



## Seeing the State through Youth Policy Formation:<sup>1</sup> The Case of the State of Jharkhand

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### Abstract

This article explores the way in which one of the largest semi-autonomous states in India, the state of Jharkhand, is developing policies that target the youth. It also looks at ways in which it is providing room for youths to participate in processes of decision making. Studying the state government's position, ideology and praxis in this regard demonstrates that there is an interesting process of transmission of socio-political power into the hands of the young in such a way that the youth is likely to become a supporter and protector of the state. On the part of the government, a great deal of trust exists with regard to youth involvement in policies beneficial to the pursuit of an ideal welfare package for the people. The state makes sure that certain social and economic benefits flow towards the youth, and this certainly helps in securing their support for its notion of a semi-autonomous state, with the belief inculcated in the youth that the future is in their hands.

### Résumé

Cet article explore comment l'Etat semi-autonome le plus grand de l'Inde, l'état de Jharkhand, développe sa politique de la jeunesse et comment il crée un espace pour permettre aux jeunes de participer dans les processus de prise de décision. A cet effet, l'étude de la position, de l'idéologie et du praxis du gouvernement de l'état démontre qu'il existe un processus intéressant de transmission du pouvoir sociopolitique dans les mains des jeunes à tel enseigne qu'ils sont amenés à soutenir et à protéger l'état. De son côté, le gouvernement fait montre de beaucoup de confiance à l'endroit l'implication des jeunes dans l'implémentation de politiques en faveur d'un programme idéal pour le bien-être du peuple. L'état s'assure que certains bénéfices socioéconomiques parviennent aux jeunes, ce qui assure certainement leur support pour sa notion d'état semi-autonome avec la conviction bien inculquée dans l'esprit des jeunes que le future est dans leurs mains.

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For your country

If you plan for a year - sow a paddy

If you plan for a decade - plant trees

*If you plan for a future - nurture youth*

(Proverb quoted in the National Youth Policy of India, 1992)<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

In post-colonial India, like in nation-states all over the world, centrally-planned social-engineering projects organise their citizens on the basis of chronological age with corresponding status allocation. In this way, and among others, the category of 'youth' has been differentiated from 'adulthood' and brought under the jurisdiction of the state. Subsequently, states formulated and reformulated youth policies and introduced a standardised and bureaucratic life course where political rights, laws, etc., are based on age and scholars have rightly argued that this is not primarily a social organisational process but an ideological one (cf. Boli-Bennett & Meyer 1978). Yet, 'modern forms of state are in a continuous process of construction' with 'languages of stateness' (Blom Hansen & Stepputat 2001:5) changing. Therefore, whereas the process of differentiation between 'youth' and 'adulthood' might be global, (state-constructed) categories of youth vary in different nation-states and the views of states on 'youth' have been changing. In this article, I argue that the analysis of these by the state constructed categories of youth – as well as policy recommendations based on these constructions – might not say much about young people in these states but certainly is an excellent way to understand (differences among) states.

The category of 'youth' did figure in national policies formulated by the Government of India (hereafter: GoI) since India's independence in 1947. In 1969, a 'National Advisory Board on Youth' was established and in 2003 a 'National Youth Policy' was formulated, followed by a 'National Plan of Action for Youths' in 2005 (Annual Report 1995-1996; cf. Singh 2005). Sharing the 'Nation's commitment towards youth development' but perceiving the inadequacy of these broad policies targeting 'Indian youth', the Government of Jharkhand (hereafter GoJ) simultaneously voiced the need for 'initiating the process of State Youth Policy Formulation'. The help of Population Foundation India (PFI) was sought and a first meeting took place on 21 April 2006 in the state capital, Ranchi. Apart from members of the NGO PFI, the state invited other (non-state) 'key stakeholders' to 'ensure an inclusive policy' (Jharkhand Youth Policy Formulation 2006). I too was invited during this

preliminary consultative meeting where 'key areas to be addressed in the policy' were to be identified and during which sub-groups of experts/institutions would be identified and enlisted, 'to prepare status papers on the identified areas which would be inputs for a larger and definitive consultation on the Youth Policy'. Subsequently, I was made part of a sub-committee on education and asked to become part of the larger consultation on youth policy. Between April and September 2006, I attended several meetings organised by the Department of Art, Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs (Government of Jharkhand) (hereafter: Youth Department) during which the state was in action making, 'itself real and tangible through symbols, texts, and iconography' (Blom Hansen & Stepputat 2001:5). The final meeting took place on 30 July 2007, when the Youth Department disseminated its Draft Jharkhand Youth Policy in Hindi and English. My presence during these meetings allowed me to study the 'languages of stateness' and 'study the state, or discourses of the state, from 'the field' in the sense of localised ethnographic sites' (Blom Hansen & Stepputat 2001:5). In other words, this youth policy formation process allowed me to 'see' the state of Jharkhand. This article discloses its character.

Relatively young people have played major roles during World War II and other struggles for independence, to which (newly) established nation-states reacted by the creation of ideological rules of differentiated and state-managed 'youth'. In Britain and America, 'Young people' as Christine Griffin described in her 'Representations of Youth' (1997:17) were,

assumed to hold the key to the nation's future, and the treatment and management of 'youth' is expected to provide the solution to a nation's 'problems', from 'drug abuse', 'hooliganism' and 'teenage pregnancy' to inner city 'riots'.

Relatively young people thus entered the domain of the state as 'youth' and policies were designed with the expectation that these young people would solve the problems of the state (cf. Griffin 2001:158). In 1985, governments around the world, including that of India, celebrated the 'International Youth Year'. Subsequently, a 'World Programme of Action for Youth' (The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond)<sup>3</sup> was formulated and subscribed to by several and diverse national governments which all recognised that, 'The imagination, ideals and energies of young men and women are vital for the continuing development of the societies in which they live'. These state governments therefore recognised 'youth' not only as a separate formation that could contribute to social development but also roped in some relatively young people by designing policies for them. Yet since the 1960s many states, and increasingly so, have started expressing their disappointment with this 'coalition' between them and 'the youth'. These

states now view young people with 'mistrust' (Stephen and Squires 2004:351) and in need of 'surveillance' and not only 'protection' and/or 'care' (cf. Griffin 1997:24).

Indeed, studies on Euro American (and Australian) states' attitudes towards relatively young people during the 1990s, conclude that states generally tend to see youth as 'problems' (cf. Sharland 2005) or even as 'inherently deviant or deficient' (Griffin 1997:24): 'young people are beset by predominantly negative images, are seen as either a source of trouble or in trouble' (Roche & Tucker 1997:1). Academic literature then continues to show how these state discourses on youth, in particular in the UK, US and Australia, impact (social welfare) policies and practices in these countries. Engaging with Foucault's theories on disciplinary, sovereign and governmental forms of power as well as of (Neo) liberalism as a problematisation of the practice of liberal welfare governments, these studies show how these 'institutionalised relations of mistrust' (Kelly 2003:165) of the state towards the 'dangerous Other' ['Youth-at-risk'] translate into 'a raft of interventions and strategies and programmes that target young people (Kelly 2003:165). These scholars also show the 'vacuous nature' of these youth constructs, which are 'laid bare as unintelligible and deleterious to fostering any sense of inclusion and social justice' in the lives of (marginalised) young people (Stephen and Squires 2004:351).

Again, often using Foucault's work on disciplinary, sovereign and governmental forms of power (Kelly 2000) or using 'governmentality' as a theoretical framework (Warburton & Smith 2003), such studies therefore aim at showing the (negative) impact these state 'imaginings' of youth have on young people (Riele 2006) and 'explore the dangerous possibilities provoked by the popular and promiscuous construction of the category of 'youth-at-risk'' (Kelly 2000:463). This is often followed by a description of 'practice' (if not 'reality') among (various groups of) young people (Bucholtz 2002), sometimes described in terms of resistance' and the formation of 'subcultures' (Muncie 1999:169-171) and elsewhere in terms of 'hybridity' (Nilan and Feixa 2006). By inference, in these studies the state seems to head a 'carceral society' (Muncie 1999:212)<sup>4</sup> and appears strong, authoritarian and overtly concerned with questions of social order and social control (Jeffs & Smith 1994). Besides, these studies show how the state, through its institutions, procedures, calculations, tactics and reflections does target at youth who become 'the most intensively governed sector of personal existence' (Rose 1989:121). However, these studies do not study the reasons for states to define 'youth' as 'the other' of itself, 'the adult'. In this article, I, therefore, explicitly analyse this grammar of 'othering' (cf. Baumann 2004:19) and aim at an ethnography of the state by looking at its 'everyday practices', its

'discursive construction' (Gupta 1995:375-402) and the state's 'image' of itself (Migdal 2001:16-18). Fundamentally therefore, this article is not about young people but deals with the ways in which institutionally structured processes of 'expert' knowledge production on youth actually constructs the state as 'adult' who is at once 'violent and destructive as well as benevolent and productive' (Blom Hansen & Stepputat 2001:5) but also weak, old(er) and most of all insecure.

In this article, I use the concept of 'security'<sup>5</sup> as a key concept to understand the state, its construction of 'youth' and therefore its self-definition as 'adult'. In the first section, I show that by defining the 'youth' as 'the intimate other' the state, roping in others too, defines itself as 'adult'. In the second section, I argue that through adults' construction of 'youth-at-risk', we understand adults' fears, anxieties and their nightmares – in short, the factors that render the state (and other adults) insecure. Conversely, I show in the third section that the state, in search of security, tries to find 'alliances' among people in 'society'. By defining 'youth' as 'the hope of the nation', we see not only a state striving for security but the state's coalition with 'youth'. This is followed by a short conclusion with a speculation of the implications of this on coalition based formulated 'Jharkhand Youth Policy'.

### **The State's Grammar of Identity and Alterity**

As there is no age at which one objectively stops being a 'child' or starts being completely 'adult' and these categories are thus arbitrary, it could be questioned whether the GoJ at all needed specific responses to 'youth'. Yet, as Kamens (1985:9) pointed out:

State elites are under strong pressures to build institutional linkages between critical population groups and the state. Children and adolescents are two key categories in the nation-building drive. This is particularly true among newer nations, in which nation building and economic development must occur simultaneously and quickly.

It indeed seems that the GoJ has always tried to rope in 'youth' in the realm of the state. With the formation of the new state in 2000, a Youth Department had already been established, initially with the intention to promote and increase participation in the sports activities of the state as well as, 'to offer help and advice wherever possible and to be a link between Jharkhand and the national sports authorities'. With this in mind, the GoJ had even put together 'a comprehensive action plan to enable them to realise *their* [emphasis mine] objectives over the next few years.'<sup>6</sup> Other schemes designed by the Youth Department had thereafter been formulated to induce the 'principles and values incorporated in our constitution in our Youth'. In order to

build even more 'institutional linkages between youth and the state' and to link the motivation of youth 'to the collective goals of the state' (cf. Kamens 1985:11), the NSS camping schemes were organised, covering several aspects like the 'adoption of intensive upliftment works, carrying out medico-social service, setting up medical programmes of mass immunisation, sanitation drive, literacy programmes for the weaker sections of the community, blood donation' etc. Clearly, the GoJ needed 'youth' as part of its 'state-building process'. Indeed, as Kamens (1985:3) stated, though in a different context, a key component of Jharkhand's 'language of stateness' was to separate 'the youth' from 'the adult', which was based on the idea that rational action results from the activities of appropriately socialised individuals. As a result, harnessing the motivation of individuals to collective goals becomes a central concern of modern states.

Moreover, in 2006 the GoJ decided it had to 'reconstruct' (cf. Kamens 1985:6) youth in Jharkhand and the state expressed its need for 'a youth-oriented policy' that would target the 'over nine million youths' residing in the state<sup>7</sup>. The GoJ's main motivation seems to have been that since the GoI had already designed 'local and contingent makers, set up in current law, guidance and practice' the Jharkhand State might as well follow. Besides, a state representative remarked, 'the recent global concern on youths has proved the importance of youths in the development of a society'. The GoJ therefore subscribed to the National Youth Policy 2003 that reiterated the commitment of the entire nation to the composite and all-round development of the young daughters and sons of India and sought to establish an all-India perspective to fulfil their legitimate aspirations so that they are all strong of heart, body and mind to successfully accomplish the challenging tasks of national reconstruction and social changes that lie ahead.

One of the foremost questions during the first meeting organised by the GoJ concerned the definition of youth and, whereas it was recognised that the GoI defined 'Indian youth' as young people in the age group of 15-35 years (Annual Report 1995-1996:5), the question was asked as to what or who was the youth of Jharkhand? Apart from the recognition that different societies do define and demarcate youth differently, it was stated that even within India, people of a wide range of ages were often treated as youth, and people of a wide range of ages claimed the space of youth, at specific times and in specific places. It was also decided that the definition of 'youth' as an age category was somewhat arbitrary as there were no precise moments that marked when the 'youth' period ended and 'adulthood' began. The state therefore recognised that youth was a physiological, psychological as well as a socio-cultural, administrative and political category. Nevertheless, the

state, including those it had roped in, agreed that 'youth' was to be defined first of all in terms of age. Different age categories were thereafter proposed, based on various criteria. Finally, the Secretary of the Youth Department decided that, in order 'to ensure a focused approach, it is always preferable to define the target group with scope of inclusion as well as confining it within a feasible limit'. Yet, while at the end of the discussion it was thus decided to define 'youth' in Jharkhand as 'those young people who fall within the age segment of 13-30 years', other definitions had also gained popularity.

One of the most important definitions was the one in which 'youth' was defined as a category to which the speakers did not belong, i.e. youth was imagined as 'the other'. But youth also was what the speakers once had been (but were no longer). In other words, youth entered the space of the state as the 'intimate other' of the speakers who all once upon a time had been part of the category of 'youth'. Apart from learning that some relatively young people in Jharkhand, namely those aged between 13-30 years, thus entered the space of the state as 'youth', during this first consultation I did not learn anything about these young people in the state. However, I learnt a lot about the (language, grammar of the) state.

First of all, while defining 'youth', the state actually imagined itself as 'adult' (cf. Kerkhoff 1995). Besides, in order to define a policy for this 'youth', the state had expressed its need for 'alliances' and had actually roped in other 'stakeholders' who all entered the space of the state as 'adults'. Indeed, all the speakers during the meeting including the state administrators felt they had passed through the youth stage and now were 'adults'. The 'state' thus consisted of a particular group of adults who had assembled to design a policy for 'the youth' of Jharkhand, defined as their 'intimate others'. The difference between 'the state' and 'society' was therefore blurred, as there were 'key coalitions between social groups and parts of the state' (Migdal 2001:36). This forced me to adopt a 'state-in-society' approach to the state rather than a 'state-and-society' approach.

Secondly, 'youth' was not only defined as 'the other' of the state (i.e. adults) but also as the 'intimate' other. By invoking their own pasts, all 'stakeholders' during the meeting, entering the domain of the state as 'adults', felt that though they were not youths themselves any longer, they nevertheless understood 'the other' who therefore was 'intimate' to them. One speaker argued for instance: 'I have not worked with youths before, yet I think I can become part of one of the advisory committees as I was born and brought up in Jharkhand. I therefore know *their* problems'. This 'othering', also allowed these speakers to reaffirm adult status as a former youth, to heighten their own authority and was a 'way to distance themselves from the young people' (cf. Knopp Biklen 2004:716).



Thirdly, I learnt from this first meeting that the state's main rationale for its search for a coalition with the youth was because these adults felt that they had lost something which the 'intimate others' still possessed: their 'youth'. One of the participants during the meeting said, 'We should organise sport events as this is the best way to reach the youth and unite them. Besides, while participating in the events, it will make us young too; we will get back our youthfulness'. Although, these adults knew, of course, that they could not really 'go back' to being 'youth', they expected a coalition with these 'youths' would give them something back, i.e. 'youthfulness' (Knopp Biklen 2004:716). Besides, as I will show below, they hoped a coalition between 'the state' and 'the youth' would return to these adults, particular conditions that had existed in their (remembered) pasts and which were imagined to have been better than the present. One of the participants remembered:

When I was a student in the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) [Delhi] it was not like that. We were all very close to each other. I do not know what it is but nowadays it is much more difficult to unite young people for a common goal.

Therefore, it was towards the 'youth' that these adults looked to redeem their present. In other words, this initial consultation meeting on Jharkhand Youth Policy Formulation thus displayed insecure adults, who had lost their pasts and were concerned over an uncertain future, striving for security. This reminded me of Griffin (2001:163) who remarked that:

Dominant representations of 'youth' can operate to calm adult fears over the instabilities of the future [and the present] and of the nation itself, the site of 'home' and therefore of identity.

In conclusion, therefore, during the first meeting I learnt nothing much about 'youth' but a lot about the state, its dreams and nightmares. I understood that the state consisted of a particular group of adults with fears about the present situation in Jharkhand. These fears, among other things, concerned all sorts of securities which these adults imagined had existed in the past but were lost in the present: The educational system had been better; there had been less people, less pollution, less violence and more job opportunities.

Simultaneously, I learnt that these adults dreamt of a different future however and looked upon youth, enrolled in the state as the 'intimate other', to return their pasts for a better future. Indeed, as Muncie (1999:11) argued, these 'intimate others' had to carry 'a peculiar burden of representation' and were seen as the state's future. To secure that future and solve the state's present problems, 'youth' was a consistent referent. In fact, youth was treated as the key indicator of the state of Jharkhand itself and the condition



of these young people was seen as being symptomatic of the health and future of the state. These adults therefore agreed they had to tackle the 'youth problem' in order to cure these adults, the state. The state's next step was therefore to schedule more meetings during which status papers would be presented that described the condition of the 'youth' in the key areas selected (by these adults) and would contain policies that would secure the state.

### **The State-at-Risk**

Apart from defining 'youth', during the initial meeting, 'key areas' had also been decided upon and sub-committees were constituted with the task to prepare status papers. The status papers were supposed to be prepared by 'experts in consultation with concerned stakeholders'. This should result in 'a preparation of an action plan for the next five years with an elaboration of action points for the key priority areas'. During the follow-up sessions 'adults' thus presented their status papers that encompassed 'Education'; 'Health'; 'Livelihood and Employment'; 'Mission Orientation of Youth'; 'Protection of Youths from Exploitation'; 'Institutional Capacity Building' and 'Art, Culture and Sports'.<sup>8</sup> The state's prime objective for asking these 'stakeholders' to produce these status papers, and thus enrolling them in the state (on equal basis as adults) was to get 'inputs for a larger and definitive consultation of the Youth Policy'. Paper writers, mostly representatives of various NGOs in Jharkhand but also a few administrators, had been requested to review the 'status of youth' in their papers.

In the status paper on 'Health', 'the youth' appears as mostly 'dwelling below poverty line' (p. 1), 'falling prey to drugs, substance abuse, mental disorders' and as 'prone to communicable and callous diseases, STI, RTI and HIV/AIDS' (p. 4). They also received 'inadequate nutrition' through which the youth of Jharkhand had become 'vulnerable to various diseases and unwholesome development'. The status paper added that there also was, 'gender imbalance in the status of youth health of Jharkhand' and stated that, 'some of the gruelling indicators like early marriage, anaemia, malnutrition, alcoholism, drugs and substance abuse have become a pervasive threat for the wholesome and equitable growth of female youth in Jharkhand' (pp. 4-5). The report concluded that 'the core problem of Jharkhand is the limited options, especially for the poor, thus leading to utter poverty situations and migration' and the 'implicit consequence in rural-urban flow of the poorest' was 'the problem of trafficking of young girls, who are economically and sexually exploited'. This had resulted in the emergence of the 'sick, unemployed, visionless, impatient, lost, and vulnerable category of population - the Youth of Jharkhand' (p. 6)

The status paper on 'Livelihoods and Employment in Jharkhand' showed that 'the work participation rate in Jharkhand, both in rural and urban areas, is lesser than the all-India average' (p. 1) and argued that 'the main economic challenge for Jharkhand is to ensure gainful and sustainable employment to two lakh people every year'. Besides, the paper continued: 'The challenge is then not just creating two lakh new livelihoods, but to make existing livelihoods more productive so that persons engaged in these can earn a higher income' (p. 5). In particular, 'urban educated unemployed youth' are defined as a vulnerable group in this regard and the status paper also mentioned that, 'the major problem with the youth is the complete lack of vocational training facilities' (p. 25).

The status paper entitled 'Jharkhand – A Cultural Overview', starts with the statement that through the formation of the new state of Jharkhand on 15 November 2000, 'the long cherished dream of forming the state of Jharkhand became a reality when Bihar was bifurcated and Jharkhand became the 28<sup>th</sup> province of the Indian nation state to coincide with the birth anniversary of legendary Birsa Munda' (p. 1). Yet, the rest of the paper shows that in fact the state is not doing well at all and argues that, 'traditions, ritual and culture are lifelines of these tribal and non-tribal people but old systems collapsed and [left] people who are finding it difficult to adjust to new occasions and new economic situations' (p. 2). The paper concludes that, 'the biggest challenge ahead of the present administration is to effectively address the decades of negligence and genuine grievances of the people, politically tackle the increasing militant activities and general disturbance of the law and order situation in the state' (p. 2).

The writers of the draft-status paper on 'The Protection of Youth from Exploitation' agreed with the government that, 'youth and adolescents will definitely augur well for the future of the state' but they regretted to say that in Jharkhand:

The scenario is rather bleak because our average adolescent/youth is illiterate, married, working or has migrated. S/he is at risk to contract HIV/AIDS because of migration, lack of awareness and poor negotiation and decision-making skills. The girl is at risk when she is pregnant because she is too young and not mature, she is anaemic and health system is not geared to respond to complications. A pregnant adolescent is more prone to access illegal and unqualified service providers for abortion because of the stigma and discrimination and the poor availability of qualified service providers (p. 1).

In this draft status paper, it is also argued that many youths suffer from 'depression' and from an 'identity crisis' and 'lack proper guidance'. Besides,

one other of Jharkhand's 'problems' is, the paper narrates, the fact that the state is, 'greatly disturbed by the naxalite activities'. The paper adds:

This social unrest in past decades has severely affected life of people as youngsters are lured and at times forced into joining such extremists groups and as a result there is large-scale migration of youth from these areas (p. 6).

The paper concludes that the 'vulnerability of youth is of various nature':

The age-old issues like child/early marriage and dowry are still prevalent in the society. Witchcraft and witch hunting are very much practiced in the tribal areas of Jharkhand, which often leads to mental, physical and sexual exploitation of the victim (especially the women and girls). It has been seen that the primary causes of most of the problems are poverty with diminishing livelihood opportunities in Jharkhand. Trafficking of young girls/boys in the form of house servants and youths as labourers has become common. Poor schooling has resulted in [the creation of] illiterate and poorly competent adolescents/youth. Thus, most migrate as unskilled labourers to metropolises [which is] the most risk factor for acquiring HIV/AIDS. Ignorance and paucity of information, health, livelihood options and the absence of supportive environment leads to dissatisfaction and depression among youth and adolescents and in youth indulging in risky behaviour (p. 9).

The picture drawn by the status report on 'Youth Education in Jharkhand' is not much rosier and it for instance mentions that, 'the state is far behind in the literacy drive race' (p. 11). There also is a lack of educational institutions for the youth and the paper writers regret that 'our students of history and culture have only two museums to see and learn the preservation and restoration of rich cultural heritage the state has' (p. 16). Besides, 'Automation and digital computation is a far cry for the state' (p. 16) and it is also felt that, 'our state education machinery at the university/ professional level is quite incompetent and deeply fractured [and therefore unable] to support even one-fifth (or even less) of our educationally ripened youth' (p. 16). In conclusion the report states that, 'a comparative analysis on all-India basis and among the newly formed states shows that we could definitely place Jharkhand as a 'BIMARU' State, which is in dire need and support of the centre and the state both' (p. 21).

Part of the process in developing policies according to Carol Bacchi (1999) is to identify the problem. Clearly in these status papers, 'youth' was supposed to be 'in trouble', 'troubled' and even sometimes 'the trouble'. Therefore, besides the fact that some among Jharkhand's younger population entered the space of the state as 'the intimate other' they also entered this space as 'youth-at-risk' (cf. Armstrong 2004, p. 112). These adults felt that contemporary

society in Jharkhand was inherently more difficult or constraining (i.e. 'risky': cf. Boholm 2003) for youth who are imagined and (re-)constructed as the 'victims of social change'. This 'youth' represents the most at risk group as they have 'less life experience, less exposure to information, resources and power over their lives' than 'adults' and are therefore severely troubled and in trouble. These relatively young people therefore entered the space of the state not only as 'different' from these adults embodying the state but also as 'unequal'. Often the inclusion of 'the other' ('alterity') is done by 'an act of hierarchical subsumption' (we adults know more, have more experience, more knowledge and more power) but sometimes by the creation of a 'negative mirror image' of the other (old against young; tired against energetic; corrupt against honest; secure against vulnerable; mature against immature or past against future) but certainly never on the basis of 'equality' (as adults) (cf. Baumann and Gingrich 2004:47-48).

Various categories of these youths-at-risk were imagined, such as 'deviant youths', 'HIV/AIDS youths', 'the girl-child', 'illiterate or out-of-school youths', 'unemployed youths', 'tribal youths', 'minority youths' 'mentally and physically challenged youths', 'rural youths', 'slum dwellers', 'criminal youths' and 'youth under specially difficult circumstances like victims of trafficking, orphans and street children'. These relatively young people are all depicted as being ill-informed, vulnerable, powerless, poor, unhealthy, ignorant, deprived, frustrated, depressed, extravagant, deficient and exploited (due to land alienation or corruption but also sexually and as migrant labourers). In this way 'youth' is seen by these 'adults' as 'increasingly threatened and endangered' but also as a 'threat to the rest of us' (cf. Buckingham 2000:3) and in need of the state's protection or supervision (negative mirror image), training or surveillance (hierarchical subsumption).

These status papers did not teach me much about young people in Jharkhand. They are clearly modes of 'vulnerable' category construction. Yet, I believe that their value lay somewhere else as well: Through these papers, we see extremely insecure adults (among others, those constituting the state) longing for security but having been so far unable to solve their problems (caused by all age groups: children, youths, adults and the aged). Through these papers, one discovers a *bimaru* (sick) Jharkhand with a state that, adults feel, has failed in all fields (i.e. educational, employment, health, policing, social welfare, sports, art and culture, etc.). Though the state housed over nine million youths, the majority of them were economically, socially and culturally backward. The state, for instance, was found to be 'lagging behind in the employment scenario in comparison to the national average'. Besides, the quality of the state educational system was found to be 'very

low, not related to the job-market and responsible for the creation of social inequalities'. The state had also not been able to keep the youth mentally and physically healthy or able to produce sportsmen or artists. Therefore, the construction of 'youth-at-risk' (or as 'vulnerable' category) in these papers actually shows us a 'crisis of governance' (Armstrong 2004:100). A 'crisis-state' that feels troubled by corruption, violence, communal and caste problems, poverty and pollution in the state and sometimes by the fact that 'youth' are not 'at-risk' but constitute 'the risk' (cf. Giroux 2002:xi).

Through these papers, rather than discovering troubled and troubling youth, I instead discovered insecure adults. During discussions, it became clear that what troubled these adults most was the fact that they had lost their pasts ('when I was young, Ranchi was so clean, so safe and quiet') and were troubled by the present ('Jharkhand is in a mess; naxalites constitute enemy no.1'), which hampered their chances of getting a better future ('it will never be as before anymore'). In this present of 'manufactured uncertainty' (cf. Giddens 1994) these adults therefore counted on the state to find alliances that would redeem their insecurity by giving back their 'pasts' (i.e. certain conditions that existed in the past or even their 'youth').

### **Coalition between State and Youth**

During the meetings organised by the Youth Department, the GoJ unambiguously accepted that the state was at-risk. The adults constituting the state had dreams too, however:

Our vision for the state in the year 2010 is a Jharkhand free from poverty where every individual is able to lead a comfortable and healthy life. Where basic minimum needs of food, shelter, health, education, drinking water have been taken care of and each individual is able to access all the opportunities for his personal, educational and skill development. Where the environment is clean and the life and property of individuals is safe. A state where there is no hunger, exploitation, discrimination or deprivation (Gupta 2003:251-252).

What is more, the GoJ was also committed to achieve the above ideals:

The state and its government are committed to accelerat[ing] the pace of development with a view to transform[ing] Jharkhand into a modern state. The development policy emphasises the need for intensifying efforts to achieve development both in the economic and the social spheres so that the state can realise its full economic potential and even the weakest and the most backward can become active participants in the development process (Gupta 2003:250).

Yet, the problem was, as shown above, that the state felt insecure and troubled, among other things by 'youth-at-risk' and most importantly as an 'adult'.

As adults, they, therefore, were in search of their pasts, their lost youth, 'a mythical golden age of peace and tranquillity', 'age-old culture and traditions and 'security' (Muncie 1999:82) when they did not have 'all these adult responsibilities', when there had been, 'less corruption, violence, castism, communal tension' and 'better education, more employment opportunities, less consumerism, individualism and environment degradation'. These adults clearly wanted to return to this 'care-free age' and they now had found the solution: 'youth-at-risk'. Indeed, the status papers all point in that direction and 'the deal' is clear: both state as well as youth had their rights and responsibilities. Says the draft-status paper on 'Protection of Youth from Exploitation' (p. 9):

It is a well-known fact that the youth and adolescents are the life-blood of any nation, and a vibrant and responsible youth will certainly contribute to a success of the development of a nation. Therefore it is inevitable to focus on promoting a sensitive and enabling environment for the growth and development of individuals of this age group.

These papers thus recommended intervention, protection, regulation and control by social agencies so that the state would be secured (by youth). The 'Mission Orientation for Youth' stated for instance:

The GoJ should see to it that the 'Jharkhand's youth' gets 'self-respect', attains 'self-recognition', 'self-confidence', 'employment/economic sustainability', 'education', 'good housing, better living conditions and a good wife or partner', gets involved in 'development work' and is provided with 'skill oriented training for self-employment'.

The state therefore should provide this 'youth-at-risk' with an enabling environment that:

1. Reduces their vulnerabilities and increases their capabilities
2. Increases access and opportunities to information and services
3. Enhances their self-respect and dignity and helps to obtain an individual and collective ethnic identity
4. Enables them to live their lives in a fulfilling and creative way
5. Inculcates values, respect for culture, character building.

The GoJ is therefore urged to design youth policies that:

1. Embody instruction in values like respect for teachers, parents, and the aged besides religious tolerance, and compassion towards the poor and the needy.

2. Motivate youth to resist fragmentation of society on the basis of caste, religion, language and ethnicity and for promotion of democratic values enshrined in our constitution.
3. Mobilise youth to create local pressure groups within the community to fight corruption at all levels and to ensure that the benefits of development reach those for whom they are intended and are not siphoned off by middlemen and the powerful.
4. Lay emphasis on the economic and social security of the youth belonging to underprivileged sections of our society and those who are mentally and physically challenged.

Accordingly, and seeing education as part of the social infrastructure which affects economic performance rather than, as it might, analysing the ways in which the economic base is affecting educational provision and performance, the (adult) writers of the status papers recommended policies focusing upon the education of young people in schools and other institutions as well as upon the economic and employment prospects of young people in Jharkhand. Yet, 'mutual obligation' was the term or keyword of the discourses being used by these writers in the rhetoric of values, as there were 'no rights without responsibilities' (cf. Giddens 1998:66). Indeed, these adults argued that if the state would provide these young people with the proper environment, these youths in turn, as 'youth has rights but also duties', would certainly redeem the state. The coalition was thus built of 'trust'.

The status paper on 'Jharkhand – a Cultural Overview', for instance, promises that 'given a chance', 'the youth of Jharkhand responds to anything challenging' (p. 2) and the status paper on 'Youth Health in Jharkhand' mentioned that, 'youth in all ages, has been in the vanguard of progress and social change' (p. 1). The paper writers therefore asked 'Jharkhand as a newly born state' to 'commit to its healthy and vibrant youth as soon as possible', as thereupon these youths would 'fight with its abject poverty, food insecurity and insurgency' as, 'a healthy youth can change the future of this poor state' (p. 10). The status paper on 'Youth Education in Jharkhand' (p. 21) concluded:

The Youth shall outshine and reflect the overall growth and development of Jharkhand in all spheres of life. The government should take the initiative in their well-being and interest and [the] rest shall be history ... Have faith and they shall repay it with recurring interests.

During the meetings, the Secretary of the Youth Department indeed confessed his belief in this coalition between 'the state' and 'the youth' through which the state's problems would be solved. This secretary mentioned, for



instance, that the nation was passing through 'a phase of demographic dividend where the number of people dependent on productive population is proportionally less' and he urged therefore that, 'The country should capitalise on this dividend' and as youth comprised 'a major proportion of the human resource' they should be provided with 'ample opportunities for self-development' so that they in turn could 'play a vital role in the socio-economic development of the nation'. In the process of social engineering the state therefore constructed the 'youth of Jharkhand' in an attempt 'to 'make up' rational, choice-making, autonomous, responsible citizens within various projects of government (Kelly 2000:464), particularly in employment, education and health. Lines of adults' legendary idol Swami Vivekanand were quoted in this respect: 'My faith is in the younger generation, the modern generation, out of them will come my workers. They will work out the whole problem like lions'.

Indeed, during the last meeting I attended in September 2006, the 'youth of Jharkhand' had become 'the hope of the nation' and for them the state would construct a kind of 'governed freedom' that 'stands as a kind of citizenship school for adolescents to make "good choices"' (Austin 2005:3). These 'good choices' meant that the young people, selected by the state and entering its realm as 'the intimate other' and as 'youth-at-risk', would exchange their identity as 'youth-at-risk' for an 'entrepreneurial self' (cf. Kelly 2006) that would make the state secure. These adults trusted that these 'intimate others' would clear up the mess created by the state or which the state had failed to clear up by itself. As 'youth of Jharkhand' (and in particular the 'tribal youth') these young people were 'energetic, hardworking, honest, simple by heart and living' and had 'sports and cultural activity as a way of life'. They also were 'very much dedicated, idealists, nature loving and loved their cultures and values'. They indeed would therefore be able to return all those aspects the state had lost upon becoming 'an adult' and which belonged to 'youthfulness'. Clearly, this 'youth promise' worked in a present where widespread (adult) anxieties, uncertainties and tensions enabled the articulation of 'youth-at-risk' to function as a powerful truth (cf. Kelly 2000:471).<sup>9</sup>

### **Will it Last?**

In this article, I have subjected 'the state' (i.e. Youth Department of the GoJ) to an ethnographic gaze. By looking at youth policy formation process in Jharkhand, I did not learn anything more about young people in Jharkhand than that some among them (i.e. those aged between 13 and 30 years old) entered the space of the state as 'the intimate other' and as 'youth-at-risk', a 'vulnerable category'. Yet, I learned a lot about the state.

I showed that the state is embodied by ‘adults’ who are not ‘youths’ themselves, yet think they know them and understand their problems. Simultaneously, we saw that the state consists of a group of ‘*insecure* adults’ who collaborate with each other on a ‘segmentary’ basis, all adults, (cf. Baumann 2004:21-24) and strive for security by defining a general plan of action for ‘youth-at-risk’, structured as the ‘hope of Jharkhand’. Therefore, and unlike its Euro-American cousins described in studies mentioned in the introduction of this article, ‘youth-at-risk’ does not enter the space of the state in Jharkhand as a ‘threat’ whose behaviours and dispositions have to be regulated unless worse will happen (but cf. Anderson 2004). Unlike in the UK, USA and Australia, the relation between ‘the state’ and ‘youth’ in Jharkhand is based on ‘trust’ (and not on ‘mistrust’). In fact in Jharkhand, ‘youth-at-risk’ are enrolled in the state as ‘collaborators’, though not on equal basis. ‘Adults’ in Jharkhand trust that by providing these relatively young people with better means to ‘school them, or police them, or regulate them, or house them, or employ them, or prevent them from becoming involved in any number of risky (sexual, eating, drug (ab)using or peer cultural) practices’ (Kelly 2000:463); in other words, with more effective socialisation means, they will secure the state. Thus, youth policy in Jharkhand is based on the same rationale as that formulated in the ‘Draft New National Youth Policy of India’ (United Nations 1999) and in which the GoI states it believes that:

The development of any country depends upon the ways in which youth are nurtured and [the GoI therefore feels] that youth must find their due place in society to become active and constructive forces of positive change [and therefore] an urgent need is felt for a youth policy which, apart from aiming at youth development, also ensures *partnership* in the process of national development [emphasis mine].

The deal is clear therefore: the GoJ promises ‘youth-at-risk’ respect, recognition, confidence, employment, economic sustainability, quality education and good living conditions if in turn these youths will secure the state by cleaning up the mess. The state’s subscription to this coalition seems to have made the enrolled adults already feel somewhat more secure. We can question whether the state will remain secure however. As shown in this article, this ‘coalition’ has been planned without the inclusion of ‘youth’ (themselves) as important stakeholders. Instead, they entered the space of the state as ‘intimate others’ (non-adults) who the GoJ did not have to directly involve in planning (cf. Frank 2006) as these ‘adults’ understood youths’ problems and their needs. Besides, as ‘youth-at-risk’, these relatively young people aged between 13 and 30 years were included in the state on an unequal basis. Though adults at times legitimated this ‘inequality’ with ‘ideas of

complementarity' (Baumann 2004:48) (*we* have more experience and *they* have more energy), the 'coalition' was more often established through 'encompassment' where,

(...) the putatively subordinate category is adopted, subsumed or co-opted (<) into the identity defined and, as it were, owned by those who do the encompassing. Encompassment is thus always hierarchical (Baumann 2004:26).

We can therefore question the chances of success of this 'coalition' as it is not only proclaimed singly and based on inequality but also as it is between 'adults' and 'the youth'. One wonders about the 'duties and rights' of 'adults'. During the dissemination session of the Draft Jharkhand Youth Policy on 30 July 2007, one voice from the public questioned Guest of Honour Shri Bandhu Tirkey (Minister of Art, Culture, Sports, Youth Affairs and HRD Jharkhand) for instance by stating: 'The GoJ promises a lot in the draft policy but can you tell me what are the actual steps taken by the Government to reach poor youths in remote villages?' Most certainly, we can foresee that this alliance would be quite unstable.<sup>10</sup> In order to say more about its outcome however, we need to know for instance how individuals belonging to the relatively younger generation in Jharkhand identify and define 'the other', how they 'see' the state (*sarkar*), how they define their problems, what they provide as solutions and what their dreams are. In other words, in order to answer this question we need to undertake a totally different study than the above, namely one where the ethnographic gaze is directed at these relatively younger people themselves.

## Notes

1. This article is a completely revised version of my paper with the title 'The Unsteady Coalition between the State and the Indian Youth in India'. This paper was presented during a workshop on the 'Ethnographies of the State' organised by the Department of Sociology (Delhi University) on 3 and 4 March 2005. For workshop report see: Chatterji, Palriwala and Thapan (2005:4312-4316). A later version of the paper was also presented during a conference on 'Youths and the Global South', organised by ASC, CODESRIA, IIAS and ISIM in Dakar (Senegal) between 13 and 15 October 2006. I have chosen this article's new title in the hope of taking readers back to two important ethnographies of the state with similar titles and with two different approaches to 'seeing' the state, i.e. that of Scott (1998) and that of Corbridge, Williams, Srivastava and Véron (2005). In this article I combine the two perspectives from which the state can be seen, i.e. from within and from without.

2. Quoted in Peter Kenyon's 'Youth Policy Formulation Manual' (International Council on National Youth Policy, ICNYP) of which excerpts are available on: [www.icnyp.net/www/files/ypformmanual\\_excerpts.pdf](http://www.icnyp.net/www/files/ypformmanual_excerpts.pdf). See United Nations (1999) for entire Manual.
3. <http://www.un.org/events/youth98/backinfo/ywpa2000.htm>
4. Following Foucault's understanding of the concept in his *Discipline and Punish* (London: Allen Lane 1977), Muncie (1999:303) defines it as, 'the notion that, as system of surveillance increase, forms of control pioneered in the nineteenth century prison are replicated throughout the social order'.
5. In 2005, my colleague, Dr. Ellen Bal, of the Vrije Universiteit (VU) in The Netherlands, and I embarked on a new project concerning youth and human security in Bangladesh and India. This research is carried out using a theoretical framework under development at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the VU University through a project with the title 'Constructing human security in a globalising world'. In this article, I understand 'security' in the same sense as how we perceive of human security in this bigger project, i.e. as a state of being that can never be reached, as a 'paradise lost' (Cf. Baumann 2000). We use the concept of human security as a perspective or a lens that allows us to understand what makes people tick, without suggesting that everyone, always and everywhere, is driven by this 'quest for human security'. In this perspective of human security, securities and insecurities go together and are understood as two sides of the same medal. It perceives of human security as a goal rather than an end destination, as a driving force for many. And it underlines the significance of an individual and contextual approach (whereby the individual is related to the social).
6. <http://www.jharkhand.gov.in/depts/culsp/culspaims.asp> (accessed on 7 September 2006)
7. <http://www.newkerala.com/news3.php?action=fullnews&id=21978>
8. As these papers are unpublished I refrain from disclosing the authors of these papers. However, these papers and their authors as well as other participants during the meetings constitute my fieldwork data and informants for the present study.
9. In this respect Austin (2005, p. 8) argues that 'fidelity to any dream/ideal is shown to be juvenile, immature, 'a passing phase', something to be discarded when one wants to be counted as 'adult'. See also my unpublished paper presented during a workshop on 'Youth in the Age of Development (1920!) (Bahia, Brazil: 20-22 June 2004) organized by SEPHIS, the SSRC and the Centro d'Estudos Afro-Orientais of the Federal University of Bahia. My paper was entitled 'Day Dreams and Nightmares. The Indian State and its Youth in Post-colonial Ranchi: An Unsteady Coalition', and it delves deeper into the idea of 'adulthood' defined as the stage in the human life cycle during which people feel they have lost their dreams.

10. Warburton and Smith (2003:772), in an effort to answer the question of whether young people will develop active citizenship through compulsory volunteer-type programmes, show that policies that 'compel individuals to contribute to society weaken their citizenship identities'. Others have therefore argued in favour of the inclusion of young people in youth policy making (Frank 2006). This might guarantee youths' collaboration in adults' projects of nation-building.

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