department was not responsible for checking whether the title to the land being bought is clear or not, and hence, for land purchases prior to that date, the onus of establishing ownership was on the buyer and not on the revenue officer registering the sale deed.[9]

His difficulty is as follows: the government was now demanding that he pay the price of the land as per present market rates in order to regularize it. But he had already paid market value thirty years ago and had followed all formal procedures. In effect, he was being asked to purchase the land all over again. Although he was willing to pay a penalty to regularize the land, he also demanded that it be a fair price. He referred to an older GO 456,[10] which was announced in 2003 and said that the terms were more favorable in that GO and that those terms should be brought back. Others followed the first speaker with very similar stories of property purchased years ago, of registered documents, and of cooperative societies. The demand across the board was the same: We are not encroachers, we are buyers. We are willing to pay a "nominal price."

The meeting ended with about twenty people signing up to be a part of the GO 59 action group to be constituted, and the gathering collectively chanted the slogan, "GO back 59! GO back! GO back!" The broad consensus reached in this meeting coalesced around a question of "formality" and of the possession of appropriate documents, which distinguished them from the "informal" poor—and also, around their commitment to "righteousness," which distinguished

9. This discrepancy was tracked down by Anindita Mukherjee, currently a PhD Student at NALSAR University, Hyderabad, who was also present at the meeting with me.

10. GO 456 of 2003 was enacted under a different ruling party, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in the run-up to the upcoming elections in 2004. The regularization drive was not very effective, and for a host of other reasons, TDP went on to lose the election.

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them from the vindictive land-grabbers. The middle-class gathering negatively defined their identity using the common strategy of "recursively defining oneself against other groups" as described by Gagné (2008, 139). Through this negative identification and with reference to a history of formal interaction with the government, this group began positioning itself as a group of citizens who *deserve to be treated reasonably*. Even their assembly was self-consciously "civil"; they maintained that they remained willing to negotiate with the government. Their demands to the government were not for concessions, but for entitlements based on their performances of duty and civility. In a country where about 1% of the population pays taxes, by inhabiting that role and particularly representing themselves as such, this middle-class public strategically represented themselves as "dutiful." The emblem of "taxpayer" is generally privileged in Indian middle-class discourses of citizenship, and money acts as the currency of citizenship itself. They strategically foregrounded their licit use of money and their willingness to contribute a reasonable sum of money to the government.

A month after the meeting, I was informed that the action group would be holding a *dharna* (demonstration) outside the office of the chief commissioner for land administration. After persistent attempts at dialogue had failed to effect a compromise from the government, the action group decided that they would have to take a bolder step. Their *dharna* was almost immediately intercepted by the police, as public demonstrations in Hyderabad must first be permitted by the government, and even then they can only take place on a narrow road between two parks in central Hyderabad. Although their assembly was unsuccessful, I wanted to highlight that the same group of middle-class men employed different strategies to communicate with the government. Further, the assembly of white-collared men was odd to begin with, but their case highlights the fact that governmental agencies have an astute reflexive understanding of the communicative effects of citizenship. Cody (2013) appropriately calls it governmental "communicative reason." This reflexive understanding, perhaps not quite consciously but structurally, produces the circuitous and often idiosyncratic pathways that exist for communicating with the state, most pithily captured by the term *Kafkaesque*, and aptly satirized in the term *bureaucracy*. Governmental tactics like delimiting spaces for collective assembly (Mitchell 2018), specifying particular days and hours for public hearings (Cody 2013), and, in extreme cases, moving administrative offices to new green-field cities (Hull 2012) are all tactics for managing citizens' communications in order to make it easier to select which and how many petitions are heard. In Hyderabad, citizens go to public hearings in large numbers and are mostly able only to hand

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over a written petition that they then track through new e-governance portals that tell them exactly which desk (bureau) their letters are sitting on.

B. "What Was All That Documentation and Fee Collection about, Then?"

My second vignette is from MS Maqtha, an informal settlement situated at the heart of the city, alongside the Hussain Sagar Lake and opposite the state governor's opulent residence. They are called *occupiers* because, despite having purchased land and having registered sale deeds, their transactions were not based on titles to the land, and the government claims the land belongs to it. They are called *irregular* because MS Maqtha is situated within the Full-Tank-Level (FTL) of the Hussain Sagar Lake by some archaic measurement. Yet, MS Maqtha has a seventy-year-long history of being a residential area. Faced with the government's threats, the residents have repeatedly turned to this history to frame their counterclaims and challenge the labels being imposed on them. In 2003, when asked to pay a hefty sum for regularizing their land, some residents put together a document titled "Brief History of MS Maqtha," contesting the claim that Maqtha is an irregular settlement. The document covers a period that stretches back further than the integration of Hyderabad[11] into independent India and contains extensive annexures that attest to each claim being made. Collecting these historical artifacts, in the form of maps, gazettes, certificates, and so on, has become imperative for them.

However, this struggle to prove that MS Maqtha is not on government land has been a losing one. Since 2003, the residents of MS Maqtha have applied under every free regularization scheme. At this point, they simply wish for the regularization to go through. This time around, too, all the landowners in MS Maqtha had applied under GO 58. Most of their land holdings are smaller than 125 square yards, although some of them have built three-story structures. Yet, when the verification of applications took place, more than half of their applications were removed on the basis of their income being higher than the specified upper limit. They were all asked to apply under GO 59. But the land value in MS Maqtha is as high as 34,000 rupees per square yard. Even with a 75 percent cut, they would have to pay 8,000 rupees per square yard, which amounts to entire life savings for many of them, and it is not easy for them to get loans.

11. Hyderabad was a Princely State that was never directly ruled by the British Empire. In 1948, Hyderabad was integrated into the Indian Union by military force. However, this history remains fraught with intercommunal tensions.

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Unlike the middle-class FACA members described above, the residents of MS Maqtha were not all part of the 1 percent of taxpayers, although some of them claimed to be. Their primary aspiration was not to be part of that exclusive club, but another one, that of "landowners." For years, they have attempted to acquire regularization and failed because of the question of the land's suitability. It was categorized as "Objectionable," which means that dwellings on that land are objectionable because it is hazardous to the dwellers. Nonetheless, Maqtha residents contested all these categories. They wrote petitions and documents like the "Brief History" referring to their long occupation of the land. They gathered historical documents from state archives and other sources to prove that their occupation has been recorded for as many years as they claim. Further, they knew that if they were asked to move, they would suffer a severe financial loss because the government would not compensate the incremental investments through which they had built their houses as permanent structures.

Nonetheless, the residents of Maqtha are well-versed in strategically communicating with government agencies. During the months when applications for GO 59 were still being collected, I spoke to Wasimbhai, who had chiefly authored the "Brief History of MS Maqtha":[12]

Me: So how did you go about making your demands with regards to the prices stipulated in GO 59?

WB: We made representations to the MRO, the Collector, the Deputy CM, even the CM! We asked them to use the prices of the 1st transaction made on the land.

These prices can be verified by government-attested registration documents, which people like Wasimbhai possess. This emerging middle class, as it were, is less keen on negotiating citizenship through the currency of money. Without a land title, they lack access to credit, and they also do not have the social capital of the educated middle class. Instead, they must rely on more political forms of negotiation, which often involve identifying inconsistencies in government policy and, in particular, often rely on documents fished out of the state archives frequented by people like Wasimbhai when seeking to settle land disputes.

12. Interview with Wasimbhai, April 24, 2015.

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WB: Then we found out about GO 980 of 2000. This was a very interesting GO. It was made so that the wife of one high-level bureaucrat could buy several acres of land at just 200 rupees per square yard. What kind of despicable government is this?! So now we take this GO and keep rubbing it in their face. They need to feel shame. If a bureaucrat's wife can be given land at that kind of rate. Why not us? We're not saying we won't pay. We'll pay a reasonable amount and would be happy if that money is used well, and even if it's not. The government can have its revenue. But we just can't pay these prices.

Me: Is there anyone here who has applied under GO 59?

WB: No one. Not a single person. We can't afford it. The government should realize that we haven't just come and sat here. We've bought this land. We've registered the land with the revenue department, they collect taxes from us and fees from services. Now how can they say we are illegal? What was all that documentation and fee collection about then? They registered lands here up to 2000 and suddenly stopped.

Although Wasimbhai had been able to purchase land informally and build a somewhat stable household, he claimed he could not possibly afford the regularization fees. He articulates his critique in terms of historical justice and rejects the government's amnesia toward its history of interaction with people like him. Government amnesia notwithstanding, and although registrations of land exchange were stopped in 2000, people continued to exchange land and build in MS Maqtha. These transactions are possible on the basis of a system of documentation whereby a government-stamped paper is signed by both parties to the transaction and attested by a public notary.[13] Thus, illegal transactions occur, but they replicate the graphic ideologies (Hull 2012) of the state, and this replication indicates that the state is always implicit, and tacitly complicit, in these transactions. Nonetheless, this system of notarized sale deeds is a legible and locally effective system of legality.

These local systems of legality do not readily translate to translocal settings, and thus it is among publics constituted by the poor, especially, that the com-

13. For more details on this system of exchange in Hyderabad, see Sinha and Jonnalagadda's (2018) entry in *The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality*, vol. 2.

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municative effects of policy and chains of communication with the government are pertinent. I would even argue that the poor engage in a kind of paranoid reading of any sign from the government. Acutely aware of their semiotic environment and the threats therein, and their incapacity to negotiate through money, they collect and catalog every sign of the state. Changes in infrastructure (both spectacular and ordinary),[14] a new signboard or the sighting of an official vehicle, and new schemes or the promise thereof are all construed as portents, and often result in a widespread speculative discourse regarding what they bode for the future. Based on this discourse, and the speech chains it produces and relies on, different kinds of strategies are designed to position oneself most favorably vis-à-vis the government. The poor also engage in a paranoid collection of documents. Most slum dwellers possess a binder with every receipt and every stamped paper through which they have dealt with the government. It is here especially that the historicizing regime of circulation I described operates. The urban poor frequent government offices with their binders of documents and ask questions about the status of their applications by showing a receipt for the fee they paid, about the status of their complaint based on a signed letter of representation, and so on.

C. "We Had Some Doubts"

My third vignette is from Maisammabanda in central Hyderabad. It was settled in the mid-1970s by Marathi Dalits and later saw an influx of households from surrounding neighborhoods, where they were living on rent. These new settlers paid around 100 rupees to a slum lord and built their houses on Maisammabanda land. In 2014, there were 151 households living in the slum with no legal claim to the land, although the settlement was at least 40 years old. Many of these households were tenants, some of them have purchased land (by notary) from households that have left, and some have been there from the outset. When GO 58 was announced, all the households applied for the free title and were hopeful of receiving a legal sanction for their occupation. Since the early 2000s, the Maisammabanda Welfare Association has been demanding titles, and GO 58 promised to finally grant them legal rights over the land.

On June 5, 2015, when the titles as per GO 58 were distributed, the initial atmosphere in the settlement was jubilant. Eighty-six out of 151 households had already received their titles, and others were expecting theirs to be granted soon. However, this jubilation soon led to dismay when they read the fine print on the titles and found that they were indefinitely barred from alienating the

14. This divinatory tendency toward interpreting changes in infrastructure is brilliantly described by Trovalla and Trovalla (2015).

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land. For most of them, who had informally exchanged land that had no title in the past and recognized the crucial value of land as an asset in a dire situation, this clause came as a shock.

On June 10, the number of recipients was still 86, and it seemed unlikely to change. The dismay about exchange rights over land getting locked by the government and discontent about incomplete distribution reached a high pitch, and representatives of the Welfare Association set out to meet the local Mandal Revenue Officer (MRO).[15] Among them were Ahmad, a Telugu-speaking Muslim attached to the Communist Party of India (Marxist), who was also the president of the association. He was accompanied by Ramesh and Balaiah, two Telugu-speaking Dalit men of Telangana origin, and me. From Ahmad's standpoint, I looked harmless enough not to pose a real threat, but seemed strange enough in their company to potentially be a risk in the eyes of the MRO.

I witnessed the following exchange at the revenue office:[16] the office was a not-so-large room with many workers at desks arranged in rows. When the association members entered the office, they were intercepted by the deputy MRO. The members asked to meet with the chief officer but were told that she was away from the office. Then an ostensibly casual, but semiotically dense, exchange ensued.

Ahmad (starting in a drawling voice): Oh, it's just that only half of the people in our basti have received titles and we were told the others should receive it soon but a week has passed and we have heard nothing, so naturally we had some *doubts*. [The last word was in English.]

Officer (interrupting): Well, we've done what we were told to do, [but] how can we know what "they" are thinking?

Ahmad: Yes, but obviously you can see why we are asking . . . why did our neighbors receive titles but not us?

Officer: They will come . . . [switches to a stern tone]. But there are many cases that are objectionable. People are occupying more than 125 square yards.

Ramesh: No one has more than 125. If anything, everyone has less.

15. "Mandal" is the official term for Revenue Subdistrict in Telangana state, also known as *Tehsil*, or Block.
16. Field notes at Himayath Nagar MRO, June 10, 2015.

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Officer: No, in fact, everyone has more than 125.

This banter continued, with Ahmad and company trying to get some definite information and the officer deflecting their questions by making general remarks about illegal settlement. After a few minutes, the officer deliberately looked away and started talking official business to people around him, a clear signal for us to leave him to his work. In response, Ahmad turned away from the officer, faced his companions, and spoke in a tone that was casual but had a purposefully high volume:

Ahmad: It's okay. Let's wait for about ten days. But if on the eleventh day we have not got our titles we'll bring our whole settlement and park ourselves outside this office.

The officer did not respond to the show. Ahmad repeated his statement twice more: once looking at the other workers in the office, but still ostensibly addressing his companions; and another time as we exited the building, where he said it to the compound outside, with other citizens visiting for various reasons—perhaps, to articulate a similar complaint.

Ahmad's threats were not an insurgent tactic, but a practiced and often-repeated strategic performance of citizens' entitlements in public offices, which constitute a set of historically patterned and learned behaviors and consist of a repertoire of practices, comportments, and vocabularies that recur in the conduct of many people in Hyderabad and beyond. The interaction between Maisammabanda Welfare Association and the MRO indicates some of the ordinary rhythms of interactions between governments and citizens. The confidence with which Ahmad and company entered and occupied the space of the local government office, although they do not have particularly weighty connections, is remarkably commonplace. Indeed, governments try to manage how much they will listen and who they will listen to (as I noted in discussing the previous vignette), but that does not mean that citizens will adhere to those limits. Across different media of communication—oral, written, individual, or collective—citizens employ a wide range of communicative strategies to make their grievance known and to induce action.[17] They have found and continue to find ways of voicing their grievances and making them heard or known (Mitchell 2018).

17. Maringanti and Jonnalagadda (2015) give an ethnographic account of an organization of slum dwellers from Hyderabad employing these multiple strategies to exhort the government to construct a community toilet.

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The other interesting aspect is the lack of mention of the alienability of the titles. That is not something that can be talked about in an office. Pragmatically, informal land markets perhaps make up the bulk of the land market, simply because most citizens are poor, and the poor have no other options; but metapragmatically the topic is not suitable for public discussion. Nonetheless, in everyday discourse they were asking, "Why should the poor not be allowed to sell their land?" For so long, the government had left them no choice but to trade land illegally, and now, when they were offered an entry into legality, their asset was effectively taken away from them.

When asked, the official responses were to the tune of saying that GO 59 applicants would get an alienable title because they were also paying for it; that is, distribution will be proportional to contribution. The poor were being granted titles out of the government's kindness and therefore should accept the terms stipulated in the title. In Maisammabanda, references were made to politicians using the poor as a vote bank, but somehow their votes were less worthy as contribution than money, resulting in them getting the short end of the distribution. The "vote bank" is perhaps one of the strongest emblems of citizenship employed by the poor to gain leverage with government agencies. Even though the poor cannot easily claim entitlements on the basis of inhabiting valorized emblematic roles such as "buyers," "landowners," or "taxpayers," they are without a doubt "voters." Many of them allegedly even risk their safety by voting multiple times on the behest of political party leaders and engage in various other political activities, often illicit, for small bonus amounts of money. While Partha Chatterjee's (2008) explanation of this phenomenon as the result of economic transformation and the need to reverse some of its deleterious effects on the poor might be true at a structural level, at a local and everyday scale it is other communicative strategies that determine outcomes of state-citizen negotiations.

4. Theoretical Implications

From these ethnographic notes and observations on government orders in Hyderabad I draw three broader conclusions. First, although the state is defined by the power to make exceptional decisions, as Carl Schmitt (2005) would put it, and although, as Ernesto Laclau (2005) might say, the state can attempt to draw broad equivalences that rely on floating signifiers, the efficacy of these efforts is circumscribed by historically and contextually grounded discursive processes. Thus, residents of Maisammabanda can express doubt about why their votes are less valuable than money. And residents of Maqtha can deny labels of irregularity, because they otherwise perform formal procedures and have been

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treated as formal landowners in the past. Second, any attempt by governments to effect a change in social organization will face friction due to uneven and unintended uptakes, and the friction is fueled by histories of governmental intervention and nonintervention, which are recorded in official archives, private documents, and collective memory, and which can therefore be remobilized in new ways. In each of my vignettes, I've highlighted the tendency of citizens to historicize governmental action and relate it to older texts produced by the government itself, or even smaller tokens of their interaction with the government that contradict the government's claims. Third, and particularly among the poor, these records of historical discursive processes tend to be meticulously maintained and in fact are consciously gathered as an instrumental repertoire for claim-making. Just as there is a governmental communicative reason, there are also communicative rationalities of citizens. Throughout this essay, I have referred to various communicative strategies employed by citizens to communicate their grievances to the government and to induce action. These communicative rationalities are not universal to all citizens and can vary depending on class, caste, gender, age, and a multitude of other factors. What is common across the range is that this communication is not mediated with reference to an unmarked individual citizen, but always with reference to some emblems recognized or created by governmental discourses.

These very broad observations could be applicable to a wide range of contexts, particularly in the global South: what Partha Chatterjee (2004) appropriately calls "most of the world." Further, such an attention to citizenship in terms of speech chains and textual habits, opens up some new questions building on existing work on the anthropology of the state. First, it adds nuance to analyses of governmentality. Although governmentality has been an immensely useful concept for the study of citizenship, it attributes tremendous efficacy to governmental discourse, which most ethnographies show to be far from the reality of the situation. There certainly are governmental technologies that become tenaciously effective at disciplining populations (Ghertner 2015), but there are also many that become mired in fraught political contestations (Von Schnitzler 2016), and even some that fail to become effective at all (Ferguson 1994). Specifying chains of uptake and processes of entextualization can reveal some of the reasons for the success or failure of these technologies. Second, it adds specificity to some very influential but abstract anthropological theories of contemporary democracy; namely, James Holston's (2008) idea of insurgent citizenship and Partha Chatterjee's (2004, 2011) idea of political society. Both these frameworks focus on marginalized populations, but both conclude that the marginalized are

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able to gradually acquire favorable exceptions from the state. Holston frames the process as insurgent citizenship that gradually and incrementally allows marginalized groups to procure various rights or legitimize various claims. Although his oxymoronic label of insurgent citizenship is evocative, it highlights certain exceptional moments of state-citizen interaction and inadvertently obscures the mundane ways in which citizens might be inducing state intervention. Chatterjee's framework comes closer to this approach. He describes the formations of associations of slum dwellers and their collective visits to government offices as tactics to make claims on governmentality. He attends to the inverse process by which governmental technologies can be called upon to act, a process further elaborated by Lisa Mitchell's framework for conceptualizing mechanisms of "hailing the state." Yet, a discursive approach like the one I am proposing attends to chains of communication that encompass the hailing of both citizens and states. Third, this discursive approach can provide a concrete methodology for studying the varied phenomena of informality. I agree with Ananya Roy (2009), who argues that there is both "informality from below" and "informality from above." Away from the theoretical neatness of governmentality and interpellation, Roy points to a murky and vast middle region where the ideological separation of state and society is less neatly achieved, where a continuum of urban processes may exist. I contend that the discursive interactions I described above—the local documentation, the performances at public offices, and so on—constitute the bridge between informality from above and below. It is constituted not by *states* and *citizens* but by social actors of various kinds among whom citizenship qua claim-making gets negotiated, often with only implicit reference to state ideologies.

With reference to this last point, I think that apart from adding nuance to existing frameworks in the anthropology of the state, this semiotic framework will open the possibility of decentering the state from political anthropology. Although in this essay I have focused entirely on what might be called "state-citizen communication," I have hinted at the fact that state-citizen communications too are only a fragment of wider discursive processes of civic and political claim-making. While I agree that the state is a crucial actor in society, that it is crucial to study it (and I continue to do so), and that state intervention is not only desired but often actively sought out by various groups (Maringanti 2015), I also think that political anthropology needs to broaden its ambit beyond the state. In contexts like India, where one sees astonishing figures for the extent of informality, citizenship cannot be theorized in merely formal terms.

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5. Conclusion

The graduated nature of citizenship in Indian cities is well recognized and has been influentially formulated by Partha Chatterjee in his famous distinction of "civil" and "political society." I have found the notions of entextualization, regimes of circulation, and uptake to be very productive for understanding how citizens use histories of communication with the state to reanalyze civil and political society and the corresponding rights and duties. There is a tendency to imagine citizenship to be more or less fixed for bourgeois civil society, except in the context of an emergency or exceptional act of state. Yet citizenship, understood as a discursive relationship to the state and not just as an accretion of rights in a subject, opens up new ways to see how state-citizen relationships evolve over time, especially for marginalized groups (Chatterjee's political society) but also for elites (his civil society). Such a discourse analysis can trace the continuities and the reanalyses of citizenship that have occurred over a long history and not just within exceptionalized periods such as a "neoliberal era" or a "colonial era."

Broadly, such an approach would be generative for political anthropology to focus on ethnographically locatable events of communication, circulation, and entextualization where state-citizen relations are discursively produced. It will also push political anthropology beyond the limits of an anthropology of the *state*. More specifically, attention to the entextualization of law and policy demonstrates how, even prior to their implementation, they inevitably enter the quagmire of haphazard policy interventions of the past due to the specific historicizing textual habits that underlie the functioning of the executive. In this process, citizens reflexively reanalyze metapragmatic categories invoked in the texts of law and policy and disrupt sovereign dreams. Thus, despite alarming narratives of diminishing agency for citizens under neoliberalism, it appears that so long as certain democratic structures hold—of which a robust electoral process is only the most prominent, but which also includes spaces for citizens to be heard—citizens will continue to exert an influence on discourses of citizenship.

In the case of GO 59, the government had to amend the text itself multiple times and eventually also make a host of other exceptions during implementation. While in the case of GO 58, the incomplete implementation as well as the mounting discontent of poor people realizing that their freedom to exchange land was being curtailed resulted in the order getting a bad reputation; eventually the government stopped citing it as an accomplishment. Instead, they designed a new plan to construct houses for the poor and to displace them from

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the sites of many slums that were partially regularized under GO 58. The TRS government has faced many obstacles in implementing this plan, and they have continued to receive complaints like Ahmad's about the implementation of GO 58. Having failed to find sufficient land to successfully implement their plan to construct 100,000 houses by the looming election year in 2019, the minister for municipal administration of the Telangana government, the son of the chief minister, announced on July 18, 2018, that applications for regularization will be reopened. People will receive another opportunity, and this time the government will modify laws where needed such that "objectionable" lands can be reclassified as "unobjectionable."

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