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**GLOBAL CAPITALISM, WORKERS'  
SPACES AND PROCESSES OF  
SELECTIVE INCLUSION/EXCLUSION:  
Findings from a Newly Industrialising Area  
in India**

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**Global Capitalism, Workers' Spaces and Processes of Selective Inclusion/Exclusion:  
Findings from a Newly Industrialising Area in India**

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***Abstract***

*The paper constructs a picture of globalisation from workers' perspective in a newly industrialising area in India. It brings together the insights of the spatial approach, which facilitates an integrated study that links various levels at which global capitalism operates, with an attention to complex processes of inclusion/exclusion to conduct a study of workers across their various spaces. It argues the need to integrate analysis of workplace with other spaces of workers, and of the local with the global-national levels. This would help to better understand the variations and interconnections observed in differential practices of firms in the area of study that have differential outcomes for workers in their various spaces. The study has implications for understanding global capitalism, link between spatiality and industrial relations and for studying the role of social actors in institutional change.*

**Keywords:** *globalisation, workers, space, exclusion-inclusion, local*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The paper maps how the reshaping of work and the workplace as a result of global-national-local processes is reflected in the social spaces of workers. A spatial perspective is used to understand the interconnectedness, construction and reconfiguration of these various spaces and the associated processes whereby workers are included in or excluded from work, the workplace, their living spaces and the institutions of the state and decision-making bodies. The paper argues the need to integrate analysis of workplaces with exploration of workers' other spaces, and of the local with the global-national levels.

Findings from a newly industrialising area in India indicate that globalisation operates through differential labour management strategies and practices of firms that have differential outcomes for workers and their organisations. The division and segmentation at the workplace, through processes of selective inclusion and exclusion, is observable in the segmented living areas of workers. This in turn influences workers' varied access to services and decision-making processes. They are aware of the global-national forces that influence their various spaces and their responses display variations as these processes intersect the operating local power dynamics. Workers' own power resources derive from their place of origin, their social support systems, and their proximity to state functionaries. These resources shape workers' variable responses to the global-national forces. This has implications for the analysis of options open to workers and trade unions.

The aim is to show that a study of workers across the work-life boundary may contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact of global processes on multiple dimensions of workers' lives. In doing so, it hopes to address the criticism of workplace-focused research for its neglect of links with the social spheres of activity outside the workplace, while not drawing attention away from the enduring conflict of interests between workers and employers and material processes in the productive sphere that determine social relations.

## **GEOGRAPHY OF CAPITALISM AND PROCESSES OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION OF WORKERS: A SPATIAL APPROACH**

### **Spatiality of modern capitalism**

A spatial approach to modern capitalism and employment relations links transformations in the socio-economic structure to the social organisation of space. It questions an economic conception of globalisation by extending it into the realm of society and social relations. The emphasis is on understanding the complexity, contradiction and the uneven outcomes of globalisation, and the active construction and reconfiguration of social spaces by the interplay of global-national-local forces.

Space is conceptualised as both geographical i.e. national, regional, local, and social i.e. workplace and non-workplace. It denotes arenas that are both material and discursive, multiple and relational with multiple outcomes. Spatiality is both a material product or geographical expression of social relations and a shaper of them. For Massey (1995), a spatial perspective is about social relations of production in and across space, and about the notion that social relations themselves constitute social space. Places, relations and processes are conceptualised as interconnected and interdependent in power relations of dominance or subordination and as concrete patterns and practices that can be objectively analysed. They are not given and bounded but actively constructed and continuously restructured, and operate at multiple scales influenced by distance and intensity of interaction (Amin 2002; Brenner 1998; Keil 1998; Harvey 1982; Sassen 2003; Bebbington 2003; Herod et al 2006).

A spatial perspective of globalisation contests its conception as 'placeless', that is associated with the creation of a borderless world, and articulates a more multifaceted approach. Ongoing changes are viewed not as elimination of distance and space, but as a transformation of relations between places accompanied with increasing complexity and a wider spatial purview. For Harvey (1982), understanding space is understanding capital, as tensions between fixity and mobility. Capital organises and reorganises space for production to occur (e.g. shifting the balance of advantage between one place and another

or creating a new industrial space) but also creates tensions and contradictions in the process (e.g. deepening and spatial division of labour, new class struggles, cross-class alliances). The result of global processes is not homogenisation of places and practices but difference and variety of outcomes as a result of interface between global forces and national institutions and processes (the latter being a particular focus in the national business systems literature: Hollingsworth and Boyer 1997; Whitley 1998, 2000; Hall and Soskice 2001).

For workers, this conceptualisation of globalisation, where the location or relocation of capital and firms is determined by specific places in relation to other places (Harvey 1982; Cox 2001), translates into a new spatial division of labour, i.e. how the social division of labour is articulated geographically (Massey 1995). This requires an analysis of how labour markets are geographically structured (Peck 1996) and how social actors' spatial embeddedness and 'locality dependence' shape their economic and political praxis (Cox and Mair 1988 cf. Herod et al 2006). The spatial mobility implies an asymmetry of power because of complex and multi-dimensional processes through which workers are deprived, or benefit, from this interplay, that are shaped by longer-term social and institutional processes. This has implications for analyzing power relations and workers' capacity to exercise agency and helps reformulate issues around the nature of labour movement (Escobar 2001, 2004; Herod 2001; Herod et al 2006; Rainnie et al 2007).

### ***Bringing the 'local' in or 'Localism'***

While acknowledging the complex and differentiated nature of global capitalism, research from a global-national perspective has often underplayed the presence of heterogeneity at the sub-national levels within a national context and the possible conflicting relations and institutions that may exist. The predominant focus on the national often denies any agency to the local. This has been addressed in works on the geography of capitalism that see a reconfiguration and rescaling of national institutions and processes in relation to supra and sub-national levels (Jessop 2000; Brenner 1998) and in others that focus on limits to change and seek explanation in 'terrains of struggle' and 'subaltern alternatives' (Burawoy 2000; Escobar 2001, 2004). In the business systems literature, recent works accommodate greater

dynamism and variety in national-institutional arrangements that arise out of power relations and allow 'space' for actors to shape aspects in a given institutional framework (Almond and Ferner 2006). This shift in focus, or more appropriately the inclusion of other levels in the analysis, poses both challenges and advantages to a study of employment relations.

At the same time, with increasing recognition of the importance of the sub-national in understanding the dynamics of global capitalism and role of institutions, uncritical 'localism' at times tends to overemphasise the picture of the sub-national as proactive, coherent areas of shared interest (Mohan and Stokke 2000; Hart 2001). Often, globalisation discourse presents the issue as one of redefining of relations between the national state and sub-national regions by global capitalism with the sub-national localities actively competing for multinational capital on a level playing field. A simplistic link between 'institutional thickness', 'social capital' and economic success, as in the examples of Third Italy and Silicon Valley, is problematic. Often the 'successes' are based on exploitative social relations prevailing in the area and underpinning both urban processes and the workplace, especially in developing economies.

Massey (1996) warns of problems in equating spatially located areas with the notion of 'community': the former might reveal contradictions and deep conflicts of interest within such places that are at odds with 'community'. This raises the issue of who has the power to represent and speak for – and indeed, to define - the region or locality, and for what purpose (Allen et al. 1998; Amin 2002; Hudson 2005). The relational approach that conceptualises regions or localities as complex spatialised social relations characterised by unequal power relations challenge a unitary conception of the 'local'. Also, the material grounding of such an approach evades the trap of endless possibilities (Massey 1995; Hart 2002).

To sum up, the advantage of a spatial approach is that it focuses attention on the *uneven* and complex nature of modern capitalism that may *diverge* in its expression across sectors, regions and countries, but more importantly sees these divergences as *interconnected*, requiring focus on ongoing processes and *struggles* along with historical-institutional

explanations. A geographical conception of globalisation, firms and workers facilitates an understanding of globalisation as multiple, non-linear interconnected processes. It allows the linking of various levels as also different spaces of workers and to study them as interrelated, overlapping and dynamic as opposed to being hierarchical in the area of study. Thus, firms' strategies and workers' spaces are conceptualised as the geography of production (Harvey 1982; Massey 1995) and the operation and outcomes of globalisation as processes of inclusion and exclusion, the latter is the focus of the following sub-section.

### **Workers and their Spaces: selective and multiple 'inclusion and exclusion'**

A complex conceptualisation of spatial global capitalism emphasises its processual nature, in particular processes of exclusion and inclusion. For Castells (1998: 162)

Globalisation '...proceeds selectively, including and excluding segments of economies and societies in and out of the networks of information, wealth and power that characterise the new dominant system.'

The concept of 'social exclusion', widely associated with contemporary changes, is beset with the problem of multiplicity of meanings. It assumes different forms and refers to different processes in different contexts. From a neo-liberal perspective, social exclusion is an unfortunate but necessary and inevitable outcome of the global reorganisation of work, which results in workers being excluded from earlier protections covering employment and social security. It has been linked with the struggle for human rights, with moves to associate social and economic rights with legal and political rights, and in relation to 'citizenship' and access to resources and decision-making processes. Critics question its assumption that social (i.e. non-economic) factors lead to exclusion: this ignores the systemic dynamics of inequality arising out of economic systems (for details see Townsend 1993; Levitas 1996; Gore and Figueiredo 1996; de Haan 1998, 1999; Evans 1998; Grant et al. 2000; Beall 2002; Du Toit 2004).

Yet, the debate also raises many pertinent questions: Is exclusion inevitable? Does inclusion, as opposed to exclusion, mean benefits or equality? Does exclusion mean a continued shrinking of the political spaces available to workers and decline of unions? At



one level, exclusion from the labour market may lead to exclusion from housing and services or those living in areas of multiple deprivations may find it difficult to access jobs. This may result in political disempowerment and perpetuate exploitation and deprivation, particularly evident in case of unskilled migrants. At another, the selective 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' generated by global forces, evident in the segmented labour market and multiple employment contracts, hint at varying terms of inclusion that in reality often represent a form of exclusion (Levitas 1996) or 'adverse or passive incorporation' (Du Toit 2004). Such developments may exacerbate uneven access to employment opportunities, economic polarisation and social fragmentation within and between different localities.

Such varying terms indicate complex and unequal relations between capital-labour, firms-employees, permanent-temporary, local-migrant, unionised-non-unionised workers and workplaces, as well as multiple outcomes. Moreover, as Gore and Figueiredo (1996) found in their research in India and Thailand, exclusion is based on policies, institutions and socially constructed individual attributes. Thus, not merely integration and incorporation, but the ways in which workers are included and how economic and social power relations operate need to be analysed. It follows that exclusion and participation are not mutually exclusive; rather, workers can participate in one domain while being excluded from the other, or participate to different degrees. This makes the whole process contested and negotiated, with implications for workers' organisations. This is where the concept, as elaborated upon below, may prove to be useful.

The positive aspect of the concept lies in its focus on the limitation of effective or full participation in society. Processes of selective inclusion and exclusion often circumscribe forms of agency, for example firms use multiple employment contracts and remuneration policies to segment and control workers and curb unions (Edwards et al 1975; Wilkinson 1981). This may have ramifications in workers' other spaces - their residential areas, their access to services and to decision-making processes, and their politics. Thus, it has come to cover a wide range of discriminatory and exclusionary processes shaped by longer-term social and institutional processes (de Haan 1998, 1999; de Haan and Nayak 1995; Beall 2002). It denotes a structural and multi-dimensional phenomenon of deprivation that refers

to the processes, agencies and institutions of exclusion and the consequent situations, taking both workplace and living space dimensions into account (Grant et al. 2000).

The interrelationship between different types of inclusion-exclusion is central to the understanding and application of the concept. The significance lies in its focus on processes through which people are deprived, or benefit, not merely the situation in which they are, and the implications of these processes for analyzing power relations and workers' capacity to exercise agency in the area of study.

### **Workplace and Other Spaces of Workers: Challenges and Unity**

The complex web of spatial interconnections and multi-dimensional processes of inclusion and exclusion bring to notice the divide between material and non-material and workplace and non-workplace spaces. The general assumption has always been that work and life constitute distinct areas which can and should be separated. However, industrial sociology has always analysed varying types of relationship between work and life, e.g. occupations within communities like mining or fishing and the decline of community with the emergence of new occupations.

A workplace or employment relations focus has been criticised for its neglect of links with the family and other spheres and absence of an ethical dimension (Ackers 2002). In a post-colonial context, a focus on the workplace excludes the larger percentage of 'informal' labour with no clear employer-employee relations (Sanyal 1991). These approaches emphasise the need to link the workplace with other aspects of society and wider social processes (Gooptu 2001). In a slightly different vein, political economy stresses the need to study the political perception and expression of workers and unions. For Burawoy (1985) the workplace has been under-politicised with few connections forged between the workplace and power relations in the wider society.

At the same time, a focus on neighbourhoods can sometimes leave out the crucial sites of the workplace and the quotidian life of workers (Parry 1999; Joshi 1999, 2003). The broader definition of workers and their concerns draws attention away from the enduring

conflict of interests that exists between workers and employers and from the material processes in the productive sphere that determines social relations and exert pressures on the state (Edwards 1994).

More recently, there has been increased analytical focus on work-life 'balance' (a normative term, whereas 'boundary' better captures the ongoing processes) because of changing temporal and spatial terms of work. The focus adopted in this paper, rather than an exclusively workplace or living space focus, offers a possibility to study both spaces of workers where they experience, share and form an awareness of the unequal workplace relations and attendant power relations through multiple processes of inclusion and exclusion engendered by globalisation.

### **FRAMEWORK AND AIMS OF THE RESEARCH**

The framework for this study is moored in theories that help understand the interconnections between local and global. It brings together the insights of the spatial approach, which facilitates an integrated study that links various levels at which global capitalism operates, with an attention to complex processes of inclusion/exclusion to conduct a study of workers across their various spaces. A spatial approach extends our understanding by allowing real experiences to be studied in their specific global contexts

The study maps out the dimensions of the selective inclusion /exclusion of workers on the basis of the nature of their employment, where they live and their access to services and the institutions of state. The aim is to analyse and compare the social relations of work and employment across these various spaces of workers and also to capture workers' views in order to present a holistic picture of multi-dimensional global processes in a specific context. This entails and enables an analysis of connections between complex processes of deprivation, power and agency in the determination of patterns of inclusion and exclusion. Such an analysis facilitates understanding the nature of spatial restructuring as global capitalism interacts with national-local institutions and processes. This may help explain multiple outcomes for workers and to explore the options open to them.

## **BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY**

**Country** India has a federal structure with a division of power between the Centre and the provinces (in this study, Uttar Pradesh (UP)) to legislate, and variations among the provinces in terms of their size and population, historical, political and economic development, concentration of industry and type of firms, nature of workforce, industrial relations and labour movements.

**Region/Province** The province (UP) is among the largest in the country with above-mentioned variations evident within its many regions. It is important politically and socio-economically, with a high density of population and sends the largest number of representatives to the Indian Parliament. Exhibiting a combination of old and large urban industrial centres alongside a predominantly agrarian population (72 per cent), the province in many ways represents India in a microcosm: rapid development accompanies vast inequalities, while widening participation in democracy and decision-making processes accompany increasing polarisation along regional, caste and religious lines (UP 2004, Department of Information, Govt. of UP).

**Area of research** The choice of the area of Noida and Greater Noida was guided by the nature of industrialisation, with relatively new and fast industrialisation largely on account of a combination of foreign direct investment (FDI) and state directed policies. It has been identified as a SEZ, special economic zone. With a total area of 1501 sq. km and a population of 1.2 million, it is the largest revenue earning area in the province. It continues to see development fuelled by FDI (2 per cent of the total foreign investment in the country and the highest in the country in the manufacturing sector) attracted by favourable state policies and the availability of a large pool of workers ([www.upgov.nic.in](http://www.upgov.nic.in)). The proximity of the area to the capital city, one of the main reasons for its development, made it close to the centre of power, such as the central offices of chambers of commerce and trade union federations. It typified most aspects that have come to be associated with 'globalisation', workers and trade unions in India: the presence of a mix of indigenous, large and small, and multinational firms; new forms of work, employment and relationships at the workplace; all types of labour - skilled, unskilled, local, migrant, young and old; weak and/or declining

trade unions; and a state that is retreating from its protective and welfarist role. It is important to emphasise that the area has little history of trade union movement, though social movements on agrarian issues, on social reform and caste-based movements have existed.

***Type of study*** The empirical evidence in this paper is based on a qualitative study of workers' responses in 10 firms in 6 industries and an ethnographic study of their living areas. The focus was workers, their spaces and organisations. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with a wide range of workers collected workers' experiences and responses to globalisation on a whole range of issues: their current role in the firm; the nature of employment; recruitment and remuneration; work organisation and management practices; the firm's ownership and managers; the character of the firm; skill development; the role of trade unions and leaders; globalisation, new policies and patterns of influence; living spaces: access to services and other processes and institutions; and role of the state. A combination of tape recording and longhand notes, with write-up immediately after an interaction was used to record the information collected. Sixty interviews (10 for each of the bigger firms and 4-6 for the smaller Indian firms) and eight focus groups were conducted over a period of five months in interactions ranging from two hours to six hours. In addition, a number of informal interviews and focus groups were conducted with workers in the bigger eight firms.

Three factors were particularly noticed: (i) constraints at the workplace meant workers could only talk freely and without fear of repercussions in their familiar environments, i.e. living areas; (ii) there were problems of accessing workplaces with a stated objective of recording workers' experiences; (iii) the division between the management and workers was clear and I was regarded as on either one side or the other. This meant that research was conducted largely in the living spaces of workers where most of the five months were spent from morning till evening. This had the advantage of yielding rich material that also brought home the way in which reality of work-specific concerns were reflected, expressed, opposed and negotiated in the living spaces of workers. An attempt to supplement this information was made by interviewing employer representatives from chambers of

commerce along with central trade union federations, labour officers (officials from the ministry of labour), and political and administrative executives in the region, and by collecting documentary material from the firms and government offices.

**Firms** A cross section of firms was chosen to be representative of ownership structures (domestic versus multinational), size (large versus small), technology (low-tech to high-tech) and union status (unionised versus non-unionised). The firms were from automobiles, consumer goods, automotive components, electrical parts, optical media and chemicals, clothing and leather. They were representative of the industries operating in the area. There were six multinational firms; two indigenous firms; and two export units (in clothing and leather).

Manufacturing, rather than services was chosen because the area has the highest FDI in manufacturing in the country, and this drives the nature of industrialization. Though the services sector was equally important, its employment tended to be polarised between those at the high-tech end in ICT firms, who did not consider themselves as workers and aligned themselves with their management; and those in low-tech, low-skill activities, employed in the catering sector and as domestic helpers, and who often aspired to find employment in the manufacturing sector.

**Workers** A 'Snowballing' technique was used to identify workers. In view of the variety of workers in the firms and the region, a cross section was interviewed based on the nature of employment contract (permanent and temporary), firm (domestic and multinational), place of origin (local and migrant), age (younger and mature), skill and whether they were union functionaries. Focus groups (ranging from 8-15 members) comprised different categories of workers within the same firm and across firms to bring out the similarities and differences of experiences and responses.

**Living areas** were identified to represent a cross-section of different types of residential areas of workers. Five types of residential areas could be identified in the region: (i) residential colonies developed by the state industrial authority; (ii) company colonies

developed on the initiative of workers with some financial support by their firms; (iii) government authorised slums; (iv) 'urban' villages; (v) unauthorised slums.

*Terms Used* The terms 'state' and 'institutions' are used interchangeably throughout: they refer to all levels (national, provincial, local/municipal) of decision-making authority; to all political and administrative executives associated with state/government in any way (local politicians, MPs, administrative functionaries, labour officers); and all administrative and legal rules and regulations. 'Services' refer to civic amenities of water, electricity, sanitation and basic infrastructure. 'Local' workers refer to those who belong to the region and surrounding districts and have ties of family, caste, community, and thereby often have greater access to networks of influence.

## **FINDINGS**

Findings from the study indicate a wide variation in firms' practices, in responses of workers, in the nature of living areas, and in access to the services and institutions of the state by workers and firms. They display differences but also commonalities among workers.

### **Workplace: firms' differential practices and varying terms of inclusion/exclusion**

The overarching themes that emerged from the accounts of workers were of firms controlling workers through the use of multiple employment contracts, high labour turnover, wage differentials, increasing control over work regimes, heavy workload, deskilling, the containment of unions, an atmosphere of fear in many firms, and control through use of institutional supports. Yet, not all these strategies/practices were in evidence in all the firms. There were significant differences in the labour management strategies of firms and a complex picture emerged as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Firms' Practices**

<b>Firms</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Employment Contract</b>	<b>Recruitment</b>	<b>Rewards/Work conditions</b>	<b>Labour retention</b>	<b>Use of State institutions</b>
J1	Japanese	Permanent Temporary: Casuals Contract	Mix of locals and migrant workers	High/ Stress and employment insecurity but no overt intimidation	Medium	High proximity to political and administrative executive: used to deny affiliation to the union
J2	Japanese	Permanent Temporary: Casuals Contract Apprentices	Mix of locals and migrant workers	High/ Stress and employment insecurity but no overt intimidation; exploitation of apprentices to get work done for less	Medium	High proximity to political and administrative executive: used to curb union efforts & during bargaining
J3	Japanese	Permanent Temporary: Casuals Contract	Mix of locals and migrant workers	Medium-High/ Relatively better but some employment insecurity	Medium	Not as above, but access to political sphere through central federation affiliation
K1	Korean	Permanent Temporary: Co casual Casuals Contract	Largely migrants	Highest paymaster/ High level of fear and intimidation	High turnover	Low
K2	Korean	Permanent	Local workers	Very High/ (firm is closed now)	-	
G	German	Permanent Temporary	Mostly from surrounding regions	Medium/ Indifference	Medium	Proximity to political and administrative executive
A	Indian	Permanent Temporary	Migrants Locals	Not as high as MNCs/ 'Open' workplace with no fear	High retention	Low
H	Indian	Contract	Local workers	Low/Fear and intimidation	High turnover	Low
I1	Indian	Contract	Migrants	Lowest/Fear and intimidation	High turnover	Low
I2	Indian	Contract	Migrants	Lowest/Fear and intimidation	High turnover	Low

Labour retention strategies of some firms (G, A) were in evident contrast to a strategy of high labour turnover in others (K1). Some firms recruited workers solely from outside regions (export units had predominantly migrant casual workers) or relied solely on one category of workers; others hired from a mix of regions as part of their recruitment strategy.



Segmentation of the workforce was sometimes clearly between permanent and temporary employment while others had further sub-divisions among the temporary workers, between contract, casual and apprenticed workers. Some actively pursued intimidatory tactics (K1, J2, H) while other firms relied on freer working environments (A). The high wages of some firms (K1) were traded off against better working conditions prevalent in others (A). Some firms, more than others, showed a greater reliance on the institutions of the state for worker and trade union control (J2).

Institutional factors, through legal and administrative provisions, specifically the temporary suspension of the labour law's application to the region, played a role in making a cheap and malleable workforce readily available and in the operation of multiple contracts.

A number of recent notifications by the state government have modified and/or eliminated provisions, perceived as irrelevant and outdated, pertaining to labour, especially temporary workers: All industrial units established in SEZs are declared Public Utilities<sup>1</sup>/units of national importance for 6 months, with the power to extend this period delegated to the Development Commissioner<sup>2</sup>. Development Commissioner of Noida/ G.Noida SEZ is authorised to exercise all powers of Labour Commissioner<sup>3</sup>. The Contract Labour Act, 1970 is streamlined and simplified and powers under it delegated, with the Development Commissioners in SEZs nominated as Registration and Licensing Officers. Employment of women workers in early night shifts is allowed for three years in all factories, subject to the provision of transport, canteen, security etc.

Such developments have drawn varied reactions: while welcomed by the employers and chambers of commerce, who had lobbied hard for them, the workers and their organisations as well as other socio-political organisations were critical.

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<sup>1</sup> Public Utilities are exempted from application of general labour laws of the land

<sup>2</sup> Development Commissioner is a high-ranking bureaucrat in charge of all aspects of management and development of an SEZ. This notification implies further dilution of labour laws and more power to the executive in its operation

<sup>3</sup> Labour Commissioners are in specific charge of enforcement and compliance with the labour laws of the land. They also fulfil the role of looking after the welfare and grievances of labour of the region allocated to them. Envisaged as being separate from other functionaries of the government to ensure fairness to labour, this power is diluted.

The workers constantly alluded to state support for the employers in the implementation of unfair practices, e.g. indiscriminate hiring-firing of workers, curbs on unions, moves towards sub-contracting and the resultant fear and insecurity among workers.

They (MNCs) are guided by their interests and do not care about workers. State is playing into their (MNCs) hands... [it] continues to change its policies and labour laws in favour of a few, not labour. Contract workers and casuals are exploited.

(Union official, J3 and J1)

Two stories regularly repeated were of J1 and J2. In the former, attempts to form an affiliation with a central trade union federation were defeated with the help of state authorities. Details were cited in the case of J2 as to how proximity to the political leader of the state and use of labour commissioners had helped the company to deny recognition to its union and to victimise union members. Accounts also referred to the presence of police officials during bargaining. It was widely believed that political patronage was extended in return for the award of contracts as well as employment for the favoured few.

Those who have the support of the local leaders are getting the jobs whether they have qualifications or not. Look at me, I am trained, I worked hard but where am I?

(Local, temporary workers, H)

Processes of 'selective inclusion and exclusion' of workers at the workplace were operating through such differential management strategies. Permanent workers were most included on account of their job security, wage level and status while migrant contract workers in export units were possibly the most excluded (or adversely incorporated, if compared to the unemployed). Looked at more closely, local permanent workers were more confident than permanent workers from other regions; temporary locals were more vocal than temporary migrant workers. Among the temporary workers, company casuals (partly included because they were employed directly by the firm) felt they were owed more than the casual and contract workers:

I am a company causal and they should make us permanent. I am technically trained

and that can't be said for a lot of permanent workers... Sure, contract workers are worse paid but they are outsiders.... We are company people...that should make the company treat us differently!

Oh, no! [Very vehement denials]. Contractors and their workers are outsiders. We are company casuals, company employees!

(Company casuals, J1 and K1)

And the skilled apprenticed workers (J2) expected more on account of their skills (partly included).

We are ITI trained from Bhopal, which is one of the best... We are already trained, that is why they (employers) got us here! They got us from outside on false promises. We are temporary and can be out anytime. And they have employed us in different production shops, in trade different from our specialisations. We were doing the work of a full time worker, 8.5 hours, sometimes more, and they were paying us only apprenticeship stipend...and overtime mostly at single rate!

Now they are shifting back to local recruitment and want us to train these local boys who have no skills and do not want to learn. These locals get a job through their contacts...they have the land and come here for the name only. They say, 'let them not pay us so long as we have the name (of the firm)...we will work for free as long as they keep us'. They will, because they can get married with large dowries then. [Embarrassed laughter all around]

(Apprentices, J2)

Multiple employment contracts, wage differentials, and divisions based on place of origin, skills, proximity to the powerful and a desire to hold on to relative security resulted in varying levels of fragmentation and a hierarchy among workers. These drew differential responses from them and were often expressed in mutual envy and hostility in a climate of constant threat of unemployment within a regional economy of surplus labour supply.

These outsiders come and are willing to work for less and less and put up with misconduct.

(Temporary, local employee, K1)

The problem with the locals is that they do not appreciate their good fortune...they are irresponsible...they have jobs and good money...what else do they want?

(Migrant company casual, K1)

The differentiated workers often displayed a sectional identity. However, restructuring at the workplace was also creating similar experiences of 'unfair practices' at the workplace among all workers. Such practices were resented by all. Dissatisfaction with the employers, Indian managers and supervisors was all-pervasive.

They are bad...they are worse than these foreign ones. The foreign ones do not know when they come here...it is our lot who teach them everything [i.e. the unfair practices]. They are selfish...You would expect them to think of us. With all the corruption and nepotism, it is the relatives of the GM and local politicians who get the jobs.

(Mixed focus group of MNC workers)

Work-related hierarchy was intersected by a shared threat of unemployment felt by all. There was an apparent willingness to forego higher wages, and ever accept lower salaries, for better working conditions. Ties of family and friends among different categories of workers intersected the divisions created by multiple employment contracts. The assumption that employers and the state were complicit underlay the perception of most workers and acted as a further link among them, though variations and contradictions persisted here too and came across in a mixed focus group:

It would be nice if the government could exercise more control over the working conditions, especially the number of hours and the kind of salary paid... and over contractors and employers. But how can this happen when all the state functionaries are corrupt and in the pocket of employers. Also how much can the government do when unemployment is so high and trained people are willing to work for less and less? It is just fortunate to get a job.

Not surprisingly, an element of pragmatism marked worker responses to employer strategies of control and work practices. A certain amount of 'inevitability' associated with the global processes and the workers being 'done to' was evident in their acceptance of the influx of MNCs but it was also accompanied by happiness at the employment opportunities and privileges associated with higher salary or permanent contract. Though elements of disenchantment were beginning to appear, most workers continued to look to the state for protection and the provision of public goods - much like the firms that successfully used the auspices of the state for protecting and furthering their interests. Interestingly, though

critical of state support to employers, workers were happy to use the same mechanisms, i.e. proximity to state functionaries, to gain employment or a sub-contract:

Can you blame us (for using local contacts)? Employers use them all the time.  
Government people use it to get their relatives in. So, why not us?

(Local, temporary contract worker)

In sum, at the workplace firms adopted a variety of means to achieve a common aim of dividing and fragmenting labour, and workers displayed a variety of fragmented responses that reflected the specificity of their working experience. The material differences at the workplace and in worker responses were real and significant, informed as they were by market position (K1: as one of the most successful firms and the highest paymaster in the area could have a no-union policy) or home-country effects of firms (J1, J2, J3: the Japanese firms were more inclined towards enterprise-based unions) or host-country institutions (the use of state institutions in most spheres of life) or the nature of the sector (manufacturing). Institutional factors, that is the role of the state and state regulation, played a role in the nature and implementation of firms' practices as well as in workers' lives. The complex picture of the workplace hinted at varied outcomes and avenues of expression for workers and for trade unions, especially the unintended consequence of a possible common consciousness emerging among workers as an outcome of firms' behaviour in response to market pressure and opportunities.

### **Living Areas: varying terms of inclusion/exclusion and spatial configurations**

Material differences at the workplace and variation in work practices and responses were reflected in the living spaces of workers. Key findings reinforced the theme of variation observed in labour management practices and the responses of workers at the workplace. At the same time, while the strategy of control of workers and undermining the commonalities through differential employment contracts and remunerations was reflected in the hierarchy of the living spaces, it was also crosscut by a sense of unity among workers arising out of shared spaces, experiences and a sense of unfairness. The living spaces formed a significant dimension of social relations of production.

In the five residential areas a form of hierarchy originating from and akin to the one at the workplace could be observed, with the government-planned (Industrial Authority) sectors/colonies at the top and unauthorised slums at the bottom as shown in Table 2. In between, in descending order were the company colonies, unauthorised colonies, ‘urban’ villages and authorised slums. The areas towards the upper end of the hierarchy had access to better services and to the decision-making levels of the state; such access progressively declined as one moved down the ladder.

**Table 2: Workers Living Areas**

<b>Type of residential area</b>	<b>Name &amp; Location</b>	<b>Features</b>
Planned colony	Gamma, Greater Noida	High level of public infrastructure, services and law and order
Authorised company colony	Y Nagar, Noida; A colony, Greater Noida	Slightly reduced scale and reach of public infrastructure and services
Unauthorised regularised colony	Harola, Noida	Come up through unauthorised sale or grab of land but regularised by government by providing some services
Authorised urban villages	Surajpur, Greater Noida	Villages surrounded by industrial and municipal urban settlements
Unauthorised slums	Khoda, Noida	Very little infrastructure / services

The processes of selective inclusion and exclusion extended here too. The ‘included’ permanent workers in the MNCs largely resided in well-developed and serviced areas; others ‘partly incorporated’, e.g. skilled migrant workers, apprentices, lived in company colonies, peri-urban areas and villages; and a majority of temporary and migrant workers, adversely incorporated or excluded, dwelt in the slums. Such scaling of the spaces resulted in further divisions among workers.

I admit we are better than others, especially the unauthorised ones, but not very good either. The light (electricity) doesn’t always come. The colonies of the Authority are much better. Why the difference?

(Union Functionary, J3, resident of a company colony)

Workplace injustices were overshadowed by demands for services and other issues in some areas. This continued the process of fragmenting the workers evident at the workplace and of weakening the formation of a collectivity.

However, on closer examination certain variations in the above scheme of things were observable. Not all 'included' workers resided in areas where they were expected to, i.e. well-developed and well-serviced residential areas. Some locals, who owned land and were economically and politically powerful continued to reside in or maintained strong links with villages, 'urban' villages and sometimes slums. This provided them with an opportunity to continue with an additional source of income (usually from agriculture or related activities); and allowed them to retain their dominant status (of class and/or caste) with its resultant social networks and benefits.

The 'most included' permanent workers, both in terms of employment status and also of the quality of the areas of residence and access to services, had the greatest fear of being 'excluded' from both. They suffered from a sense of insecurity similar to workers in other categories. At the other end, the 'most excluded' migrants who resided in slums exhibited no such fear and were resigned to workplace inequality and apathetic towards living conditions:

What is the point (of services)? We only come here to sleep. I am here to earn...and they will never give us a permanent job.

(Focus group of migrant workers, I1 and I2)

In between, there were many variations based on levels of inclusion and exclusion both at the workplace and in living areas. Many who were 'more included' at the workplace felt 'excluded' in the living spaces and vice versa. The skilled migrant workers (e.g. J2) who lived in the 'urban villages' experienced a greater sense of inclusion with respect to work but exclusion when it came to access to people of influence/ decision-making processes because they did not 'know anyone'.

Yes, we live together but half of them are locals and they go home. The people (locals) understand our problems but they live here during the week and go to their villages over the weekend. They are different. We are different. We have skills and we held good jobs. They work at the firm only for the name. Pay and conditions don't matter to them.

What can we do? Nobody listens to us...we are from different places. We don't know anyone here and even if we ask for help, no one will stand by us, we are from outside.

(Focus group of migrant skilled apprentices, J2)

The reverse was true for many unskilled local workers (e.g. K1, J2) who lived in the surrounding villages and continued with the original agrarian pursuit (often as a fallback option during periods of unemployment). They drew confidence from local networks of community, village, and region and were vocal in their criticism of workplace practices and migrant workers for 'putting up with them':

I tell the security men who misbehave (manhandle, shout) with me...I will see you at the gate...

Others (migrant workers) who put up with it are not men.

(Local temporary worker, K1)

Many of the relatively prosperous and influential locals, who were excluded or partly included-excluded in the workplace as temporary workers in its various categories, often indulged in land grab in the slums and extended accommodation at high rents to migrant workers. The economic strength and political clout required for this originated from their insertion into channels of influence (access to officials and politicians through links of family, caste, village etc that are often drawn upon in times of crisis or during elections). They were most vocal in their demands for services and more hopeful of their fulfilment because of their social support systems.

I tell you it is a matter of time...we will get the recognition (thereby services in the unauthorised colony). They [the government] will have to do it. We are a solid vote bank for them.



(Local temporary worker, J1, Head of the residential committee)

In a way, their exclusion at the workplace was sought to be remedied by seeking greater inclusion in their other spaces.

Despite the very evident divisions, the unintended outcomes of such structuring and reconfigurations were the coexistence of the workers in the living spaces, the urban-rural continuum and the overlap of spaces and issues in the physical and mental landscapes of workers. Shared spaces encouraged sharing of the experiences and injustices of the workplace. The empathy and the sympathy from the shared plight, or the fear of it, often overcame the divisions and hierarchy of both the workplace and living spaces.

The situation in those areas [Khoda and Harola] is bad. The workers there are mostly in export units and it is well known the kind of exploitation that goes on in such units. The government supports the owners of such units but ignores the terrible conditions that the workers live in...where else can they live on the pittance that they receive? As for us (in the MNCs), it is a different kind of exploitation. [Nods of approval by all]

(Union President, J1 during a mixed focus group)

A fragmented workforce from fragmented work organisation lived in hierarchical living spaces. Given their degree of fragmentation, sense of insecurity and spatial segmentation, one would expect to find a much weakened workforce with reduced avenues of organisation and representation. Yet, the politics of the workers displayed complexities that arose from their varied exclusion/inclusion at the workplace and in living spaces and the varied nature of interest articulation. The emphasis on the interests articulated differed on the basis of the place of residence (more service-oriented in the slums and completely work-related in the residential areas of the MNCs), or origin of workers (migrant or local), or skills of workers.

Variation of interests could be observed between the slums, where demands centred on better living conditions and services, and the well-serviced residential sector developed by the government, Gamma, where the permanent MNC workers were concentrated, where

workplace and work related issues completely dominated. Again, service-related demands in slums were vocalized by influential local residents of the area and not the migrant workers. The urban village of Surajpur and the company colonies showed a mix of demands: the demands for services were not as strong as in the slums and were mixed with criticisms of work culture and practices.

While migrants and temporary workers in the slums displayed apathy towards their living conditions and towards the idea of political solutions to the same, and felt completely disempowered politically and economically, those in other areas, e.g. the migrant skilled workers working in the MNCs and residing in the 'urban villages', were more engaged. This stemmed from their sense of greater inclusion (however selective) at the workplace. However, it is significant that the engagement was not with the local politics but with the new economic policies of the state to attract MNCs and its impact on them, i.e. at the global-national level (the case of apprentices of J2 who spoke of workplace issues but disregarded the local ones).

Migrants, whether in temporary low paid employment or skilled, felt weaker on account of 'not knowing anyone' compared to the local workers who felt stronger because of their social support systems despite their insecure jobs. The presence of many well-placed permanent workers and entrepreneurs, mostly local, in the unauthorised slum of Khoda indicated both the operation of an 'informal' economy and the use of informal channels and mechanisms by the workers to gain economic strength and social status, and thereby access to the decision-making processes and institutions.

If they are going to take our land away, why wouldn't we grab this land? We have to live and this is our place, our roots. [AT – But land grab is not good, surely?] No, it isn't. But a man has to go up in life. Money talks, power matters.

None of the locals wanted to move and all felt that the migrants were unfortunate, thus manifesting the relationship between spatial mobility and social power.

Nobody wants to be rootless; I can't imagine going somewhere else to live... it is sad to be a migrant.

This fractured politics with conflicting interests in the slums and the 'urban villages' reflected the inclusion-exclusion experienced by workers at the workplace. The local residents were 'more included' in the social processes of decision-making and power because of their origin (as compared to the migrants) but 'more excluded' than the permanent workers in the MNCs (who had access to better services). The latter, for their part, were not as concerned with the conditions of the slums (when asked about it) as with their own largely work related issues. The greater inclusion of the migrant skilled workers and exclusion of the local unskilled workers at the workplace reinforces Massey's (1996) emphasis that space implies a co-existence of differences and multiple trajectories. Also, the preoccupation with service provisions in the slums was counterpoised by very powerful workplace and work-practices related responses in the company colonies and the residential sectors of the workers.

At the same time, the workers in the MNCs were as likely to exhibit a place-based politics in their villages.

I still have my land in the village...have bought some more too. This area is only going to grow more, not less. At the end of the day, it is family [extended family], community that matters...in times of need, marriage, troubles, and illnesses. Without your roots and links (in the village), a man is anchorless.

(Permanent worker, MNC)

Another example was found in interviews conducted with a local, permanent worker and a focus group of a mix of workers from the same organisation in one of the villages. When the interview was completed, I requested for all categories of temporary workers to be assembled. None of the temporary workers sat down and no response was forthcoming on any of the issues raised except from the permanent worker, who belonged to the dominant caste, was one of the rich men of the village, and was also instrumental in getting others employment. On being prompted, the permanent worker said 'I am telling you, why do you need to ask them' and the temporary workers said 'we agree with what he says'.

Despite attempts by capital to undermine their commonalities, the possibility of a common consciousness emerging among workers, identified at the workplace, was also identifiable

in the living spaces of workers. There was a keen awareness of trends and practices in other workplaces. Also, all along there was an emphasis on injustice and unfairness and a feeling of 'us' and 'them' among workers. Despite the divisions and conflicting interests there was a continued sense of awareness that such differences were largely work-mediated. This came through in almost all interviews and focus groups when workers, after initial scapegoating of other groups of workers, would end by attributing all their problems to the 'MNCs, employers, state, new policies and changes'. Use of local networks were accepted by all and resented by some but always attributed as a counter to the prevalent 'unfairness'.

It appeared that processes of exclusion-inclusion were multiple and interrelated and operated in all domains of workers. Although at some level the exclusions at workplace and living space were mutually reinforcing, in other respects and for some groups they were mutually compensating – e.g. exclusion at work can be offset by living space inclusion, and vice versa. The locational sources of power, i.e. those rooted in a place, local support structures and networks of influence that followed from it played a role. Also, though the fragmentation of both living space and workspace was a source of division, there were countervailing sources of solidarity deriving from a shared plight (or fear of it). Workers attempted to counter work-generated and spatial inequalities by demands for services, through recourse to formal as well as informal channels of influence and institutions of the state. What emerged was a lack of concordance between power location within the village or other living space, and power location in the company. Old social structures rooted in agrarian systems persist alongside new power relations in industrialised workplace settings.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

A spatial perspective, with its ability to conceptualise the interconnections between various spaces of workers and at multiple levels, informed this research. Findings show that multiplicity defined all aspects of firms' practices; the nature of the workforce, its spatial concentration and politics; and the interaction of the various actors with state policies and institutions. Such variations existed in the area prior to the influence of global forces but have become more pronounced with a rapid growth in size and concentration of population following the influx of foreign investment.

### **Global-national in the workplace**

Taking the firms' practices as representative of global processes, their differential nature divided the workers through selective inclusion-exclusion at the workplace, inadvertently providing them with some unifying features too. The divisions thus created were reflected in the hierarchical living areas, though here too shared experiences created their own sense of unity among workers. Multiple processes of inclusion-exclusion sometimes reinforced the extant power equations between different categories of workers and at other times workers strove to redress the power balance at the workplace, in the living areas and/or in access to institutions and actors that carried influence in society. Firms played a further role in restructuring workers' living areas by influencing the state's decision to develop the area (SEZ) with its easy availability of cheap labour and good infrastructure; moreover, it was an area with little history of trade unionism and where suspension of labour laws could be enforced via administrative and legal provisions. All this had a natural and direct impact on the nature of trade unions at the national level who found it difficult to access the workers in the area. More significantly, at the local-neighbourhood level firms' controls and curbs on unions created conditions for workers to share their grievances about unfair practices experienced at their own workplace as well as at other workplaces whose workers shared their living areas.

The role of the national level was identifiable in that the very development of new regions/areas within the states to attract foreign investment is subject to state discretion in the choice of area and nature of its development. More importantly, the state (local-municipal) contributed to the multiple inclusion-exclusion of workers in all domains. At the workplace, its extension of support (legal, political and administrative) to the employers was cited frequently by workers as a major reason for the success of firms' unfair practices. This extended into the living areas where the provision of well-serviced and well-planned residential colonies to some whilst denying the extension of similar services to the unauthorised colonies and slums, under the auspices of the local-municipal state, often reinforced the asymmetrical power relations being created at the workplace by global capitalism.

### **Global-national in the local, Local in the global-national: Living areas and power dynamics**

It was at the local-neighbourhood level, especially in the workplace-living space interactions, that the boundaries between different actors and institutions blurred further. Taking the workplace-living space dichotomy as misleading and restricting (especially in the context of the study), the living spaces of workers were conceptualised as an extension of the workplace that reflected workplace realities, and spaces that determined employer strategies of location of subsidiaries and recruitment. The material differences and conflictual relations of the workplace were experienced and reflected in the living spaces and in the differential access to services and social processes. These social spaces were the arena where workers engaged and contested with each other, with workplace realities, with local power dynamics, and with institution of the state. The global-national level was entering, influencing and altering the social spaces.

If workplace and work practices represented the global-national processes that structured the living areas, the workers were not totally helpless or apathetic either: they tried to counter workplace inclusion-exclusion in these very spaces. Workplace dissatisfaction was articulated here and interaction with trade union leaders took place in these spaces. Place of residence defined social and economic status of workers but living areas were also used to either elevate the status through economic advantages, e.g. many workers continued to reside in villages, unauthorised colony or slums because of the rental income earned through migrant workers, or to retain the status that originated from their embeddedness in the social support systems and channels of influence, e.g. by continuing to reside in villages. It was also here that workers countered the state through circumventing its rules, e.g. by usurping land in unauthorised colonies. It was the dynamics observable in the living areas that brought into notice workers' politics that could be both work-based and place-based simultaneously in different spaces e.g. work-based in Gamma for permanent workers but place-based in their villages, or work-based at the workplace but place-based in slums. Local forces were simultaneously negotiating with as well as countering global-national ones.

The local influenced the global-national through the operation of power relations that pervaded all. Political patronage, dominant status, or social support systems were mobilised to gain employment, and to garner sub-contracts or services that often reinforced power relations. The locals were more vocal at the workplace and outside through their 'knowing someone'. Firms were party to the prevalent clientelism in order to control workers and trade unions. The same extended to institutions of the state. Though critical of the state support to employers, workers (and this was more likely to be locals than migrant workers) frequently used the same for their own purposes. In the living areas, while temporary migrant workers lived in slums and had no choice, local or dominant community workers chose their place of residence based on its implications for their social or economic status.

### **Summing Up**

The integrated study of workplace-living spaces of workers has shown that the geographical concentration of workers in the urban-rural landscape, the structuring and restructuring of their spaces, differential access to institutions and services through processes of selective inclusion and exclusion, and overlapping commonalities and fragmentation among workers in living and work spaces were spatial expressions of division of labour and power relations evident both in work and living domains (de Haan and Nayak 1995; Gooptu 2001; Massey 1995).

The multidimensional connections that existed between the workplace and the living spaces followed from, and spread into, institutions of state, firms, and broader politics. Rather than being the 'inevitable' outcome of the global reorganisation of work, the reconfiguration of workers' spaces and related ongoing processes were selective, variegated and engendered by the institutions of the state, market and society where asymmetrical power relations pervade all levels. Thus, they embodied the sub-state geographies of global capitalism operating at multiple levels and contributed to the 'messiness' of globalisation which was central to the understanding of workers lives, and indeed of globalisation.

A spatial perspective permitted a holistic study of globalisation and helped to address the much-neglected level of the provincial and the local in the analysis of work and

employment relations (Bebbington 2003). Global-national processes intersected the operating power dynamics that had a base in the place of origin of workers, their social support systems, and their proximity to state functionaries. These intersecting processes were evident in the overlapping commonalities and divisions that influenced the spatial politics of workers and were generating struggles in the area that were at the same time local, national and global (Cox 2001; Hudson 2005; Sassen 2003; Keil 1998).

In doing so, it brings into notice two significant aspects of workers lives: their engagement with all levels of processes affecting them and their capacity to exercise agency (Burawoy 2000; Escobar 2001, 2004). Global-national-local processes function by constricting the spaces of workers in newly industrialising areas: limiting their interactions and expressions at the workplace; their trade unions as well as their access to services and decision-making processes in their segmented living areas. The same also have the impact of widening the workers' spaces: they may attempt to counter the constraints of the workplace by increased interactions and developing resultant sympathies in the living areas and through recourse to various channels available to the workers. These spaces provide avenues of expression for worker dissatisfaction that is curbed at the workplace.

This emphasises the need for more work on globalisation from the workers' perspective, as significant participants who experience it closely and in all domains of their lives. The methodological approach adopted here allows an insight into the nature and impact of globalisation, reinforcing the argument that the dynamics of globalisation operate as part of extant social dynamics, not as their simple replacement. Further, as global capitalism operates through such processes that are a spatial expression of power relations, it may at times reinforce and at others alter such relations. This opens up avenues for studying the role of social actors and realignment of power relations among actors and their role in institutional change (Almond and Ferner 2006). More specifically, this may have implications for the strategy and nature of trade unions in a constrained environment observable in the unions' adopting a strategy of neighbourhood mobilisation in the living areas.



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