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Source: *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Nov., 2002), pp. 981-1002

Published by: [Wiley](#) on behalf of the [American Anthropological Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3805165>

Accessed: 17/01/2014 11:14

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spatializing states: toward an ethnography of neoliberal governmentality

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In this exploratory article, we ask how states come to be understood as entities with particular spatial characteristics, and how changing relations between practices of government and national territories may be challenging long-established modes of state spatiality. In the first part of this article, we seek to identify two principles that are key to state spatialization: verticality (the state is “above” society) and encompassment (the state “encompasses” its localities). We use ethnographic evidence from a maternal health project in India to illustrate our argument that perceptions of verticality and encompassment are produced through routine bureaucratic practices. In the second part, we develop a concept of transnational governmentality as a way of grasping how new practices of government and new forms of “grassroots” politics may call into question the principles of verticality and encompassment that have long helped to legitimate and naturalize states’ authority over “the local.” [states, space, governmentality, globalization, neoliberalism, India, Africa]

Recent years have seen a new level of anthropological concern with the modern state. In part, the new interest in the state arises from a recognition of the central role that states play in shaping “local communities” that have historically constituted the objects of anthropological inquiry; in part, it reflects a new determination to bring an ethnographic gaze to bear on the cultural practices of states themselves. An important theme running through the new literature has been that states are not simply functional bureaucratic apparatuses, but powerful sites of symbolic and cultural production that are themselves always culturally represented and understood in particular ways. It is here that it becomes possible to speak of states, and not only nations (Anderson 1991), as “imagined”—that is, as constructed entities that are conceptualized and made socially effective through particular imaginative and symbolic devices that require study (Bayart 1993; Bernal 1997; Cohn 1996; Comaroff 1998; Coronil 1997; Corrigan and Sayer 1985; cf. Fallers 1971; Geertz 1980; Joseph and Nugent 1994; Nugent 1997; Scott 1998; Taussig 1996).

In this article, our contribution to this literature is twofold. First, we argue that discussions of the imagination of the state have not attended adequately to the ways in which states are spatialized.¹ How is it that people come to experience the state as an entity with certain spatial characteristics and properties? Through what images, metaphors, and representational practices does the state come to be understood as a concrete, overarching, spatially encompassing reality? Through specific sets of metaphors

and practices, states represent themselves as reified entities with particular *spatial* properties (specifically, what we will describe as properties of “vertical encompassment”).² By doing so, they help to secure their legitimacy, to naturalize their authority, and to represent themselves as superior to, and encompassing of, other institutions and centers of power. We refer to the operation of these metaphors and practices as “the spatialization of the state.” In the first part of this article, we identify some key methods through which states achieve this spatialization and seek to show, via an ethnographic example, that mundane bureaucratic state practices are integral to such achievements.

In the second part of the article, we build on this discussion by showing its relevance to the question of globalization. We argue that an increasingly transnational political economy today poses new challenges to familiar forms of state spatialization. After developing a concept of transnational governmentality, we discuss the relation between weak African states and an emerging network of international organizations and transnational nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and show how these developments confound conventional understandings of state spatiality. We suggest that attention to the changing forms of state spatialization might enrich the anthropology of the state and clarify certain aspects of the contemporary politics of globalization.

part one: the spatialized state

conceptual issues

Two images come together in popular and academic discourses on the state: those of *verticality* and *encompassment*. *Verticality* refers to the central and pervasive idea of the state as an institution somehow “above” civil society, community, and family. Thus, state planning is inherently “top down” and state actions are efforts to manipulate and plan “from above,” while “the grassroots” contrasts with the state precisely in that it is “below,” closer to the ground, more authentic, and more “rooted.” The second image is that of *encompassment*: Here the state (conceptually fused with the nation) is located within an ever widening series of circles that begins with family and local community and ends with the system of nation-states.³ This is a profoundly consequential understanding of scale, one in which the locality is encompassed by the region, the region by the nation-state, and the nation-state by the international community.⁴ These two metaphors work together to produce a taken-for-granted spatial and scalar image of a state that both sits above and contains its localities, regions, and communities.

Such images of state vertical encompassment are evident, for instance, in scholarly discussions of so-called state–society relations, a topic that has dominated recent discussions of the state in political science and political theory. The idea of “civil society” has been embraced both by neoliberal advocates of structural adjustment in Africa and India and, for different reasons, by many of their strongest critics (cf. Ferguson in press). But whatever else might be said about the opposition between state and civil society, it is evident that it normally brings with it a quite specific, if often unacknowledged, image of vertical encompassment, one in which the state sits somehow “above” an “on the ground” entity called “society.”⁵ The state, of course, has long been conceived in the West, through an unacknowledged “transcoding” of the body politic with the organismic human body (Stallybrass and White 1986), as possessing such “higher” functions as reason, control, and regulation, as against the irrationality, passions, and uncontrollable appetites of the lower regions of society.⁶ It

is therefore unsurprising that where Western political theory has opposed civil society to the state, it has often been as a kind of buffer between the low and the high, an imagined middle zone of contact or mediation between the citizen, the family, or the community, on the one hand, and the state, on the other.⁷ For Hegel (to take one foundational instance), the state was literally “mind objectified” (1942:156), and civil society precisely the intermediary between the foundational natural particularity of the family and the ideal universality of the state. The state was therefore “higher” than civil society (ethically as well as politically) and also encompassed it.⁸

Few scholars today, of course, would endorse Hegel’s conception of the state bureaucracy as the embodiment of society’s highest collective ideals, and feminist criticism has long since laid bare the maneuvers through which the separation of a public, political “society” from a private, personal “family” naturalized patriarchal domination (e.g., Ferguson 1984; Pateman 1988; Rosaldo 1980; Yanagisako and Collier 1987). But the old topographic metaphor that allowed civil society to appear as a zone of mediation between an “up there” state and an “on the ground” community continues to be omnipresent and surprisingly resistant to critical scrutiny. Participants in recent debates on the public sphere (e.g., Calhoun 1992) and civil society (Chatterjee 1990; Cohen and Arato 1992; Harbeson et al. 1994; Taylor 1990) advance diverse political and theoretical positions; but they largely share a commonsense topography within which the object of their theorizing lies in some sense “between” the state and the communities, interest groups, and lifeworlds that states must govern.

An imagined topography of stacked, vertical levels also structures many taken-for-granted images of political struggle, which are readily imagined as coming “from below,” as “grounded” in rooted and authentic lives, experiences, and communities. The state itself, meanwhile, can be imagined as reaching down into communities, intervening, in a “top down” manner, to manipulate or plan society. Civil society, in this vertical topography, appears as the middle latitude, the zone of contact between the “up there” state and the “on the ground” people, snug in their communities. Whether this contact zone is conceived as the domain of pressure groups and pluralist politics (as in liberal political theory) or of class struggle in a war of position (as in Gramscian Marxism), the vertical topography of power has been an enormously consequential one.

Picturing the state’s relation to society through the image of vertical encompassment fuses in a single, powerful image a number of analytically distinct propositions. Is the state’s encompassing height a matter of superior rank in a political hierarchy? Of spatial scale? Abstraction? Generality of knowledge and interest? Distance from nature? The confusion engendered by bundling these distinct propositions together is in fact productive, in the Foucauldian sense, in that it constructs a commonsense state that simply *is* “up there” somewhere, operating at a “higher level.” The point is not that this picture of the “up there” state is false (still less that there is no such thing as political hierarchy, generality of interest, etc.), but that it is constructed; the task is not to denounce a false ideology, but to draw attention to the social and imaginative processes through which state verticality is made effective and authoritative.

Images of state vertical encompassment are influential not only because of their impact on how scholars, journalists, officials, activists, and citizens imagine and inhabit states, but because they come to be embedded in the routinized practices of state bureaucracies. The metaphors through which states are imagined are important, and scholarship in this area has recently made great strides.⁹ But the understanding of the social practices through which these images are made effective and are experienced is less developed. This relative inattention to state practices seems peculiar, because states in fact invest a good deal of effort in developing procedures and practices

to ensure that they are imagined in some ways rather than others (Scott 1998). They seem to recognize that a host of mundane rituals and procedures are required to animate and naturalize metaphors if states are to succeed in being imagined as both higher than, and encompassing of, society.

The importance of the mundane rituals and routines of state spatialization is easily recognized where the regulation and surveillance of the borders of nation-states is concerned. But the policing of the border is intimately tied to the policing of Main Street in that they are acts that represent the repressive power of the state as both extensive with the territorial boundaries of the nation and intensively permeating every square inch of that territory, respectively.¹⁰ There is more to state spatialization, though, than policing or repression. State benevolence, no less than coercion, must also make its spatial rounds, as is clear, for instance, in the ritual tours of U.S. presidents who drop from the sky in helicopters to dispense aid in the wake of natural disasters.

Although such spectacular examples make convenient illustrations, it may be more important to look at the less dramatic, multiple, mundane domains of bureaucratic practice by which states reproduce spatial orders and scalar hierarchies.¹¹ Any attempt to understand state spatialization, therefore, must simultaneously attend to theoretical understandings and bureaucratic embodiment. The force of metaphors of verticality and encompassment results both from the fact that they are embedded in the everyday practices of state institutions and from the fact that the routine operation of state institutions *produces* spatial and scalar hierarchies.

In the section that follows, we explore this relation between spatial and statist orders by showing how they produce each other.¹² Because state practices are complicated with spatial orders and metaphors, an analysis of the imaginary of the state must include not only explicit discursive representations of the state, but also implicit, unmarked, signifying practices. These mundane practices often slip below the threshold of discursivity but profoundly alter how bodies are oriented, how lives are lived, and how subjects are formed. Such a practice-oriented conception calls for an ethnographic approach. We do not attempt to provide a full ethnographic treatment here because this article is principally concerned to identify a research program rather than to present the results of one. But it may be helpful to provide a brief illustration of how an ethnographic view of mundane state practices can illuminate the mechanics of state spatialization.

rituals and representations of the spatialization of state power in India

The Government of India in 1975 launched the Integrated Child Development Services program (ICDS), popularly known as the Anganwadi Program, soon after the formulation of the National Policy for Children. It was spurred by awareness that India exhibited some of the world's highest rates of infant mortality, morbidity, and malnutrition, and extremely high rates of maternal mortality during birth. The goal of the Anganwadi Program was to provide a package of well-integrated services consisting of supplementary nutrition for pregnant women and young children as well as education, immunizations, and preventive medicine for poor and lower-caste children. The Anganwadi program well illustrates the concern with the welfare of the population that Foucault identifies as the central aspect of "governmentality" in the modern world.¹³

The structure of command of the ICDS bureaucracy at the District level followed a typical pyramid shape. The District Program Officer (DPO) headed the office. Reporting to him were the two Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) who headed the programs at the Block level.¹⁴ The CDPOs supervised an office consisting of clerical staff and a driver, and also supervised the four Supervisors (*Mukhya Sevikas*)

who, in turn, looked after the 86 Anganwadi Workers and an equal number of Helpers in the Block.¹⁵ The pyramid-shaped hierarchy of the program was made visible to its employees through standard bureaucratic representational devices like organizational charts.¹⁶ But, more importantly, hierarchy was realized through a panoply of practices of spatial encompassment, some examples of which are given below.

The Anganwadi Program operated through Anganwadis or Centers, run by a Worker and her Helper from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., six days of the week. Running the center involved taking care of as many as 45 children, teaching them, cooking food for their midday meal, supervising their medical care, and maintaining the records. In Mandi, the Block from which this data has been collected, all the Helpers, Anganwadi Workers, and Supervisors as well as the CDPO, were women; the rest of the office staff were men.¹⁷

Exploring this project in the context of an analysis of state spatiality immediately gives rise to several questions: How was the ICDS program spatialized? By what procedures and techniques of bureaucratic rationality did state verticality and encompassment become real and tangible? How were certain people and populations fixed in place, made "local," whereas others higher up could be seen to be more mobile, more encompassing? Village-level state workers, in particular, represented an interesting paradox. On the one hand, their presence in the village made it more difficult to sustain the image of the state standing *above* civil society and the family; on the other hand, as marginal members of the state apparatus, they provided a concrete example to other villagers of the verticality and encompassment of the state. Anganwadi Workers, perhaps even more than other villagers, experienced the state as an organization "above them" that was concerned primarily with surveillance and regulation, even as they themselves served as agents of that surveillance.

In order to contextualize the ethnographic examples that follow, we will begin with a short description of the ICDS office in Mandi.¹⁸ When first looking for the ICDS office, the ethnographer (Gupta) walked right past it because the directions given had been keyed to a blue UNICEF jeep that served as the unofficial mascot for the program. He could not locate the office because the jeep was missing, and unlike other government offices that displayed large signs, there was no outward indication that an office existed in that building. It was a nondescript space, consisting of a small driveway barely large enough for a vehicle, and a narrow flight of stairs to one side. The stairs led to a terrace, opening up to three rooms, the furthest of which belonged to the dynamic and articulate CDPO of Mandi Block, Asha Agarwal. Sitting behind a fairly large desk in a sparsely furnished and decorated room, she had a buzzer on her desk, which she pressed whenever she needed to get the attention of the peon.

By doing fieldwork in the ICDS office, it was possible to see how encompassment came to be actually instantiated in the everyday practices of the program. The most important mechanism was that of the surprise inspection. Anganwadi Workers were positioned at the bottom of a bureaucratic hierarchy in which the ritual of surveillance and regulation as an instrument of control was central. They were subject to surprise inspections by a host of visiting superior officers. One of the officers' primary concerns was to monitor the degree to which the Anganwadi Workers collected data, especially information about women and children who were the targets of the ICDS program. In this sense, the object of the officers' surveillance was the surveillance exercised by the Anganwadi Worker on "their" populations. The logic of this kind of recursive regulation cannot be explained in functional terms because most of this activity was irrelevant to the needs of the state. Rather, what such rituals of surveillance actually accomplished was to *represent* and to *embody* state hierarchy and encompassment.

It was possible to accompany Asha Agarwal on a couple of inspections. She had carefully planned the itinerary to include Anganwadi centers that had records of good performance. But the fact that these were surprise visits meant that they could not serve as unproblematic public relations exercises. The first trip was on a cold and overcast day in February 1992, soon after the office had received a fresh disbursement of funds for purchasing gasoline for the jeep.

The first village was Kalanda. There were two Anganwadis in Kalanda that had been operating since 1985, when the ICDS project began in Mandi Block. The village was most unusual for the well-maintained quality of its inner roads and the complete absence of sewage water and garbage on the streets. Many men in the village were masons, returnees from the Gulf, who had volunteered their labor to lay the roads and the drains.

The first inspection was of an Anganwadi housed in a dark room that served as the storage area for a farm family. A huge pile of lentils occupied half the room, completely covering one wall and a sizeable proportion of the floor space. The local Anganwadi Worker, a pleasant and energetic woman, quickly sent the Helper to round up additional children to add to the 14 who were already there. Asha asked the children to count and to recite the alphabet, which they did with practiced ease. One child in particular, who was a little older than the rest, had written down numbers all the way to 100 on his slate and had also memorized all the poems and songs that the children had been taught. During the visit, a number of children came in, looking washed and scrubbed. Asha told me that the teacher only had a high school degree, but seemed to be doing a good job with the children. She scolded the Anganwadi Worker for not removing the charts, which functioned as teaching aids, from the wall where the lentils had been piled. "It is your job to look after the charts," she told her. "When you knew that the crop was going to be stored there, why didn't you remove the charts beforehand?" After inspecting the Attendance Registers and writing a brief report in the Inspection Register, which noted when the inspection took place, how many children were there, and what the children had demonstrated, Asha indicated that it was time to leave the Center and move on to the second one.

The second Center in Kalanda operated on the porch of a house. But the Anganwadi Worker was nowhere to be seen. There was only a handful of very young children present. The Helper claimed not to know the whereabouts of the Anganwadi Worker. Asha and the Supervisor attempted to coax some of the children to stand and recite the number table or to identify objects on an alphabet chart. None of them complied. It was hard to tell whether this was out of fear of the visitors or because of their unfamiliarity with the task. Asha left a note in the Inspection Register demanding that the Anganwadi Worker produce an explanation within 24 hours as to why she was missing from her station. Just as Asha's party was headed back to the jeep, the Anganwadi Worker arrived. She apologized profusely and blamed her delay on the fact that the bus she was traveling on had broken down. Asha chastized her in no uncertain terms. Even if her bus had broken down, she said, this was no excuse for reaching the Center at 11:15 a.m. instead of 9:00 a.m. The Anganwadi Worker lamented her fate, saying that it was her bad luck that the one day when she started late was the day when Asha happened to visit. Asha noted wryly how much better the center that was operated by the woman who was only "high school pass" seemed compared to the second one, despite the fact that the second Anganwadi Worker had a Master's degree. She appeared surprised at this because, in the past, she had found that the better-educated teacher had done a very good job.

One of the chief functions of Anganwadi Workers, and by far their most time-consuming activity, consisted of documenting and generating statistics. A plethora of registers recorded different aspects of the Anganwadi's functioning: For example, an *Attendance Register* noted such things as how many children were in a Center each day, and who they were—their names, fathers' names, and castes. A *Nutrition Register* recorded how much food and fuel was consumed; a third register was used to record the birth dates of each child born in the village, its parents' names, ages, and castes. Similar records were kept of all deaths. The name, age, and caste of each pregnant woman and a record of the outcome of the pregnancy were recorded in another register. A *Travel Log* maintained a record of when and why an Anganwadi Worker was missing from a Center. An *Inspection Register* was maintained in which Supervisors, the CDPO, and other visitors recorded their impressions about the functioning of the Anganwadi. Registers were devices for self-monitoring—technologies of self-discipline that were simultaneously portfolios for recording the effectiveness of the care of the population—on the one hand, and for enabling the surveillance and control of the Workers, on the other.¹⁹

Surprise inspections and registers were two devices by which verticality and encompassment were practiced. It was not only that superior officers at “higher” levels traveled in jeeps, thereby establishing their control over the geographical space of the block, district, and state (whatever their jurisdiction happened to be), it was also that they traveled in order to conduct inspections, to discipline, reward, encourage, and punish. Registers helped them do just that because registers enabled them to check their observations against what had been noted. For example, Asha complained that Workers who ran Anganwadi Centers in their homes often brought in additional children when they saw the dust of the approaching jeep in the distance. Thus, by the time the CDPO actually reached the Center, there were many children there even if the Anganwadi had not been operating; however, she managed to catch the Worker's “deception” in such cases by checking the names of the children present against the names (if any) entered in the Attendance Register. The CDPO's ability to swoop down on the space of the Anganwadi Worker was thus mediated by the semiotic of dust, a smoke signal delivered by that very device—the jeep—that enabled her to suddenly enter the professional space of the local Anganwadi Worker.

The surprise inspection was a ritual of control that established and demonstrated hierarchy, but the mode of conducting the inspection, the sudden swooping “down” into the geographical space of the Anganwadi Worker, was a demonstration of the inequality of spaces. Anganwadi Workers went to the main ICDS office at a prescribed time each month; their ability to enter the space of the superior officer was limited and circumscribed, a sharp contrast to the surprise inspection. The ability to transgress space (the prerogative of “higher” officers) was also a device of encompassment, as it was their position in the vertical hierarchy that gave officers the privilege of a particular kind of spatial mobility, a mobility whose function and goal was to regulate and discipline.

The conjunction of hierarchy with ever wider circuits of movement finds a different kind of expression in the system of transfers, which are a major aspect of the lives of state employees in India. Government servants are supposed to be transferred every three years; in practice, this period is even shorter. What is interesting for the purposes of thinking about the spatialization of the state is the circumference of what Benedict Anderson (1991) has called “bureaucratic pilgrimages.” The “higher up” officials are, the broader the geographical range of their peregrinations, and the more encompassing their optics on the domain of state activity and its relation to what is merely

“local.” Once again, we find verticality and encompassment to be intimately tied to one another.

One of the chief mechanisms by which officials “higher up” in the bureaucracy came to embody the higher reaches of the state (with its connotation of greater vision; a better sense of the general good; and national, as opposed to local, interest) was by positioning “lower-level” workers, “local” politicians, and “local” villagers as people who belonged to, and articulated the interests of, particular communities, with limited generalizability across geographical areas, or across class and caste divisions. How did such localization work in practice? By what mechanisms were certain people fixed in space as local people with local concerns while others came to be seen, and to see themselves, as concerned with “larger” issues that traversed geographical and political space? Some concrete examples of localization in the ICDS program might help to make this dynamic visible.

By its very etymology—the word *angan* means “courtyard,” the space in north Indian village homes where women spend most of their time—the Anganwadi program emphasized its relation to a confined, encircled, and domestic space. Contrary to the image conjured by this association, Anganwadi Centers were in fact usually run in public spaces, either porches of homes or, when available, in community centers. It was one of the expectations of the ICDS that these spaces for the Anganwadis would be donated by the community. Thus, there was no provision for rents in the ICDS budget. Apart from reducing the cost of administering the program, such a requirement was intended to provide the community with a stake in the operation of the Anganwadis and was, most likely, influenced by the design of international and bilateral agencies such as UNICEF, USAID, and DANIDA (Danish International Development Assistance). According to development orthodoxy, one of the lessons learned from the high failure rate of development projects in the past is that they lacked participation by the local community. Hence, ICDS had a “slot” for community participation, in the form of the provision of space. This created a great deal of difficulty for Anganwadi Workers and was one of their chief complaints, as free space was scarce and often reclaimed for wedding parties and storage of the harvest.

Is it surprising that the agents of localization were precisely those entities—the Indian state and multilateral aid agencies—that claim for themselves geographies and interests that are national and universal? The program thus worked to create a structural and spatial location for the Anganwadi Worker as an official who was marked by her ties to locality and particularity. Localization of the Anganwadi Worker is precisely what enabled those overarching institutions to disavow the particular, and to claim to represent the “greater” good for the “larger” dominion of the nation and the world.

part two: transnational governmentality—contemporary challenges to state spatialization

governmentality and the global

In the previous section, we showed some of the means through which a state may be able to create, through mundane and unmarked practices, a powerful impression of vertical encompassment of the “local.” But such efforts by states to establish their superior spatial claims to authority do not go uncontested. This is especially true at a time when new forms of transnational connection are increasingly enabling “local” actors to challenge the state’s well-established claims to encompassment and vertical superiority in unexpected ways, as a host of worldly and well-connected

“grassroots” organizations today demonstrate. If state officials can always be counted on to invoke the national interest in ways that seek to encompass (and thereby devalue) the local, canny “grassroots” operators may trump the national ace with appeals to “world opinion” and e-mail links to the international headquarters of such formidably encompassing agents of surveillance as Amnesty International, Africa Watch, or World Vision International. The extent to which states are successful in establishing their claims to encompass the local is therefore not preordained, but is a contingent outcome of specific sociopolitical processes. And, as the precarious situation of many states in Africa today makes especially clear, the state has no automatic right to success in claiming the vertical heights of sovereignty.

In thinking about the relation between states and a range of contemporary supranational and transnational organizations that significantly overlap their traditional functions, we have found it useful to develop an idea of *transnational governmentality*, borrowing and extending the idea of “governmentality” first introduced by Michel Foucault (1991). Foucault draws attention to all the processes by which the conduct of a population is governed: by institutions and agencies, including the state; by discourses, norms, and identities; and by self-regulation, techniques for the disciplining and care of the self. Political economy as knowledge and apparatuses of security as technical means have operated on the population as a target to constitute governmentality as the dominant mode of power since the 18th century (Foucault 1991:102). Governmentality is concerned most of all with “the conduct of conduct” (Dean 1999:10), that is, with the myriad ways in which human conduct is directed by calculated means. Foucault was interested in mechanisms of government that are found within state institutions and outside them, mechanisms that in fact cut across domains that we would regard as separate: the state, civil society, the family, down to the intimate details of what we regard as personal life. Governmentality does not name a negative relationship of power, one characterized entirely by discipline and regulation; rather, the emphasis is on its productive dimension.

More recently, scholars working in this tradition have sought to refine the analysis of governmentality to deal with the shift from the Keynesian welfare state toward so-called free-market policies in Western democracies. Although this move to neoliberalism has often been understood (and variously celebrated or lamented, depending on one’s politics) as a “retreat” or “rolling back” of the state, Barry et al. stress that it has, rather, entailed a transfer of the operations of government (in Foucault’s extended sense) to nonstate entities, via “the fabrication of techniques that can produce a degree of ‘autonomization’ of entities of government from the state” (1996:11–12). The logic of the market has been extended to the operation of state functions, so that even the traditionally core institutions of government, such as post offices, schools, and police are—if not actually privatized—at least run according to an “enterprise model” (Burchell 1996). Meanwhile, the social and regulatory operations of the state are increasingly “de-statedized,” and taken over by a proliferation of “quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations” (Rose 1996:56).²⁰ But this is not a matter of less government, as the usual ideological formulations would have it. Rather, it indicates a new modality of government, which works by creating mechanisms that work “all by themselves” to bring about governmental results through the devolution of risk onto the “enterprise” or the individual (now construed as the entrepreneur of his or her own “firm”) and the “responsibilization” of subjects who are increasingly “empowered” to discipline themselves (see Barry et al. 1996; Burchell 1996; cf. Burchell et al. 1991; O’Malley 1998; Rose 1996; Rose and Miller 1992).

Such extensions of the Foucauldian concept of governmentality to neoliberalism are undoubtedly illuminating and suggestive. But they remain strikingly Eurocentric, and closely tied to the idea of the territorially sovereign nation-state as the domain for the operation of government.²¹ We propose to extend the discussion of governmentality to modes of government that are being set up on a global scale. These include not only new strategies of discipline and regulation, exemplified by the WTO and the structural adjustment programs implemented by the IMF, but also transnational alliances forged by activists and grassroots organizations and the proliferation of voluntary organizations supported by complex networks of international and transnational funding and personnel. The outsourcing of the functions of the state to NGOs and other ostensibly nonstate agencies, we argue, is a key feature, not only of the operation of national states, but of an emerging system of transnational governmentality.

The increasing salience of such processes ought to bring into question the taken-for-granted spatial and scalar frames of sovereign states. But instead of spurring a wholesale rethinking of spatial and scalar images, what we find is that received notions of verticality and encompassment have been stretched—often improbably—to adapt to the new realities. Thus, institutions of global governance such as the IMF and the WTO are commonly seen as being simply “above” national states, much as states were discussed vis-à-vis the grassroots. Similarly, the “global” is often spoken of as if it were simply a superordinate scalar level that encompasses nation-states just as nation-states were conceptualized to encompass regions, towns, and villages.

Struggles between agencies that are attempting to foster global government and their critics have made headlines first in Seattle in November and December 1999, then in Washington, D.C., in April 2000, and, more recently (September 2000), in Prague. One of the most interesting aspects of these protests, as well as of the documentary coverage and commentary about them, is the difficulty experienced by participants and observers alike in articulating the role of the national state vis-à-vis “global” agreements and “grassroots” protests. Are the institutions that promote globalization, such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO, making policy decisions that affect the lives of people all over the world without the normal mechanisms of democratic accountability, as the protestors charge? Or are these international bodies merely facilitating efforts at “good governance” proposed and enforced by national governments, as they counter? Observers and commentators struggle to make sense of this situation. Journalists note that the protestors consist of seemingly unrelated groups that are protesting for very different causes and reasons; moreover, many of the “grassroots groups” opposing globalization are themselves arguably leading examples of it: well-organized transnational organizations with offices or affiliations spread out across the world, coordinating their demonstrations over the internet, and even in real-time (during the events) by cellular phones and walkie-talkies.

The confusion evident in the understandings both of important agencies of globalization and of the activist groups that oppose them (as well as those who report on them and study them) is at least in part about how states are spatialized and what relations exist between space and government. Processes of globalization have disturbed the familiar metaphors and practices of vertical encompassment (still taken for granted by the participants in debates on globalization, including journalists and academics), and the new landscape that is emerging can be understood only through a rethinking of questions of space and scale. To accomplish such a rethinking, it will be necessary to question both commonsense assumptions about the verticality of states as well as many received ideas of “community,” “grassroots” and the “local,” laden as they are with nostalgia and the aura of authenticity.²²

In making this move, we find it useful to turn from our Indian ethnographic example, in which a relatively strong state succeeds in spatializing itself in familiar ways, to a macrological overview of Africa, where many contemporary states are, in significant ways, no longer able to exercise the powers normally associated with a sovereign nation-state, or even (in a few cases) to function at all as states in any conventional sense of the term. Such undoubtedly extreme cases will help us to decenter the state and to foreground new forms of transnational governmentality that we suggest are not unique to Africa, even if they are especially visible and important there. It should be noted that our aim is not to make a comparison between Africa and India. Rather, the discussion of the precarious situation of African states aptly illustrates one part of our argument (about the rising salience of transnational governmentality), just as the Indian material usefully illustrates another part of the argument (about the way that states secure their authority and legitimacy through unmarked spatial practices that create effects of vertical encompassment).²³

beyond vertical encompassment: transnational governmentality in Africa

Contemporary scholars of African politics continue to rely on images of vertically encompassing states, even as the empirical situations being described are becoming ever less amenable to being captured in such terms. It is clear enough that there exists a range of phenomena in contemporary Africa that cannot be understood in the old “nation-building” optic that saw postcolonial African politics as a battle between a modernizing state and primordial ethnic groups. But the dominant response to this evident fact has been a recourse to the idea of “civil society” to encompass a disparate hodgepodge of social groups and institutions that have in common only that they exist in some way outside of or beyond the state (for a critical review, see Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:1–43). Definitions of “civil society” in the state and society literature are usually broad and vague, but in practice, writers move quite quickly from definitional generalities to a much more specific vision that is restricted almost entirely to small, grassroots, voluntary organizations. This narrow usage leaves some rather important and obvious phenomena out of the picture. One is never quite sure: Is the Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa part of this “civil society”? Is John Garang’s army in Sudan part of it? Is Oxfam? What about ethnic movements that are not so much opposed to or prior to modern states, but (as recent scholars show) produced by them (see, e.g., Vail 1991; Wilmsen and McAllister 1996)? And what of international mission organizations—arguably as important a part of the African scene today as ever, but strangely relegated to the colonial past in much Africanist scholarship? Such things fit uncomfortably in the “state” versus “civil society” grid, and indeed cannot even be coherently labeled as “local,” “national” or “international” phenomena. Instead, each of these examples, like much else of interest in contemporary Africa, both embodies a significant local dynamic, and is indisputably a product and expression of powerful national, regional, and global forces.

The state, meanwhile, when apprehended empirically and ethnographically, starts itself to look suspiciously like “civil society.” This can be literally so, as when government officials moonlight by using their educational and institutional capital to start (and gain resources through) their own “grassroots” organizations. (As a Zambian informant put it, “An NGO? Oh, that’s just a bureaucrat with his own letterhead.”) More profoundly, as Timothy Mitchell has argued, the very conception of “the state” as a set of reified and disembodied structures is an *effect* of state practices themselves (1991). Instead of opposing the state to something called “society,” then, we need to

view states as themselves composed of bundles of social practices, every bit as local in their materiality and social situatedness as any other (Gupta 1995).

To break away from the conventional division into vertical analytic levels of state and society here is to go beyond the range of questions that such a division imposes (how do states rule, what relations exist—or ought to exist—between state and society, how can civil society obtain room to maneuver from the state, and so forth), and open up for view some of the transnational relations that we suggest are crucial for understanding both the putative “top” of the vertical picture (the state) and the “bottom” (“grassroots” voluntary organizations).

the state

If, as some neoliberal theorists of state and society suggest, domination is rooted in state power, then rolling back the power of the state naturally leads to greater freedom, and ultimately to “democratization.” But the argument is revealed to be fallacious if one observes that, in Africa and elsewhere, domination has long been exercised by entities other than the state. Zambia, to take an example, was originally colonized (just a little over a hundred years ago) not by any government, but by the British South Africa Company, a private multinational corporation directed by Cecil Rhodes. Equipped with its own army, and acting under the terms of a British “concession,” it was this private corporation that conquered and “pacified” the territory, setting up the system of private ownership and race privilege that became the colonial system. Today, Zambia (like most other African nations) continues to be ruled, in significant part, by transnational organizations that are not in themselves governments, but work together with powerful First World states within a global system of nation-states that Frederick Cooper has characterized as “internationalized imperialism.”²⁴

Perhaps most familiarly, international agencies such as the IMF and World Bank, together with allied banks and First World governments today often directly impose policies on African states. The name for this process in recent years has been “structural adjustment,” and it has been made possible by both the general fiscal weakness of African states and the more specific squeeze created by the debt crisis. The new assertiveness of the IMF has been, with some justification, likened to a process of “recolonization,” implying serious erosion of the sovereignty of African states (e.g., Saul 1993). It should be noted that direct impositions of policy by banks and international agencies have involved not only such broad, macroeconomic interventions as setting currency exchange rates, but also fairly detailed requirements for curtailing social spending, restructuring state bureaucracies, and so on. Rather significant and specific aspects of state policy, in other words, are, for many African countries, being directly formulated in places like New York, London, Brussels, and Washington.

As critics have pointed out, such “governance” of African economies from afar represents a kind of transfer of economic sovereignty away from African states and into the hands of the IMF. Yet, because it is African governments that remain nominally in charge, it is easy to see that they are the first to receive the blame when structural adjustment policies begin to bite. At that point, democratic elections (another “adjustment” being pressed by international donors) provide a means whereby one government can be replaced by another; but because the successor government will be locked in the same financial vice-grip as its predecessor, actual policies are unlikely to change. (Indeed, the IMF and its associated capital cartel can swiftly bring any government that tries to assert itself to its knees, as the Zambian case illustrates vividly.) In this way, policies that are in fact made and imposed by wholly unelected and unaccountable international bankers may be presented as democratically chosen

by popular assent. In this way, “democratization” ironically serves to simulate popular legitimacy for policies that are in fact made in a way that is less democratic than ever (cf. Ferguson 1995).

“the grassroots”

Civil society often appears in African Studies nowadays as a bustle of grassroots, democratic local organizations. As Jane Guyer has put it, what this ignores is “the obvious: That civil society is made up of international organizations” (1994:223). For, indeed, the local voluntary organizations in Africa, so beloved of civil society theorists, very often, on inspection, turn out to be integrally linked with national and transnational-level entities. One might think, for instance, of the myriad South African community groups that are bankrolled by USAID or European church groups (Mayekiso 1996; Mindry 1998); or of the profusion of local Christian development NGOs in Zimbabwe, which may be conceived equally well as the most local, grassroots expressions of civil society, or as parts of the vast international bureaucratic organizations that organize and sustain them (Bornstein 2001). When such organizations begin to take over the most basic functions and powers of the state, as they very significantly did, for instance, in Mozambique (Hanlon 1991), it becomes only too clear that NGOs are not as “NG” as they might wish us to believe. Indeed, the World Bank baldly refers to what they call BONGOs (bank-organized NGOs) and even GONGOs (government-organized NGOs).

That these voluntary organizations come as much from “above” (international organizations) as from “below” (local communities) is an extremely significant fact about so-called civil society in contemporary Africa. For at the same time that international organizations (through structural adjustment) are eroding the power of African states (and usurping their economic sovereignty), they are busy making end runs around these states and directly sponsoring their own programs and interventions via NGOs in a wide range of areas. The role played by NGOs in helping Western development agencies to get around uncooperative national governments sheds a good deal of light on the current disdain for the state and celebration of civil society that one finds in both the academic and the development literature right now.

But challengers to African states today are not only to be found in international organizations and NGOs. In the wake of what is widely agreed to be a certain collapse or retreat of the nation-state all across the continent, we find forms of power and authority springing up everywhere that have not been well described or analyzed to date. These are usually described as “subnational,” and usually conceived either as essentially ethnic (the old primordialist view), or alternatively (and more hopefully) as manifestations of a newly resurgent civil society, long suppressed by a heavy-handed state. Yet, can we really assume that the new political forms that challenge the hegemony of African nation-states are necessarily well conceived as “local,” “grassroots,” “civil,” or even “subnational”?

Guerrilla insurrections, for instance, not famous for their civility, are often not strictly local or subnational, either—armed and funded, as they often are, from abroad. Consider Savimbi’s União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) movement in Angola: long aided by the CIA, originally trained by the Chinese government, with years of military and logistic support from apartheid South Africa, and funding from sources that range from the international diamond trade to donations from U.S. church groups. Is this a subnational organization? A phenomenon of an emerging civil society? Or consider the highly organized transnational forms of criminality that so often exist in such a symbiotic partnership with the state that we

may even come to speak, as Bayart et al. have recently suggested (1999), of “the criminalization of the state” in many parts of Africa. Can such developments be grasped within the state–society or local–global polarities? What about transnational Christian organizations like World Vision International, which play an enormous role in many parts of contemporary Africa, organizing local affairs and building and operating schools and clinics where states have failed to do so (Bornstein 2001)? Are such giant, transnational organizations to be conceptualized as “local”? What of humanitarian organizations such as Oxfam, Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE), or Doctors Without Borders, which perform statelike functions all across Africa?

Such organizations are not states, but are unquestionably statelike in some respects. Yet they are not well described as subnational, national, or even supranational. They ignore the nation-building logic of the old developmentalist state, which sought to link its citizens into a universalistic national grid (cf. Scott 1998) and instead build on the rapid, deterritorialized point-to-point forms of connection (and disconnection) that are central to both the new communications technologies and the new, neoliberal practices of capital mobility (Ferguson 1999, 2001). Local and global at the same time, such entities are transnational—even, in some ways, anational; they cannot be located within the familiar vertical division of analytic levels presented above. Not coincidentally, these organizations and movements that fall outside of the received scheme of analytic levels are also conspicuously understudied—indeed, they have until recently been largely invisible in theoretical scholarship on African politics, tending to be relegated instead to “applied,” problem-oriented studies.

In all of these cases, we are dealing with political entities that may be better conceptualized not as “below” the state, but as integral parts of a transnational apparatus of governmentality. This apparatus does not replace the older system of nation-states (which is—let us be clear—not about to disappear), but overlays and coexists with it. In this optic, it might make sense to think of the new organizations that have sprung up in recent years not as challengers pressing up against the state from below but as horizontal contemporaries of the organs of the state—sometimes rivals; sometimes servants; sometimes watchdogs; sometimes parasites; but in every case operating on the same level, and in the same global space.

The implication is not simply that it is important to study NGOs and other transnational nonstate organizations, or even to trace their interrelations and zones of contact with the state. Rather, the implication is that it is necessary to treat state and nonstate governmentality within a common frame, without making unwarranted assumptions about their spatial reach, vertical height, or relation to the local. Taking the verticality and encompassment of states not as a taken-for-granted fact, but as a precarious achievement, it becomes possible to pose the question of the spatiality of contemporary practices of government as an ethnographic problem.

conclusion: toward an ethnography of neoliberal governmentality

Studying the relationship between states, space, and scale opens up an enormous empirical and ethnographic project, one that has not been systematically pursued in anthropological analysis. In this article, we have drawn attention to two central features of state spatialization, *verticality* and *encompassment*. These images of space and scale are not “mere” metaphors. What gives verticality and encompassment their efficacy as commonsensical features of states is their embeddedness in a host of mundane bureaucratic practices, as the examples from the ICDS program in India demonstrate. Instead of understanding space as a preexisting container and scale as a natural feature of the world in which states operate, we have argued that

states themselves *produce* spatial and scalar hierarchies. In fact, the production of these hierarchies is not incidental but central to the functioning of states; they are the *raison d'être* of states (and perhaps their *raison d'état*). It might be worth rereading the ethnographic record to reinterpret the data concerning how state claims to verticality and encompassment have been legitimized and substantiated in everyday life in a multiplicity of empirical situations around the world (although the data might well be too thin in many cases to carry out such a project).

Although the spatial and scalar *ideologies* of states have always been open to critique, the new practices associated with neoliberal globalization have opened up opportunities for a deeper questioning. In a global order where the organization of capitalism coexisted more easily with the hegemony of nation-states, statist projects of verticality and encompassment seemed “natural” and were usually easily incorporated into the everyday routines of social life. However, the conflicts engendered by neoliberal globalization have brought the disjuncture between spatial and scalar orders into the open, revealing the profoundly transnational character of both the “state” and the “local,” and drawing attention to crucial mechanisms of governmentality that take place outside of, and alongside, the nation-state. Claims of verticality that have historically been monopolized by the state (claims of superior spatial scope, supremacy in a hierarchy of power, and greater generality of interest and moral purpose) are being challenged and undermined by a transnationalized “local” that fuses the grassroots and the global in ways that make a hash of the vertical topography of power on which the legitimation of nation-states has so long depended. For increasingly, state claims of encompassment are met and countered by globally networked and globally imaged organizations and movements—manifestations of “the local” that may claim (in their capacity as ecological “guardians of the planet,” indigenous protectors of “the lungs of the earth,” or participants in a universal struggle for human rights) a wider rather than narrower spatial and moral purview than that of the merely national state.

We do not mean to suggest that such transnationalized local actors always win their fights, or that national states have become incapable of exercising their authority over localities. Neither do we intend to imply that states’ new difficulties in spatializing their authority are likely to usher in a new era of enlightenment and greater public good. (On the contrary, the diminishment of state authority is as likely to undermine the position of subaltern groups as it is to enhance it, as the recent political history of much of Africa in particular shows). That state claims to vertical encompassment are today increasingly precarious does not mean that they no longer exist; as we have shown, vertical encompassment continues to be powerfully institutionalized and instantiated in daily practices. If the nature of these institutions and the sites of this instantiation are being transformed, it is precisely to these transformations that we must attend in our empirical investigations.

What is necessary, then, is not simply more or better study of “state-society interactions”—to put matters in this way would be to assume the very opposition that calls for interrogation. Rather, the need is for an ethnography of encompassment, an approach that would take as its central problem the understanding of processes through which governmentality (by state and nonstate actors) is both legitimated and undermined by reference to claims of superior spatial reach and vertical height. Indeed, focusing on governmentality calls into question the very distinction insisted on by the term *nongovernmental organization*, emphasizing instead the similarities of technologies of government across domains.

An ethnography of the spatiality of governmentality has to confront several problems. First, as originally formulated by Foucault (1991), "governmentality" as a form of power exercised over populations assumes the frame of the nation-state. Extending this concept to account for neoliberal globalization forces us to reformulate the spatial and scalar assumptions of governmentality.²⁵ For example, we cannot just think of transnational governmentality as a form of global government, a suprastate that is superimposed on various nation-states much as the European Union is on its member governments. Institutions of global governance are not simply replicating on a bigger scale the functions and tasks of the nation-state, as both proponents and opponents of transnational governmentality often assume. Verticality and encompassment continue to be produced, but not in the same way by the same institutions or groups. Globalized "grassroots" groups and nongovernmental organizations are good examples of how scales have collapsed into each other. Neil Smith has attempted to understand this phenomenon of the "active social and political connectedness of apparently different scales" (1992:66) by referring to such activities in terms of "jumping scales." John Ruggie (1993) has attempted to understand the reconfiguration of territorial sovereignty in the world system as forming an "unbundled space" where nation and state are not homologous in their control and regulation of territory. Other forms of spatial and scalar production are clearly imposing themselves on state spatiality and territoriality (Brenner 1997; Storper 1997; Swyngedouw 1997). At the same time, different institutions and organizations, including nation-states and metastates like the European Union, are attempting to reinstate verticality and encompassment in territories that are not necessarily contiguous, or united in cultural, political, and economic spheres. The ethnographic challenge facing us today with neoliberal globalization is to understand the spatiality of all forms of government, some of which may be embedded in the daily practices of nation-states while others may crosscut or superimpose themselves on the territorial jurisdiction of nation-states.

Such an approach might open up a much richer set of questions about the meaning of transnationalism than have been asked up to now. It is not a question of whether a globalizing political economy is rendering nation-states weak and irrelevant, as some have suggested, or whether states remain the crucial building blocks of the global system, as others have countered. For the central effect of the new forms of transnational governmentality is not so much to make states weak (or strong), as to reconfigure states' abilities to spatialize their authority and to stake their claims to superior generality and universality. Recognizing this process might open up a new line of inquiry into the study of governmentality in the contemporary world.

notes

Acknowledgments. We wish to thank Rozita Dimova for research assistance. When this article was revised, Akhil Gupta was a Fellow at the National Humanities Center and James Ferguson was a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences. We gratefully acknowledge the support of both those institutions.

1. There is a long and rich tradition of studies by geographers and social theorists on the social construction of space under conditions of modernity and postmodernity. Building on an old, if often undervalued, tradition of spatial thinking within Marxism (esp. the seminal work of Henri Lefebvre [1991]), social geographers like David Harvey (1985a, 1985b, 1990) and Doreen Massey (1984, 1994) have shown how changing forms of capitalist production have structured urban spaces and the social experiences that unfold within them. Meanwhile, theorists of globalization, such as Saskia Sassen, have shown how state practices of regulation (from immigration control to financial regulations) intersect with transnational flows of capital to generate highly differentiated national and subnational economic zones within an increasingly

global economic space (1991, 1996, 1998). But although such contributions help to show how states may act to construct social and economic space and to shape the way that places are built, experienced, and inhabited, they do not deal with the related but distinct question that concerns us here: How are states themselves spatialized?

We have also benefited greatly from a recent body of work in anthropology that seeks to understand ethnographically the spatial consequences of state policies (see, e.g., Bernal 1997; Darian-Smith 1999; Grant 1995; Herzfeld 1991; Merry 2001; and Verdery 1996). It is this literature that has enabled us to pursue our own, slightly different, question of how the state itself is spatialized.

2. Ann Anagnost presents a wonderful example of this phenomenon in her discussion of splendid China (1997:161–175).

3. A different kind of critique of this position has been advanced by Marilyn Strathern (1995), who argues that just because anthropology appears to route its knowledge through persons, it does not follow that the person constitutes an elementary scale of social organization. Maurer (1998) offers an example of how spatial and statist projects converge when encompassment is realized through incorporation.

4. That spatial encompassment is often imagined in terms of such neatly nested circles does not imply that regions, localities, or communities really do fit so neatly within the “higher” levels that supposedly encompass them—indeed, a range of phenomena from borderlands to transnational communities in practice confound this image. Part two develops the implications of this observation.

5. The concept of “civil society” clearly grows out of a specific, European history; like Chatterjee (1990), we emphasize the historical and cultural particularity of the concept, even as we are concerned with its operational universalization as part of the standard package of institutional and ideological forms that have come to be as widely distributed as the modern state itself. But it is not simply the category, “civil society,” that requires to be seen in its cultural particularity, but a larger imaginary topography through which the state and society are visualized in relation with each other.

6. Verdery makes a very interesting connection between the nation and the body (1996:63).

7. Not all theorists have made such an opposition; indeed, the earliest writers on civil society (e.g., Locke) saw “civil society” as synonymous with “political society” (see Taylor 1990:105).

8. On the history of the concept of civil society, see Burchell 1991; Chatterjee 1990; Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; and Seligman 1992.

9. See especially such contributions as Bayart’s (1993) discussion of “eating” as a metaphor of state power in Africa and Mbembe’s (1992) analysis of how the imagery of the vulgar and the grotesque in the popular culture of Cameroon comes to invest the symbols of state power. The ways that the spatial metaphors of vertical encompassment that we discuss here may coexist with other metaphors for picturing states are a rich ground for future investigation. Other important contributions to a lively recent discussion on the state in postcolonial Africa include Bayart et al. 1999; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Mamdani 1996; and Werbner and Ranger 1996.

10. One particularly clear example of such policing is provided by the treatment received by Mexican laborers in the United States at the hands of the INS and the police, which demonstrates quite clearly that the border is not just a line that one crosses into a zone of safety but a zone of exclusion that permeates the interior of the territory of the nation-state (see, for instance, Chavez 1998). Heyman (1998) goes even further in making an explicit connection between control of the U.S.–Mexico border and foreign wars such as Vietnam through the trope of illegality.

11. The term *order* is here used both in its directive intent as well as in its organizing connotations.

12. The point is neither to reduce one to the other nor to claim some kind of privileged relationship, as compared to, say, the relationship of space to capital.

13. See discussion on pages 998–991.

14. The Block is the smallest administrative unit in India, comprising approximately one hundred villages.

15. The number of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers varied from one Block to another, depending on population to be served and the funds allocated to the program.

16. The pyramidal structure of the bureaucracy followed a classic, Fordist pattern of industrial organization. Unlike the bureaucracies of late-capitalist firms or of other post-Fordist organizations, there was no hint of a flat organizational structure or decentralized decision making.

17. Following anthropological convention, the name "Mandi," as well as the names of the people and villages below, are pseudonyms.

18. The following text is based on fieldwork observations conducted by Akhil Gupta.

19. Although we have here chosen to focus on the surveillance of the Anganwadi Worker rather than the welfare of the population, our point about state verticality and encompassment could equally have been demonstrated by focusing on the "positive" aspects of governmentality.

20. A good example is provided by the privatization of prisons: Increasingly, private companies have taken over the job of constructing and operating prisons for the state. Once an "enterprise model" becomes dominant, there is little reason for many state functions to be performed by state institutions.

21. It is striking, for instance, that Rose (1996:53) characterizes "advanced liberalism" as a set of strategies that "can be observed in national contexts from Finland to Australia"—without any discussion of the vast range of national contexts (most of the world, it would seem) to which his account does not apply. Nor is there any consideration of the relations between the breakdown of notions of welfare at the national level and those of development at the international, or of the ways that the proliferation of "quasi-autonomous NGOs" might be linked to changes in the role and function of the nation-state within a global system.

22. Recently, a great many anthropologists have been concerned to problematize the traditional anthropological notion of the "local" (although usually without relating this notion to the question of state spatialization). For reasons of space, we will not review this literature here, but only refer the reader to our extensive discussion of this issue in Gupta and Ferguson 1997.

23. No doubt it is the empirical differences between the situation of the state in the two regional contexts that accounts for why each best illustrates a different part of our argument (broadly, the relative strength of the Indian state versus the institutional and financial weakness of so many African ones), but it is not our purpose to explore those differences systematically here.

24. We borrow this evocative term from remarks made by Cooper (1993). It should be noted, however, that we are here connecting the term to larger claims about transnational governmentality that Cooper may not have intended in his own use of the term.

25. Sally Merry (2001) has developed the idea of "spatial governmentality" to draw attention to forms of governmentality that seek to regulate people indirectly through the control and regulation of space.

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accepted May 25, 2001

final version submitted February 18, 2002

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