Researching livelihoods and services affected by conflict

Services and legitimacy

Exploring the everyday experiences of the state in Sri Lanka

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Cover photo: Woman turns on tap for clean water, Sri Lanka. Photo: Simone D. McCourtie/World Bank. (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Preface

The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) aims to generate a stronger evidence base on state-building, service delivery and livelihood recovery in fragile and conflict-affected situations. It began in 2011 with funding from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), Irish Aid and the European Commission (EC).

Phase I: 2011 - 2017

SLRC's research can be separated into two phases. Our first phase was based on three research questions on state legitimacy, state capacity and livelihoods, developed over the course of an intensive one-year inception phase. Findings from the first phase of research were summarised in five synthesis reports produced in 2017 that draw out broad lessons for policy-makers, practitioners and researchers.

Phase II: 2017 - 2019

Guided by our original research questions on state legitimacy, state capacity, and livelihoods, the second phase of SLRC answers the questions that still remain, under three themes:

- Theme 1: What are the underlying reasons for continued livelihood instability in post-conflict recovery situations?
- Theme 2: Through what mechanisms do perceptions, definitions and experiences translate into behaviours that aids or hinders post-conflict recovery?
- Theme 3: When does service delivery influence the negotiation of state legitimacy?

Theme 3: Services and state legitimacy

This paper is one of three case studies conducted in Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Pakistan. Researchers from the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Pakistan, the Social Scientists Association (SSA) in Sri Lanka, Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in the UK and independent researchers collaborated to produce these case studies. The research lead was Aoife McCullough.

The case studies under this theme consider when and why services influence the negotiation of state legitimacy. Development donors and practitioners often assume that improving access to services will contribute to improving state legitimacy in post-conflict environments. Findings from SLRC I did not support this assumption; data from our panel survey indicated that access to, or improved satisfaction with basic services did not translate into improved perceptions of government. On the other hand, when people experienced a problem with a service, this translated into negative perceptions of government.

In SLRC II,we sought to understand why access to, or improved satisfaction with basic services had a limited effect on people's perception of government while experiencing problems with services had a much stronger effect. We broadened our research angle to examine processes of negotiating state legitimacy and located this negotiation within evolving political settlements. Using this broader approach, we sought to understand when certain aspects of service delivery become salient in the negotiation of state legitimacy. In addition to these country studies, a third round of the panel survey was carried out in 2018 in Uganda, Nepal and Pakistan. New questions were added to the survey that were designed to capture a range of opinions related to perceptions of state legitimacy. The findings from the survey are forthcoming.

For more information on who we are and what we do, visit: www.securelivelihoods.org/about-slrc

Acknowledgements

Acronyms and glossary

DFID	Department for International Development
ETC	Estate Tamil Community
GDP	gross domestic product
IMD	Irrigation Management Division
INMAS	Integrated Management of Major Irrigation Settlement Schemes
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDSA	State of Democracy in South Asia
SLFP	Sri Lanka Freedom Party
SLRC	Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium
SRA	Strategic-Relational Approach
SSA	Social Scientists' Association
UNP	United National Party
WC	water controller

Acronyms
and glossary

Exteriority (of the state)
The exteriority of the state refers to a condition that is produced wherein the state seems to stand outside and above society. That is, the state (its bureaucrats, institutions, etc.) gains the appearance of being exterior to the lives of citizens. This is achieved by means of the state effect. See: 'state effect'.

Interpellation
Interpellation is a concept that is central to structural Marxist Louis Althusser's notion of ideology and the state. For Althusser, 'ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence', and thus, the state effect and the exteriority of the state are all bound by ideology (See: state effect and exteriority (of the state). The concept of interpellation is used to talk about individuals in relation to ideology. According to interpellation, individuals or subjects are always already within ideology, and rather than being free and independent, are always bound by ideology's structural constraints.

Legitimacy and de-legitimacy
Legitimacy and de-legitimacy, in this study, designate the two polar opposites in citizens' thinking about or articulations of how justifiable, admissible, or permissible a given state-society relationship is. Both terms pertain to people's narratives about the state, often involving disparate ideas of what a state is and should be. Therefore, there is a constant interplay between legitimacy and de-legitimacy, and it is often the case that a certain articulation of the state is de-legitimised only to legitimise a different articulation.

Pluri-centrality
Pluri-centrality refers to the fact that state power is not concentrated around a single locus, such as the central government, for instance, but that there are multiple and often shifting loci of power. In such cases, different loci of power or centres become prominent in various locations and during various times. The pluri-centrality of the state entails that a view of the state as being a singular and fixed locus of power that does not vary according to location and time is impossible and naïve.

State effect
'State effect' is a term employed by Timothy Mitchell in order to argue that the apparent boundary between the state and society is in fact something that is produced. We use the term state effect to note that while the state is an elusive and even spurious entity since its boundaries cannot be empirically determined, the state effect causes the state to appear as an entity that is above and distinct from society. The state effect, therefore, provides a certain appearance of order and undermines the contingent nature of service delivery, power, citizenship and governance.

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Executive summary

Our approach: examining state effect and legitimacy

In this study, we explore whether our understanding of legitimacy changes when the state is treated as 'an effect' of diverse and shifting perceptions rather than as a fixed entity. Our entry point is to examine how the state establishes its exteriority (or 'state effect') in the arena of service delivery. With this approach, we deviate from the dominant practice pegging an empirical investigation of legitimacy to the notion that the state is autonomous, outside and above 'society' (Jessop, 2007). Our interest is in studying the elusiveness and fluidity of state and society, and how legitimacy is articulated and manifested. Service delivery is viewed as the moment in which the state establishes its exteriority. We study how state legitimacy (or de-legitimacy) is produced in local-level service delivery in Sri Lanka.

Methodology

Through a series of focused case studies in Mannar, Nawalapitiya and Rajanganaya, this study aims to understand the nature of legitimacy through everyday interactions with local-level service delivery in Sri Lanka. Our findings are based on fieldwork carried out in 2017 and 2018 in these locations. We interviewed about 100 respondents, including men and women in the locations we visited, local political actors, civil servants, civil society activists and academics.

Main findings

1   We found that **various intermediaries blur the boundaries** between state and citizen in the arena of service delivery, which problematises the ideas of 'state as institutions' and 'state as autonomous'. While the role of intermediaries is studied elsewhere, in recent research on state legitimacy, it has not been adequately foregrounded in conceptualising state–society relations. Intermediaries could take the shape of local level party organisers, local businessmen, local elites, politicians, bureaucrats or other persons with high social capital.

2   The blurring of state–society boundaries by intermediaries allowed us to register *what* is legitimised or de-legitimised, and how this is articulated during encounters (i.e. service delivery) where the state effect is produced. This is because **what is legitimised is contingent on the relation between the intermediary and a particular individual or group**. At times, legitimacy narratives are about the state-system (a set of institutions); at other times, people articulate legitimacy or de-legitimacy about the state as an idea (something larger than the cumulative effect of institutions). Often, both kinds of narrative are expressed in the same conversation. Articulations of legitimacy, therefore, are highly contingent on the types of citizens involved, the types of state effects they actively produce and the kinds of networks and social relations they are part of.

3   **Citizens are not equal: this matters for supporting state-society contracts.** Our research showed that there are different levels of citizenship across different groups in Sri Lanka with some groups having structured and regular access to state resources and personnel, while other groups struggle to use either formal or informal intermediaries to access the state. This degree of citizenship and access to the 'state' is in turn grounded in and shaped by a very specific socio-economic and political history of the particular locality. An individual's gender, ethnicity, religion, caste, occupation, or even party affiliation, and various intersections of these characteristics, could shape the extent to which the 'State' sees that person as a 'citizen,' and consequently, his/her access to the 'State.' This becomes important in thinking about access to state resources but also who has the 'license' to legitimate and contest the state. This problematises the effectiveness of development practitioners in identifying the 'most

disadvantaged' which typically tend to be based on gender, ethnicity, and sometimes caste. In Rajanganaya, farmers of lower castes, for example, have greater access to the state, and carry the license to legitimate or delegitimate, a luxury that is not shared by relatively 'higher' caste people among the fishing community.

4. **Services are not equal:** the dominant socioeconomic, political- and cultural history of a place and its relation to salient ideological tropes determine which services are salient in shaping the state-society contract. Not all services have the same salience in the construction of state legitimacy. In Rajanganaya, for instance, agriculture (paddy farming to be specific) is the most important terrain in which services assume saliency, in comparison to other livelihoods, such as fishing. This is because paddy farming is central to the imagery of a particular ideological trope that invokes the island's proud past as a sophisticated hydraulic civilization. This imagery has been central to post-colonial nation-building, and it tightly interlinks, in both material and ideological forms, rural agriculture, and Buddhism not only as core institutions and ideas, but also key responsibilities of the rulers of the land. Hence, services around agriculture become more salient in constructing people's idea of the state, in comparison to other livelihoods.

5. We found that the various textures of legitimacy result from subjects being differently interpellated due to various multifaceted social relations and conditions. Interpellation refers to how these subjects are ideologically configured as particular kinds of citizens, not merely positioned differently in a more-or-less transparent manner. Here, **state–citizen relations are always shaped by ideologies**, and the narratives of legitimacy are always contingent on these ideologies. In Rajanganaya, the paddy farmer is central to a widely used trope to invoke the island's proud past as a sophisticated hydraulic civilization. Thus the paddy farmers experience their identity as central to nationalist ideology. Meanwhile the Estate Tamil Community in Nawalapitiya is configured very differently—perhaps even in what may be termed coercive or repressive lines, in that their identity is explicitly tied with the type of labour (tea cultivation) to which they are supposed to commit, which resonates with the economic ideology of capitalism and is rooted in the colonial experience of Sri Lanka. The Estate Tamil Community's link to the 'state', therefore, lies in their relation to the company/tea estate and their identity as labourers who produce tea.

Policy implications

1. If the aim of a programme is to strengthen or improve the state-society contract, it may be strategic to look for multiple versions of a state-society contract rather than seeking an overarching state-society contract that doesn't exist. A key way to identify multiple state-society contracts is to understand how different groups access the state. Even in a small geographical area, such as the local authority level or even the *Grama Niladhari* Level, with a population of the same caste or ethnicity, there will be sub-groups with different modes of accessing state resources.

2. If a programme aims to support the legitimation of the state through service delivery, practitioners need to first identify what services are salient in the negotiation of state legitimacy. The salience of a service will be influenced by the natural resources in the area, the predominant livelihoods of the residents and how the state regulates access to those natural resources and livelihoods. If the state does not deliver a salient service in the way that people expect, this service could become a site over which the legitimacy of the state is contested. Working on contested services could represent a riskier investment for donors in terms of reputation and ability to spend consistently over a programme timeframe. However, the benefits of addressing contested issues within a salient service may outweigh this risk.

3. Development organisations invariably work with intermediaries and this is good practice, especially where those intermediaries help disadvantaged or excluded groups in accessing the state. This practice needs to be delicately handled for two reasons. First, working through intermediaries inevitably creates a system of patronage that benefits some citizens more than others. Certain good practices may be adopted in order to level the playing field. For example, more could be invested in helping to formalize modes of access for disadvantaged groups so that they need to rely less on intermediaries and patronage can be curtailed. International organisations ought to be mindful that their choice of intermediary will influence how local people perceive their organisation, and in turn, that organisation's relationship with the state.

4 Development organizations are already introducing new ideologies to link citizens to the state across a spectrum of issues (i.e. rights discourse and practice, neoliberal ideology, etc.). However, the specific ideologies operating in each location may contradict development ideologies. It may be necessary to look for ways in which ideologies overlap to gain full participation of locals in projects.

1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to deepen understanding of how state legitimacy operates and is articulated in relation to service delivery in post-war Sri Lanka. This builds on and aims to advance the body of knowledge produced in the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) during its first phase, which primarily focused on the material forms of the state (i.e. service delivery). Studies conducted during SLRC Phase I inquired whether the state, through the delivery of services, influences state legitimacy in the eyes of the people. The effective demarcation of boundaries between the state and society was taken as a preliminary for many of the studies.

The overall findings of the SLRC panel survey found a weak relationship between people's satisfaction with services and their perceptions of government. Even where people's satisfaction with a service increased, this did not necessarily result in improved perceptions of government. Furthermore, findings from Sri Lanka in SLRC Phase I indicated that the disappointing or disempowering everyday encounters people experience with state officials generate a wider negative perception towards the local authority but not towards the central government (Sanguhan and Gunasekara, 2017). Given this, it is impossible to be certain that de-legitimation processes occurring at the very local level 'aggregate up' to inform broader relationships between the state and citizens. The outcome was that the most immediate question – 'why do people's experience of services have little impact on their perceptions of government?' – was left unanswered. But the first phase of the research invited further empirical enquiry on the overarching concepts of 'state', 'legitimacy', 'public services' and 'state–society relations'.

1.1 Contextualising legitimacy in Sri Lanka: two important considerations

We approached this study foregrounding two important considerations of how legitimacy is negotiated in Sri Lanka. First, patronage networks and local power-brokers influence how state legitimacy is negotiated through service delivery. In Sri Lanka, as many have argued, patronage plays an important role in accessing services at the local level (Jiggins, 1979; Jayantha, 1992; Peiris, 2014), and patron–client relationships play a crucial role in politics and service delivery (Hettige, 1984; Gunasekara, 1992; Uyangoda, 2010). Therefore, the state cannot be taken as a free-floating, autonomous entity, located separately from and opposed to the entity of society (Mitchell, 1991). The state's pluri-centred

nature is supported by two recent studies (Godamunne, 2015; SSA, 2017). These studies found that individuals who make greater links with local-level politicians within the formal political system find it easier to secure services from their local authorities. Such reciprocal social relationships colour the way in which bribery and corruption at the local level is viewed, and how perceptions of local authority services are formed. The study conducted by SSA (2017) finds that those who feel they struggle to access services from local authorities emphasise the service-delivery function of local government and often blame corrupt, elected officials for their exclusion. Such articulations of de-legitimacy are crucial because patronage multiplies the points of service delivery at local level, emphasises individual rather than institutional connections for service delivery, and makes the equitable and efficient delivery of services impossible.

Second, this study looks at the ideological nature of legitimacy, according to citizens' perspectives of the state and its legitimacy. We focus on how narratives of efficiency, expectations of service delivery, performative and affective registers of belonging or inclusion structure these perspectives. For example, the presence and function of multiple (and at times competing) narratives about the expectation of the state and service delivery did not receive much attention in relation to Sri Lanka in SLRC Phase I. A different perception survey,[1] 'State of Democracy in South Asia' (SDSA), conducted during the same time period as SLRC Phase I, further highlights this complexity. The SDSA survey asked respondents how they believed the relationship between the government and the citizen should take shape. The findings indicate that respondents' opinions are sharply divided, with 44% agreeing that 'the government is like a parent and should decide what is good for us' and 44% agreeing that the government is 'an employee of the people' (Peiris and Schubert, 2015).[2] Therefore, the question of whether perceptions of local service delivery translate into broader perceptions of state legitimacy is complicated by the presence of different expectations for the function of the state in Sri Lanka. In a sense, in Sri Lanka, and in many other countries, legitimacy seems to be in a constant state of flux, shifting as and when expectations of the state shift.

Through a series of focused case studies in Mannar, Nawalapitiya and Rajanganaya, this study aims to understand the nature of legitimacy through everyday interactions with local-level service delivery in Sri Lanka. Our entry point to understanding legitimacy is to examine how the state establishes its exteriority (or 'state effect') in the arena of service delivery. Based on our experience, we are reluctant to accept the notion that the state is fixed, autonomous, outside and above 'society' (Jessop, 2007) as a preliminary in an investigation on legitimacy. Our interest is in studying the elusiveness and fluidity of state and society, and how legitimacy is articulated and constructed in this relation. This study frames legitimacy as a function of the separation of state and society. What are the institutions that establish this effect? Who are the agents of the state? And what are the dynamics of the interaction between the citizens and the institutions and agents that help establish the 'state effect'? We take this approach because we regard the state as not only a set of institutions but also a constellation of institutions, agents, brokers, ideas and ideology. How people understand and articulate legitimacy is deeply intertwined with how they experience the presence of the state.

1.2   The central research enquiry

This study examines how state legitimacy, or de-legitimacy, is produced in relation to local-level service delivery in Sri Lanka. First, we show how the state itself is variously produced, and how intermediaries blur the boundaries between state and citizen in the arena of service delivery. Second, given this complication, we identify articulations of legitimacy (and de-legitimacy) and demonstrate what Beetham (1991) refers to as 'shared beliefs', both dominant and subordinate, in the varied registers of legitimacy. We show that narratives of legitimacy or de-legitimacy in people's everyday experiences of local-level service delivery are rooted in their historical experiences both as individuals as part of a collective. We refer to this as the ideological aspect of legitimacy. With this in mind, the following questions guide this empirical enquiry:

- How do people encounter 'the state' in everyday local-level service delivery?
  - What are the formal and informal mechanisms through which services are distributed at local level?
  - How do people conceptualise, negotiate and articulate their perceptions of exclusion and/or inclusion from service delivery?

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1   This was a representative national survey, with a sample of 3,401 respondents in 23 districts.

2   Two statements were presented to respondents, and they were asked to select one: 'Statement 1: The government is our employee, the people should tell the government what needs to be done'; 'Statement 2: The government is like a parent, it should decide what is good for us'.

- What do people's narratives about legitimacy (or de-legitimacy) and their experiences surrounding service delivery tell us about their shared beliefs and histories?

This study does not aim to provide a general theory of state legitimacy, nor to uncover the structures of legitimacy as such. We focus on ontological questions about the state itself, based on our data. Legitimacy features as only a secondary, descriptive category, although we do presume that articulations of legitimacy are contingent on various articulations of the state. And since the latter too are contingent on various social and political contexts and relations, articulations of legitimacy are often highly context-dependent. A general theory of state legitimacy can be posited only at great expense of the various site-specific dynamics that shape state–citizen relations.

In Section 2, we situate our approach within wider literatures on the state; and in Section 3, we outline our research methodology. In Section 4, we discuss the state's pluri-centred nature and look at how various state effects are produced. In Section 5, we highlight the various articulations of legitimacy and de-legitimacy that emerge from the three field locations due to this pluri-centricity. In Section 6, we present our conclusions and broadly outline recommendations to address issues raised by the research.

2 Literature review

2.1 Services and state legitimacy

Our study engages the theoretical and empirical foundations of the notion that service delivery improves state legitimacy. State legitimacy rose as a key component of state-building in the past decade particularly in discourses on fragility (DFID, 2010; OECD, 2010). Mcloughlin (2014) notes in her review of literature on state legitimacy that this stems from the view that legitimacy deficit (or illegitimacy) undermines the state's capacity and stability. This is discussed at great length in much of the prominent state-building literature (Mcloughlin, 2014: 341). Mcloughlin also notes that, alongside the increasing interest in legitimacy as a core aspect of state-building, there has been a simultaneous concern about sources of legitimacy available to the state particularly in international aid circles (ibid.). This has led to framing the state's provision of public services – posited as a material expression of 'reciprocal state–society relations' – as a key source of legitimacy (Carpenter et al., 2012). However, whether services contribute to state legitimacy is much debated (Carter, 2011).

In Phase I of SLRC, researchers across five countries found that the relationship between a state's delivery of services and perceptions of government is non-linear. Building on the non-linearity of the services–legitimacy link, we explore whether we are able to improve understanding of the texture of legitimacy when we further deconstruct concepts such as 'the state'. In this paper, we complicate the predominant view that the state is a fixed entity (or a set of institutions) standing outside and above 'society'. We then use the opening created by this deconstruction to glean ideas about legitimacy. Our primary interest is in exploring whether our understanding of legitimacy changes when the state is treated as 'an effect'.

In this section, we begin by setting out the texture of legitimacy as discussed by Beetham (1991) and others, while touching on key assumptions about the state underpinning the scholarly work on processes of legitimation. The next sub-section illustrates a different treatment of 'the state', drawing on the work of Abrams (1988), Mitchell (1991) and Jessop (2007), which is useful in grappling with the conceptual elusiveness of the state as well as the challenges of attempting to reify it. We conclude this section by advancing the case for trialling an investigation of legitimacy through a more deconstructionist view of the state.

In her review essay, Mcloughlin (2014) contends that much of the aid literature adopts an empirical definition of state legitimacy. Based on the Weberian notion of rational-legal legitimacy, here a state is legitimate when people believe it to be so. Beetham (1991) points to the circularity of Weber's view and argues that there are at least three levels in which legitimacy operates: rules, justifications grounded on beliefs, and actions (Beetham 1991: 16). In his discussion on why states stay intact, Joel Migdal (2001) refers to the institution of law and the political leaders' use of law as a source of legitimacy. Beetham (1991: 16) calls this 'rules of power', indicating that the first and most basic level of legitimacy is derived from the state exercising power in accordance with established rules, both formal and informal. According to this line of reasoning, illegitimacy, or 'the opposite of legitimacy' (ibid: 16) is when power is acquired and exercised in a way that contravenes the rules. Power acquired illegally, in this regard, has profound (negative) consequences for legitimacy. Acknowledging the insufficiency of power acquired through rules or law to produce legitimacy, Migdal stresses the importance of shared beliefs between the dominant and subordinate (ibid: 17). In other words, rules (or law) can produce legitimacy to the extent that they are underpinned by certain shared ideologies.

Beliefs (or ideologies) about state power range from the rightful leadership and characteristics that define political leaders to expectations that the powerful must ensure that people's basic needs are met. As such, the second level of legitimacy (Beetham 1991, p.17) is far from static. Changing circumstances (people's everyday circumstances relative to broader structural-level changes) constantly produce and reproduce shared beliefs about whether rules are justifiable. As Lipset (1984) proposes, these shared ideologies are, to a great extent engineered by the state. It is this embeddedness of shared ideologies in legitimacy or de-legitimacy narratives that piques our curiosity. We are particularly interested in exploring how different histories and interpretations of historical experiences shape people's expectations of, and experiences with, the state. We are driven by the basic point made by several post-colonial scholars (Nandy, 1984; Kothari, 1988; Chatterjee, 1997) that historical continuity of moral ordering of social relations and values salient in diagnosing the 'legitimate state' colour how people view, negotiate and articulate their perceptions about the modern state.

The third level of legitimacy that Beetham presents is derived from the expression of consent by the subordinate to the particular power relation in which they are involved (Beetham, 1991: 18). Here, legitimacy is demonstrated through actions, such as participating in an election and swearing allegiance to a superior. These actions can be symbolic or ceremonial, in that they are expressions of acknowledgement on the part of the subordinate of the position of the powerful, which the latter confirm as their legitimacy (ibid.). However, based on our experience in Sri Lanka, legitimacy derived from laws and actions demonstrating consent seems to be contingent on a set of shared values. We look towards Beetham's second level of legitimacy, where 'shared beliefs' are key, as the foundation and the source of legitimacy for both laws and actions that indicate consent. We think shared beliefs, or a shared value system, are important for people to willingly obey laws, internalise certain norms, and perceive that the state or its officials are worthy of allegiance.

Our starting point in exploring the ideological aspect of legitimacy is through service delivery. In the aid literature, services are seen as the visible and tangible area depicting the reciprocal relationship between state and society, as they give content to the social contract (Rotberg, 2004; OECD, 2011). The relationship between a state's performance in delivering basic services, on one hand, and its degree of legitimacy, on the other, seems to pique the interest of donors, despite inconclusive evidence confirming this relationship. Services are placed in a category of *what* the state produces, which is distinct from *how* the state functions (Bellina et al., 2009). The 'state as institutions' perspective is embedded here. This institutional perspective and treatment of service delivery as a distinct category, however, overlooks the possibility that services may well be a conduit of norms and values that produce the imagination of the state, or what Gupta (1995) calls the 'main myths and symbols of the state'.

The roots of this view lie in Weber's (1968) notion of the 'rational-legal' variety of legitimate authority, where 'the state' legitimates itself by establishing functioning institutions, and the social contract articulated by service delivery is more or less an instrumental supply-and-demand transaction. Drawing on Mcloughlin's (2014) analysis of the relational aspects of service delivery (also Robinson, 2008; van de Walle and Scott,

2011), we approach service delivery as a co-productive and ideologically laced encounter between state and citizens, rather than one of pure instrumental reason. We build on the notion that certain histories, norms and values surrounding the idea of the state as well as services shape people's articulations of legitimacy. In this way, we conceptualise service delivery as more than a state's visible and tangible output. Services are also a formative component of people's imagination of 'the state' (Holsti, 1996).

2.2 The elusiveness of the state

The analysis of Beetham (1991) and Mcloughlin (2014) on the nature of legitimacy is invaluable for going beyond the instrumental, rational notion of legitimacy and attempting to account for an understanding of state and state legitimacy from the 'bottom up'. However, it is also worth conceding that neither Beetham and Mcloughlin nor other scholars like van de Walle and Scott (2011) who discuss the importance of norms, values and shared ideologies in relation to legitimacy and service delivery, focus on the elusiveness of the state as such. Questioning the very existence of the state – that is, its boundaries and demarcations – was crucial in the present study, especially when interrogating the role played by mediators (both institutional and individual) in shaping citizens' attitudes towards service delivery and legitimacy. Interrogating the boundaries of the state further enables a study of how various social relations and structures – such as patronage networks, ethnicity, social class and labour – play a crucial role in shaping citizens' ideologies underpinning their idea of the state and why it should hold power.

Three key theorists who have engaged with the elusiveness of the state are Bob Jessop, Philip Abrams and Timothy Mitchell. It is possible to trace a certain genealogy in their thinking back to Marx, whose idea on the illusory common interest of the state in *The German Ideology* is quoted by Abrams (1988): 'the most important single characteristic of the state is that it constitutes the "illusory common interest" of a society'; the crucial word there being 'illusory'. This is based on an idea Bob Jessop (2007) outlines as one of the six qualifications of his Strategic-Relational Approach (SRA): that there can be no common interest regarding the state and there are always structures of inequality and unevenness around such propositions. Jessop's intervention in theorising the state lies in his attempt to understand the state as being produced by the various social relations contingent on particular

social formations. Whereas the state was formerly conceptualised as 'a thing', both above and outside society, Jessop (2007) notes that there are institutions 'above, around, and below the core of the state'. The core itself lacks full closure because this institutional ensemble is never coherently integrated under a single overarching policy or objective.

To return to the issue of common interest, the word 'illusory' used by Abrams (following Marx) highlights the fact that the state is ideologically produced. The state is ideological insofar as it is produced as something separate, disinterested and neutral, when it is merely an internal line drawn within society which enables certain modes of domination and the reproduction of determinate social relations. Due to this inseparability between the material ('social relations', 'relations of production', etc.) and the ideological ('common will', or even the very term 'state'), Timothy Mitchell (2006) argues for the 'state effect'. This implies that the exteriority of the state is in fact produced, and that the 'line is drawn internally, within the network of institutional mechanisms through which a certain social and political order is maintained' (Mitchell, 2006). However, just because 'the state' is produced by a certain effect, an articulation, this does not mean that the state itself is illusory or even that the line is illusory. It merely means that the line is drawn for a distinctive purpose, which is to maintain power and the prevalent political economic order, and that the line or boundary is bound to shift in various concrete social contexts and relations.

Of immediate interest for this paper is how an understanding of the fuzziness of the state can enable a more in-depth scrutiny of how various social relations and subject positions influence different narratives of legitimacy or de-legitimacy. This furthers Mcloughlin's aim, and responds to her suggestion that 'future empirical inquiry could usefully focus on the texture of citizens' everyday encounters with service bureaucracy and how these affect citizens' perceptions of the state from the "bottom up"' (Mcloughlin, 2014: 353). Our study argues that the various textures of legitimacy result not so much from variously positioned subjects responding to a concrete and objective state-system, but due to various subjects (who are differently interpellated due to various multifaceted social relations and conditions) responding to a state which in and of itself is elusive.

This differential interpellation needs to be clarified: while our immediate point of departure here is Louis

Althusser's (1971) notion of interpellation whereby various subjects (citizens) are always already within ideology, these subject positions are not directly reducible to the state. Thus we see that in each of our three sites in Sri Lanka – Mannar, Nawalapitiya and Rajanganaya – there exist various subjects whose ideology cannot be said to be a *direct* result of state control, although the state (in its contemporary albeit elusive form) functions to reproduce these positions. For example, the ideological aspects of ethnicity and labour cannot be directly reduced to the state, although it is important to investigate how these aspects are bound up in the narratives that legitimise the state. An understanding of the state as a fuzzy, pluri-centred entity, produced as an effect by certain social relations, is important. This is because such a view can accommodate various context-specific social relations, ideologies and intermediaries – all of which play a role in service delivery at the local level. This can present a more comprehensive account of how narratives of legitimacy are intertwined with various articulations of the state, as well as various notions of service delivery.

3 Methodology

The broad research questions that guide this study – '*How do people encounter 'the state' in everyday local-level service delivery?*' and '*What do people's narratives about legitimacy (or de-legitimacy) and their experiences with- and negotiations surrounding service delivery tell us about their shared beliefs and histories?*' – called for a predominantly qualitative approach, to investigate why and how things happen (Yin, 2012). We have aimed to gain in-depth understandings of legitimacy and state effect through consequences, using interviews allowing respondents to discuss what they feel is important about services and the state. Drawing on Levine (2014), the research begins from the perspective of people's lived experiences, rather than from an analysis of the context, institutions and broader social and political dimensions. This research does also explore context and institutions but we chose initially to foreground the perspective of the people. The iterative nature of the research design allowed the research team to reflect on data as it was being generated. If new and important issues were revealed, we adapted research questions and tools to address these.

A 'case study' in this project is the study of state effect through a particular service and the legitimating (or de-legitimating) narratives of the state in a selected geographic location. As mentioned above, we chose sites in Nawalapitiya, Rajanganaya and Mannar[3] to help us understand how the state is constantly produced and reproduced in the arena of service delivery. The focus on service delivery is an entry point to study 'state effect' and discourses and practices of legitimacy (or de-legitimacy) which in turn produce and reproduce the state.

We followed two methods of inquiry to address the research questions in the three case study locations. First, we explored the pluri-centred nature of the state, focusing on what 'types' (or faces) of the state are legitimised (or de-legitimised) in people's narratives of service delivery. Second, through people's articulations of legitimacy and de-legitimacy, we look at the historical rootedness of individuals and groups, identity politics, and ideas of inclusion and exclusion – all of which contribute to the dynamism surrounding the concept of legitimacy.

The data for the case studies is based on over a hundred extensive qualitative interviews with key informants, both individually and in groups, carried out in each

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3   See Figure 1 for the location of the field sites and Annex 1 for basic descriptions of the three sites.

location.[4] Analysis was a continual process throughout the research and all team members were involved in the analytical process. We adopted principles of grounded theory where analysis is iterative, to reduce limiting understanding at the start of the analytical process, and used a flexible analytical framework that developed as the researchers embedded themselves deeper in the field sites. Our approach to fieldwork – spending long periods of time observing state-effect – provided insights into how to 'read' legitimacy in people's everyday articulations of the state. We also developed an intuitive sense, based on our knowledge of the context, and perhaps owing to our own backgrounds (and language skills), that helped us identify legitimacy and de-legitimacy when we heard it. In this way, our study adds to a small but growing body of research attempting to locate and understand the 'state' using inductive and qualitative methodology.

Figure 1: A map of Sri Lanka indicating the three field locations

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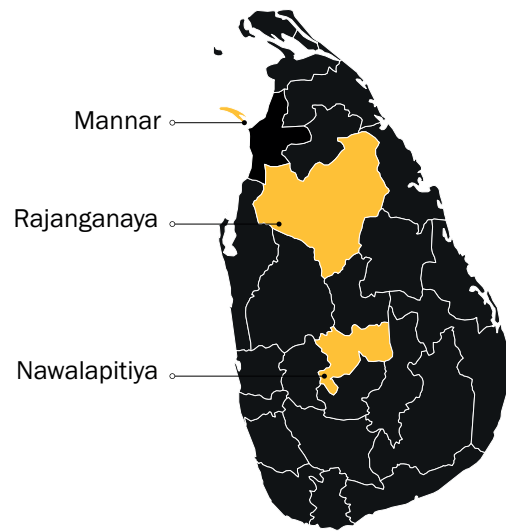
4 States and citizens

4.1 The 'centre': not a singular state?

Our inquiry into articulations of the state in Sri Lanka began with the *assumption* of a central state that provides material services to its citizens. This idea of a 'centre' assumes different meanings in each of our field sites, however, at times shifting its location, and demonstrating a hydra-like nature. In Rajanganaya, a state-constructed agricultural settlement, we observed the presence of a relatively 'central' state that delivers services for paddy cultivation. In Sri Lanka, paddy cultivation occupies a central place in terms of both ideology and material service delivery. Post-colonial nation-building is closely linked *to* rural agriculture and Buddhism, not only as core institutions and ideas but also as key responsibilities of the rulers of the land. Paddy cultivation is key to portraying Sri Lanka as a historically agricultural economy, and proudly references the country's past as a sophisticated hydraulic civilisation. Rajanganaya is a perfect example of this enduring ideological trope within the post-colonial Sri Lankan state. Given the central nature of agriculture (mainly paddy) within this community, public services in Rajanganaya are defined around paddy cultivation.[5]

Water and fertiliser are the main services that farmers in Rajanganaya receive from the state, and they function as two of the primary points of interaction between citizen and state. The fertiliser subsidy in Sri Lanka dates back to 1962. Its main objective was to make access to fertiliser easy and affordable to farmers, thereby stimulating high yields in paddy (Ekanayake, 2009). Since then, however, despite the contribution of agriculture to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) being just 7%, and the massive expenditure on providing the fertiliser subsidy (currently Rs 15 billion), no government has moved to suspend the system. This is because as much as one-third of the labour force is employed in the agricultural sector, and the large voter base of farmers (around two million) immediately made the subsidy into a highly ideological political tool crucial to state-building.

Similarly, the Rajanganaya farmers' protest over the state's decision to extract drinking water from the Rajanganaya reservoir, originally used for agriculture, indicates the significance of the act of receiving water for paddy cultivation. The Irrigation Management Division (IMD) established in 1984 in Rajanganaya is a

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5   'Agriculture' and 'paddy cultivation' are terms used interchangeably in Rajanganaya.

key component of the Integrated Management of Major Irrigation Settlement Schemes (INMAS), specifically set up to achieve 'harmonization of various inputs and services necessary for increasing agricultural productivity with special focus on the use of irrigation water which had been identified as the most critical and limiting resource in irrigated agriculture' (Perera, 1986). Institutions like these serve as points of contact between state and citizens, highlighting the 'illusory common interest' – combining both the state's and citizens' expectations – in depicting Sri Lanka as an agricultural society.

It is worth noting that the agricultural state is not agricultural alone. The Sri Lankan state is a cultural and political imaginary that tightly interlinks rural agriculture and Buddhism, as evidenced by the many religio-cultural rituals we observed in Rajanganaya. For instance, the *aagama sihikireema* ('invoking religion', in Sinhala) at the beginning of the monthly IMD meeting, and the *kiri poojawa* ('milk offering') for the deities during the harvest seasons (attended by both state officials and farmers), depict state–society relations in Rajanganaya within the broader assemblage of agricultural life. While it was difficult at times to tell 'the state' apart from the people in Rajanganaya, as officials and farmers were related through marriage and other kinship ties, troubleshooting specific contingencies related to water supply produced the 'state effect', instantly separating 'the state' from 'society'.

The 'water controller' (WC) is the agent of the state present in farmers' everyday lives. He too is 'one of them', typically a farmer appointed by a Farmer Organisation. Some years ago, the Project Committee decided that WCs from right and left embankments would be switched to prevent conflicts of interest reported by farmers. However, after six months of trialling this arrangement, the farmers requested that the decision be reversed, on the basis that they are more comfortable dealing with 'their own'. This incident depicts not only a failed attempt overtly to establish state effect at the lowest level of irrigation administration but also the farmers' preference for monitoring by the state (the 'centre', as represented here by the WC) only when needed. The reversal of the WC policy indicates re-negotiation by the farmers to maintain control over when, and under which

circumstances, state effect can be produced, indicating their own agency in producing the 'state' (or the 'centre').

However, the imaginary of a unitary state is complicated by the recognition that this identity necessarily excludes other groups located within the geographical space of the state. One significant instance in which this singular conceptualisation of the state is directly challenged is in the emergence of the demand for a separate Tamil state in the North and East, and the civil war between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The war that Sri Lanka experienced over the course of three decades played a crucial role in the formation of the state and the state-idea. Part of the LTTE's strategy during the war was to establish a de facto state in areas under their control, with a mix of government and LTTE state structures sometimes functioning within the same area (Stokke, 2006).

Narratives from state officials who served in Mannar during the war exemplify negotiations with the LTTE as a routine part of administration in the region. For many in the North and East, the LTTE was as much a state as the Sri Lankan state. Speaking of the incursion of Indian trawling boats into Sri Lankan waters, Naresh,[6] a *waadi*[7] owner in Mannar complained that neither the Sri Lankan state nor the LTTE took sufficient measures to resolve the problem.

The LTTE used it to their advantage and the military, the government also used it to their advantage. They thought 'If we hate India we won't get any help' and they didn't see that [Indian fisherfolk] were coming here and stealing our resources. The LTTE also didn't look into this because their arrival was an advantage to their cause. Because they could sometimes bring diesel, petrol, fuel. They could bring arms too. They could bring pharmaceutical products... It is the people here who have over time gradually sacrificed their resources to this.

This observation places blame equally on the Sri Lankan state and the LTTE, and fractures the concept of the state as a singular entity held responsible for the wellbeing of its citizens. The intrusion of an alternate state-system complicates the narrative of the 'centre' by calling attention to the existence of other citizens whose needs do not fall neatly within the citizenship produced inside its boundaries. The state is linked to other

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6   All names of respondents have been changed.

7   A *waadi* is a beach strip that fisherfolk use to store fishing equipment, land boats, mend nets and carry out all other fishing-related activities.

identity groups whose expectations do not coincide with those of the Sinhala Buddhist farmer and, in its real existence, the state cannot be isolated from these other entities. The LTTE's alternative state complicates the idea of a singular state delivering specific material services and subscribing to a particular ideology at the most basic level. It is in this instance that Jessop's conceptualisation of the state as an institutional ensemble that is never fully coherently integrated, and Mitchell's case for state effect, helped us understand the state's fluid nature.

Even in the case of the Sinhala Buddhist farmer, the 'centre' is not neatly demarcated, however. We found that, in practice, such farmers do not access the state in a singular, coherent fashion. Rather, even citizens with direct ideological and material access to the state produce 'the state' in particular ways. Thus, we will now explore how the state's fluidity is experienced differently by variously interpellated citizens.

4.2   Different shades of citizens and access to 'the state'

We observed that the production of the state, or state effect, is possible only through the combined efforts of both state and citizens. Thus, citizenship also becomes a question of vital importance in the definition of a 'state'. The fluid state is seen more clearly among those who do not fit squarely into the 'illusory common interest' of the Sri Lankan state. In Mannar, among our three field sites, we were most clearly able to observe the disconnect between the central state and citizens. Two possible reasons for this are: the prolonged war in the North and East and the period of living under both *de jure* and *de facto* states functioning in parallel. This has prevented many Tamils living here from accessing services directly through the central state. At the same time, however, there was – and, some would argue, still is – an ideological distance from the central state largely governed through the ideological framework of the majority. Indran, a village leader in Mannar spoke of the danger of having bo trees[8] growing wild in his village, because Buddhists would come and place a statue there and maybe even build a temple. In a focus group discussion with village leaders in Thalvupadu (Mannar), we were told that a Buddhist temple was built in Thiruketheesvaram, a sacred place that had

long been a site of dispute between Hindus and Roman Catholics with competing claims. Their observation on this incident was *poonai appaththai pangidum pōthu kurangu vantha maathiri* ('it's like a monkey came in the middle of two cats trying to divide a hopper', in Tamil). Observations like this highlight how distantly these people are located from the 'centre', and from access to services provided by the state.

Since fishing was our main focus in Mannar, we explored relations between state and citizens, and access to service delivery, in this sector. We found that fisherfolk in Mannar access the state through institutions that are highly localised and able to deliver material services directly to the people. Importantly, the fisheries sector is directly under central government – unlike agriculture, which is managed by provincial government. However, in Mannar, fishing villages interact with the state through the District Office of the Fisheries Department. Services and materials such as boat registrations, fuel rations and fishing nets are obtained through this local office. Even our respondents' complaints about the inefficiency of the Fisheries Department were directed particularly against the officers in this District Office. This complicates the picture drawn by the 'legal' state. Even though the central government has authority over the governance of fisheries all over the island, in Mannar 'the state' was more firmly located within local state institutions than as part of the distant central state to which people had very little material or ideological access.

In Nawalapitiya, we encountered a different form of citizenship in the Estate Tamil community (ETC)[9]. The nature of the state produced among the Estate Tamils is very different from that of the Sinhalese in Inguru Oya or even the Tamils in Mannar. This is because Estate Tamils are configured as a particular *type* of citizen, indeed only partial citizens (their citizenship being revoked by the Ceylon Citizenship Act of 1948, but re-enacted in 1964). To date, their identity is bound not merely by ethnicity but also by labour. The predominant mechanism through which the ETC can access the 'centre' is formal and abstract. It is generally assumed that each estate (company) provides for the needs of its workers, in the absence of which they can file a case at a labour tribunal. (Residents of Penrose Estate mentioned Estate Tamils in Hatton and Nuwara Eliya, for whom housing, transport and healthcare are all

8   Bo trees are considered sacred by Buddhists. It is common practice to place a small statue of the Lord Buddha in a niche in the bo tree.

9   'Estate Tamils' are a group of people, with Indian origin, brought over by the British colonial administration to work as indentured labour in British Ceylon's tea plantations. They live in tea 'estates' and are of Tamil ethnicity. The term 'estate' sets apart this community from the Sri Lankan Tamils.

provided by the estate.) However, according to a resident of Penrose Estate, such formal mechanisms do not function in practice: 'We can't directly access the labour tribunals. I can't represent myself. I can't go and ask for a lawyer. There is no permission for that.' Instead, Estate Tamils are forced to depend on trade unions – which are themselves seen as exploitative – for representation. In the law, the estate is a 'legal person' capable of owning private property. Any infringement of this right, such as in the case of a forceful acquisition or unauthorised cultivation, is seen as an offence committed against this legal person, irrespective of the internal malfunctioning of the company which comprises this legal person. Since the basic rights of the ETC as citizens stand in a trade off with the legal rights and personhood of the company, members of the ETC are effectively reduced to being sub-citizens.

The only solution available to the ETC therefore is to tap into the patronage networks of the Sinhalese villagers in Inguru Oya, through the Village Development Committee, of which the president is a Sinhalese villager (Mr Fernando), and the vice-president an Estate Tamil. However, several residents of Penrose Estate also stated that, of the funding obtained collectively through the Committee, much of it goes to the village and only a small sum finally trickles down to the estate. The vice-president of the Committee further stated that to plead for funds for the road, he had to 'hold a minister by his hand' and 'worship' him before he got into his vehicle. Thus, it is seen that the ETC has to go through certain Sinhalese mediators (such as the president of the Village Development Committee) in order to access local politicians, and to tap into local patronage networks (of the Sinhalese) to access even basic services. This produces a very different kind of state effect, and a different type of discourse about the state. For the ETC, the state appears largely to be a distant, abstract entity mediated by the company.

Rajanganaya offered us two more interesting forms of citizenship that further complicate our understanding of the relations between state and citizens. First is the case of Jayadasa, a farmer in Track 18 on the margins of the settlement, a long distance from the 'centre' in the form of the reservoir. Jayadasa told us that farmers in Track 18 have not cultivated paddy for the past three seasons due to a lack of water. Others who lived in areas furthest from the reservoir, in Tracks 18, 17, 16 and 13, confirmed this. This reality interrogates the general narrative of pride and self-satisfaction (among state officials) that all of Rajanganaya is cultivated during the

two paddy seasons, as well as between them. During an interview, Malini, an officer in the Divisional Secretariat, mentioned that elephants, peacocks and monkeys destroy the cultivated land of residents in Track 18. She described residents of this area as 'ignorant' and said that 'most people know that they are illiterate'. We infer that these narratives depict varied ideas about who the 'state' sees as 'authentic' citizens of Rajanganaya. There is unevenness in how Rajanganaya is made legible for the state, and distance from the reservoir serves as proxy for determining this legibility.

The second notable form of citizenship in Rajanganaya is within the fishing community, in pockets of land near the reservoir and the Angamuwa tank. The early settlers were mostly landless fisherfolk who came to Rajanganaya in the 1960s, to try their hand at freshwater fishing. While their livelihoods determined their citizenship in the eyes of the 'state-system', they recounted instances in which they were able to negotiate with the state. Charlis, an older fisherman, told us how he had obtained land permits through a politician (from the SLFP) in Anuradhapura, who served as an intermediary in the issue in order to obtain their votes. 'When they see us, they see our heads ... votes ... votes' he chuckled. He proceeded to describe how his interactions with *mahaththaya* (a term of respect in Sinhala, equivalent to the English 'sir') eventually led to people of his village obtaining legal titles to their land.

4.3   The intermediary: blurring the state–citizen line

Charlis' story brings us to a vital aspect of producing the state in Sri Lanka: intermediaries and brokers who function within patronage networks that blur the line between state and citizen. In Charlis' case, the politician (*mahaththaya*) served as an intermediary, engaging with the 'state' to acquire land permits, despite the fact that Charlis and others were squatters on reservation land. Here, the politician was able to bypass not one, but two institutions (the Divisional and District Secretariats and Mahaweli Authority) of the 'state-system'. Charlis noted, 'only one phone call was needed from *mahaththaya* ... he's a thug, no? ... otherwise would this be possible?' Charlis' patron–client relationship with this politician created a link that bypassed the state-system in Rajanganaya (which privileged farmers, not fisherfolk), for fisher communities to access national government directly. During Charlis's long relationship with the politician, fisherfolk in Rajanganaya established fisheries societies and Charlis was chairman of the

fisheries society in his area. This also marks a moment in which the 'government' made its exteriority (from the 'state–system') visible to the people. However, Charlis reflected that, with the politician's demise, the state's attention on Rajanganaya's freshwater fishing declined significantly. Jessop's (2007) framing of the state is enhanced here: it is not only institutions that blur the boundaries of the state but also individuals. These individuals occupy various positions within and without the state–system, and are particularly situated to enable state activities.

Another example of how this network can function can be seen through the role played by Rishad Bathiudeen in Mannar. Bathiudeen is the Minister of Industry and Commerce, elected to Parliament from the Vanni District,[10] and most often associated with the resettlement of the Northern Muslims after 2009. Bathiudeen is a significant player in thinking about the state in Mannar for a number of reasons. Being from Mannar, he is seen to have a very close link to the region. In our interviews we repeatedly heard him described as a 'Mannar man'. This local connection seems to inform both his commitment to serving the people of Mannar and the citizens' expectations of him. Bathiudeen's role as mediator is particularly interesting because of his party politics.[11] With regard to service delivery, he is seen to be successful primarily because of his position within the government. People report that his allegiance with the government gives him an advantage over Tamil politicians who operate from the opposition. As one respondent succinctly put it, '[Tamils] have to eat something, no? The other needs are there, no? … he [Rishad] gives.' This suggests that the expectation of Bathiudeen as an intermediary in Mannar is that he should provide services for his people.

In Nawalapitya we encountered patronage networks that Sinhala Buddhist citizens used to access services. Several community leaders in Inguru Oya are (or had once been) railway employees, who often serve as mediators when accessing even a seemingly rational, centrally administered service such as the railway. This was particularly evident in the case of a protest against the Railways Department several years ago, demanding the stopping of more trains at a local station. One of the chief protesters, Fernando (performing the role of citizen) was actually, at that time, a railway employee. Because of his political connections as a local organiser for the United

National Party (UNP), and his post as the president of the Village Development Committee, Fernando appeared as a key mediator through whom citizens accessed the state. He then appeared as an ad-hoc state agent who intervened in the provision of housing, local government services and employment, on several occasions, despite the fact that he no longer had an *official* government job. For instance, a group of women (all of whom faced numerous economic hardships), when asked if they attempt to access local government services for welfare, attested: 'we don't go to the Pradeshiya Sabha [local government] to make demands. We tell them to Mr Fernando. He goes.' Fernando also seems to speak on behalf of the state in terms of sorting out land deeds and housing under the Gamperaliya project, a new development scheme introduced by the UNP government. The families Fernando selected for the welfare scheme are all faithful UNP supporters.

Fernando is an ambiguous subject who can be pinned down in terms of neither state nor society. Moreover, there are many others playing similar roles, and this seems to be the dominant mode in which citizens (especially Sinhala villagers) access the state. Thus, we find that even those with direct access to the 'centre' produce the state in nuance, with their particular interpellations playing a role in how they demarcate the state.

The blurring of the boundary between state and citizen continues even into what can presumably be called 'the core of the state': state officials. In Nawalapitiya, the road built recently accessed funds directly from the Japanese state (through JICA, the Japan International Cooperation Agency). This was achieved through the contacts of an individual born in the village, and went up the social ladder to reach the Finance Ministry. This individual was not working as an official state agent but as an informal mediator. However, he was able to obtain funding because he had power within the state-system to do so.

Often the state official's role as intermediary is motivated by the need to serve their own community. This was clearly articulated by Ratnam, a retired Divisional Secretary in Mannar.

As a Divisional Secretary, I did a lot of things for my community. But I never – within my own risks

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10   The Vanni Electoral District is located in the Northern Province and consists of the administrative districts of Mannar, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya.

11   Rishad Bathiudeen is leader of the All Ceylon Makkal Congress, a Muslim political party aligned with the current government.

sometimes I may give two things to you, but you are entitled to only one thing. She is entitled for one and I can give her one. You are okay and she is also okay. Within my power *I give you two. In Musali, land matters I did to my people [Tamils] to my satisfaction and their satisfaction. [Emphasis added]*

Ratnam is referring to preferential treatment towards his own (Tamil) community with respect to delivering services. The point made is that preferential treatment is accepted or even endorsed, provided that all communities receive services at some basic level. The state official here blurs the line between state and citizen by claiming belonging as a reason for providing services. In such instances, the exteriority of the state is complicated and the state is produced in a manner that answers to the needs of particular groups of citizens. Narratives of inclusion and exclusion then become key to understanding how the state is defined and legitimised in its interactions with citizens.

5 State legitimacy

Our encounter with the state in narratives from our field sites is with an entity that is fluid in nature, constantly forming and re-forming in negotiations with diverse groups of citizens. The attempt to produce an exterior state is complicated by the numerous institutions and individuals that occupy the space of the state at different points in time and space, and the various types of 'citizen' they interact with. This contingent nature of the state affects our understanding of legitimacy as well, as it does not allow for a simple, black-or-white dichotomy in the conceptualisation of legitimacy. Rather, it requires an exploration of multiple shades of legitimacy articulated around multiple articulations of the state. In reviewing our work in all three field sites, one of our most interesting findings was how people articulate the legitimacy of such a fluid state. Often, the stories we heard were of instances where the state had failed to deliver services or meet the expectations of citizens. Our task was then to unpack these narratives of de-legitimacy to find how the legitimacy of the state is framed. For the purpose of clarity, we will explore the question of legitimacy in this section first through narratives about accessing the 'centre', and second through articulations of other more fluid peripheries of the state.

5.1   Legitimacy as ideological

In Nawalapitiya, a key moment in which potentially de-legitimising narratives were identified was in reference to an incident that had happened several years ago – the protest carried out by the villagers demanding for more trains to be stopped at the Inguru Oya station (as mentioned in Section 4.3 above). Fernando, the key mediator in this instance, stated:

> *Those days we could not protest and ask for a road, so we formed a Railway Passengers' Society, of which I was the chairman. We managed to stop the Udarata Menike [Badulla–Kandy–Colombo intercity] train for six-and-a-half hours. A monk got down on the tracks. The Chairman from Colombo came and gave us a solution. Now if the 12:30 train doesn't come, the Udarata Menike train stops here.*

The narrative about this 'historic' protest came up in the context of the railway workers' strike demanding salary increments that was ongoing during the time of the research. While opinion was divided on whether railway workers should in fact receive higher salaries (with most people arguing in favour of the increment, being in some way affiliated with the service themselves), there

was undivided opinion that the strike caused injustice especially to school children taking examinations. The railway service was thus held morally responsible since people absolutely depend on its full functioning for education and access. This moral dimension is also one that has persisted over a period of time, since even before the 'historic' protest, the villagers (both Sinhalese and Tamil) resorted to putting up flags and stopping even long-distance trains in times of emergency – such as in the case of transporting a sick person to the Nawalapitiya hospital. Narratives of de-legitimacy here claim a *moral* violation by the state – represented by the striking railway employees – of its role, and thereby a loss of legitimacy.

There exists, however, in the interpellation of the Sinhala villagers and the ETC, another layer of de-legitimacy, which is perhaps more marked than the loss of moral legitimacy. When the railway service is functioning under normal circumstances, it does not and cannot distinguish between Sinhalese and Estate Tamils. This is not the case, however, when it comes to resistance. In fact, Fernando, as well as several other villagers, claimed that 'the Estate Tamils do not protest'. Why this differential engagement is seen when resisting or protesting against the state can be found in the *mode* of resistance. It is here the role of the Buddhist monk who 'got down on to the tracks' becomes key. Our observation and inference here is that citizens subversively employ the same *ideological* means by which they are interpellated as means of resisting or making demands. When the state employs ideological apparatuses to legitimise itself—in the case of the Sri Lankan state, through Buddhism and Sinhala Buddhist nationalism—it also provides the means by which resistance may be directed towards it. The citizenship of the Sinhalese in the area allows them to articulate de-legitimacy in a mode that the ETC will never be able to adopt. The ideological link of the Sinhalese villagers to the state is vital to this act of resistance, and the loss of legitimacy of the 'centre' here is possible only because of that ideological link. Thus, the difference in how the two communities are interpellated affects not only the manner in which they legitimise and de-legitimise the state but also the articulation of which state is considered legitimate or de-legitimate.

In Rajanganaya too, the ideological link to the 'centre' comes into play in the articulation of a legitimate state. The issue mentioned above (in Section 4.1) of the farmers' dissatisfaction with officials in the Department of Agrarian Services who were blocking their access to the fertiliser subsidy reveals an important aspect of state legitimacy. There are two levels (or orders) of the state embedded in this narrative of de-legitimacy. At the first level is the 'state system' represented by the Agrarian Services, through which the fertiliser subsidy is distributed to farmers. The loss of a material entitlement (of the fertiliser subsidy) by the farmers invariably induced their frustration. Given that farmers have been receiving the subsidy for decades, recent changes in the programme[12] necessarily shaped negative perceptions about the 'state'. The policy decisions regarding the nature of the subsidy, however, are made by a combination of elected officials (representing government) and bureaucrats. The way in which the street-level bureaucrats in this instance manipulated the fertiliser subsidy signals the complexity of interests conveyed through service delivery.

While farmers mentioned the politicisation of the government institutions that disburse fertiliser, their complaints were not directed at the 'state-system' itself. One commented: 'this happens in every government when officials support the opposition … it is farmers that become helpless', which does not signal a determinate set of social relations. The imaginary of the state from the farmers' vantage point pushes the boundary of the state to include political parties, elected politicians and individuals in political patronage networks. The 'state officials' in Agrarian Services are not autonomous individuals, acting independently of their political party leanings. The conflation of state and government found in the farmers' narratives then becomes a second-order representation: the imaginary of the state that has its base in the material dimension (Althusser, 1971), which in this instance is the issue with access to fertiliser.

The farmers' narratives, however, reinforce the legitimacy of the state-idea because their grievance indicates an expectation for the state to deliver their entitlement of fertiliser which has a long history. Narratives around access to fertiliser triggered by

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12 The *Yahapalanaya* ('good governance', in Sinhala) government elected in 2015 changed the subsidy into a cash transfer system which failed due to implementation issues. Farmers were unhappy about the change, not least because the cash transfer was insufficient to cover the cost of fertiliser at market prices. In a final twist of fate, during the drought 2017, there was also a shortage of fertiliser at a time when farmers desperately needed it. Enraged farmers all over the country blamed the ruling coalition for incompetence, a sentiment evidenced by key agricultural areas voting against the current government (and in favour of the Pohottuwa party led by former President Mahinda Rajapaksa) in the local elections in February 2018. The incumbent regime reintroduced the previous fertiliser subsidy two months after its defeat in the local government elections.

this encounter helped us realise that articulations of legitimacy work on different orders that do not necessarily logically correspond with each other. We also infer from the narratives that de-legitimacy does not necessarily indicate rejection of the state. Rather, we heard articulations of de-legitimacy when people's expectations (in relation to service delivery) were not met, and their hopes of the future were shattered, particularly in regard to livelihoods. In relation to the fertiliser issue, de-legitimacy was particularly acute because it was a highly politicised historical entitlement that was taken away and replaced with a cash transfer system to which the farmers responded negatively. As such, this was not just a temporary inconvenience for the farmers. Farmers' expectations in this instance were not limited to the material subsidy, which represented something more than a service. Over the years, it had also become a token of appreciation and respect for the farmer, whose image, though central to the imagination of the Sri Lankan nation-state, has been in practice repeatedly displaced by neoliberal economic reforms. These narratives of de-legitimacy in most instances implied that the solution would be to return to the status quo (the subsidy policy that existed earlier) and to increase the subsidy amount in the face of rising production costs, thus harking back to the 'centre' that shaped their citizenship.

5.2   A fair state is a partial state

Where the Sinhalese villagers of Inguru Oya and the farmers of Rajanganaya articulated the legitimate state as one that could deliver services materially while maintaining its ideological link to its citizens, groups without ideological – or even material – access to the 'centre' articulated legitimacy differently. In these moments we observed that the type of state and citizen involved in each of these instances played a vital role in demarcating how legitimacy is articulated.

One aspect of a legitimate state that was expressed quite clearly was that it should be partial. While at first glance this may seem to coincide with narratives about the legitimacy of the 'centre', the articulation of the state in these instances is more fractured, and we were able to observe concurrent and contrary articulations of what would be a legitimate state. For instance, in Mannar there were articulations of Bathiudeen as a legitimate access point – but only for Muslims. That Bathiudeen's delivery is directed largely towards Muslims is an accepted fact, and more blame is placed in this case on Tamil politicians who are unable to meet citizens' needs.

'[Rishad] is Muslim, no? He went to Muslim countries and they would have given [funds] for Muslims. They can give like that. We can't interfere in that.'

'The TNA [Tamil National Alliance] is now broken. Because if you are seeking employment, it happens through him, through the Minister [Rishad]. It isn't happening through the TNA.'

These sentiments were repeated in many of our interviews. Although Bathiudeen was described by Tamils as *naanga thūkki vazharththa pillai* ('the child we carried and raised', in Tamil), there is no expectation here that he should provide for those outside his ethnic group, and especially not to those outside his political party. In this instance, the state represented by Bathiudeen is seen as one that represents mainly Muslims, and that it caters only to Muslims does not de-legitimise it. Rather, this serves as a point of comparison that affects the legitimacy of the Tamil political parties that are 'always in opposition' and unable to provide services to the Tamil people. Thus, there is a legitimation of a state that is partial.

However, there were articulations of the state that also found this partiality to be de-legitimising, particularly because the state excluded some groups. Jeyarajah, a Tamil state official serving at the Divisional Secretariat spoke about how Bathiudeen's delivery of services to Muslims alone was wrong. He recounted the equal distribution of houses between Muslims and Tamils through the Indian housing project, and juxtaposed this with occasions when Muslims who had already received houses were given second and even third houses through Bathiudeen. This to him, served to de-legitimise Bathiudeen as a representative of the people of Mannar. To Jeyarajah, Bathiudeen is an elected representative who must be impartial in his service delivery. He also stated that incidents like these served to question the legitimacy of a state-system that allowed this partiality to go unchecked.

These narratives suggest that partiality as a marker of legitimacy occupies a complex position. On one hand, partiality can be constructed as the norm, and as something that is essential if a state is to serve its people well. On the other hand, partiality can cause a loss of legitimacy, especially among people who are disadvantaged through a partial system. However, a strong argument could be made for this disadvantage colouring the perception of a legitimate state. To Jeyarajah, the state here could be de-legitimised simply

because of whom it is partial towards, and not because the state itself is not legitimate.

5.3   Policing the margins

We encountered another aspect of legitimacy within the fishing community in Rajanganaya. Simon, from one of the fishing villages, spoke to us about the local 'state-system' as 'predatory' when it came to illegal fishing. The use of closely knit twine fishing nets is prohibited in Sri Lanka. The Fisheries Officer at the Divisional Secretariat monitors illegal fishing activities, and reports to the local officer representing the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources. The penalty for using twine nets is a fine of Rs 20,000 and confiscation of the fishing vessel. Given fisherfolk's low income (Rs 500–800 per day) and paltry living conditions, this penalty can be devastating. Simon's son was recently caught by the authorities for illegal fishing. Simon is of the view that the local state authorities go to great lengths to police fishing activities and described the presence of high-tech boats in which they charge towards local fisherfolk when they suspect such activity. He immediately complained that the local state authorities do not provide any assistance to the fisherfolk. 'They haven't given us a single piece of net for months', he complained. We observe Simon's juxtaposition of the local state authorities' policing function, which he articulated as their 'predatory' nature, and the lack of support for fishing livelihoods as core material bases of de-legitimacy of the local 'state-system' in Rajanganaya.

Simon was equally disheartened with local and national-level politicians, and journalists who reported on their meagre living conditions to the rest of the country. 'No one pays attention to helpless people like us', he said, after relating an incident when a national-level journalist came to do a story on their village. 'I even went to the water and posed with my fishing net, but nothing came out of it'. During the latter years of the previous political regime, a high-ranking national-level political figure

had wanted to install solar-power plants on the shores of all water bodies in Rajanganaya. 'Since we are not supposed to live so close to the tank, we were at risk of being evicted and homeless,' said Simon. The solar project never took off as the government changed in 2015. 'No one would even know if people like us get "dozered" off', Simon said sombrely. Fisherfolks' Roman Catholic identity further isolates them from the largely Sinhala-Buddhist settlement. Simon felt that local Buddhists did not want the Catholic fisherfolk to display their religiosity overtly. He drew a map for us indicating precise physical boundaries that demarcated where the Christians in Rajanganaya live. Simon's hand-drawn map, in many ways, depicted their existence 'on the margins' of Rajanganaya.

Simon's observations indicate that people outside the imagined geography of Rajanganaya have different expectations, and that their articulations of legitimacy (and de-legitimacy) are different from those located within the 'centre'. Simon's narrative of de-legitimacy is based on the expectation of purely material assistance to improve living conditions and basic security. For Simon, the paltry living conditions of his village indicate 'de-responsbilisation' on the part of the state and government. 'They come to our lives for the wrong reasons,' he says, pointing explicitly to the state's constant policing of the fisherfolk which, in his view, disrupts their already-fragile livelihoods. We infer from narratives of de-legitimacy in Rajanganaya that perhaps exclusion from basic services necessarily produces de-legitimacy, even for people are on the peripheries of the dominant political, economic and cultural identity allotted to a particular space. The state's surveillance of the lives of the 'other' (in this instance, fisherfolk in Rajanganaya) exacerbates the de-legitimacy of the state. The double-bind that is produced by policing excluded populations puts the latter in a helpless situation in the face of inimical political, economic and social fault lines.

6 Conclusion

In this study, we set out to deepen our understanding of 'state effect' and legitimacy in relation to service delivery in three diverse locations in Sri Lanka. We start from the premise that a disconnect exists between people's experience of service delivery and their perceptions of the state. This disconnect emerged as a significant finding in the first phase of SLRC, where service delivery was understood as a material representation of the 'state–society relation', which could be used to instrumentally enhance state legitimacy. We confronted two distinct theoretical problems in setting up an empirical enquiry to study the state and its legitimacy in the context of service delivery. The first problem was that articulations of legitimacy are never clear-cut or singular but layered and contingent on particular historical contexts (Beetham, 1991; Mcloughlin, 2014). The second problem was that the state itself is a contingent entity, constantly produced and reproduced (Abrams, 1988; Mitchell, 1991; Mitchell, 2006; Jessop, 2007). Service delivery is not merely a discrete category through which the state either gains or loses legitimacy but might also serve as an arena in which the state's 'main myths and symbols' (Gupta, 1995) are produced and reinforced.

To improve our understanding of the layered nature of state and legitimacy, we foreground the role of patronage networks and local power-brokers,[13] giving a pluri-centred view of 'the state'. Our approach hence moves away from the fixity of state that is seen in much of the legitimacy literature, and further explores how shared beliefs and histories, both dominant and subordinate, reflect in articulations of legitimacy and de-legitimacy. We also posit that it is not simply the case that people legitimate a static thing in different ways, but that they may in fact legitimise (and de-legitimise) various ideas, system or networks, none of which are *objectively* or *already* the state.

Through a series of focused case studies in Mannar, Nawalapitiya and Rajanganaya, we examined how material and ideological dimensions work together to produce perceptions of legitimacy at the local level. We observed that people's narratives about their expectations with regard to their livelihoods and development, trust and moral expectations were directed at various individuals and institutions. This contributed to our reading of a 'state' that was constantly shifting over the course of even a single story.

13 Whom we also refer to as 'intermediaries' and 'mediators'.

We encountered a state that was not the 'centre'. Institutions and individuals lying along the borders of the state blurred the boundary between citizens and state. In the services they provided, how these services were provided, and to whom, a multiplicity of states was produced that were constantly being defined and redefined. To populations excluded from the 'centre', the state produced itself as a more fluid entity that was manifested through local state institutions and patronage networks. Citizens, recognising their distance from the 'centre', access other 'states' that deliver their material services to them. This is not to say that the 'centre' is a fixed, unchanging entity. Rather, it drew attention to the idea that the fluidity of the state lies in its *production* in negotiations between variously interpellated citizens and states.

The legitimacy of all these states too – whether central or peripheral – is produced in negotiation between state and citizens, and states are expected to be both partial and impartial, providing material services and affirming the citizen at the same time. The blurring of state–society boundaries by intermediaries allowed us to register *what* is legitimised or de-legitimised, and how this is articulated during encounters (i.e. service delivery) where the state effect is produced. This is because what is legitimised is contingent on the relation between the intermediary and a particular individual or group. At times, legitimacy narratives are about the state-system (a set of institutions); at other times, people articulate legitimacy or de-legitimacy about the state as an idea (something larger than the cumulative effect of institutions). Often, both kinds of narrative are expressed in the same conversation. Articulations of legitimacy, therefore, are highly contingent on the types of citizens involved, the types of state effects they actively produce and the kinds of networks and social relations they are part of.

It was evident that certain shared beliefs and histories position the citizen in relation to the state. Farmers in Rajanganaya, Sinhalese villagers in Inguru Oya, Tamil fisherfolk in Mannar, fisherfolk in Rajanganaya, Estate Tamils in Nawalapitiya, and farmers on the periphery of Rajanganaya all have their own shared beliefs and histories that position them in relation to the state. The state produces itself to these groups differently, and these citizens negotiate their access to the state by variously articulating narratives of state legitimacy that includes them. These differential relations with the 'state' are in turn shaped by a person's identity. An individual's gender, ethnicity, religion, caste, occupation, or even party affiliation, and various intersections of

these characteristics, could shape the extent to which the 'State' sees that person as a 'citizen,' and consequently, his/ her access to the 'State.' This becomes important in thinking about access to state resources but also who has the 'license' to legitimate and contest the state. This problematises the effectiveness of development practitioners in identifying the 'most disadvantaged' which typically tend to be based on gender, ethnicity, and sometimes caste. In Rajanganaya, farmers of lower castes, for example, have greater access to the state, and carry the license to legitimate or delegitimate, a luxury that is not shared by relatively 'higher' caste people among the fishing community.

Our research shows that the dominant socioeconomic, political- and cultural history of a place, and its relation to ideological tropes, determine which aspects of service delivery are salient in shaping the state-society contract. Not all services have the same salience in the construction of state legitimacy. In Rajanganaya, for instance, agriculture (paddy farming to be specific) is the most important terrain in which services assume saliency, in comparison to other livelihoods, such as fishing. This is because paddy farming is central to the imagery of a particular ideological trope that invokes the island's proud past as a sophisticated hydraulic civilization. This imagery has been central to post-colonial nation-building, and it tightly interlinks, in both material and ideological forms, rural agriculture, and Buddhism not only as core institutions and ideas, but also key responsibilities of the rulers of the land. Hence, services around agriculture become more salient in constructing people's idea of the state, in comparison to other livelihoods.

We found that the various textures of legitimacy result from subjects being differently interpellated due to various multifaceted social relations and conditions. Here, state–citizen relations are always shaped by ideologies, and the narratives of legitimacy are always contingent on these ideologies. In Rajanganaya, the paddy farmer, central to a widely used trope, experience their identity as central to nationalist ideology. Meanwhile the Estate Tamil Community in Nawalapitiya is configured very differently—perhaps even in what may be termed coercive or repressive lines, in that their identity is explicitly tied with the type of labour (tea cultivation) to which they are supposed to commit, which resonates with the economic ideology of capitalism and is rooted in the colonial experience of Sri Lanka. The Estate Tamil Community's link to the 'state', therefore, lies in their relation to the Company/tea estate and their identity as labourers who produce tea.

6.1   Policy implications:

We suggest that policy-makers and development practitioners working to strengthen state-society relations in Sri Lanka should consider the following possible policy implications:

1   If the aim of a programme is to strengthen or improve the state-society contract, it may be strategic to look for multiple versions of a state-society contract rather than seeking an overarching state-society contract that doesn't exist. A key way to identify multiple state-society contracts is to understand how different groups access the state. Even in a small geographical area, such as the local authority level or even the *Grama Niladhari* Level, with a population of the same caste or ethnicity, there will be sub-groups with different modes of accessing state resources.

2   If a programme aims to support the legitimation of the state through service delivery, practitioners need to first identify what services are salient in the negotiation of state legitimacy. The salience of a service will be influenced by the natural resources in the area, the predominant livelihoods of the residents and how the state regulates access to those natural resources and livelihoods. If the state does not deliver a salient service in the way that people expect, this service could become a site over which the legitimacy of the state is contested. Working on contested services could represent a riskier investment for donors in terms of reputation and ability to spend consistently over a programme timeframe. However, the benefits of addressing contested issues within a salient service may outweigh this risk.

3   Development organisations invariably work with intermediaries and this is good practice, especially where those intermediaries help disadvantaged or excluded groups in accessing the state. This practice needs to be delicately handled for two reasons. First, working through intermediaries inevitably creates a system of patronage that benefits some citizens more than others. Certain good practices may be adopted in order to level the playing field. For example, more could be invested in helping to formalize modes of access for disadvantaged groups so that they need to rely less on intermediaries and patronage can be curtailed. Second, the state's perception of development donors is influenced by the types of intermediaries that donors choose to work with. This may at times jeopardize state-INGO/NGO relations.

4   Development organizations are already introducing new ideologies to link citizens to the state across a spectrum of issues (i.e. rights discourse and practice, neoliberal ideology, etc.). However, the specific ideologies operating in each location may contradict development ideologies. It may be necessary to look for ways in which ideologies overlap to gain full participation of locals in projects.

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Annex 1: Descriptions of the three field locations

The selection of the services to observe were done differently in each field site:

Rajanganaya

Rajanganaya is a DS division in the Anuradhapura district, and is located on the border of the North Central and North Western Province. It is an agricultural settlement built around the massive Rajanganaya reservoir created in 1964 during the coalition government led by Sirima Bandaranaike of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). A violent protest in Thambuththegama (the closest main town to Rajanganaya) on the 28th of February 2018 was a key factor in the decision to select Rajanganaya as a case study. Farmers from Rajanagaya took to the streets to challenge the state's decision to implement a drinking water project, which used the Rajanganaya reservoir as its water source. For us, the protest signaled a moment in which the state's legitimacy was questioned by a group (farmers) that forms the ideological core of the Sri Lankan electorate.

Nawalapitiya

Nawalapitiya was identified as a site for an in-depth study of state legitimacy based on previous research conducted in the area. In 2017, the Social Scientists' Association (SSA) conducted a study for Transparency International Sri Lanka, which found that the role of social capital in accessing local government services in Nawalapitiya was significant, with those with higher social capital needing and accessing local government services significantly more than those with lower social capital (SSA 2017). Given this background, the research team identified Inguru Oya in Nawalapitiya as a suitable site in which the complex relationship between informal networks (which in the above case was tied to social capital), service delivery and state legitimacy could be investigated deeply through the central service of the railways. While the railway service provided an initial point of entry into the discussion of state legitimacy and its articulations in the area, it soon became evident that a number of other services (especially those associated with land) could explain in greater detail how both the state and state legitimacy was differently articulated by diverse communities within the same village. Selecting Inguru Oya gave us access to looking at how both Sinhalese and Up-Country Tamils articulate the state and state legitimacy.

Mannar

A number of factors framed the decision to choose Mannar as one of the field sites for this project. Key among these was the fact that Mannar was included in SLRC Phase I, which found that people in Mannar report least satisfaction with both the central government and the Northern Provincial Council in comparison to the other sites in which the study was conducted. Mannar is also located in the north of the country, which had been in a state of civil war for nearly three decades. Therefore, the question of legitimacy was placed in a context of transition from war to the absence of it. Our initial approach to Mannar was through the Konthapiddy *paadu*

case, an incident centered on a disagreement between two fishing communities over rights and access to land, and was embedded in narratives about displacement, return and resettlement. While the Konthapiddy case itself had lost salience in Mannar, much of the discourse that drew us to the case in Phase I continued to be relevant to our exploration into the concept of legitimacy. Our research focused mainly on Mannar Island, and therefore explored issues surrounding fishing (which is one of the main occupations in Mannar, and especially on the Island). However, our conversations also led to other contemporary issues like housing and resettlement, which significantly enriched our understanding of how the state and state legitimacy are articulated in Mannar.

Annex 2: The data collection process

Primary data collection was planned and implemented in multiple phases (see Annex 3 for details on interviews conducted in each location). The formulation of research questions and case selection was informed by key person interviews. The 'key persons' that were approached by the research team included academics, development workers, social workers, researchers and activists that had a deep understanding and experience working in each of the three locations, as well as those who could offer fine-grained analyses of local politics and broader political and economic dynamics of each location in relation to the national and international politics. This initial round of interviews helped ground the broader research question and sub-research questions in each context; it was through this process that the research team came to the realization that the selected sites were in fact the best to explore the questions outlined above. The first phase of data collection took place from December 2017 to February 2018.

Primary data collection in each location was conducted in multiple waves from February to September 2018. Initially, key person interviews were carried out in Rajanganaya, Nawalapitiya and Mannar. The key persons were embedded in local politics and government officials were known to possess in-depth understandings of the historical and current political, economic, social and ideological landscapes of each site. The second and subsequent waves of data collection focused broadly on state agents, citizens and state-like bodies and representatives who are not the 'state' but middlemen, brokers, and NGO functionaries. It was important to look at NGO and other social actors implicated in the project of rule in order to examine how the boundary marking off the state is drawn. Our selection of interview respondents is informed by the Foucauldian (Foucault, 2009) idea that governance extends well beyond state or government, and ties together with a number of different social agents and bodies (including citizens). One set of questions we asked them are broadly in the remit of formal mechanisms of service delivery, the nature of interactions when services are accessed and/or received (negotiations within, incentive structure, grievance mechanisms, patronage, etc.), the range of actors (with emphasis on intermediaries and brokers) in the processes on accessing and/or receiving services. Another set of questions focused on everyday issues concerning people's livelihoods, financial situation and general wellbeing and socioeconomic status in relation to others. In asking these questions, we probed on people's expectations and ideas about

'delivery' and who should bear responsibility for these everyday concerns and obstacles. A third and last set of questions focused more broadly on their imagination of the 'state', 'leadership/leader', 'culture', and 'citizen' by engaging the respondents on salient issues in their own environment and context such as recent political changes, development projects, and elections. We paid special attention to 'hearing' and 'reading' the ideological dimension of the state in all our interviews. In other words, we probed how 'officialdom' was enacted, how agents of power (including brokers and intermediaries) acted and how they spoke when conveying authority or legitimacy. We also explored local stories about good and bad experiences with officials, corrupt and 'decent' people, and about what the state ought to do, and what it does. All of these are mechanisms, encounters and practices that represent the state to its citizens and also shape citizens' expectations of the state. We utilise them, later on in this paper, to analyse the state as an ideologically shaped artifact, imagined and constructed through multiple forms of representations, and how different forms and sites of representations create contradictory ideas of and expectations from the state rather than coalescing in a coherent manner (see Annex 4 for the questionnaire guide that was used in the field sites).

Annex 3: Key person interviews, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions in each location

		Stakeholders		Method
NAWALAPITIYA	**State officials**	DS Office/decentralisation, administrative	Divisional Secretary	KII
			Estate Infrastructure and Community Development Officer	KII
			Economic Development Officers	KII
			Foreign employment development officer	KII
		Pasbage Korale Pradeshiya Sabha/Devolution	Chairman	KII
			Secretary	KII
			Technical Officer	KII
		Nawalapitya Urban Council/ Devolution	Administrative Officer	KII
	Non-state actors	Party organisers	United National Party, oganiser, Inguru Oya	IDI
			Sri Lanka Freedom Party, organiser, Nawalapitiya	IDI
		Citizens	Sinhala villagers	IDI, FGDs
			Estate Tamils in abandoned estates	IDI, FGDs
			Estate Tamils in semi-abandoned estates	IDI, FGDs

		Stakeholders		Method
RAJANGANAYA	**State officials**	DS Office / decentralisation, administrative	Divisional Secretary	KII
			Economic Development Officers	FGD
			Women Development Officers	FGD
			Land Officer	KII
		Irrigation Department - Central Government	Chief engineer	KII
			Engineering Officers	KII
		Agriculture Department - Central Government	Officers at Rajanganaya	KII
		Rajanganaya Project Office	Resident Project Manager	KII
			Official attached to Project Office	KII
	Non-state actors	Citizens	Farmers	IDI
			Fishermen	KII
			School teachers	KII
		Farmer Cooperatives	Presidents of farmer cooperatives	KII
			President of Association of Farmer Cooperatives	KII
		Businessmen	Businessmen at the Thambuththegama Economic Centre	KII
		Academics	Lecturer, Department of Fine Arts, University of Kelaniya	KII
			National Coordinator, Movement for Land and Agrarian Reforms	KII

	Stakeholders		Method
MANNAR — State officials	District Secretariat	Government Agent, Mannar (Retired)	IDI
		Investigative Officer	IDI
	Divisional Secretariat	Divisional Secretary, Manthei West (Retired)	KII
		Administrative Officer, Nanattan Divisional Secretariat	KII
		Social Services Officer	KII
		Grama Niladhari (Retired)	KII
		Grama Niladhari	KII
	Mannar Urban Council	Administrative Officer	KII
		Urban Council Officer	KII
	Mannar Pradeshiya Sabha	Ex- Council Member, Mannar Pradeshiya Sabha	KII
	Fisheries Department	Assistant Director, Mannar	KII
		Deputy Assistant Director, Mannar	KII
MANNAR — Non-state actors	Fishermen's Co-operative Society	President of Fishermen's Co-operative Society	IDI
		Manager of Fishermen's Co-operative Society	IDI
		Members of Fishermen's Co-operative Society	IDIs, FGDs
	Village leaders	Church Council Members	KII
		Women's Rural Development Society Members	KII
		Religious leaders	KII
		Party organisers	KII
		School principals	IDI
	NGO representatives	Activists	IDI
		Director, ZOA, Mannar	IDIs
	Citizens	Villagers	IDIs, FGDs

Annex 4: Questionnaire guide

Nawalapitiya FGD guideline

1. Objective of the guideline:
   a. To identify the ways and which people (Sinhalese and Estate Tamils) engage with the state (national level)
      i. Nature of the engagement (**ideological, material**) and how it differs between the two ethnic groups
   b. To identify the ways in which people (Sinhalese and Estate Tamils) engage with the Sub-National level
      i. Nature of the engagement (**use of mediators**) and how it differs between the two ethnic groups

2. The village:
   a. What is the history of this village?
   b. What is your history in this village?
   c. What is the importance/specialty of this village?
   d. What are the preferable things in this village to you?
   e. What are the things in this village that you do not prefer you?
   f. What are the economic activities villagers are engaged in?
   g. How have the economic activities changed over time?

3. Nature of the state:
   a. What is your opinion on following kinds of governments in governing the country? (Ask each and the reason for their answer)
      i. Strong leader who is not influenced by the Parliament
      ii. Military running the country
      iii. People with specialised knowledge (Educated People)
      iv. Democratic government
   b. Some people say that corruption is a bad thing and some say that it is fine as long as the country is developed... what you think about this?
   c. What is your opinion on capital punishment?
   d. Do you think that Buddhism should be given a prominent place in the constitution or not? Explain.
   e. There are instance in which the state uses violence to control protest. Some people agree with that since protests cause public disturbance, while others say that it the right of those protesters. What do you think?

4 Citizenship:
- a   Have you done any of the followings: Signing a petition, Joining in boycotts, Attending peaceful demonstrations, Joining strikes or any other protest (Please explain: Who led it, What was it about, What was the result)
- b   Do you think that casting your vote is important? If yes, why?

5 Central government services:
- a   In what ways are the railway services important to you?
- b   How did the recent railway strike influence your life?
- c   What kind of improvements do you think are needed to provide better services to the people in your village?
- d   What are the other crucial services for your village? (Wildlife)
- e   Which government institutions own/owned land in the village (CGR, forestry, plantation)?

6 Welfare state:
- a   Do you think state is responsible for:
  - i   Providing jobs (explain why)
  - ii   Samurdhi (explain why)
  - iii   Free Education (explain why)
  - iv   Free health (explain why)

7 Village and the politicians:
- a   Who are the national level politicians who have visited the village? *Explain the reason for coming and how you experience it*? **What notable things have they done (like assaulting the UNP politician story we came across previously)?**
- b   Who are the provincial level politicians who have visited the village? *Explain the reason for coming and how you experience it*? **What notable things have they done (like assaulting the UNP politician story we came across previously)?**
- c   Who are the Local level politicians who have visited the village? *Explain the reason for coming and how you experience it*? **What notable things have they done (like assaulting the UNP politician story we came across previously)?**
- d   How important is for politicians to help their supporters after an electoral win?

8 Subnational institutions:
- a   DS
  - i   What kind of the services do you receive from the DS?
  - ii   Whose help do you obtain to get to those services (mediators)?
  - iii   How efficient is service delivery?
  - iv   What are the difficulties in approaching the services provided by the DS?
- b   PS:
  - i   What kind of the services do you receive from the PS?
  - ii   Whose help do you obtain to get to those services (mediators)?
  - iii   How efficient is service delivery?
  - iv   What are the difficulties in approaching the services provided by the PS?
- c   Who are more trust worthy? Why?
  - i   Local politicians,
  - ii   National politicians,
  - iii   Bureaucrats

9 Features of the head of the state:
- a   What do you think?
  - i   It is important that the head of the state is having children, so that we know that he/she is cares about the future of the children of the country
  - ii   It is important that the head of the state is Sinhalese since the majority of the country is Sinhalese
  - iii   It is important that the head of the state is Sinhalese since the majority of the country is Buddhist
  - iv   It is important that the head of the state had been a farmer since Sri Lanka is an agricultural state
  - v   It is important that the head of the state had been a rough [tough/strong] person otherwise it is difficulty govern a country
  - vi   According to your opinion, what should be the qualities of a political leader?
  - vii   What do you think about the capability of this government to rule the country?

Rajanganaya interview guidelines

1 Meetings and possibly an FGD (or interviews, depending on the situation), with fisheries cooperatives in Rajanganaya.
   a Where cold-water fishermen/women (if any) encounter the state, and in what ways?
   b What are the services related to fisheries in Rajanganaya?
   c How (and through whom - institution or individual) do they access these services?
   d What are the issues/challenges that are associated with services related to fisheries, and the fisheries sector in general?
   e How do fishermen compare state services towards fisheries to services towards agriculture?
   f Narratives of everyday lives of fisher folk and we can also test some of the questions from the WVS.
   g Need to ask them questions about context: type of fisheries, history of fisheries, political involvement/patronage, where they came from, caste dimension (?), how they integrate with the rest of the community, what did they consider *their* community, land ownership, wealth/income, education, health status, migration, issues related to violence, what the women in their communities do, etc. We should also try and speak with women from fisher communities to get an idea about their livelihoods, everyday experiences, violence, etc.

2 Meeting with *maranadhara samithi* of selected 'tracks'
   a What they do for a living?
   b What are the services related to their livelihoods? Who provides them?
   c How (and through what institution or individual) do they access these services?
   d What or whom do they turn to or consult when they are faced with an issue related to livelihoods, and needs to get it resolved?
   e Why do they turn to this institution or the person (questions about confidence)?
   f What are their views on the current financial situation of the household?
   g What they consider as priority goals for Sri Lanka in the next ten years? Why?
   h What they consider as most serious problems for Rajanganaya? Why?
   i How should resolve these problems? Who *can* resolve these problems?

   j Out of all government/state institutions, which do they have the most or least confidence in? Why?
   k Did they vote in the past local government election? Why did they vote? What are their views about the outcome of the election?
   l Do they think that elections are an important factor in whether or not this country develops economically? Why or why not?
   m What has changed in their lives from 10 years ago? And how do they feel about these changes?
   n Where do you see yourself/family in 10 years?
   o Hopes for their families/children?

3 Meetings at the DS office, potentially with officers in the Samurdhi division, Development, Women's Desk, Land, etc.
   a What are the services delivered by the DS office?
   b How is Rajanganaya administratively organised (GNs, tracks, etc.) and how do these multiple boundaries of the area (GN - administrative, tracks - irrigation) shape service delivery to the people?
   c Which areas are served better than others?
   d Poverty rates, and the spatial distribution of poverty
   e Education: where are the schools located, how many students, up to which grade, facilities, number of teachers, etc.
   f Health: where are the clinics and/or hospitals located? Where do people go for surgeries, child birth, etc.? Prevalence of malnutrition, anemia, CKDu (kidney disease), NCDs, other diseases/conditions that are unique to the Rajanganaya area, and why they are unique.
   g Livelihoods: type of livelihoods, do they have a spatial pattern, migration from Rajanganaya (within country and overseas), income levels, debt patterns, credit facilities, supply-chains, producer groups, market landscape, etc.
   h NGO presence and what they do in Rajanganaya
   i Other issues: alcoholism? Suicides?
   j What do the officers talk about as "women's issues", or "family problems" why? Patterns, prevalence, their explanations, etc.
   k The officers' views of the 2020/2030 development plans
   l Officers' plans for Rajanganaya, and how they plan to implement these plans
   m How the officers engage with the communities to find out about issues, and address them, etc.

4 Meetings with businessmen in the Thambuttegama area who serve as middlemen for the produce in Rajanganaya.

a   What type of business

b   From where do they source goods

c   Where are the goods sold

d   What is the market for the goods

e   Are they responsible for creating the market? If so, how do they go about it?

f   General views on the business climate in the Thambuttegama area, and its relation to Rajanganaya

g   Other business hubs they trade with - Anuradhapura, Kurunegala, other? How do they build ties with businesses in these hubs?

h   How they get things done - permits, licenses, tenders, etc.?

i   Who do they associate for business?

j   Who do they associate socially, and what is the nature of these relationships?

ODI Mannar interview guidelines

1 Personal
  a Background of respondent/s
  b How do they obtain these services for you?
  c What are the needs for which you approach the state (related to livelihood, housing, food, education etc.)?
  d Who provides these services to you? Describe your relationship with them.
  e What interactions do you have with state institutions in your day-today life? Which institutions?
  f How satisfied are you with the services you receive from these institutions?
2 Village
  a What religious/caste/class/occupation groups are present here, in what numbers?
  b What are the politics among these groups?
  c What is the main political party here? Who are the politicians?
  d What is the relationship between government officials and the village? (GS, DOs)
3 Occupation
  a What is the structure of/hierarchy in your occupation?
  b What are the religious/caste/class dynamics within this occupation?
  c What village/DS/district/stet level structures are in place to support those involved in this occupation?
  d What are the services you need to continue this occupation?
  e Who do you approach to obtain these services? What is your relationship to them? How satisfied are your with the services you obtain through them?
  f Who are the government officials connected to this occupation? What is your relationship to them? How satisfied are you with their service?
4 Religion
  a How important is religion to you? Why?
  b How important is religion in your village? Why?
  c What role does religion/ do religious leaders play in terms of obtaining services for the people?
5 Politics
  a How important is politics to you? Why?
  b How important is politics to your village? Why?
  c What role do politicians play in terms of obtaining services for the people?

  i Who are these politicians?
  ii Who benefits from these services?

Cover photo: Woman turns on tap for clean water, Sri Lanka. Photo: Simone D. McCourtie/World Bank. (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)