অন্তর্বর্তী শ্রম

变迁劳力

TRANSIT LABOUR

শ্রমরে আবর্তজাল, অঞ্চল,এবং সীমানা

回路、区域、边界

CIRCUITS, REGIONS, BORDERS

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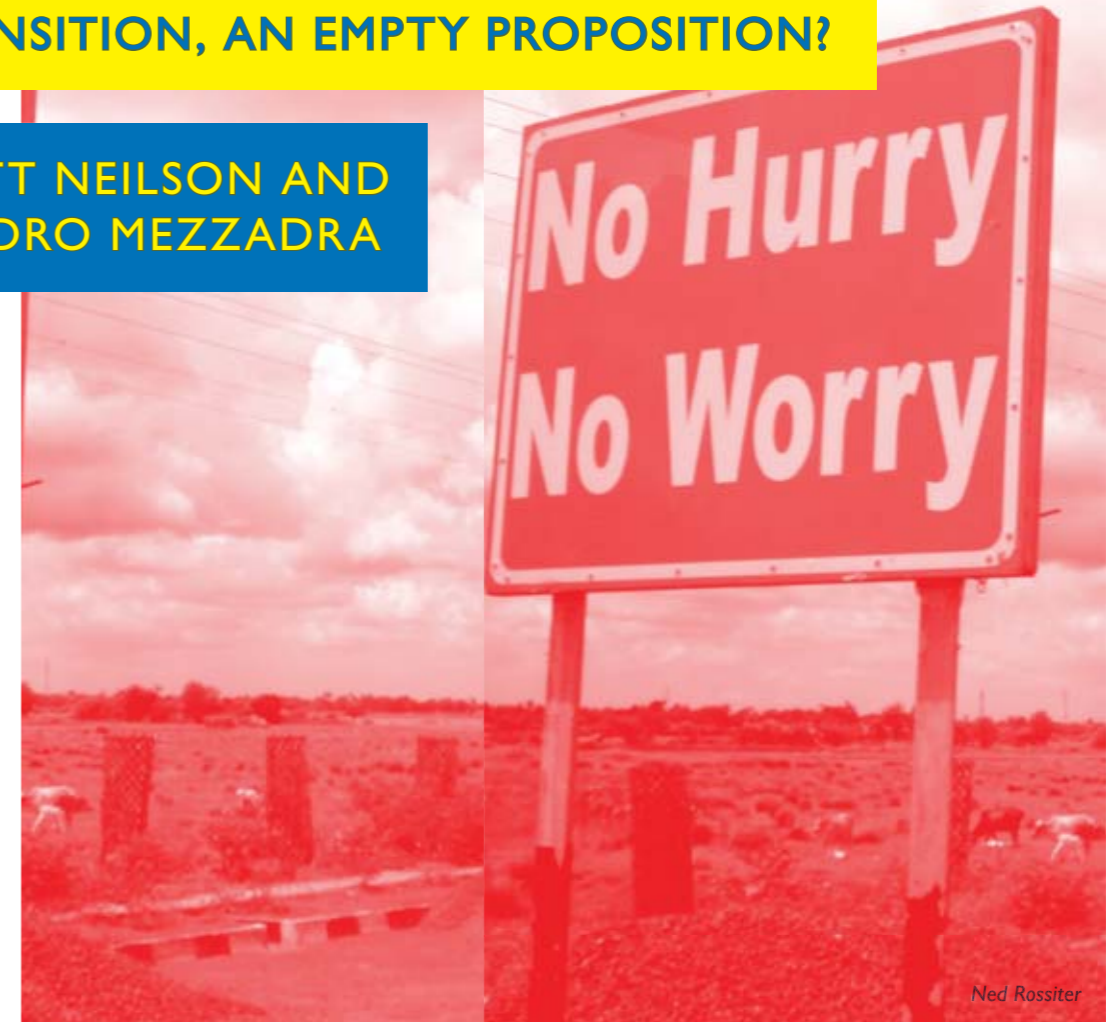# TRANSITION, AN EMPTY PROPOSITION?

BRETT NEILSON AND SANDRO MEZZADRA

Ned Rossiter

Resistance to land grabs and accelerated urban expansion has been a hallmark of recent peasant struggles in West Bengal. One thinks of the conflicts that unfolded at Singur and Nandigram in 2006-2007 when peasant movements successfully blocked the West Bengal government's acquisition of village and agricultural lands for the 'public purpose' of establishing an automobile factory in the first instance and a Special Economic Zone in the second. These struggles resounded loudly in Indian and West Bengali public life, igniting debates about primitive accumulation among Kolkata's intellectual class and eventually contributing to the fall of the state's longstanding Left Front government in May 2011. Elsewhere on Kolkata's fringes, resistance to land acquisition has not been so successful. The huge area of land known as Rajarhat or New Town which sits to the city's northeast is a barren monument to stalled peasant movements. Dotted by empty housing estates, shopping malls, special IT zones, 'service villages' inhabited by populations left without livelihoods, and vast stretches of arid land, Rajarhat is a site that has much to teach us about mobile styles of governing, transmutations of capital and labor, and the violent production of space that accompanies informational strategies of accumulation.

The Special Economic Zones (SEZ) that have multiplied their presence across the Indian subcontinent since the middle of the last decade join an array of spaces that are fundamental to the reorganization of labor forces, labor processes, and the social relation of capital well beyond the national scale. These spaces include Export Processing Zones, Free Trade Zones, new towns, IT hubs, freight highways, and industrial corridors. Understanding how these spaces connect to and disconnect from each other is crucial for assessing the saturated normative arrangements that pertain in them, their significance for sovereign and governmental powers, the logistical operations that link them to each other as well as into wider global

circuits, and the various forms of labor, exploitation, and dispossession that they facilitate. Important factors in this regard are the competition between Indian states to attract direct foreign investments, the role of Development Commissioners and other administrative bodies in the governance of these spaces, the use of the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 to acquire the land for such developments as a 'public purpose', the displacement of peasant and sharecropper communities, intergovernmental agreements that facilitate vast infrastructure implementations, the assignation of differential citizenship rights and their role in the 'precarization' of the workforce, and the significance of 'knowledge work' and 'virtual migration' in the building up of these spaces. This is not the occasion to undertake a comprehensive survey of the postdevelopmental rescaling and respatialization of labor and production that has crossed the Indian subcontinent since the economic 'reforms' of 1991. Suffice it to say that there has been a persistence of unorganized and informal work, a reinforcement of the sexual division of labor, and a swelling in the ranks of internal migrant workers, particularly those who subsist at the point where the frontiers of capital impinge upon urban heartlands and fringes. In spaces such as Rajarhat, where the development of the urban fringe has abandoned industrial pretensions, these tendencies converge.

As a new town established on Kolkata's fringes Rajarhat is not technically a SEZ. Although it contains a number of SEZs established for the IT and IT Enabled Services (ITES) sectors, it is rightly classified with the other new towns that have grown up along the edges of Indian metropolises: Navi Mumbai for Mumbai, Gurgaon for Delhi, and so on. In the late 1990s the development of Rajarhat was changed to the West Bengal Housing and Infrastructure Corporation (HIDCO), an administrative body set up and granted wide powers to acquire and sell land, install infrastructure, construct housing, supervise the building of commercial premises, and maintain the future city. To travel through Rajarhat today is to move through a barren landscape sparsely dotted by empty apartment blocks, which lack basic infrastructural supply such as water and electricity. These lonely monuments exist as the material shells of the financial investments of non-resident Indians. Also present in the landscape are shopping malls, private schools and hospitals, bus terminals, and office buildings occupied by IT/ITES firms.

Perhaps the most striking feature of Rajarhat is the desolation of this once lush and biodiverse farming and fishing area, the destruction of water sources, and the dryness of the land. Former peasants and sharecroppers have been forced to sell their land at supposed market

prices, which were quickly exceeded by five or six fold in subsequent sales. Those who resisted usually met the force of local goons. Now many of them have been gathered into so-called 'service villages' where their current state of dispossession is preemptively figured as cheap labor for the middle-class communities who are yet to inhabit the new town's residential towers. Some of these former peasants have redeployed themselves by setting up teashops and other makeshift tiffin stores to cater to the new IT workforces employed in the area. Others offer themselves for sundry labor tasks along the road everyday or have turned to prostitution or various forms of thuggery. Lacking the skills and know-how to participate in the construction of Rajarhat's buildings and infrastructure, a task largely performed by mobile workforces coming from elsewhere in West Bengal, these are populations for whom transition is an empty proposition. The roads back to peasant cultivation and forward to industrial work are blocked. Their biographies do not follow the classical script of primitive accumulation.

To traverse the heterogeneous spaces of Rajarhat, from the IT SEZ to the teashop, the shopping mall to the 'service village,' or the drenched rice paddy to the empty apartment block, is not only to cross the borders separating labor regimes but also to negotiate the contours of postcolonial capitalism. The fragmentation and splintering of this space, as well as the multiple and indefinite borders that separate it from Kolkata proper and join it on one side to the Sector V IT Hub and on the other to the unkempt bazaar, eating place, and banking centre called Baguihati, far exceeds what Ernst Bloch in a famous text of 1932 called the 'synchronicity of the non-synchronous'. Caught in the vortex of globalized time, Rajarhat is a densely bordered space where the very narrative that separates past from present modes of production is shattered. Devoid of peasant cultivation and never imagined as a site of industrial manufacture, this is a space where times, temporalities, and temporalizing practices can neither be arranged along a progressive line nor flattened on to the dead time of co-presence. How can we say that the IT/ITES firm in the SEZ and the teashop across the road from it exist in different stages of social and economic development when the workers in both are obliged to labor according to the rhythms of other time zones and thus inhabit spaces that stretch way beyond Rajarhat and indeed the subcontinent itself?

These patterns of stretching and connection have a significance that extends far beyond the chatter about global flows, cognitive capitalism and virtual migration. They force us to bring theoretical and political idioms

that have been developed to analyze the spread of informational and knowledge-intensive forms of work and accumulation into contact with arguments about peasant dispossession, primitive accumulation and postcolonial capitalism. Equally, however, the inverse is true. Two prevalent areas of political and economic debate become stuck in an echo box and the patterns of resonance and dissonance are far from predictable.

Without doubt the prevalent means of analyzing the displacement of peasant and sharecropper communities affected by the new forms of informational and logistically driven capitalist developments in India makes recourse to the concept of 'accumulation by dispossession' introduced by David Harvey. While Harvey uses this phrase to indicate the continuation and proliferation of accumulation practices described as primitive or original by Marx, the debate on primitive accumulation has taken on particular twists and turns in the Indian context where the developments in Rajarhat and similar economic spaces have assumed center stage. Writing of primitive accumulation as what he calls the 'immanent history of capital', Kalyan Sanyal conceptualizes 'capitalist development as a process that in its own course produces pre-capital'. At stake is a process of primitive accumulation that goes beyond the 'narrative of transition'. Seeking to 'inscribe the wasteland of the excluded into the narrative of capital's coming into being', Sanyal points to a scenario 'in which direct producers are estranged from their means of production … but not all those who are dispossessed find a place in the system of capitalist production'. Primitive accumulation does not necessarily oblige the peasant to become a wage laborer. What allows such accumulation to continue is rather its governmental reversal. Under the sign of development and the dominant discourse about the necessity of growth, there is a global consensus that basic conditions of life should be provided to people everywhere and that those dispossessed of their means of labor should not be left without subsistence. Thus when national or local governments do not intervene, there are other states, international agencies, or non-governmental organizations that step in with governmental programs and measures that seek to meet the livelihood needs of the dispossessed, and, in so doing, enable the very continuation of primitive accumulation.

Partha Chatterjee extends this argument by relating it to the transformed structures of political power in India, including changes in the framework of class dominance, the state's susceptibility to the political-moral sway of the middle classes, and the penetration of state and other governmental technologies into

peasant communities. For Chatterjee, this enablement of primitive accumulation by its governmental reversal is a process played out in what he calls 'political society,' where peasants play an active role in agitating for their livelihood needs. In these negotiations, which often involve a 'calculative, almost utilitarian use of violence,' what peasants frequently invite 'is for the state to declare their case an exception to the universally applicable rule.' This makes 'the governmental response to demands in political society … irreducibly political rather than merely administrative'. Referring to the techniques of 'enlightened despotism' that characterized British rule, he understands the governmental maintenance of processes of primitive accumulation precisely as the negotiation of exceptions to normal administrative processes crisscrossed both by the politics of dispossession and the politics of 'the governed'.

The arguments of Sanyal and Chatterjee give us an analytical approach to the normative and governmental arrangements that penetrate into economic zones. What remains under- emphasized in this approach are the very spatial strategies employed in the ongoing processes of primitive accumulation and the conflictual and overlapping relations between normative regimes that not only crystallize in such zones *but also exceed them*. This means that the dispossession effected by these developments must always be analyzed in relation to the forms of exploitation they allow both within and beyond their borders, whether or not governmental initiatives that seek to assuage the effects of dispossession are effective. To put it in terms relevant to Rajarhat, peasant politics and the precarious state of IT/ITES workers must be understood with reference to each other. As Jamie Cross writes, the 'most significant achievement of India's new economic zones ... is to render visible and legitimize the conditions under which most economic activity in India already takes place'. The absence of regulation and protection for workers in the wider informal economy is laid bare in the zone where it is rendered as deregulation and flexibility. Seen from this perspective, the continuing processes of accumulation by dispossession must be analyzed in relation to ongoing processes of accumulation by exploitation as well as the normative governmental arrangements that articulate these accumulation strategies and the processes of the production of subjectivity they entail.

THE SOCIAL FACTORY: PRODUCTION OF THE NEW TOWN

RANABIR SAMADDAR

Giorgio Grappi

The way a new town was planned for Rajarhat indicates the evolution of governmental techniques. It was not initiated as a technology park, but as one by the Housing Department. Planning is essential for all such partitions and reorganisation of spaces. In all of the cases I narrate here one can see that the agenda of physical planners goes against the logic of the old space marked by 'integrated' cities and outlying villages. It seeks to reverse the earlier territorial division and specialisation. If there is an opening up of space, there is a new closure too, whereby all sub-(advanced) economic entities have to be subordinated to the newly emerging hi-tech space. Planning in this sense does not mean, as usually thought, direct state control of commanding economic activities, but it means guiding the latter to the pre-determined goal. New towns are thus planned not by entrepreneurs, but by governmental bodies. The aims are: to open cities to world economy, to synchronise urban economy with macro-economic reforms, to close or scale down the old manufacturing base of the city, to make the city a centre of tradable services such as health care, education, new skill formation, etc., to make the city a servicing centre in the interest of finance, trade, hospitality, culture, health care, data processing and programming. The old idea of national economic development takes a back seat.

The Indian urban scenario was always marked by a dualism. Cities attracted population. They attracted industries and infrastructure. They also attracted government investment in developing administrative centres at district and sub-division levels. Villages remained villages. Now the dualism has taken another form. Old cities remain decrepit. Big cities now develop more and become in time centres of high economic and demographic growth by becoming 'urban agglomerates'.

Geographers have already noted the imbalances in regional and urban development in the country in mid nineties of the last century in the wake of liberalisation. Particular cities like Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, and Delhi became principal centres of investment. With the defeat of the strikes by textile workers in Mumbai in the nineteen eighties, large areas of the city went into the hands of developers who in turn handed over the property to offices, firms, shopping malls, etc. This decade was marked by defeat of trade union movements – be it in Mumbai or in Kolkata and its suburbs. Workers resisted gentrification, but could not succeed. Factory owners closed down factories and changed business. Building norms changed, land development rules altered. The idea of the downtown also changed. Municipalities vied with each other to make their cities attractive to multinationals and big firms. The idea of Ahmedabad-Pune corridor developed in this milieu. In none of these cases the government stood as mute spectator. It facilitated, encouraged, directed, and at times led the process of mutation of the city form as site of capital accumulation.

Geographers theorizing the city have until today approached the subject from roughly three angles. First, the city can be judged from the angle of spatial practices. Second, a city is perceived on the basis of the mental images that the city evokes. Third, the city is seen as a lived space. Even though the third way of looking at the city tries to get over the 'objectivist' bias of the first two by positing a subject-object view, the problem remains, namely how to account for its variety, its links with capital formation, and the binaries that seem to characterise the city. These binaries are results of a number of socio-spatial phenomena at play, such as: colonial-free, rich-poor, city-periphery, labour-capital, manufacturing units-services, citizen-migrant, etc. Other binaries also have emerged, such as, redesigned-old, cyber city-inner city, IT enabled-IT disabled, green spaces-crowded, or self-governed-administered. The lived city approach at times seems empty from a political point of view, because it cannot give us an insight into these binaries and the fault lines that emerge from colonising practices.

Just as in the old colonial days the prevailing land tenure system and contract method were changed to colonise land and introduce changes in the land use pattern, for

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instance to compel indigo cultivation, likewise for new towns to emerge tenure systems and land use patterns have to be changed – by legislation or by violence. In this way water bodies at Rajarhat were filled up, land taken away, the legal principle of inalienability of land of the small peasants was thrown to the wind, and agricultural status of land was changed to that for setting up hotel and mall. The divided city is in this way the norm rather the exception. New areas would be administered by a bureaucratic authority (development board. etc.) while the old areas will be run by democratically elected municipal bodies. In this new regime of urban governance, financial riches would mark the administered (new) area, while financial constraints would mark the self-governed (old) one. The technologies we now see deployed today to restructure the city were all put in place in the last four decades of the last century – from setting up development authorities, urban commissions, embarking on mega and master plans, urban renewal missions, constitutional amendment for self-government, restructuring of urban taxation system, to setting up ATM machines that seem ubiquitous today monetising everything in the process, and all these partitioning the city again and again. Land and territory have again become issues of contention – an indicator of the return of the colonial time.

In some sense then we can claim that the growth of new towns is a part of the general history of the increasing domination of urban agglomerations over human habitation and production spaces. Also in some sense new towns become the fresh sites of what Tilly had called contentious politics by which we mean sites for new claims, exacerbation of old conflicts, and new claimants mingling and at times clashing with old claimants. It is not that the Indian government was unaware that the land question would return as an urban boom and would overwhelm the developmental scenario. Therefore regulations, norms, restrictions, and procedures for setting up new towns began to be put in place from late eighties and through the nineties. These regulations became the ground on which public resistance against construction of new towns was mounted in several places. On one hand these regulations, norms, and guidelines became the legitimating tool for urban expansion and domination, because all the planners and architects had to do was to secure compliance with them, on the other hand they became the ground for public campaigns and litigation in defence of life and livelihood. Thus in Writ Petition 7516(W) to the High Court in 1999 the petitioners (Howrah Ganatantrik Samity and Rajarhat Jami Bachao Committee) cited several union government regulations allegedly violated by the government of West Bengal. For instance the *Guidelines and Procedure for the Environmental Appraisal of New Towns* published in 1989 stipulated that a new town could be founded to serve as a satellite to a metropolitan city. These guidelines

also stipulated that such construction must not impose any additional burden on the existing city by excessive utilisation of the city's presently available resources, such as water, transport, etc., and that natural water catchment areas must not be destroyed in the process of construction. The petitioners argued that these guidelines had been violated. These guide lines were developed on the basis of the experiences of 160 new towns.

The guide lines noted that while earlier new towns developed as mainly residential clusters around an industry or a port, and institutions like schools, hospitals, and markets were added later as access became crucial to life in the new town. Later this logic of its 'self-contained' nature began to expand. New towns were no longer simply service or satellite towns. They became project construction colonies, mining colonies, port colonies, district administrative centres, towns near cantonments, university or technical institution towns, and towns connected with large and upcoming new industries. Hence site and situation capabilities, impact assessment, hinterland study – all these became critical. Likewise, in these guidelines, the availability of natural amenities like clean water, drainage, rock structure, natural vegetation came under the governmental gaze. Dislocation of population, availability of domestic servants, etc. were also to be considered. The guidelines were thus not to prevent new towns which were coming up at the expense of dislocating large number of population in various parts of the country, or to maximise the output from these new settlements, but to facilitate the emergence of new towns on a wide scale. The government had also in mind that these new towns were emerging in the background of development – indeed they were the signs of development – and thus the government said that there was a need for these guidelines.

Yet if all this is true, and if new towns are part of this landscape of domination, it is also true that these are special as exceptional places. The question then is: Has this exceptionality too has a history? In this connection, think of say the Hanseatic ports of Europe (13th to 17th century) where Hanseatic League members would demand and ensure all kinds of freedoms from restrictions on trade, merchandise, entry, and stay. After the Hanseatic age and at times parallel to it, others also extracted concessions - the Genoese, Venetians, and the Antwerp merchants backed by their respective city powers. Giovanni Arrighi describes the role of these cities in reaching new frontiers of money and commerce, and remarks that these cities had to often depend on the continuous supply of basic life items such as food items, clothing material, and metals,

and the supply was ensured through all means. Arrighi notes the nature of 'unorganised capitalism' – in other words anarchic expansion of trade and commerce that led to expansion of capital. But then he misses the most critical element in this expansion – the persistently reappearing phenomenon of dispossession and accumulation through which trade was ensured. Even though he speaks of the role of plunder in buttressing British economy, the phenomenon of primitive accumulation remains by and large the unspoken other in his account of the rise of the city. The long twentieth century remains blind to its most astounding aspect – not technology, but the return of primitive accumulation in the wake of globalisation and virtual trade. The city is again today the nodal point around which the new phase of expansion has begun. Today's new towns are like dry ports. These inland ports or dry ports of today likewise demand autonomy of a particular kind. They demand relief not only from taxes, but autonomy in dealing with labour. They are special – that is why they are mostly classified as special economic zones – while they are not sovereign.

In any case, one may ask: Is Kolkata then reproducing its own history which began more than three centuries ago as a colonial enclave amidst marshy lands, developing as a port and a landing dock after having secured all kinds of concessions from the Mughal Empire? Is it the revenge of the modern time, when Kolkata would now be the marshy lands and the new towns (in the east and the west) would become the new concession areas hogging all attention of trade and commerce? We have the history of sovereignty thanks to the work of various historians. We now need a parallel history of the territorial exceptions and special autonomies – a sort of genealogy of the idea of a new town and the attending governmental practices.

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DISINTERRING LABOUR IN TRANSIT IN TERMS OF CLASS PROCESSES

BYASDEB DASGUPTA

CRG

In any economy, the three essential components are production, distribution and consumption. Following the Althusserian logic of over-determination, these three components as *processes* are over-determined as they mutually constitute each other to determine the social plane, the very existence of which is effectuated by ever-changing contradictory and conflict-ridden economic, political, cultural and natural processes. This write-up is not meant to theorise such social planes as it is evolving today. Rather, it is an attempt to understand the very process of *labour in transit* as opposed to the traditional *process of labour in situ* in production processes and to unfold in its term the very *transition* of economy and society as it is taking shape against the backdrop of a globalised reality construed by the dictate of global capital. The question of transition is perhaps a never-ending process of evolution and negation and a journey which goes on and on in any social plane. And if one adheres to the logic of a class-focused Marxist approach then, this transition needs to be understood in terms of transition of several *heterogeneous* class processes which do coexist in a social plane at a time. The question of transition if visited in terms of class transition then brings to the fore the very question of different labour processes as they exist today and as they are evolving and influencing the surplus accumulation at the dictate of global capital. Let us begin with the fundamental notion of labour process as it shapes any class process and let us then draw the line

between the traditional notion of labour process and emerging notion of labour and work in transit.

Entry point of our analysis will remain surplus labour *a la* Marx. Production is a process of creating goods and services using labour and means of production. The process of manufacturing goods and services using labour over the means of production is dubbed as labour process. It involves the muscles, nerves and emotions of the owner of the labour power. This labour process in any production remains solely responsible for the generation of surplus (labour) and hence, for the accumulation of capital by the muscles, nerves and emotions of labour(er). And class in this way is a process of performance, appropriation, distribution and receipt of surplus labour.

Given the above notion of labour process and then class process, the image of labour that comes to one's mind is that of labour *in situ* – a labour(er) performing surplus labour within the abode of a (manu) factory. But this is not the received image of labour in transit. Labour in transit is not confined to the four walls of a factory. Rather, movement is the primary feature of such a labouring process. This moving labour process can be found in construction work, agricultural field (after Green Revolution where at the time of harvests agricultural workers leave their own places of residence), in the train compartments as vendors hawking various goods produced in small and tiny industries etc. The form of each as labouring process is different from each other, and so is their association with surplus production. One can, in this

regard, distinguish between two forms of the labouring process – (a) one which it directly performs surplus labour and hence, is directly responsible for capital accumulation, and (b) the other which does not perform surplus labour directly but helps to procreate it by providing necessary conditions of existence of the very performance and appropriation of surplus labour with which they are related. And as provider of these necessary conditions, they receive part of the surplus. This is also the feature of labour in situ in today's globalised economy. But what distinguishes labour in transit from that *in situ* is the fact that chances of occupying several class positions in eking out a (socially) minimum living is more for labour in transit than for a labour *in situ*. This is derived from the acute livelihood risks which confront such labour as the onslaught of global capital rises day by day. And this is where the relation between global capital and local labour in transit requires some elaboration.

The livelihood risks confronting an individual labour in transit stem primarily from the ever-expanding network of global capital which is continuously dispossessing farming communities from its means of production – the land – and hence, disturbing his self-sustaining livelihood (as in the New Town Project of Rajarhat near Kolkata). One can identify at least three processes effecting the transformation and hence, current transition from a self-sustained (and self-sufficient) livelihood to a mobile livelihood in the form of transit labour where transition does not signify moving from one state/plight to another definitely, rather it signifies a never-ending journey which makes the "temporary", "casual", "irregular", "mobile", "seasonal" or "temporal" the regular, permanent feature of a man's labouring life be it for the purpose of producing more and more surplus or for the purpose of garnering fundamental conditions of existence and reproduction of such surplus on ever-increasing scale. These three processes include (a) processes of urbanisation, (b) processes of industrialisation including setting up of SEZs, and (c) natural processes. The link between global capital and labour process is direct and immanent in the first two processes and there is plethora of instances by this time which do not warrant further exploration. But natural processes are equally endangering established and self-sustaining livelihood of a great milieu in agriculture and allied activities. For example, one can cite the case of Padma river erosion in the district of Murshidabad in West Bengal which has uprooted thousands of families from the erstwhile livelihood pattern and compelled their earning members (including child labour) to take to alternatives with mobile working activities. In fact, men in this area are hired by agents to sell goods in other parts of the country – Assam, Arunachal Pradesh,

Orissa as vendors or hawkers – in the local parlance known as "*Harek Maaler Karbar*" (activities of selling variety goods on foot).

With the growing informalisation of the economic space – the informalisation which is visible even within a formal space (say within a jute mill) – and with the demand being created for newer forms of logistic services, labour has become more and more mobile – the mobility which goes on and on in future. In this context there is a need to think afresh about the livelihood risks of these forms of labour; there is a need to re-examine the role of the labour organizations – the traditional trade unions; there is a need to think about their well-being – a well-being which would signify a real humane transition in their life-forms. Labour in transit is much more disaggregated, de-centred and de-politicised than labour *in situ*. A true resistance has to address these disaggregations and de-politicisations of a heterogeneous working class. The agenda is no doubt political. It is that political which would take care of a true transition of class processes and also, would address the "need" of these labouring masses at the micro level. In other words, the political struggle has to combine both class and need for the betterment of live-forms of this vast working milieu.

Borrowing from Jan Breman we would like to portray labour in transit as footloose labour in the true sense of the term. It is from nowhere to nowhere the journey, the mobility, the transition is shaping the live-forms and livelihood risks of these men and women. The real transition at the micro level – in our rendition which class as well as need-based transition – should be understood in the broader perspective of resistance to global capital and the current waves of globalisation.

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'TRANSIT' LABOUR IN MUMBAI CITY

MOULESHRI VYAS

Migration into cities is a feature of many third world cities; its impact on the city and its people has a temporal, socio-cultural as well as economic dimension. The waves of migrants that enter a city space over the decades therefore find themselves absorbed or not absorbed in the avenues of work opportunities they seek. Those who join the ranks of the working poor in the city, struggle to find shelter or spaces, and make them habitable over several years. Over the years, the city expands outwards and within the city too, there are the more and less preferred spaces that begin to be occupied depending on the economic and social status of the settlers. The working poor in the informal sector set up shelters within shrinking and unaffordable spaces – in slum settlements, along railway tracks and even inside unused water pipelines; there is, in fact, a hierarchy of spaces that forms over a period of time with the poorer people in the least preferred spaces.

Some sections of labour will therefore always be in transit, living with uncertainty, and lacking social security due to disconnections between governance institutions and mechanisms in places of origin and of new settlement. For similar reasons, some are what Breman refers to as 'footloose' labour, those men, women and children who comprise a reserve army of labour, whose presence is often not acknowledged and whose muted voices remain unheard. As circular migrants they face many hardships and are the victims of the transnationalised politics of development. He goes on to say that the informal sector is not a stepping stone towards a better and settled urban life but a temporary abode for labour that can be pushed back to its place of origin when no longer needed.

Three dimensions of transit labour in Mumbai are outlined below. They draw from: transitory jobs, work entailing physical movement across the expanse of the city, and the transitory nature of the very lives of people, and particularly the urban poor in the city.

TRANSITORY JOBS AND SECTORS IN TRANSITION - DIFFICULT AND PRECARIOUS WORK

In the hierarchy of jobs and work that is done to build and maintain cities and urban spaces, there are certain types of work that are undertaken as a last resort. They are at the bottom rung of the informal economy. While the idea is not to undervalue in any way the contributions of large sections of 'invisible' workers in the city, it is a fact that most often the jobs of cleaning the city streets, garbage collection and transportation, maintenance of sewage lines, public toilets and so on, are taken on by people in extremely tenuous conditions of employment and poor conditions of work, due to an absence of any alternative source of survival. One of the clear indicators of these being transit jobs is that few of these workers would say that they want their children to get into the same jobs. Those who get into such work often do so with the hope that they will move out as soon as they get something better. In many cases, it is difficult to exit from such a job as the alternative does not present itself to this generation and it is only the next that is able to make the shift. Some aspects of this element of transit are evident with very exploitative conditions of women in prostitution, where the raging and value-laden debate is about whether it is 'work' at all, or quite simply exploitation of women. With cleaning jobs, the sheer negativity and filth of the working conditions is so strong that it overpowers even the advantage of standard employment. Hence permanent workers in municipal employment are seen to get casual workers to do the job for them. Lack of protective gear and any social security for the latter category of workers, make this work extremely precarious. In essence, these are jobs that are unpleasant and socially stigmatised, which workers would like to get out of whenever possible.

At another level, there are sectors in transition, which therefore put the labour in a state of flux. Increasing privatisation of services has led to questions about

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the role of the state in protecting the interests of the labour that is now being engulfed by the contract system. Multiplicity of agencies, of employer-employer relationships and breaking up of tasks are features of this emergent regime. Conservancy workers in cities like Mumbai travel across 30-40 km of the city with the collected solid waste to landfill sites; they are just one category of labour in the city that travels significant distances, at cost of time and money to deal with changed equations with the city space and shrinking scope for negotiation. The altered nature of work, spatial fragmentation of labour, the creation of newer categories of labour through policy and governance regimes result in the distancing of labour from the city.

The nature of work keeps labour on the move literally and in terms of creating a system of flexibility to serve the profit-making interests of the employers; the policies and governance mechanism ensure that they are temporary, hemmed in by conditions of informality, and therefore unable to break out of this circle of poor wages and working conditions, lack of social protection, and access to decent housing and other services for the family.

WORK BASED ON PHYSICAL MOBILITY - LIFE AND WORK ON LOCAL TRAINS IN THE CITY

Outsiders to the city of Mumbai often find that people in this city are always on the move … and in a rush to get somewhere. There is a question implicit in this statement – to do with *where* people are going. It is something about the pace of Mumbai and its people's preoccupation with making a living that defines its core character. In this light, it would not be amiss to examine the concept of transit labour in a more literal sense of those physically on the move in the course of everyday work.

The Mumbai Suburban Railway, built as an offshoot of the first railway built by the British in 1853, today ferries 6.9 million commuters every day. It is the principal mode of mass transport in Mumbai. This pulsating lifeline of the city carries the sweat, the aspirations and the crowd of passengers segregated in the general or ladies' compartment and by the first class and second class coaches; it is a cultural cauldron of the city. Covering more than 460km, there are more than 2,300 services each day.

The Koli women returning at 5 a.m. from purchasing fish from the wharf, the *dabbawalas* at work during late morning to evening hours, the hawkers selling their wares through the day, and the office-goers, packed four to a seat during the peak hours, are just some of the citizens who spend significant parts of their lives on the trains. Bound by a journey of a certain number of minutes or hours, trains allow for purposeful social connections bridging the physical distances of the place of work and place of stay for some hours each day. The fact that urban lives are organised with a premium on time, allows for repeated contact among certain individuals and groups on a daily basis and year after year. Sometimes this contact and the relationships

that are built span several years and move into spaces beyond the train journey.

As with the garbage collection and transportation workers, the vendors on the local trains travel large distances each day. Young boys, girls, men and women moving from one compartment of the train to another, selling anything from hairclips, cosmetics, garments, handbags, ready-to-eat food items, and even fresh vegetables and fruits, are a common sight on the trains. With some there is a friendly banter that regular commuters engage in; purchasing goods on credit is also not uncommon. Conversations, cries of the hawkers, and the sound of *bhajans* are just some of the familiar sounds on a local train.

All consumers of these goods will affirm that these men and women selling their wares on the trains actually render a service to the commuter who prefers to shop while on the move rather than making a stop at a market on the way home. Conceptually a part of the informal economy of the city, this massive mobile network of service providers that works and to a great extent lives around the railway stations, leads a life of everyday challenges. Underlying these informal interactions is a subtle conflict and element of territoriality that exists around the beats of the hawkers. With those selling similar wares, there are designated stations where one boards or alights to avoid competition; with the younger ones working alongside the elders there is evidence of familial and kinship ties, and of apprenticeship. The railway authorities control the small businesses and activities at the station platforms and also on the trains; when checks are carried out, these hawkers may be apprehended, or receive a cuff behind the ear and have to alight at the next station. This governmentality results in a state of perpetual anxiety that the hawkers work under. Control of these fluid spaces and ambiguity in their governance makes for a situation where nothing really changes in terms of the real economics of it, the bribes that have to be paid, and constant intimidation and spectre of authority that looms large over the hundreds who make a living on the trains.

LIVES IN TRANSIT AND WORK IN TRANSIT - TRANSIT CAMPS AND TRANSIT LABOUR

With heavy investment in infrastructure development in the city in the past decade, the internal displacement of people has transformed the social fabric and the geographies of several communities. In the city of Mumbai,

there are about 32 resettlement colonies across 11 civic wards with a total of 449 buildings housing about 35,000 displaced project-affected families.

This transition from slum life to more gentrified neighbourhoods and formal housing has meant a re-orientation of relationships within the family and the community, and a re-building of lives and livelihoods. As jobs and work suffered due to the fracture of space and work, into the lives of these families was introduced an uncertain phase of transition from one life to another where they perhaps did not have the space for claim-making and asserting citizenship rights. Studies conducted by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences have shown that as the distances of commutes increased, the access to services became costly and cumbersome and some people simply gave up the struggle, pushing new members of the family into the workforce.
These altered spaces create new equations of governance; a modification from the informal to the formal and an overall dominance of the state and its institutions over the citizens, who are defined and re-defined through policies and projects that are compelled by a neo-liberal development paradigm. Several years down the line, these individuals and their families are still in transition.

The extent of internal and involuntary displacement in cities such as Mumbai is significant. The perspectives of the state, the voluntary agencies and the displaced people are divergent. Even from among the displaced population, there are likely to be multiple subjectivities, rendering this a complex terrain to analyse. However, the involuntary nature of the displacement is a manifestation of the conflict of citizens with the state and the power exercised by it to make the latter submit to its plans and the 'public purpose' of infrastructure development. Transit labour as situated within the context of urban poverty, is conceptually multi-dimensional, containing conflict and a certain sense of unease and impermanence. It is likely to remain a part of our cities in the years to come.

ENGAGING WITH THE IDEA OF 'TRANSIT LABOUR'

SAMITA SEN

INFINITY

Ned Rossiter

How do we conceptualise 'transit labour'? I would suggest that we see this at the intersection of two major conceptual grids characterising the understanding of labour in the present: first, transitional forms of labour, which are inextricably related to transitions in mode of production, involving change in forms of labour arrangements, shifts in, creation or closures of labour markets, and in types and structures of labour deployment; and, second, transitory labour, which may be considered in chronological/empirical frame to denote changing and shifting patterns of employment or, in a more particularised sense, may address questions of labour mobility, both physical and structural.

Let me address first some of the major historical questions associated with labour in a transitional stage. The context most relevant to our discussion of changing labour regimes in areas brought arbitrarily and rapidly into processes of urbanisation that we are now discussing is some of the conceptual issues associated with debates about the transition to capitalism. Traditional pre-capitalist economies are believed to be characterised by settled and stable labour arrangements or at least social and legal processes strive to achieve such forms of stability.

Thus, forms of bondage seek to tie peasants to land (serfdom) or the artisan to masters/workshops (guild systems). This is not to say that there are no exceptions. Recent research has shown that in Europe, for instance, journeymen had a great more mobility than was previously imagines (thus named 'journey'men) and wage labour made an early appearance around the 13th or 14th centuries, especially in the context of sailors and seafarers. Nevertheless, the dominant trope of labour arrangement was to tie labour down and the denial of mobility facilitated the extraction of surplus. Thus, capitalism's primary slogan was 'freedom' to 'free' labour from being tied down in a variety of forms of indenture or servitude. That this 'freedom' meant in fact a limited legal freedom allowing labour to contract for its own exploitation is an old and much told story into which we need not go into just now. For our purpose today, what I would like to emphasise is the myriad resonances of this idea of 'freedom': in its classical historical (and conceptual) form legally, it meant individuation of labour, physically it meant the migration from countryside to towns and cities and sectorally it meant a shift from the land to the factory. Such shifts were associated with wider social changes — the transformation of the family, the erosion of

religion and ecclesiastical controls, the subversion of existing social hierarchies, including those of gender and generation. In one view, these changes effected a major social transformation, empowering the individual vis-à-vis family and community; in another view, social change was (or had to be) slowed down or managed to preserve social order, thus ensuring that institutions such as the family were not fully incorporated into the regime of contract and exchange; in yet a third view, many of these social changes were more apparent than real, capitalism worked by scripting existing social hierarchies within its fold, thus transforming but neither subverting nor eliminating hierarchical relations of race, caste, gender and community.

Whatever view one may take of the wider meanings and implications of individuation of labour, the mobilisation of labour in its more limited sense was a critical aspect of capitalist development. In colonial India, the advent of capitalism in the mid- to late nineteenth century, signalled a massive mobilisation of labour in the non-agrarian sector. There was short-term and long-term employment in public works such as the railways and in public services such as the army, in small-scale artisan occupations and cottage industries, for large-scale industries such as jute, cotton, and mining, in the urban service sector including municipal works, personal and domestic services and entertainment trades, and for plantations both within the country and overseas, such as tea, coffee, sugar and rubber. Many of these employments involved migration for varying distances and periods, ranging between local week-end commuting to permanent settlement in distant lands. Some 2.5 million people travelled to Assam to work in the tea gardens; about 1.5 people left India to work in sugar and rubber plantations across the world. The history of early industrial capitalism in colonial India demonstrates one kind of tension between the different understandings of the wider social concerns of labour mobilisation discussed above. The British, even as they managed the millions on the move within and out of India, playing critical roles as regulators, employers and recruiters, persisted with a paradoxical approach to the labour question. On the one hand, a stated commitment to 'free labour' remained the watchword of the colonial state, overseas emigration of Indian labour being justified by the abolition of slavery (needless to say this did not prevent their acquiescence and active involvement with forms of labour regulation that involved draconian regimes of indenture). On the other hand, they continued to uphold (and frequently devised labour strategies based on the belief) that Indian society continued to be organised around and was committed to the self-sufficient village economy, bound

by family, caste and community. In this imagination, the Indian peasant was immobile, immune to pressures of poverty and incentives of wage; the Indian woman was of course even more circumscribed, imprisoned behind *purdah*. Suspicious of the evidence generated by their own bureaucracy, the higher reaches of British policy-making continued to believe that Indian labour required inordinate levels of pushing to work at all and complex hierarchical structures of supervision when they did.

Employers adopted different, sometimes contrasting labour strategies, depending on the scale of labour mobilisation. In the case of the Assam tea plantations, for example, employers failed in their attempt to mobilise local labour. Not only because population was itself sparse in the remote locations of the gardens, but because local labour could not be disciplined into the cheap labour regime desired by planters. The solution the import of workers from the plains of Bengal and Bihar, the hills of Chota Nagpur (and later, the forests of Chhattisgarh) was an expensive one. The cost of transportation was enormous, and added to that was attrition desertion and mortality undercut planters' long-term plans of stability and settlement, reaching unprecedented peaks at times with employers losing four out of 10 recruits. The response to such difficulties was to legislatively produce stability the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act (1859) allowed for 'contract', even assuming that the process of recruitment allowed for 'free' entry into the labour contract, the Act closed the possibility of voluntary exit, thus simultaneously proletarianising and de-proletarianising plantation labour. The dracocian indenture regime produced in the tea 'gardens' required an elaborate regulative machinery in which employers and the colonial state colluded. By contrast, urban industries, such as jute and cotton mills, benefited from existing streams of migration. Millowners were not required to undertake recruitment and transportation of labour and the primary thrust of their strategy was to pass on the costs of migration and reproduction on to the workers. To this end, they produced a highly casualised labour force operating within an economy of surplus, best represented by the institution of '*badli*', which allowed for a highly replaceable workforce, a significant proportion of hiring being by day and at the factory gates. These represented two ends of a spectrum of labour strategies: one aimed at locally self-reproducing settled communities of labour and the other a highly casualised labour force, which allowed short-term adjustments to the vagaries of the market.
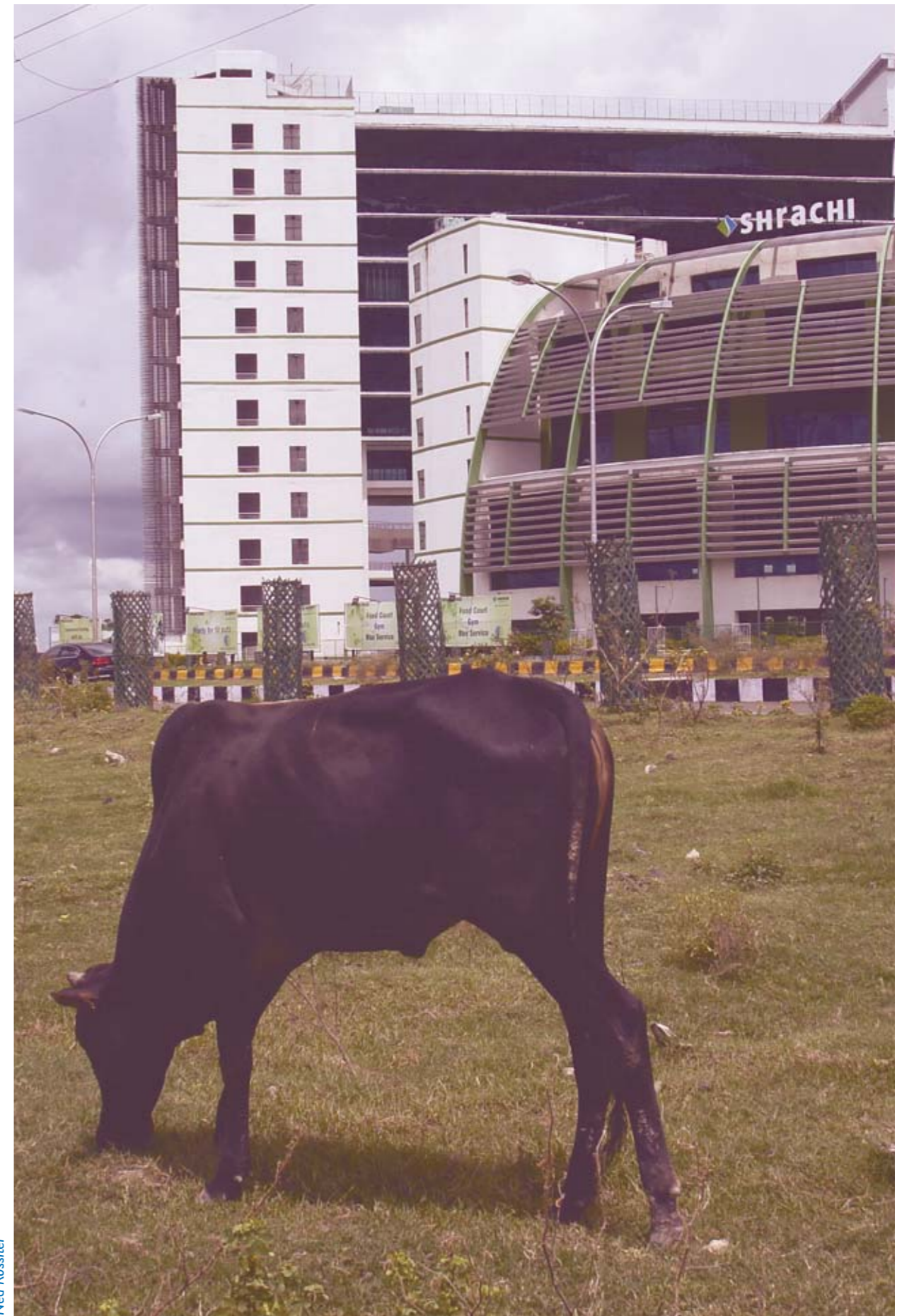

Ned Rossiter

Over time, both these kinds of labour were formalised. If early capitalism undercut the stability of pre-capitalist labour regimes, in the period after the First World War and in India the Second, concerted efforts were made towards new kinds of stabilisation of labour and the rhetoric was of 'protection' and 'rights'. In the Indian case, early attempts at this began in the 1920s and 30s, as factories, mines and plantations were brought under regulatory regimes with minimum welfare measures, monitoring of wage and working conditions. These processes speeded up after Independence. In these three decades, some enclaves of labour had been unionised. As federated trade unions became affiliated to political parties, they were able to influence policy sufficiently to win much greater protection in terms of wage, working conditions, influence over hiring, and employment security. This process reversed the process of casualisation in some enclaves, but of course, left the vast majority in the same situation as before. In the plantations, the indenture system was gradually dismantled beginning from 1915 and after Independence, legislation brought new kinds of regulative control over employment exit. In these enclaves, which came to be known as the 'formal' or the 'organised' sector, comprising about 10 per cent of the working population of the country, an increasingly male workforce found some measure of social welfare and protection, could aspire to the single male breadwinner family and upward social mobility. This provided for a more stable regime of labour upheld by powerful strategies of collective bargaining and reflecting new political confidence on part of certain segments of labour. This political settlement, one could expansively hold it to encompass six decades between 1920 and 1980 may be termed the 'Age of Regulation'.

Our immediate context begins in the 1980s, which quickened in the 1990s, with the advent of New Economic Policy in India, but is related to wider global trends which dismantled Fordist regimes of industry, ushered in a new international division of labour and witnessed a hunt for cheap labour across the world by an unprecedented mobile industrial and finance capital. In the age of multi- or trans-national corporations, the dismantling of stable labour regimes (which had complemented Fordist industry) has become the key to profit-making. In this economic environment, organised labour has seen the erosion of its hard-won political stake and an assault on precisely those regulative mechanisms which was productive of (or desired to produce) an enclave of a stable labour regime. In the last three decades, thus, we have witnessed the slow dismantling of regulative regimes, more direct and violent confrontations between labour and capital and

the undercutting of organised labour. A major aspect of the changing labour scenario is the expansion of the 'informal', which is now appearing as appendages within the erstwhile 'formal' sector as well as reaching higher and lower within the economic spectrum. Thus, even government supplements administrative staff by 'contract' workers; while in the upper reaches of the informal sector, lucrative wages/salaries offset the disadvantages of impermanency. How do we understand these new processes of a new kind of casualisation of labour? It is my contention that placing the process of casualisation we are witnessing today in the historical context I have sketched briefly and in skeletal outline here will help us understand better both the process itself as well as its wider social ramifications. And these, I expect, will be addressed in more detail by the following papers.

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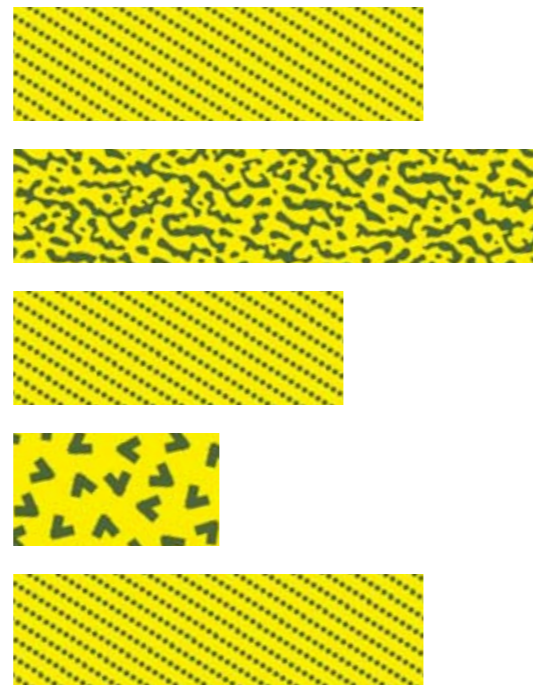
ON CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT AND LOGISTICAL RATIONALITY

(IN MEMORY OF KALYAN SANYAL)

GIORGIO GRAPPI

Giorgio Grappi

«Capitalist underdevelopment has traditionally been seen, by liberal and Marxist theories alike, as a case of failure on the part of capital to revolutionize and transform the economy after its own image. Departing from this, this book extricates the post-colonial experience from the historicist narrative of transition and articulates it within a political economic framework that conceptualizes underdevelopment as endogenous to capitalist development in the post-colonial context».
[Kalyan Sanyal, *Rethinking Capitalist Development*, 2007]

The news of Kalyan Sanyal's departure reached us unexpectedly. Sanyal passed away on February 18th in a clinic in his hometown, Kolkata, at the age of sixty. We therefore want to dedicate this note to the memory of a brilliant Bengali economist and intellectual with whom we had an intense dialogue. We had the opportunity to meet Sanyal several times, lastly in September 2011 in Kolkata, during the roundtable on Karl Marx's *The Capital* part 8, vol. 1 (chapters 26-33), "The so called primitive accumulation". Sanyal was one of the keynote speakers, together with Ranabir Samaddar, Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson. The roundtable opened the *Critical Studies Conference on Development, Logistics and Governance*, the fourth of a series organized by the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group. The conference occurred alongside the Transit Labour Kolkata Platform

which brought together a group of researchers from India, Australia and Italy in the exploration of selected sites at the core of economic and governmental developments of metropolitan Kolkata.

The conference employed a broad understanding of logistics, defined in relation to the functions of government, the organizational models of war and development, as well as the role of *planning* as a logistical rationality which produces a new sense of 'urgency' in governmental thinking. It is exactly this urgency - overcoming the traditional forms of negotiation associated with nation-states – which fosters the implementation of new technologies of control and communication, and leads to the construction of new urban and industrial agglomerations.. The clash between this urgency and the opposition of a majority of the effected populations is at the root of an unpredictable and new situation for most of the leading theories of government.

Following this reading, and in light of our participation in the Kolkata Platform, two images emerge. The first image is the absolute diffusion of work, marked by the elusiveness of the frontier between the outside and the inside of places of production. The area of Chadni Chowk, at the heart of Kolkata, is an example

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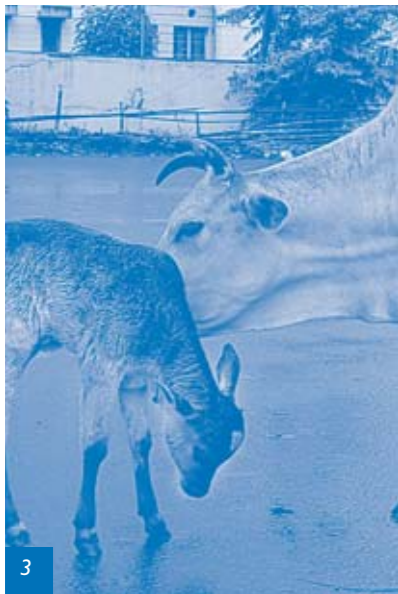
1 Giorgio Grappi 2011
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3 Kolkata, Ned Rossiter 2011
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6 CRG 2011
7 Kolkata, Ned Rossiter 2011
8 Katie Hepworth 2011
9 Kolkata, Ned Rossiter 2011
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of this: here, in a multitude of sweatshops and benches along the edges of the streets, thousands of workers disassemble and re-assemble old electronic devices and household appliances of every sort. In such a landscape, composed of thin shops and overcrowded lanes, one can witness the position of Kolkata as the eastern door of Indian development: as one can observe from the sea linings and parcel labels, lots of this *e-waste* comes from China, and seeks here a second life through the hands of Indian workers. Multiple functions are carried out in this large and dispersed factory. Different tasks play different roles in the scale of economic growth that has occurred in recent years. If on the one hand everything is repaired, thus gaining a new use value, on the other hand brand new devices are displayed for the new middle class. Old mobiles, DVD players, computers, printers and Hi-Fis re-enter the cycle of consumption, made available to new strata of society. At the same time, new products such as wide mega screen LCDs, plasma TVs, and smartphones, are sold at prices that are inaccessible for the large majority of the population of this metropolis.

The activity of recycling links these two poles. However here "recycling" has a very different meaning from that attributed to it by global civil society and in environmentalist discourses. Indeed, here we face a new form of raw material extraction for global industry. Rare and costly minerals and metals are hidden inside *e-waste*, and the miners of superseded technologies have the skills to identify, insulate and extract each valuable element from old phones as well as printers or PC screens. The labour of extraction comes with enormous risks to their health and to the environment, as plastic devices are burned in makeshift ovens to extract metals, old refrigerators are broken to save the usable parts, and everything is done with bare hands. Furthermore, the waste materials of the waste industry are handled together with general city waste.

Far from being an insulated enclave, Chadni Chowk is perfectly integrated into global networks and circuits, and the raw materials extracted here feed the economies of Asiatic countries, sustaining the growth in electronic industries. We want to stress the paradigmatic dimension of places like Chadni Chowk, which mark the productive structure of the postcolonial world. Chadni Chowk is not just a model, but also a transit place, included in a transnational network. The recovery of useful materials from different kinds of waste is a widespread activity that plays an increasing role in the global economy: other examples are the beaches where old ships are dismantled in order to extract iron and steel from their dead bodies, like

Chittagong, the first source of iron for Bangladesh, Alang in Gujarat, India, or Gadani, Pakistan.

The second image is the elusive north-eastern periphery of Kolkata, in the area that extends from Sector V in Salt Lake City to the *new town* of Rajarhat, where it has become increasingly difficult to discern rural areas from mushrooming urban pockets. Sector V can be considered the opposite pole to Chadni Chowk: here many Indian and multinational IT industries find young and qualified graduates to employ at low wages in R&D offices. At the same time, these industries take advantage of the economic regime of Special Economic Zones, securing tax exemptions and dispensations from the West Bengal labour laws. No wonder, then, that during the Durga Puja, the most important religious holiday in the State, Sector V remains fully operational. As the gigantic advertising boards that surround the arterial roads of Kolkata leading to Salt Lake and the airport inform us, the new buildings offer clean, dry and cool working places behind their walls of glass and concrete, in contrast to the chaotic and unmanageable old Kolkata. The message is clear, and one can observe how it is becoming part of the new urban and social imaginary. The prestige of these new forms of employment therefore hides a new model that quickly undermines any political discourse, and where anything can be sacrificed on the altar of the economic growth.

A similar situation is occurring in Rajarhat, where - following the *new town* model - a built-up area for at least 500,000 people is under construction. This plan is important for many reasons, and one can observe the definition of a new form of government that most of the new towns share and which differs from traditional city government. If democracy and citizenship are traditionally associated with the expansion from cities to larger territorial agglomerates, in postcolonial new towns this trajectory is moving towards a new form. There are no effective representative bodies, nor *panchayats*. On the contrary, these agglomerates are managed by big corporations like the *West Bengal Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation* (HIDCO). Born in 1999 and formally under the rule of the Urban Development Department of the West Bengal government, HIDCO operates virtually outside the rules applied in the State: rather than following formal procedures and consultations, its immense projects proceed using force and by imposing the "urgency" of development onto often-resisting populations. The materiality of development is thus fully exposed here; in a countryside dominated by wetlands and largely settled by farmers and fishermen, the development of the new town affects the whole

environment. The process of dispossession of the local population is producing resistance, violent clashes, deaths and forced migration towards the slums of Kolkata in a peculiar legal *assemblage*.

The new form of governance embodied in logistical rationality, far from being immaterial, needs land and labour in order to be implemented. The old social landscape can only remain in marginalised pockets, as in the so-called *service villages* that, like contemporary reservoirs, resist the new topography drawn in Rajarhat and elsewhere by postcolonial, capitalist development. Their inhabitants are for the most part completely detached from their means of production, and only a minority can hope to obtain a low qualified job in the *new towns*. These dynamics were at the core of Kalyan Sanyal's work, especially his most challenging work, *Rethinking Capitalist Development*, an important contribution to the debate on the contemporary meaning of "so called primitive accumulation". Starting from a new reading of Marx, the text releases the category of primitive accumulation from the historicist readings characteristic of a large part of economic thought, Marxism included. Disentangled from the description of a primitive stage of capitalism, the continuous repetition of primitive accumulation has become a way to describe the multifarious dimension of exploitation under capital. The different sites of work and the different forms of relation with land and information networks explored during the Kolkata Platform thus do not represent different stages of Capital but, instead, the structural heterogeneity of postcolonial capitalism and the coexistence of different forms of exploitation, governance and resistance. Rather than positioning itself against underdevelopment, the present capitalist development exposes new negotiations of time beyond what Ernst Bloch defines as the 'contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous'.

In this reality, logistical rationality organizes the penetration of capital into new domains, using different and multiple strategies to make logistics *transformational,* and produce new sets of rules. If we are confronted with the definition of a different law, then the question is whose law, who can enforce it and how? What we have seen in the outskirts of Kolkata, and what we have learned by meeting some members of the farmers' movements in Rajarhat, are good starting points to answer these questions without hiding the materiality of this regime. The landfilling activities we witnessed during the several transfers from one site to another are perhaps the immediate image of the radical transformation of the social and natural ecology of these places. Turning wetlands in residential zoning

is one of the primary operations for every subsequent building site. The land grabbing and the forced requisitions of farmers' and tenants' land are other fundamental elements. A fourth – politically critical – component that needs to be mentioned is the growing of new communities, both inside and outside these sites. An army of workers living in improvised slums, primarily migrant masons from other Indian states, are the present of the future town of Rajarhat, while young underpaid clerks work behind the glass windows of Sector V. On the sidewalks, another army of unpredicted hawkers assures quick and cheap food and other essential goods that allow the machine to work. Will these communities become the ghostly presence of work in the new town, as in French photographer Philippe Chancel's portrayals of the Emirate workers, or will they interact with dispossessed communities to negotiate a political society against this new assemblage of law and rules?

Photographs by Giorgio Grappi

THE LOGISTICAL CITY: SOFTWARE, INFRASTRUCTURE, LABOUR

NED ROSSITER

The logistical city is a city of peripheries. These peripheries are occupied by intermodal transport terminals, warehouses, IT infrastructure, container parks and shipping ports. Such logistical facilities do not stand isolated, of course, but are interspersed with suburbs, green belts, roads, railways, water systems and barren land. The interconnection of peripheries on a transnational scale comprises a special kind of globality, one in which the complex network of distribution systems – roads, rail, shipping, aviation – makes concrete the otherwise mysterious abstractions of capitalist operations. Yet for all this materiality, the logistical city goes largely unnoticed in the metropolitan imaginary precisely because the margins of cities tend to be overlooked and made invisible by more spectacular elements – magisterial feats of architecture, harbour views, cultural festivals and so forth. We long ago resigned ourselves to not needing to know how things work or where things come from. And we are in no rush for a reminder. The logistical city ticks along in the background as we get on with our busy daily lives.

The logistical city is distinct from the global city, which is characterised by financial services located in CBDs and cosmopolitan populations whose ethnic peculiarities are integrated more or less seamlessly into the flow of global economies. The logistical city also differs from the industrial city, which is defined by class stratifications across urban spaces and an

economy based on the manufacturing of goods. Like the global city, the logistical city is a city of services, but these services are driven by computational systems oriented around managing the mobility of things produced by the industrial city, and servicing the services of the global city.

Thirty years ago the L.A. School of planners, geographers, sociologists and historians identified many of the features of the logistical city just described, especially 'the emergence of information-age "edge cities," and the hypermobility of international capital and labor flows', as recounted by Steven Erie in his book *Globalizing L.A.: Trade, Infrastructure and Regional Development* (2004). The logistical city nevertheless stands out as a new urban form for the ways in which it stitches together diverse cities and regions across the global north and south, continuously reconfiguring connections according to just-in-time demands of supply-chains and contingencies that disrupt their smooth operation. Whenever a new diagram of relations is set into play, a new logistical world is created in which difference must either be displaced or absorbed. This spatio-temporal elasticity and capacity to adapt to changing conditions is perhaps what marks the logistical city as particularly distinct from other urban forms. Always searching for enhanced efficiencies across its circuits of distribution, the logistical city is an urban laboratory ripe in experimentation.

The logistical city can also be understood in terms of

what architect Reinhold Martin calls an 'organizational complex', which consists of technocratic and aesthetic systems designed to modulate the world as 'an organized, informatic pattern' in flexible ways. Not constrained by sovereign rule or national borders, the logistical city is a recombinatory form that attempts to standardize capital accumulation from the micro level of algorithmic apparatuses to the macro level of global infrastructures. Standards are crucial to the universal logic of interoperability across software platforms and infrastructural components. Without them, cargo containers could not transfer with such ease from ship to truck, software operating systems could not exchange data across platforms, and circuit boards could not be manufactured to fit and function in multiple computational devices.

Whoever sets the standard rules the world. Yet standards change and develop over time. New standards are always being established, though only some percolate to the top and become universally adopted. This is where innovation meets political economy. The desire for a trans-scalar smooth world, however, is accompanied by any number of contingencies: labour strikes, software glitches, inventory blowouts and traffic gridlock, to mention just a few that come to mind. In principle, the topological parameter of 'fault tolerance' incorporates such disruptions to make anew the seamlessness of logistical worlds. But there can be no denying that contingency is the nightmare of logistics.

Logistical nightmares can be found across the cities investigated in the Transit Labour project, which examines how circuits of labour are reshaping the contours of regions while coming up against, testing and transforming a multiplicity of borders. Rajarhat New Town is a development underway since the late 1990s on the north-east fringes of Kolkata, situated between the airport and on the edge of Sector V, an IT park developed in the 1970s as an industrial extension of Kolkata's Salt Lake township. The government legislation that authorised both of these developments is complex and fraught with political conflicts and social tensions. Chief among these was the West Bengal Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation's (HIDCO) invocation of a colonial administrative remnant, the Land Acquisition Act of 1894. When combined with a China-inspired neoliberal legislation, the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Act of 2005, HIDCO was able to legally conjure a zoning technology for Rajarhat designed to attract foreign capital to finance the transformation of fertile agricultural land and fisheries into non-agricultural use. The economic and social displacement of peasant populations numbering

in their tens of thousands recalls for Ranabir Samaddar and his colleagues at the Calcutta Research Group the Marxian critique of 'primitive accumulation', or what David Harvey prefers instead to term 'accumulation by dispossession'. In the case of Rajarhat, the expropriation of land and the partial remobilisation of peasant labour forced by HIDCO into 'service villages' are the conditions of possibility for the logistical city and its information economy.

Following an initial surge which saw the instalment of fibre-optic cable and a skeletal road system, a number of international and national IT firms opened for business in Rajarhat, including Wipro, Accenture, Unitech, IBM and Tata Consultancy Services. Graduates of computing and IT programs working in these firms are largely undertaking beta-testing of new software or BPO (business process outsourcing) work, doing basic data entry and accounting tasks for financial, medical and insurance companies based in Europe and North America. It is worth noting that a logistical city like Rajarhat registers an uneven geography of information that goes one step beyond the international division of labour running along the global north and south axis. Most of the IT related work in Rajarhat, as well as Sector V, is a secondary form of outsourcing internal to the nation state. Parent firms based in Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad undertake the more interesting R&D and management related work, while IT workers with similar qualifications are lumped with more menial informatic tasks.

With India's elevation in these sort of high-skill sectors of the information economy, it is hard not to assume a substantial loss of similar jobs in the global north accompanying forms of outsourcing internal to the space of the nation within India. In Australia in recent weeks and months, we have heard much about how the aviation and finance industries are also planning to outsource data-entry and general service related work. Whether it is the global or national scale, the key driver behind these decisions is, of course, the lower cost of labour coupled with cheaper land leases for IT service firms located on the peripheries. And this is where logistical cities such as Rajarhat find their rationale for existence.

Since 2008, however, the rate of development in Rajarhat has slowed considerably due to the effects of the global financial crisis. Partially built apartment towers stand isolated against a backdrop of now arid land dotted with surveyor's pegs and the occasional grazing cattle. Many of the complete residential complexes remain empty as investment owners are located in other Indian cities or live overseas.

A number of IT firms are operating, but their workers are often commuting from elsewhere in Kolkata, as do many of the owners of the makeshift teahouses and eateries servicing the IT workers during their breaks.

As Ishita Dey's research has made clear, some of the women find employment as domestic labour, but for most of the men security and construction work is considered semi-skilled and usually contracted out to migrant workers residing elsewhere in India. Following some initial work filling in the wetlands, this only leaves low-skill construction jobs and teahouses as sources of income for men. No wonder, then, that Rajarhat New Town is the scene of regular acts of infrastructural sabotage, social unrest and political conflict. Not only is the logistical city distant from metropolitan imaginaries, it suffers the intrusion of materiality in ways that unsettle the abstraction of information.

The logistical city is also at the cutting edge of labour reform. Technologies of automation are transforming shipping ports across Australia and elsewhere in the world, shifting the work of wharfies from the dockside to the screen where the oversight of robotic operations is duplicated by human labour clicking through the interface of software applications. Whether machine or flesh, performance indicators are finely calibrated against time and volume. The logistical city does away with the biological and social rhythms of urban life so beloved by Henri Lefebvre, and instead operates by the cold sword of code that measures productivity and worth in real-time.

The year 2009 saw not only the initial peak of the ongoing financial crisis, it also occasioned the entry of Chinese state-owned shipping and logistics company COSCO into a 35 year lease agreement with Greek authorities to access and manage port space at Piraeus, one the largest shipping ports in Southern Europe located 12km outside of Athens. Along with upgrading port facilities and apparently dramatic increases in productivity, local Greek workers have found themselves confronted by employers with substantially different ideas about working conditions, pay rates and workplace safety. As Greece cedes its sovereign authority to more powerful economic actors, Greek citizens and organizations such as unions have diminished ground upon which to contest perceived and experienced inequalities. With software programs devised to manage key performance indicators (KPIs) and global supply chains, algorithmic cultures are key agents that govern subjects and things in logistical operations such as those found at Piraeus, among countless other global sites.

By way of conclusion, the logistical city is caught between expediency and contingency. The machine dream of absolute efficiency runs counter to the unruliness of labour and life. The elasticity of logistical time and space must nevertheless contend with the materialities of society and place, particles and power. Even if the logistical city could overcome the protocological asymmetries across software platforms that prevent cross-sector and global interoperability, it could never entirely eradicate the constituent power of refusal. The logistical city is cold, and without employment. The work has been done, elsewhere, sometimes hundreds if not thousands of kilometres away.
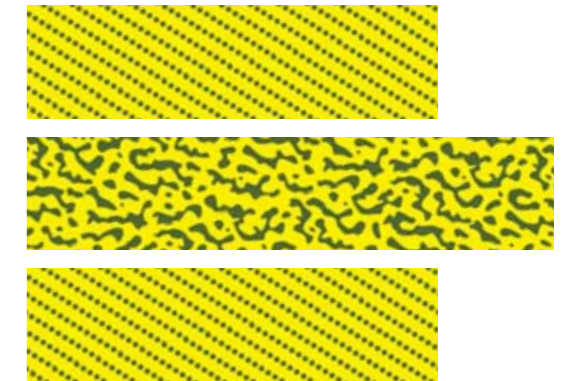
"NOTHING, JUST A POND": IMAGINING EMPTY LAND IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF RAJARHAT

KATIE HEPWORTH

Katie Hepworth

Nestled in between the vast expanse of an azure sky and the verdant earth at Rajarhat Township, Hiland Woods comes across as a unique effort of modern urban community development. With the best of contemporary residential facilities set against an idyllic landscape, this cluster of dwellings promises a unique living experience for people from all walks of life. … Among the woods that surround this complex, one will certainly find a refuge that is stable, secure and lively. […] We build for you… we build communities.
Hiland Group, Rajharat Township

A smiling family stares out from signs repeatedly affixed to poles on the main road from Rajarhat to Kolkata; below their faces the tagline: 'we build communities'. These posters are advertisements for the Hiland Group, one of the companies responsible for multiple residential developments currently under construction in New Town, Rajarhat. Other signs and billboards advertise specific residential compounds, showing artists' impressions of apartment buildings clustered around green central courtyards.

Views from the apartments show an internalised out; focusing on the central courtyard, they suggest isolation from both the old and new cities beyond the edges of the development.

The future-present implied by the billboards is one of idyllic retreats removed from congested chaos of the old city, yet closely linked into new IT hubs, business parks, and high-end shopping districts. In advertising the new town and its communities to come, these signs

make invisible the already present communities living within the city's boundaries. They intentionally forget those communities that were displaced from their livelihoods by government acquisitions of agricultural and fisheries land for 'public purpose'; displaced from land that was on-sold to developers for the public-private production of a new city at the eastern edge of Kolkata.

Writing of the translation of modernist planning into the colonial cities of India, Sundaram makes the distinction between the master plans for New Delhi and Chandrigah. Where the former had to contend with "restless refugee squatter camps and politicized Parliament", the later was built on land imagined empty; it "was conceived, or thought to be conceived, on a *tabla rasa*". By eschewing the informality of the Indian city, it was thought that Chandrigah could be realised as intended; the "legal city" would not have to contend first with the "unintended city".

The building of Rajarhat was initially proposed by the Kolkata Municipal Development Authority. It was to operate as part of a network of new satellite cities that were intended to alleviate residential congestion in the centre. The new city would provide space for high-end residential towers and special economic zones providing outsourcing opportunities for India and the rest of the world. It would function as a new IT centre that would complement – or maybe supplement – Kolkata's Sector IV.

Although the KDMA issued plans showing a city zoned into functional units, New Town lacks the rigid

rationality of modernist plans. In fact, we were told, there was no plan. Responsibility for the development was split between public and private partners: the boundaries of the city were determined by the Kolkata Municipal Development Authority, and the land "legally" acquired – following violence, coercion and barely met promises of adequate compensation – by the government-run HIDCO, while the responsibility for construction was handed over to individual developers and the owners of particular sites. With development split between multiple organisations, the New Town appears to be emerging somewhat randomly. Repetitive residential towers appear in clustered together, scattered throughout a seemingly empty landscape. A comprehensive plan is suggested by bitumen roads that divide up the spaces between partially constructed buildings, and yet proved untrue by stories of residents trucking in water to apartments due to the lack of public or even private infrastructure.

On our first day in Kolkata we had driven through these landscapes. Ishita Dey spoke the plan to us as we drove through Salt Lake and Rajarhat on our first day in Calcutta. Moving between recently completed IT centres, and clusters of partially and fully constructed residential land, she invoked the farmlands and fisheries that were no longer, which once occupied what appeared initially to us as empty land. She described these farmlands through the informal tea and food stalls that had accreted along the edges of the new techno cities in Salt Lake City and Rajarhat. In these places, the "unintended city" emerges in Rajarhat, the new town that was to become a model legal city.

This is the landscape that Sophea, Anja and I drove and wandered through on one of our days in Rajarhat. We went to listen to the new town under construction and to rural areas under destruction. As in other places, we collected onlookers curious about us as outsiders, and of our photographs and recordings of "nothing". Here the men that we spoke to were from somewhere else. Drivers of intercity coaches, they had found themselves here to clean their vehicles, moved on from their usual place in Salt Lake City.

We asked them the history of this place, to tell us what had preceded the barely constructed buildings, and were told: "*nothing… just a pond*". Their words ignored the small yellow blocks of concrete that were scattered through the grass between the barely constructed buildings. Each of these markers was cast with a number and the word HIDCO, signalling that here was a block of land that had been acquired by the government for the building of the New Town; together they

represented areas that had once been farmland, and had formed the primary livelihood for nearby villages. Dispossessed of their farmlands, these villages became absorbed into the New Town. Their individual names were erased from the plan, as they were collectively redefined as "service villages". In reinscribing these farming and fishing villages as service villages, the plan rationalised their presence in the new town; they appeared in the plan not as remnants of a rural past, but as intentional inclusions. No longer the centres of agricultural land, they became peripheral and subjugated to the new residential developments. It was not just the villages that were reimagined, it was also their residents. As Sundaram argues, the work of the modernist plan goes beyond the rationalisation of space into discrete units of use. It also operates by making a distinction between "forms of labour and subjectivity that were seen as appropriate to modern urban life in India; those who did not fit this model could be open for displacement in the event of a failed assimilation into urbanism". No longer owners of their own land on which to work, the residents of the newly reinscribed "service villages" were assimilated into the new city as servants that were to work in the residential buildings to come.

This reinscription rendered invisible the violence of dispossession. In leaving the villages occupied, while acquiring fisheries and farmland, the government argued that no forced displacement had occurred. They have contravened neither the World Bank's requirements for funding, nor the UN's guidelines on forced eviction, both of which require that resettlement solutions be found in the case of eviction. However activists predict that this displacement is still to come; it will occur once the compensation has been used, once individuals and families find themselves unable to gain sufficient work within the new city. The displacement from homes will follow the displacement from livelihoods, but only once the attention surrounding acquisition has passed. These displacements are forgotten in the building of Rajarhat; they are absent from the memories produced alongside the new town. To build Rajarhat it was necessary to forget that it was built on already occupied, productive fisheries and agricultural land. Selling the new town required the erasure of the violence of dispossession – the beatings, murders and summary arrests. It was necessary to imagined empty land in order to turn agricultural land into landscape beyond the windows of the future city.

THE CONTEXT OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING: THE NEW TOWN AT RAJARHAT

KEYA DASGUPTA

Google Maps
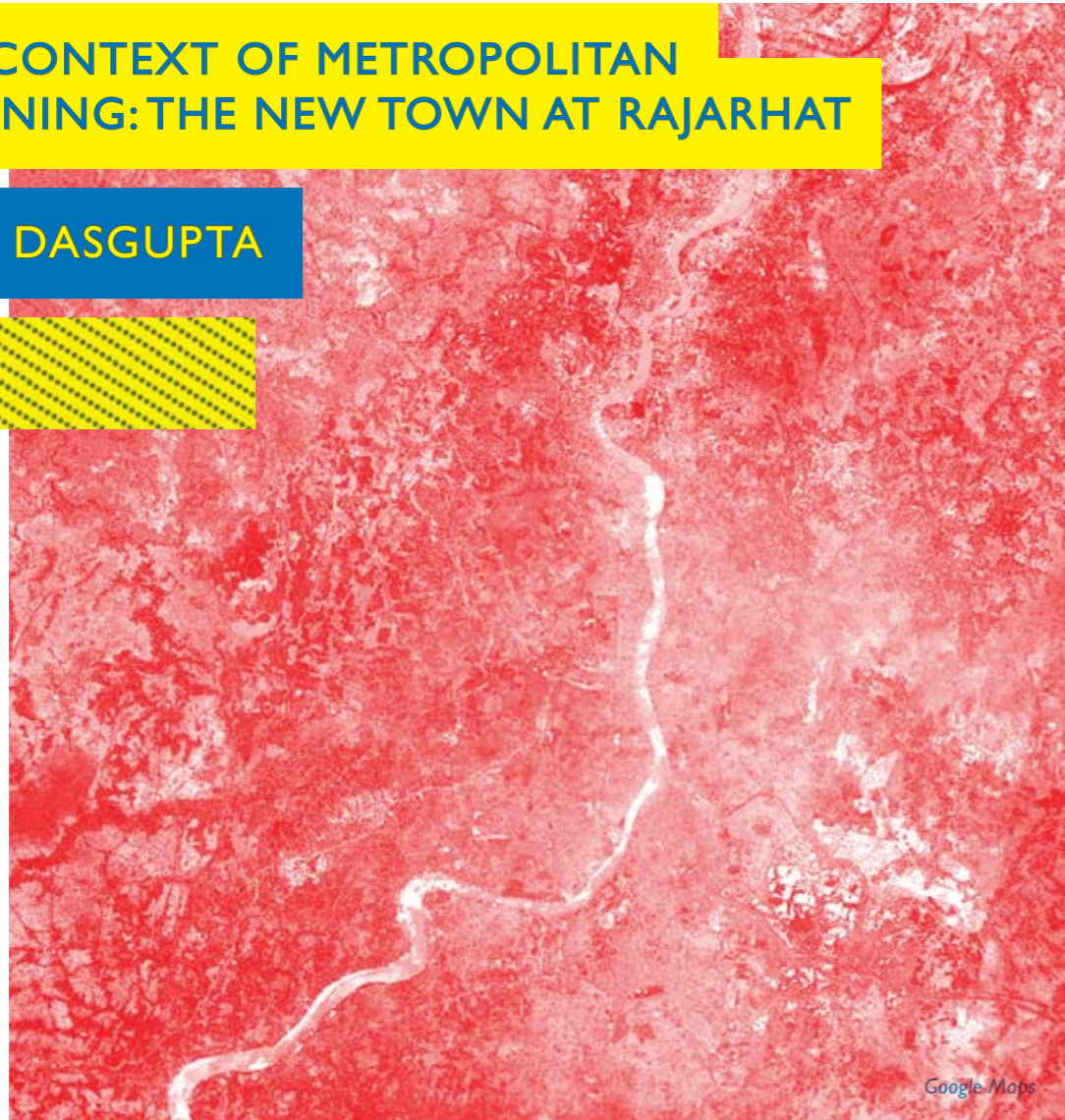
Kolkata is witnessing significant and rapid transformations in its organization of space, especially in its periphery; transformations which began over three or more decades ago. These developments have come about through both formal/organized and informal/unorganized interventions. The state, the developmental authorities, both local and global, constitutes the former, whereas private ventures of a different nature and scale constitute the latter. Such simultaneous efforts in the reorganisation of space have given rise to characteristics shaped by legality, illegality, formal, informal, governmental, private, public-private partnerships, acquisitions, transactions, etc. The coexistence of such diverse actors and actions is being reflected in significant changes within a short span of time. These are changes brought about in occupancy, in objectives, in forms, through the emergence of a 'new'

form of governance characterised by new categories and new actors, with resultant displacements of the existing. It would be interesting to enquire whether such developments reflect a planning agenda, or have evolved in spite of any well-defined, well-integrated plan.

A common factor in these varied layers of transformation – physical, social and economic - has been a shift in focus from the centre to the fringe areas of the city and the broader metropolitan area in the northeast, east, southeast, south and southwest (though not with equal intensity). Interestingly, the demographic trends, especially in the last four decades, also substantiate this fact. Since 1971, population growth was reported to have slowed down in the city of Calcutta. This slowdown was concentrated in its core wards, with a few wards even experiencing negative

growth. By contrast, the rate of population growth in fringe areas, which were administratively included in the city in 1981, far surpassed that of the central city. Although this is an area yet to be interrogated in detail, one could possibly surmise that there has been a slowing down of migration into a city that had earlier witnessed significant migration flows; and that secondly, a large section of the population in the core city has been moving out, often making way for newer uses. But these are very tentative assumptions. May be we could term this, in the words of Edward Soja, as the 'third geography of restructuring… a combination of decentralization and recentralization, the peripheralization of the center and the centralization of the periphery, the city simultaneously being turned inside out and outside in'.

URBAN SPRAWL IN THE EASTERN FRINGES

Since its inception, the growth of Calcutta has primarily been dictated by its physical set-up   between River Hooghly on the west and the low lying swamps and wetlands on the east. The east has always functioned as the natural drainage and sewage disposal area. The vast East Calcutta Wetlands is a multiple use wetland covering 12,500 hectares. In November 2002 it was declared a Ramsar site, making it a wetland of international importance, and thus to be protected. The need to control the eastwards expansion of settlements has been voiced by city administrators and planners from the colonial era to the post-independence period. The entire eco-system is now under critical threat. According to the findings of a report by Kunal Chattopadhyay, as referred to by Kalyan Rudra, between 1980 and 2000, urban sprawl has engrossed about 1500 hectares of wetlands.

Urban sprawl in the environmentally vulnerable eastern fringes has continued unhindered ever since the establishment of a planned township at Salt Lake and the subsequent construction (in phases) of the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass, a broad road connecting the township to the southern extreme of the city that was meant to relieve the traffic load of the city proper. The planning of new townships such as the East Calcutta Township, the Baishnabghata-Patuli Township by the Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) Metropolitan Development Authority are representative examples of state effort. With developments in the eastern fringes sponsored by both state and private agencies, the neighbouring areas also became sought after locations for further expansion.

The planning of a new town at Rajarhat in a dominantly agricultural land with water-bodies was significantly different on many counts - in magnitude, in method, and in the creation of a new form of governance, a model not followed earlier in township development in the state. This was through the setting up of a special purpose vehicle (SPV), the West Bengal Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation (WBHIDCO) in the early 1990s to facilitate the project, with land assembly commencing in 1996. It is significant to note that alongside the development of the project, fringe villages were being developed as 'service villages', thus paving the way for their future inclusion into the urban area. This was done through the constitution of a civic body, the Bhangar-Rajarhat Area Development Authority (BRADA), which had administrative control over Rajarhat and adjoining areas, with the primary objective of infrastructural development. In Rajarhat HIDCO took up full responsibility for acquiring land and the fixing of land prices, while for the neighbouring villages this was left to market forces. BRADA has recently been scrapped after the new government came to power in the state.

PLANNING FOR CALCUTTA

The city of Calcutta has not followed a 'planned' course, in the proper sense of the term, in its process of development. Changes in its land use and built form have taken place, effected by the implementation of the 'plan', or alternatively, as a normal consequence of the urbanising process. The responsibility for developing the city physically has periodically changed hands, beginning with the British colonial powers. Since then a large number of agencies have appeared on the scene, 'making and executing independent physical development decisions without necessarily integrating them with the overall concept and functions of the city'. As the state government officially declared, they 'remained in the wings, retaining the power to intervene but seldom exercising the integrating function in the city's developmental activities.'

DECENTRALISED URBANISATION? PLANNING FOR NEW TOWNS

Probably the earliest reference that we find regarding the planning of future growth centres outside the metropolitan area is in The Perspective Plan 1966-1986 of the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation's Basic Development Plan (BDP), the first comprehensive
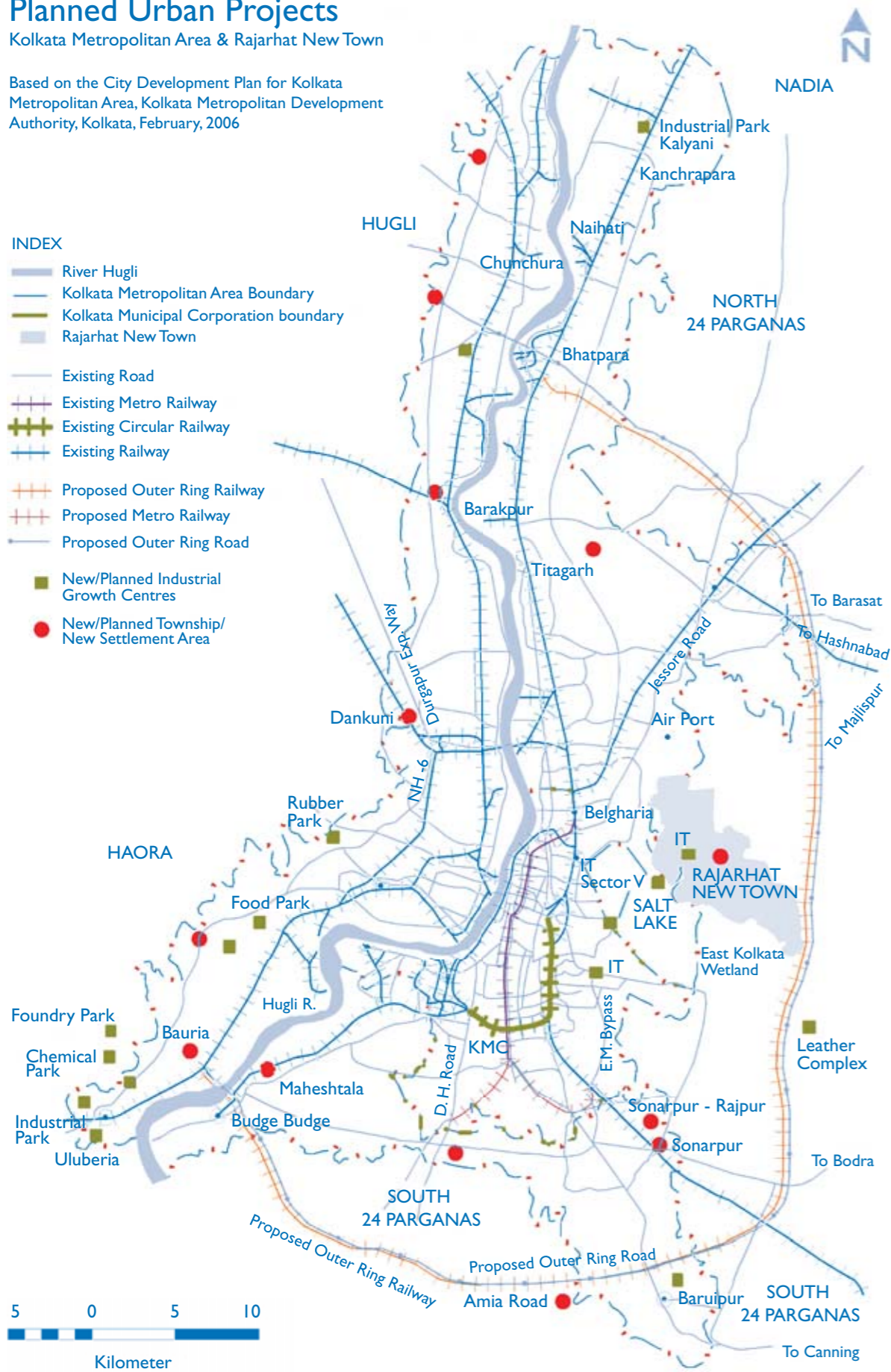
Planned Urban Projects
Kolkata Metropolitan Area & Rajarhat New Town

Based on the City Development Plan for Kolkata
Metropolitan Area, Kolkata Metropolitan Development
Authority, Kolkata, February, 2006

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River Hugli
Kolkata Metropolitan Area Boundary
Kolkata Municipal Corporation boundary
Rajarhat New Town

Existing Road
Existing Metro Railway
Existing Circular Railway
Existing Railway

Proposed Outer Ring Railway
Proposed Metro Railway
Proposed Outer Ring Road

New/Planned Industrial Growth Centres
New/Planned Township/ New Settlement Area

NADIA

Industrial Park Kalyani
Kanchrapara
HUGLI
Naihati
Chunchura
NORTH 24 PARGANAS
Bhatpara
Barakpur
Titagarh
To Barasat
To Hashnabad
To Majlispur
Jessore Road
Dankuni
Air Port
Rubber Park
Belgharia
IT
IT Sector V
RAJARHAT NEW TOWN
SALT LAKE
East Kolkata Wetland
IT
HAORA
Food Park
Foundry Park
Bauria
Hugli R.
Chemical Park
KMC
E.M. Bypass
D.H. Road
Leather Complex
Industrial Park
Maheshtala
Sonarpur - Rajpur
Uluberia
Budge Budge
Sonarpur
To Bodra
SOUTH 24 PARGANAS
Proposed Outer Ring Railway
Proposed Outer Ring Road
Amia Road
Baruipur
SOUTH 24 PARGANAS
To Canning
Durgapur Expressway
NH-6

5 0 5 10
Kilometer

planning endeavour for post-independence Calcutta. The BDP referred to two strategic centres for renewal and growth in the Calcutta Metropolitan District - the Metropolitan Centre comprising Calcutta and Howrah and the Kalyani-Bansberia Centre twenty-five miles further north. The latter didn't take off as envisaged. A move was also made by the Government of West Bengal in the late1970s 'towards a decentralized urban development policy' through the development of small and medium towns and growth centres, to reduce the 'unhealthy dependence on the metropolis'. Such efforts mainly concentrated on 'improving the conditions' of already existing small and medium towns.

Planning objectives of contemporary Kolkata were clearly spelt out in the Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority's Vision 2025: A Perspective Plan of Calcutta Metropolitan Area. The following are representative extracts from the document, which might be useful to consider in the context of the present article:

Development efforts during the last three centuries have restored confidence, where the city looks forward to a dynamic and bright future, where 'massive programmes' have to be undertaken to support this new growth. Such programmes would include providing shelter, civic services, health and education facilities, and 'expand the economic base and employment structure.

It is quite apparent that this new growth should largely be channelised outside the metropolitan centre.

In deliberating on the spatial structure for the metro region of Kolkata, Vision 2025 proposed a number of 'Future Growth Centres'. The rationale given was that the 'over-spill' population in 2025 would need more built-up space, taking into consideration the 'absorption capacity' of existing settlements in the metropolitan area. Rajarhat-Gopalpur, though located just outside the metropolitan area, was selected as one of eight such envisaged growth centres, well-integrated in the future traffic and transport network (Ref.Map). Through many similar ventures in other metropolitan areas in the Indian subcontinent, planned urbanization has been taking place in the periphery of large cities. Navi Mumbai is representative of this process.

The New Town of Rajarhat dovetailed with the Government of India's declaration to establish 100 new towns by 2021. According to HIDCO's project report on New Town, Calcutta, the two main 'development objectives' were to generate new areas for absorbing future metropolitan growth and to establish a New

Business District to complement as well as supplement the metropolitan level functions of the Central Business District of Calcutta.

The City Development Plan, which was prepared for the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), echoes similar views as Vision 2025:

Notwithstanding the problems and constraints, Kolkata envisions to become a world class city and attain competitive edge in this era of globalization. […] Obviously, this would call for substantial improvement in the basic infrastructural facilities such that domestic and international investors are encouraged to come and invest in the city and stay to realize the economic growth potential.

The primary objectives of these two planning documents reflect a marked shift from the preceding period in terms of spatial planning and the emergence of a new agenda in the management of cities, where through development projects, the role of external funding agencies, the private sector, and public-private partnerships have been given prominence as well as priority.

The new economic policy of liberalization and globalization had brought in change in the approach to economic development and the responsive role of the local self government in the development process. […] Development of the service sector has to be emphasised. Towards meeting these targets, internationally proven consultants may be utilised including for funding arrangements.

The role of the state is also very significant in this new scenario; it no longer simply acts as a facilitator, but also as a sponsor. The setting up of the New Town, Rajarhat is an interesting model of this new form of governance.
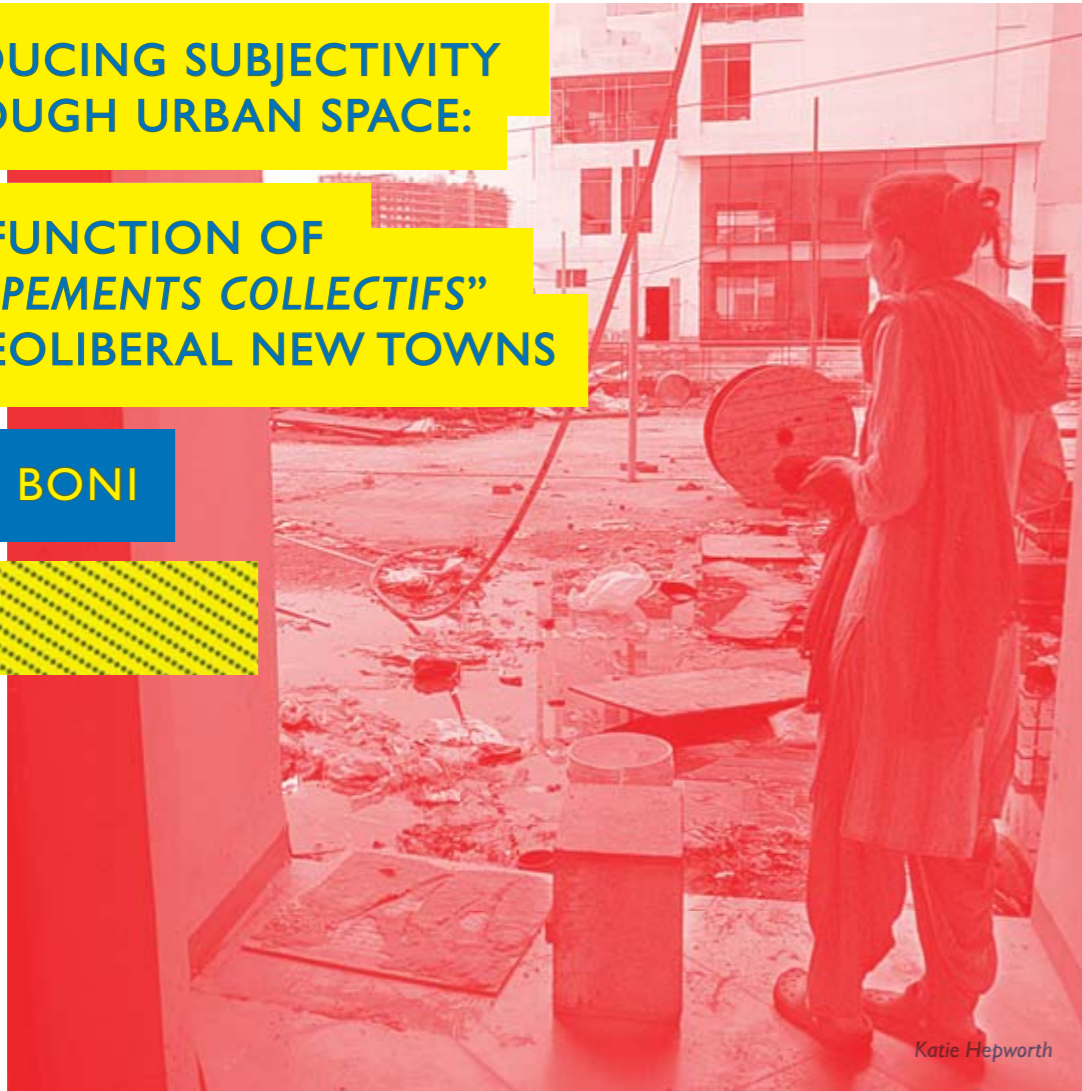
HTTP://TRANSITLABOUR.ASIA/BLOGS/ PLANNING

PRODUCING SUBJECTIVITY THROUGH URBAN SPACE:

# THE FUNCTION OF *"EQUIPEMENTS COLLECTIFS"* IN NEOLIBERAL NEW TOWNS

LIVIO BONI

Katie Hepworth

Ned Rossiter

The very short, punctual, but nevertheless significant contributions of Deleuze and Guattari to urban studies, written in the context of CERFI (Centre d'Etudes, de Recherches et de Formation Institutionnelles), have been largely overlooked. This is clear if one compares the attention drawn by these writings to the widespread reception of Foucault's article on heterotopias. CERFI describes the city as a 'density' of *equipements collectifs*. This concept specifies the material agglomeration of 'structures of investment, structures of public service, and structures of assistance or pseudo assistance' within which antagonistic relationships may obtain. By considering the case of Rajarhat, the new town on Kolkata's northeast fringes, I ask whether the conceptual approach developed by Deleuze and Guattari in these texts provides a useful analytical frame for understanding urban development under neoliberalism and, in particular, the formation of Special Economic Zones. I also test their notion that there is

no functional difference between productive and anti-productive *equipements collectifs* since both produce a kind of socius.

The very model of a new town as removed – even from an administrative point of view – from its surrounding territory seems to confirm the idea of the city as a 'pseudo-totalization' or 'dream', an imaginary construct in which *equipements collectifs* themselves become 'machines of the socius'. The urban dystopia realised through the model of the Special Economic Zone validates Deleuze and Guattari's idea that the city is not a real entity but rather a field of intensification in which the construction of *equipements collectifs* induces a subjectivation that produces the citizenry. However, we have to complicate this observation with some supplementary remarks: first of all, the form of the *equipements collectifs* found in a new town such as Rajarhat is very different to that found in developments constructed in the seventies. Classic *equipements*
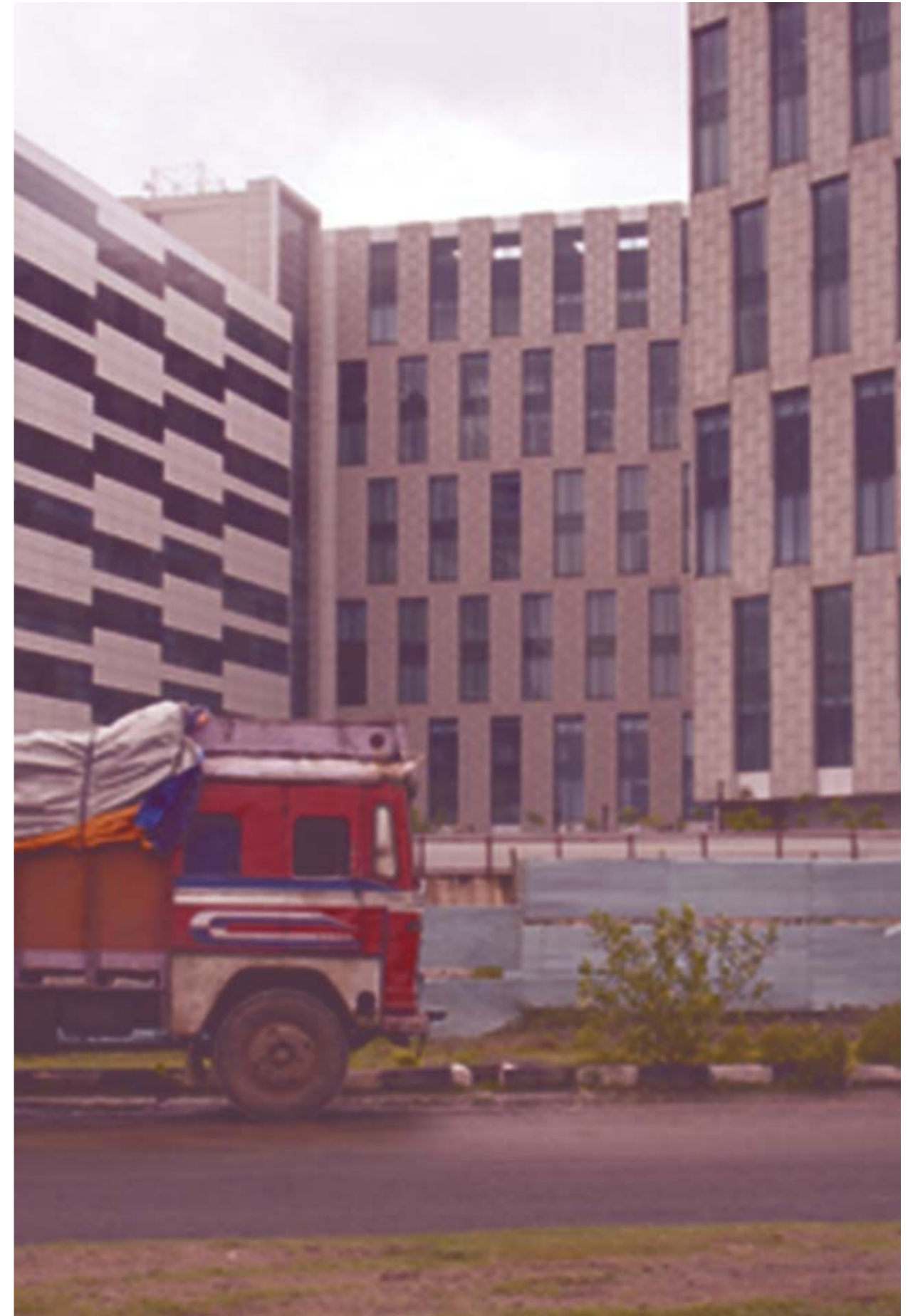
collectifs – such as roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, gardens, stadiums – on which urban development was based in the seventies, have lost their centrality in the new town. Instead, they have been replaced by a kind of 'sanctuarised' space, which predominantly consists of middle-class residences, a concentration of corporations and, more generally speaking, the privatisation of urban space. Of course, not all of the 'traditional' equipements (such as big sanitary stacks or green spaces) have disappeared. New *equipements collectifs* (such as shopping centres or communication infrastructures) are also emerging. But it seems quite clear, for instance, that transport *equipements* are no longer the most crucial. This is due to the nature of the social and productive composition of new towns, which are especially made – as in the case of Rajarhat – for those who work in IT/ITES industries and who enjoy high salaries or those in the Indian diaspora who are willing to invest in their own country.

Deleuze and Guattari's observations can be extended by trying to create a cartography of new forms of *equipements collectifs* in the era of so-called neoliberalism. This is the only way to test their fundamental idea that every new step in the development of *equipements collectifs* creates an ambiguous and divided subjectivation. In a discussion with CERFI, Foucault outlined a genealogy of the contradictory social figures engendered by the development of the road as a crucial *equipement collectif*:

1) The tax collector and the bandit, who are engendered by the first function of the road, which is to enable production (circulation of commodities and workforces, the collect of taxes, and so on);

2) The customs officer and the smuggler, who are engendered by the second function of the road, which consists of producing demand (constitution of local markets, decision of which kind of merchandise has to be taxed, etc.);

3) The civil engineer and the vagabond, who are engendered by the third fundamental function of the road, which is 'to normalize, to adjust the production of production with the production's demand' (town planning, development of transport's infrastructures, urban policy, etc.). In this last case, the qualified subject of normalization finds his opposite figure in the simpleton (demeuré) who never moves out of his village, or in the vagabond, who inhabits space in an un-economic way.

If we follow Foucault's view of *equipements collectifs*

as machines for producing ambiguous forms of social subjectivity, we must try to describe the new forms of ambiguity that emerge in the new towns and SEZs. Let me risk some hypotheses: one the one hand, the high-end consumption (shopping centres, all kind of facilities) creates a kind of resident-consumer, while on the other, a new service class emerges from the villagers who have lost their land in the construction of the city; the 'sancturisation' of space (which, in the words of Samaddar, involves the wall as an apparatus) creates a contradiction between the isolation and self-reference of urban space, and the connection/ identification of the classes that inhabit it with a global space (linked up electronically and creating forms of proximity with other SEZs in competition to attract capital and workforces). Finally, in moving from the problem of production (consumption vs. care work) and the question of space (sancturisation vs globalisation) to one of subjectivation, one can easily observe how the virtually globalized middle-class living in contemporary New Towns does not become a cosmopolitical class but rather becomes a fertile ground for new liberal-nationalist movements. Any political invention or proposition adequate to the development of the new town must be able to negotiate such ambiguities, to think through the internal division of these new social subjectivities, and to force their logic by opening onto other spaces of subjectivation.

LISTENING AS A METHOD FOR 'KNOWING': SOUND MAPPING SECTOR V AND RAJARHAT

ANJA KANNGIESER

Ned Rossiter
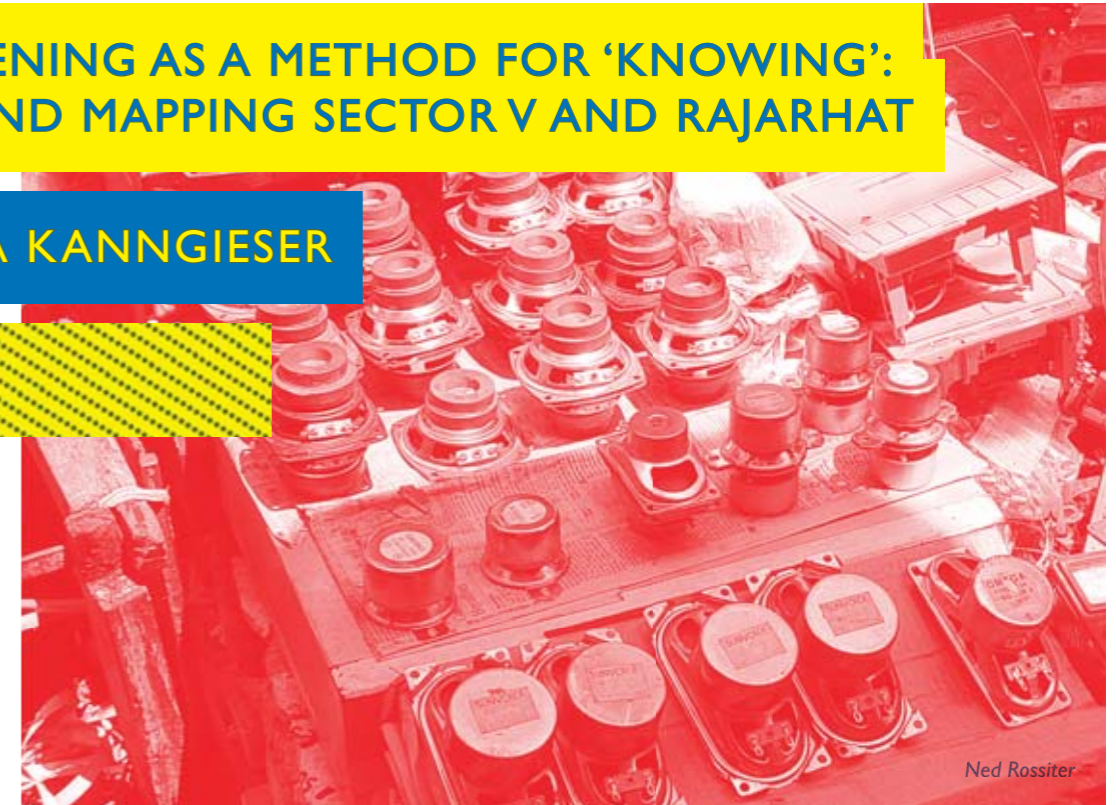
The sounds of a place reveal much of its conditions. By listening to a place we get a sense of the complex and shifting terrains that make up its unfoldings, the sudden flashes of activity, the lulls, the transversals of animate and inanimate beings. Listening closely allows us to hear for its topologies – those continuous tones and harmonics that hum throughout moments, events and passages as they articulate themselves. Through concerted listening we are able to encounter sound as a way of 'knowing', as an acoustemology.

A method of sound mapping can be used to trace out sounds in-situ and in-transit. Sound mapping is a means for registering the unseen or the difficult to see because we hear the resonance, dimension, depth, and porosity of space. While it has conventionally been an aesthetic practice linked to acoustic ecology, policy makers and institutions have also recently deployed it to help understand and measure the effects of noise levels on human and natural habitation. Sound mapping involves listening carefully to a space for a defined period of time. In most instances there is audio documentation, which may be accompanied by written notation and observations of ones surroundings. This can then be translated into a sonic or visual/ graphical cartography.

During the Transit Labour project in Kolkata, Sophea Lerner, Katie Hepworth and I undertook a project of

sonically (and visually) recording some of the spaces in Rajarhat and Sector V, Kolkata. We visited six locations within these areas on the edge of the old city of Kolkata: a bus depot, three building sites, a waterways and wetlands area, and food markets. The sounds were documented using a combination of binaural and directed microphones in order to better capture both the general atmosphere as well as specific sound zones.

Sound maps underscore the highly textured topographies of a space. The sites we visited were in the process of construction and/or transition. These were predominantly areas with recent histories of conflict – the eviction of agricultural communities from their land to make way for commercial and housing infrastructure. The signs of displacement were still quite apparent; alongside the frames of business centres and apartment buildings were farmers tending to small plots of land and moving rubble.

The three building sites were in various stages of development, all at once. What impressed me across all three were the jarring intervals and pockets oscillating noise and silence. The sound-scapes at these sites were not smooth; bursts of commotion that were isolated to very specific locales syncopated the ambient drone. Moving through these spaces I felt a sense of vastness, the long tracts of concrete lying inert, clanging heard

Giorgio Grappi

only through far off echoes. This was in acute contrast to the encounters of labour elsewhere on site: a room full of workers arc welding and sawing metal, children pushing wheelbarrows and throwing bricks, a security guard singing through a half-erected, underground car-park approaching me where I hid on a stairwell, the splashing and thudding as a group of men heaved mud onto the bank of a lake, dozens of cows lowing and grazing in the background only a few miles away from corporate IT parks and SEZs.

The transversal between noise and silence on re-listening highlights the many layers and concatenations of activity and stillness within these geographies. We sense physics of depth and size, the resonances of rooms, steel and concrete frames, the clatters of tightly packed food stalls, the frenetic passing of traffic. Kolkata is a sonically dense city. In these outskirts one starkly hears the different permutations of transition and the daily labour of its momentum. By mapping these sounds we can discern the rhythms and cadences of construction and demolition, literally and figuratively, as they happened on one day for a discrete period of time. We can discern social relations, camaraderie and antagonism through the tenors of voice. We hear the contrasting speeds of building, the specific directions of a workers attention and a foreman's instruction. We also hear ourselves, female artist-researchers from the

'global north'; we hear our lack of relevant language skills and our sometimes failed, sometimes successful attempts at negotiating entryways and borders in a city that we are but moving through.

To be sure, to usefully employ a method of acoustemology we need to go beyond description into analysis and we need to understand that such maps provide just a snapshot of an environment. If we are to approach sound as a way of knowing we need to reflect on what it reveals about the conditions and stakes of our hearing. We have to ask: what does it mean to listen, to be a listener, and to produce knowledge? How do we recognise the moment of recording for what it is, one moment in a world of many, affected by the technologies of capture, digitisation, interpretation, editing? And if we acknowledge this, how can we discover and unravel the different threads of what we are hearing while we translate them? If we keep such questions in mind, sound mapping may be a method for experiencing and engaging the dynamic topographies of a megacity like Kolkata, where our ears are fully saturated with the velocity of its inhabitants and its industries.

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BLOGS/LISTENING

SHANGHAI, KOLKATA, SYDNEY:

THESE CITIES ARE SITES FOR MAPPING

NEW PATTERNS OF LABOUR AND MOBILITY

IN THE WHIRLWIND OF ASIAN CAPITALIST

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