

Understanding Life Work of Migrant Industrial Workers in Contemporary City of Global South: Bridging Urban Development with Precarity in Labour Market

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Introduction

The city of Faridabad, planned with Nehruvian vision in 1951, was built for the migrants who had arrived from Pakistan after the partition of India. The city was envisioned to provide work and housing to these migrants and hence large-scale industries were built along with housing colonies. Nehru had insisted on industrial development along modern lines, with proper workers' quarters, to obviate the growth of slums (Jain 1998, 47-55). Seven decades after India's partition and the planning of Faridabad, however, the city is now known for its small and micro-scale industries on one hand and slums on the other. The policies aiming at industrial decentralisation in Delhi were chiefly responsible for promoting unsystematic industrial growth in Faridabad.

This paper reflects upon the trajectory of industrial development in Faridabad, highlighting a series of insights, including the role of social reproduction, local identity and social capital in shaping the migrant workers' experiences of work in the city. The role of social reproduction is spatially stretched and manifest in rural-urban entanglements, particularly in the case of migrant workers who have established a foothold in the city: whom Gidwani and Ramamurthy (2018) call 'middle migrants'. The current paper draws from the various essential contributions to the scholarship on migrant workers in cities (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003; Gidwani and Ramamurthy 2018; Buckley 2012; Mitchell et al. 2012), which help in understanding the ways in which migrant workers see themselves in the city, continuously working towards their social reproduction and survival. The so-called 'informal' spaces that have come up in the city, have become sites where migrant workers continuously build/forged new relationships of social reproduction and negotiate their working conditions with the state. While highlighting the course of development in Faridabad, the paper addresses the macro concerns emerging from the literature on urban geography and labour geography in a city of the Global South. These concerns mostly revolve around the issues of 'informality' of space that arise from

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the interplay of a host of factors –governance, urban planning, and the real-estate market under the neoliberal regime of economic development. Besides, how this ‘informal space’ (as defined by the state) is facilitating certain types of labour practices for new and old migrant workers, while being produced by it at the same time, seems to be an interesting entry point to bridge the gap between the sub-disciplines of labour and urban geography.

The study focuses on the ways in which growth of industries in the city of Faridabad has shaped the spatial relations amongst migrant workers – the mark of a functioning labour market. These labour markets are systematically structured by the institutional forces of the state, capital, labour, employer-employee power relations, workers, communities and different identities (Peck 1996, 5). The understanding of labour issues have become central to discourses on human geography because the new accumulation regime has created a common experience of marginalisation for migrant workers across borders. Recent researches in labour geography, a theoretical tool in human geography, facilitate the understanding of these layers or nuances of marginalisation and the workers’ choices of work and employment. This, however, does not suggest the emergence of a homogenised narrative of labour politics, but rather opposes this notion by indicating that it is difficult to theorise the migrant worker’s agency and responses because of stratifications and nuances at various scales (Carswell and Neve 2012; Buckley et al. 2017). Workers’ responses vary with their spatial embeddedness, and if there are limits to the agency of workers, so it is in the case of capital. The making of a labour/worker and their entry into a labour market is more a political process than a simple economic one governed by the demand and supply of labour.

This paper is divided into two broad sections. The first section will be tracing the spatial evolution of industries in Faridabad along with the emergence of *bastis* and unauthorised colonies in the city. The second section draws from the narratives and life histories of workers, to understand these so-called informal spaces as a site of social reproduction of labour. It more or less corresponds to the understanding of production of urban space. Based on the narratives of migrant workers and their life histories, I reflect upon the lived experiences of migrant workers in the city of Faridabad, and the role these experiences play in their constantly being a central actor in the spatial development of the city’s landscape. I conclude by emphasising that Faridabad, as a contemporary city of the Global South, has had a relational development that has to be seen in the twin contexts of the history of Faridabad as well as the eviction of small-scale industries from Delhi. The spatiality of Faridabad is informed by the tenure diversity of land, which provides a window of opportunity for small-scale industrialists and migrant workers to make their space in the city. There are two reasons for emphasising Faridabad’s identity as a contemporary city of the Global South, as mentioned in the title; firstly, as later discussed in the paper, the functioning of urban processes are not merely guided by land rents and neoliberal agendas but also by extra-economic forces and land-

tenure diversity (Ghertner 2015; Bhan 2015). Secondly, the urban spatiality of Faridabad and most other cities of the Global South overlap with agrarian ecosystems in terms of land-market management as well as labour flow, which also affects the labour market.

Further, to contribute to the scholarship on urban studies from the perspective of cities in the Global South, I argue that the impact of spatial restructuring of these cities on the labour market is different in nature from that in cities of the West. To elaborate on this, I need to first justify the use of the term ‘spatial restructuring’ and not gentrification. Industrial relocation was accompanied with large-scale eviction of *bastis* from the core areas of Delhi, to create parks, stadiums and complexes (Mitchell 1995). Keeping aside the intricacies associated with the term ‘gentrification’, it is established that it is akin to a colonisation at neighbourhood level that thrives on systematic inequalities (Smith 1996; Atkinson and Bridge 2005, 266). The gentrification theories in the West are largely focused on the vicissitudes of land rent and the expansion of global corporate capital, with very few barriers to private forms of ownership (Ghertner 2015). The situation is different in cities in other parts of the world, because of complex land-tenure systems, complicated legal processes and politics. Hence, gentrification cannot be understood purely in terms of capital accumulation – sometimes socio-political power too plays a major role in the acquiring, modifying and using of spaces (Chatterjee and Parthasarthy 2018). Therefore, theories of gentrification do not explain much about the spatial restructuring in cities of the Global South. Interestingly, gentrification has an intimate relationship with the functioning of labour markets in cities of the West (Gourzis et al. 2019). Many a times labour precarity became integral to gentrification, while in many other cases gentrification fostered precarity in the labour market. This complex relationship is also manifested in cities of the Global South but since the nature of this relationship differs, it needs to be looked into further. It would not be entirely accurate to say that spatial restructuring in cities of the Global South was supported by precarity and fostered precarity, since the workers working in industries, pushed to the periphery, were already engaged in precarious as well as flexible jobs. It, however, directly stifles the worker’s livelihood and social provisioning, giving rise to complex forms of illegalities and pushing the labour market flow to the periphery. The narratives in the second section show the ways in which workers were always on the move after being displaced from Delhi.

Spatial Development in Faridabad

The Delhi Master Plan 1962 sought to decongest the capital city through the shifting and relocation of heavy and polluting industries to neighboring towns. This is when a ring of 800 sq km was identified as the Delhi Metropolitan Area or DMA¹, to decongest or liberate the city from the chaos of post-Partition urban dystopia (Sundaram 2010). Therefore, the phenomenal growth of these towns is a result of initiatives of regional planning. Amongst DMA towns, Faridabad was the only town that had been originally set up as an industrial

town in Punjab (initially Faridabad was part of Punjab, it became part of Haryana after the bifurcation of Punjab). Therefore, in terms of industrial development, Faridabad had an upper edge as compared to other DMA towns, and hence saw enormous industrial growth².

The history of industrialisation in Faridabad started in 1951 with the setting up of the New Industrial Township or NIT. Large-scale industries of auto parts, tractors and shoes³ were set up in Faridabad between 1950s-60s, attracting small and medium-scale industries to invest in the area. Therefore, the movement from Fordism to Flexible Specialisation was quite visible in the Faridabad industrial area. This flexible accumulation showed two tendencies in Faridabad as rightly pointed out by Peck (1996, 125), based on Scott's (1988) study. Firstly, evasion of Fordist labour pools which took place in Faridabad in terms of evasion of politicised working class, institutionalised labour process and high cost structures; secondly, reagglomeration of production in insulated locations caused by fragmentation of industries and sprouting of new industries in pockets all over the city. Later, the fragmentation of joint families also leads to the setting up of many small and medium-scale units in the city. Also, gradually, as the workers gained the skill and technical know-how of industrial production and processes, they would set up small/micro scale industries or workshops of their own⁴. Since these workers did not have the capital to buy land in a planned industrial estate, they established their small workshops or micro-scale industries in unauthorised colonies⁵.

Eventually, due to unavailability of infrastructural facilities, and because labour militancy was creating huge problems for industrialists, the industrial focus of Faridabad shifted towards small-scale industries, with large-scale industries moving out to the neighbouring areas of Haryana. This was also facilitated by the industrial policies put in place by the state of Haryana, providing incentives to industrialists in industrially backward districts for decentralisation of economic growth (*Haryana Industrial Policy 2005, 2011*). Rewari, Jind became the new centres for large-scale industries. Only sixteen large-scale industries were established in Faridabad between 2005 and 2014 (as per the List of Large and Medium Industrial Units established in Haryana as on 31 July 2014, published by the Department of Industries and Commerce, Haryana). Around the same time, after the 1996 Supreme Court judgment ordering relocation of non-conforming industries in Delhi, many industrialists chose to move to the unauthorised industrial colonies of Faridabad, because of cheaper land and better availability of labour since it was already an industrial space⁶. The shift of industrial development towards micro and small-scale industries in Faridabad is therefore also linked with the industrial decentralisation in Delhi. The sudden closure of industries in Delhi was accompanied with large-scale *basti* demolition, which left many workers unemployed. Many migrant workers who were not eligible for being allocated a plot under the resettlement and rehabilitation scheme had to return to their hometown. The industries in adjoining towns were a good option to work in; the non-conforming industries in Faridabad provided similar

conditions of work as the non-conforming industries of Delhi, hence drawing many evicted workers to Faridabad. This movement of workers from Delhi to Faridabad was facilitated by the networks between workers and labour contractors or employers. The process of spatial restructuring in Delhi thus fostered the development of small and micro-scale industries in Faridabad, specifically in unauthorised colonies. These unauthorised colonies are places where labour laws are not applicable legally, making workers a lot more vulnerable to exploitation. In such conditions, the residential spaces of unauthorised colonies and *bastis* become a major source of networks essential to survive in the city.

The industrialists interviewed, on being asked about their places of residence, named either Faridabad or Delhi as their home. The location of the industrial unit was indicative of the amount of capital invested in the industry with respect to the scale of industry. For instance, the industries in the unauthorised colonies of Sector 48, were mostly micro and small-scale industries with small turnovers, while sector 56A, developed adjacent to the planned industrial sector 25, was more of a spill-over or an add-on to the planned industrial sector that housed many large-scale industries. Sector 56A had some medium and a few large-scale industries for moulding, die-casting, forging as well as polymers and auto-parts manufacturing industries. New industrial units are also being established in lands newly acquired from the rural zone by the Development Authority. These industries are non-conforming and unregistered in nature and belong to micro or small-scale in typology⁷. Strong lobbying by industrialists forced the state to regularise all unauthorised colonies in Faridabad in 2014⁸, in spite of industrial land-use being more than 50 percent in some of them. Such spaces have emerged as a result of the struggle to occupy urban spaces by non-corporate global capitalists; they are altered representational spaces that give rise to new and different understandings of labour processes. These spaces, also referred to as liminal spaces by J.J. Varga, resist the dominant narratives of reformers or planners and are sites where new and varied concepts of categories such as citizenship emerge (Varga 2013, 43).

As indicated by the Cluster Profile Report, Faridabad⁹ (having a total sample size of 400 MSME units, with 95 percent confidence level and 5 percent margin of error), 58 percent of the industries are small-scale industries, 38 percent are micro-scale industries and 3 percent are medium-scale industries, the rest being large-scale industries (categorisation carried out on the basis of definition of industries in MSMED, 2006 Act)¹⁰. The industrial cluster of Faridabad can therefore be characterised as a cluster of MSMEs that have forward and backward linkages to an extent, and where economic agents share a common socio-cultural background, with public/private institutional support such as industrial associations, DSIIDC (District State Industrial Infrastructural and Development Corporation) and other state or non-state agencies.

There are 23,000+ industrial set ups in Faridabad (quote given by the President of Manufacturing Association of Faridabad, interviewed January 2016) but approximately only 18,000 units are registered by DIC. The blindness of the state government to the actual requirement of industrial plot is visible by the observations made in the City Development Plan, “the industrial estate provided by the HSIIDC/HUDA¹¹ is 3,500 against more than 15,000 units running” (CDP Faridabad 2007). Therefore, it becomes important to address the reasons for the increasing number of non-conforming industries while framing industrial policy. The reasons for non-conforming industries coming up in unauthorised settlements are:

- The space occupied by MSMEs in an unauthorised colony is around 100-150 sq km while the industrial-model township only provides larger plots of 300 sq km. Industrial plots are therefore too expensive.
- Labour can reside at cheaper rent in unauthorised colonies. On the other hand, there is no provision of residential facilities for the labour in an industrial estate. Besides, there are no labour laws applicable in non-industrial zones and hence workers can be exploited by extracting more labour at lower price.

The setting up of industries in unauthorised colonies is gaining popularity because of the networks that have come to exist between people in that space (Bhan 2015; Benjamin and Raman 2001): for instance, the setting up of a shop of paint alongside a carpenter’s furniture shop or the setting up of a dyeing unit alongside a small-scale tailoring unit. The non-conforming industrial units are concerned with printing, tool-producing and auto-parts production. Hence, a mutual adaptation of strategies of capital and labour is conditioned by the urban context (Peck 1996, 88). Here, inter and intra-urban competition become important determinants of production of space and uneven geographic development, as argued by Harvey (1986, 55).

The tripartite concept of space, as Harvey (2006) notes, is in dialectical tension with each constituent. The urban space, if seen in the absolute sense, just serves as a place for residence and production. However, it assumes importance when considered relative to the place of residence and employment, transport networks and economic flows. The larger processes of urbanisation and industrialisation, which define their own spatial frame, make space internal to the process and also give a relational dimension to space. Therefore, the urban space does not merely act as a container for production and living, rather it is produced by the processes and practices of those who are living and involved in production activities. At the same time, these processes and practices of the workers are very much determined by their spatial embeddedness; this points to the complexities involved in the process of production of urban space, where labour or workers act as one of the main actors whose identity, consciousness and lived experiences play a major role in the production of space.

‘Bastis’ as Workers’ Housing and Site of Social Reproduction

Faridabad has 2,15,053 persons dwelling in *bastis* out of a total population of 14,14,050 persons (*Census* 2011). There are sixty-four slum settlements, almost all of them non-notified, within the limits of Municipal Corporation of Faridabad (MCF); out of these, forty-one slum settlements are older than thirty years, nine are between 20-25 years old, two were settled 15-20 years ago while one slum settlement is 10-15 years old¹². No new slum settlement has emerged in the last ten years because of non-availability of government land and strict monitoring by MCF against encroachment of land. According to the Slum-Free Action Plan of Faridabad, it has been proposed to upgrade twenty-five slum settlements situated on MCF land in Phase 1; the rest are to be followed in Phase 2. The impending resettlement was not welcomed by many *basti* dwellers since almost 85 percent of the houses are semi-*pucca* and people have already invested their earnings in establishing a home in that space. Besides, the resettlement will only provide them with a flat, while for many households in slums, income from renting the floors or rooms was contributing to their sustenance.

The *Basti* dwellers interviewed showed mixed characteristics, with some staying with families and others as single migrants. The migrant workers staying with their families were mostly the ones that had a foothold in the city, or what might be referred to as ‘middle migrants’ by Gidwani and Ramamurthy (2018). The single migrant workers were mostly seasonal migrant workers, who were either brought in by the labour contractor or had migrated on their own. A considerable number of workers were constantly on the move; they had worked in Delhi, then came to Faridabad, moved to NOIDA and then again returned to Faridabad. Their movement was determined by the work opportunities made available to them by their networks. These networks could be traced to have roots in their villages or could be formed in the cities based on their identities, workplace, place of residence or plain camaraderie. The workers were constantly negotiating with their employers and the state when it came to surviving in the city. The redevelopment and resettlement scheme for a *basti* named Ekta Colony had allocated, to eligible candidates, flats in the periphery of the city. Most of these flats were vacant; the people from Ekta Colony were moving to other *bastis* as their livelihood options were near those *bastis*. One such household, staying in Rahul Colony on rent, stated: “We cannot move to periphery, our jobs are here, so we stay here at rent. The flat allocated to us is lying vacant. Whenever MCF runs such eviction wave, these homes are vacated and people then come back and squat again on these land. This had been happening for a long time now.” The micro-politics which then comes into play in the course of negotiating for these slums shows the ways in which the working-class population appropriates spaces (Benjamin 2008). This is a population that is engaged in precarious jobs and depends on existing social relations of production, which will be disrupted if they are moved to the periphery. Faridabad shows exemplary instances of resilience of the working-class population

in occupying spaces, and bypassing the system of ordered planning put in place by the municipal body through a string of loopholes in urban governance. Therefore, the spatial restructuring, as argued in the introduction of this paper, cannot be only explained by land rent and global capital expansion in a city like Faridabad. These *bastis* act as spaces of affordable housing (Naik 2015; Cowan 2018), where new relationships are formed amongst working-class population (as shown in the next session) that make them realise their aspiration, in the absence of any structured and assured security at the workplace.

The urban space in Faridabad is indicative of an organised system that promotes the production of ‘informal’ spaces and practices (Roy 2009; Bhan 2013, 2016). Breman (2010) points out that although informalisation seems disorganised, one can see in it a highly organised system in which capital directs the state and prompts labour informality to receive higher returns and productivity. This labour informality is encouraged by the state in various ways, one of which is a structural transformation of the urban economy or shifting to a form of economy that is more capital-intensive than labour-intensive. It does not mean that there is no creation of jobs; instead, it indicates a shift towards creation of jobs in sectors which do not give social security to workers and where hourly wages or piece-rate work are the norm. Kundu (2010) points out that the service sector is showing the fastest increase in employment. However, it comprises precarious employment in the unorganised sector: domestic work, construction, real estate and restaurants and café work. This work is largely taken up by the dispossessed rural and urban workers to survive. In this context, their micro-politics and their tendency to occupy urban spaces become important tools in the fight for survival, as observed by Benjamin (1996) in Viswas Nagar, East Delhi.

Role of Workers in Shaping the Landscape of Faridabad

To understand the processes that affect the production of urban space as discussed above, we need to understand lived spaces. Taking livelihood and social reproduction of labourers as an entry point, the study draws upon the work of labour geographers and labour scholars. Having mentioned the importance of institutions, power relations and spatial embeddedness of workers in the functioning of the labour market, it is imperative that we demonstrate how and why they assume such importance in the real world. As Peck (1989) observed, ‘lack of effective control over the conditions and volume of its own supply means that labour finds itself at a strategic disadvantage in the labour market vis-à-vis capital’. This observation seems valid in the current neoliberal context. However, Herod (2003) and other labour geographers had stressed on two important points when they came up with the sub-discipline of ‘labour geography’. The first is that there was a theoretical argument being made – that the production of capitalism’s landscapes is not the sole prerogative of capital and that workers’ geographical embeddedness shapes their ability to shape the landscapes within which they live (i.e. the notion, adapting Marx’s famous comment about history, that workers

make their own geographies but not under conditions of their own choosing). Although this may seem a non-controversial argument to make today, in the context of the extant Marxist theorising of the 1990s, in which much of the theoretical focus was upon capital as a geographical actor, the workers' ability to produce a "spatial fix"¹³ was something that had not really been considered much (Herod 1997, 2001, 2003). The second aspect, of course, was to study empirically the instances where workers had actually gone about constructing their own spatial fixes. Obviously, it's easier to do that with unionised workers who are well organised (especially as many unions often have reasonably good records showing how they went about organising various campaigns) than it is with workers in the informal sector, who are not members of unions or other similar organisations, etc. That is largely why much of the early work focused upon unionised workers – because the empirical evidence available was easier to use to support theoretical arguments. Nevertheless, contemporary labour geographers proved with empirical studies that the theoretical argument also holds true with non-unionised workers/workers in the informal economy, even if it is more difficult to find empirical evidence of this. Of course, another aspect to consider is the issue of power – some workers have a greater ability to impose a spatial fix in some places at certain times than do others.

Various reviews and critiques of the sub-discipline have emerged, acknowledging that it has often overestimated the workers' ability to shape the geography of capitalism or the long-term impact of any such shaping (Mitchell 2011). A more sympathetic and persistent group of scholars supported the impetus of labour geography, while emphasising the need to conceptualise agency in a nuanced manner, and hence to examine workers' lives holistically; emphasis was also laid on revisiting the work and class relationship with respect to the workplace, unions and the state (Castree 2007, Rutherford 2010). To pursue this, the need to move towards ethnographic studies and oral histories, while moving beyond the unionised and organised workers, was realised (Lier 2007; Buckley et al. 2017; Rogaly and Qureshi 2017, Padmanabhan 2016; Gialis and Herod 2014). Jordhus-Lier et al. (2018) further demonstrated from their study of migrant workers in the warehouses of Oslo, that concepts of agency and control at the workplace are nuanced by polymorphic socio-spatial frameworks. Although the discipline of labour geography had, in its initial years, focused on organised industrial workers, the increasing precariousness of jobs is making it necessary to study the everyday forms of negotiation that intersect the ways in which workers' identity and socio-cultural experiences are engrained in their work. Most of these questions are addressed by geographers and political-economists studying the process of social reproduction of workers (Mitchell et al. 2012; Katz 2001). In a way, we are going back to the basic old question as to what it is like to be a worker in the city. An understanding of the micro-geographies of work brings out new dimensions of labour geography (Jordhus-Lier et al. 2018; Rogaly and Qureshi 2016; Buckley et al. 2017; Carswell and Neve 2012).

Industrialists often hire labourers whose reproduction is only partly borne by the wage system (Das 2012), thereby creating opportunities for large numbers of seasonal migrant labour as well. However, this reserve army of labour adversely affects the bargaining power of workers. While one might be struck by the absence of a politicised working class in Faridabad, it does not necessarily mean that the workers' lives are apolitical. The politics of the workplace and of a social life in the urban landscape needs to be emphasised to understand the lived experiences of workers and the precariousness of their work. A spectrum of actions is manifested as the workers' response to a capitalist management system. These actions could either involve conforming to certain norms or resisting those norms. For that reason, it is not necessary that every act of conformity is devoid of assertion or a realisation of one's own capacities (Sharma and Kunduri 2015). Katz (2004) proposed a continuum of actions, with small conformist actions and common coping strategies at one end, and resistance or challenging capitalist social relations at the other end. Studies suggest that neoliberal attempts at deregulating the labour market have left workers in a disadvantageous position and unable to resist or unionise (Breman, 1996; Peck 1996; Sen 2010) because of the increased substitutability of labour and poor implementation of labour laws (especially in the unauthorised colonies). Therefore, the everyday forms of negotiations hold importance in the case of non-conforming industrial clusters. To understand these decisions and actions, scholars have had to study the impact of spaces of reproduction and consumption beyond the workplace, on labour processes (Lier et al. 2018; Rainnie et al. 2010).

The workers' decision to temporarily or permanently migrate from their places of origin to places of destination marks their sociospatial relations. Their decision to migrate also implies their power and willingness to escape the locally embedded patronage (Rogaly 2009). As Hardt and Negri (2001, 397) suggest, "the pathways of transnational migrants often cost terrible suffering but there is also present a desire for liberation, within them, which is not satisfied except by reappropriating new spaces, around which are constructed new freedoms". Therefore, the spatial mobility of the workers is also a manifestation of the vision that workers carry. This vision provides them with the freedom to escape the unfairness prevailing at their place of origin. The migration could also be seen as an act of negotiation with the exploitative measures of feudalism, thereby taking the initiative to promote their own self-interest. For instance, a group of workers from a focused group discussion stated the lack of employment opportunities as one of the major reasons to migrate. '*Kheti me paisa nai hai* (there is no income in agricultural practice)', '*Gaanv me roj ka kaam nai hai* (there is no daily-wage work in village)' were some common answers given by workers in response to questions about the reasons behind migration. Moreover, a few workers who worked as landless cultivators in villages, preferred working in industries to working on the fields of landlords where they would not get their daily wages consistently. Migrant workers who had come from farther places in nearby states, were connected by kinship or caste networks. Single

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migrant workers in the city would make connections based on their caste, kin, workplace, skills or place of accommodation (Joshi 2003). As evident from the oral histories of workers, these new networks and solidarities are made at the workplace, realising very well that each of them can be substituted easily. In the case of Bitua, who had run away to Delhi two years ago because of strained relations with his family, and had shifted to Faridabad in search of a ‘respectable job in factory’, these new relations are all he has in the city. Bitua narrates his story – he had first arrived at Delhi’s Wazirabad industrial area where his uncle used to work. He found work as a helper in a factory but was paid very little and the work was taking a toll on his health. Besides, sharing a small room with his uncle’s family was becoming problematic. He then came to know about Faridabad, came here for a few days looking for a job and was hired as a helper in a footwear factory. He rented a room with three other men in the *basti* of S.G.M Nagar and learned the job of making soles of footwear by observing his colleagues in the workplace. He now earns Rs 6000 per month. He reminisces about the time when he met with an accident. His friends and his colleagues helped him with money and saved his life. He says:

‘I was very drunk and fell from stairs of *Darukhana* [place where alcohol is served], my friends saved my life. I owe my life to them. But then, I would have done the same. Who all we have except each other in this place? We live together, we work together, and relationships are made.’¹⁴

This narrative of Bitua is shared by many other workers who establish close-knit relationships with other workers, by having to share common spaces of living and of work. The workplace thus became a paradoxical space of camaraderie and competition (Jordhus-Lier et al. 2018). The residential space was serving as a space for reinforcing old relations traced back to the villages or forming new networks. The space many a times labeled as ‘informal’ by the state, acts as a force where workers formed networks and collectivise by sharing their experiences with each other. An interview with an industrialist in Sector 56A led me to one of his previous employees, Shankar, who now had his own small workshop of automobile parts in an unauthorised colony of Faridabad. He had worked in the industry for seven years, first as a helper, followed by a skilled position and finally as a foreman. After selling off his agricultural land in his village in Darbhanga, he bought a small plot of land in an unauthorised colony and set up his workshop. Because of his previous networks at his workplace, he easily got skilled employees and financial help to start his new work. Shankar repeatedly expressed that his bonding with the labour contractor from his own village, who also lent him some token money, helped him a lot in establishing this workshop, not just financially but also in terms of guidance. He did admit that very few workers were able to achieve such upward mobility. He mused: “*Sabke sath kahan hota hai aisa* (it doesn’t happen with everyone)”.

The idea here is not to romanticise the workers' bonding but to propose an alternative narrative of how the spaces are shaped by workers and how later on the social relations of workers are shaped by the spaces. Further, when spatialities of capitalism are changing and workers are developing new organising models to respond to the everyday regimes of labour control, the point to be stressed is that social relations of production are entwined with the work relations of production. The role played by regional and caste identities in forging these social relationships is important and is corroborated by the lived experiences of most workers. Therefore, social relations are sometimes governed by rural norms which play an important role in production of spaces. Besides, the rural-urban entanglements (Gidwani and Sivaramkrishnan 2003) were also manifested in the ways of using spaces. The lanes were often occupied by migrants from the same region. The norms held more significance in the case of middle-aged workers and workers who had migrated with family. The *bastis* were almost 30-40 years old and the new migrant workers residing in them often faced a lack of trust and prejudices in their social groups and communities, which posed a hindrance to collectivisation. In this case, the lack of kinship ties in the city broadens the scope of workers, in terms of choosing their work and place of living and having the freedom to use that flexibility in their own interest. One major expression of this broadening of remit to choose work was in the switching of jobs and workplace. The workplace-embeddedness that characterised workers working at warehouses in Oslo (Jordhus-Lier et al. 2018) was not so common in the workers in Faridabad, especially contractual workers who were not in close contact with the employer. However, workers who were experienced, had been working in the same industry for a long time and had managed to maintain a strong foothold in the city, manifested some place and workplace embeddedness (Gidwani and Ramamurthy 2018). For instance, Sanjay reported being close to his employer and taking pride in his company and his skill, declaring, "Madame! I might have hundred of flaws, which my wife knows, but when it comes to my work, I am the best. I make best motor parts, and my employer knows this, hence it is sort of my own workplace/ company."

In contrast to the 'flexibility' sought by women home-based workers to look after their household chores, it was the notion of being a 'Freeman'¹⁵ that attracted the single male migrant workers in Faridabad. The spatial embeddedness of male workers thus plays an important role in their choosing a certain type of action for themselves and cannot be ignored. However, Harvey (2017) and Gourzis et al. (2019) noted that the flexibility (malleability in matters of work and employment) and precarity (increased vulnerability in terms of security of worker) of labour are interrelated and inevitably become the means of lowering production costs through exploitation of labour and wage repression. The switching and choosing of jobs and site of work also points to their aspiration of being at a certain position in the social hierarchy and attaining a certain power at the site of work as well as the residence, besides seeking better wages. Most of the unskilled migrant workers started off working as helpers.

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The ill-defined nature of the work makes it notoriously exploitative and therefore the workers involved in this were always looking for an upgradation. A well-defined job is considered a 'respectable job' and hence more desirable. Those who were interested and had aspirations, upgraded their skills and moved upwards in the hierarchy. This was aligned with the vision that the migrant workers had for themselves, which could be either to establish themselves in city or to save money and return to the village. The linkages of labour with space, both urban and rural, shape the labour market and workers' choices. Quite often, the worker is brought to the market by the labour contractor from his village, through his network of social relations. Migrating in a flock and having strong ties with the contractor gives workers a slight advantage, as compared to migrant workers arriving singly with no prior associations in the new place. A single migrant worker has to establish himself on his own. The choices of jobs and decision-making in life are often determined by the workers' perceptions which in turn are driven by their socio-cultural background. Therefore, even in cities, the workers' spatial praxis manifests the embeddedness to the village. For instance, in an interview, many workers working in a small-scale factory producing automobile parts in Sector 48 narrated their experiences of switching from one job to another. Buddhiram described his twelve years of working in Faridabad as follows:

'I started as a cleaning boy in a *Dhaba* [small eating place] at the age of 15, when I migrated from the village of Bihar, Jehanabad. I trained myself to become a mechanic while working in a mechanical garage, where I worked for three-four years. I left that job, since the employer died, and the workshop was shut down and I started working in factories. It has been eight years since then, I had worked as daily waged labourer for few years. Currently I am working in a small-scale automobile ancillary part producing factory since last five and a half years. I earn Rs. 11000 per month and live in a rented room of Rahul Colony Basti, which is at few kilometres distance from sector 48. I have come a long way, I am reaching my thirties now, I am planning to go back to my village and get my family here, as I have better job now.'¹⁶

Other workers had similar stories about moving or switching jobs. Buddhiram's conviction that he had to be in a better job to be able to bring his family to the city came from him being the eldest son in the family, and having three sisters who had been married with his help. One interesting point noted in the case of micro and small-scale industries in unauthorised colonies was that in most instances the workers had direct contact with their employers, in contrast to workers in the medium and large-scale industries who reported to their supervisors. This implies their power to directly negotiate with their employer regarding wages, the way it was handed over to them (daily or monthly) and other issues such as accommodation, food and working conditions. Their spatial mobility and flexibility became an advantage, imparting freedom to these workers in some ways. These workers preferred working in the industries to the fields of the landlord because of this freedom, besides other subjective reasons. While

it cannot be said that there was no ill-treatment or lack of autonomy in industrial work, it was either less than what they had experienced working on the fields of the landlord, or paid them more than cultivating their own field, and hence was the obvious choice of workers. Moreover, some workers also revealed that since a few employers were not consistent in paying wages and looked for ways to exploit them by making them work long hours with little wages and no accommodation, the workers had often retaliated by threatening to collectively quit work and making sure no one else joined, forcing the employers to meet at least some of their demands, if not all. Rampreet, a worker from Dhabua village who commutes daily to his workplace, recounted incidents where he and his fellow workers had bargained with the employer for wages which could at least help them meet their daily needs.

‘We do not have anything to lose, we are poor labourers, who work hard and make our daily ends meet, why will we ask for something we do not deserve, we only ask for market value of our labour power so that we can feed our families. We are poor, but it does not mean we are cows, we already work in industries which reduce our life expectancy, then asking for some water at work is not wrong. When *maalik* [employer] leaves no avenue for us, we have to either quit the job or fight for our money with our *bhai* and *bandhu* besides us [brothers tied with caste and kinship network].’¹⁷

Probably, the ways of negotiating with the employers also varies with the place where the worker comes from. If the worker is not a migrant and is from a nearby village or *basti*, he is in the vicinity of his networks and connections and therefore has the potential to gather people with similar interests to stand with him and assert their numerical strength. However, workers who are single migrants and have no connections other than their ties with other workers, have to quit their jobs due to a lack of bargaining power. Thus, workers’ responses vary with the type of background they have. The industries maintained control over the workforce through a territorial hiring of workers with a preference for migrant workers. However, skilled workers were in demand too, and since the *bastis* had been present for a long time in the city, many old *basti* dwellers were skilled workers with a sense of solidarity. The residential space, therefore, was an important variable in the power hierarchy and played a major role in the process of negotiation by workers at workplaces.

The decision of some workers to move towards self-employment also emerged as one of the many options available to the migrant worker. Through the decision to start one’s own work, a worker makes a choice to gain autonomy in his work. It is not free from competition, and worker is essentially engaging in self-exploitation, but the realisation of not having anyone to report to, was attractive for many workers. Sector 56A of Faridabad, with 70 percent of its built-up area consumed in non-conforming industries, saw the dawn of industrialisation mainly

because of a few industrial workers, working in the adjacent planned industrial sector 25, deciding to start their own industrial units. However, not all migrant workers had the material or subjective resources to take such a decision. Many of them would take up other small businesses, such as establishing a tea stall, starting a vegetable or fruits trade etc. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the choice to move towards small business came after enough resources had been gathered after working as casual or permanent labour in industries. The activities observed in the worker's life were invariably a mix of responses to circumstances and individual preferences.

Rajkumar, a twenty-one years old worker from a village in Etawah, Uttar Pradesh, had migrated to Delhi in 1994 in search of employment, leaving behind his family in the village. He worked in an industry in Delhi, but soon after the industrial closure order of 1996, the industry was shut down and Rajkumar moved to Faridabad in search of work. There he found work in another forge-casting industrial unit, and after two years, because industrial work was impacting his health, set up his own tea-stall near the industrial area with the help of few friends. He recalls the dreadful impact the metal-forging work had on his health and how grateful he was for the little help he got from his friends. He says: 'I do not have a steady income now, but at least I am my own boss now.'¹⁸ Rajkumar's narrative depicts the importance of social relations in making certain choices regarding self-employment. The spatially-embedded social relations of workers are crucial in shaping the praxis and choices of workers. Therefore, the urban space becomes a manifestation of how the workers produce it and in turn get affected by it.

There are various stories similar to that of Rajkumar. There are also workers who had taken different jobs along with setting up a seasonal business. The fluidity of jobs taken by workers in an urban space such as Faridabad, dominated by micro and small scale industries, reflects the choices and preferences of workers. The cultural and social practices are not external to these choices – they are very much intrinsic to it. Social relations of production play an obvious role in worker's actions, where these relations are spatially embedded. The actions of workers play a role in influencing the landscape, and even though it is not as much as that of a collective union or capital, it does contribute to the functioning of capitalism in that space. There are various workers like Rajkumar, who either because of health problems or unwillingness to work under an employer who does not treat them with dignity, take the risk of starting their own small business. It may or may not be accompanied with other jobs, depending upon the earning and feasibility of the work. The workers, however, find alternative opportunities to materialise their interests – through spatial mobility, spaces of negotiation and decision towards self-employment.

Conclusion

The spatial and industrial development of Faridabad has been influenced by the regional development policies of Delhi. The neoliberal urban and regional policies in Delhi and Faridabad created an influx of migrant workers who strategise their movement and find affordable homes in the ‘informal’ spaces of the city. These informal spaces run in an organised manner under the local governing bodies, and give the workers opportunities for harnessing the spatially-stretched relation of social reproduction with employment. The spatial restructuring in contemporary cities of the Global South, exacerbates the vulnerability of evicted workers and draws new migrant labour for the creation of new infrastructure (Goldman 2015). It causes the movement of labour to the peripheral spaces which further distributes and spreads the precarity in labour markets across spaces. The study shows that the relationship between labour and space can be best comprehended by focusing on everyday forms of lived experiences and social reproduction. Taking forward Tithi Battacharya’s work on theory of social reproduction (2017), this paper makes a strong case for studying the geographies of social reproduction in order to understand the socio-spatiality of urban space, while also examining the interrelationship between processes of production and social reproduction. Drawing from Varga (2013), who argues that ‘the spatial practice or the lived space is the primary location of the spatial code of historically contingent systems of mode of production, distribution and consumption’, it becomes important to study the lived space of workers. It helps us understand the multiple ways in which labour engages with capital and state, which shape the urban space but also produce effects on workers’ livelihood, choices and social relations.

The paper also shows that studies on cities of the Global South need to look beyond concepts like gentrification and industrialisation and take note of the complex interstitial spaces. It also argues that binaries like rural and urban or formal and informal seem problematic in understanding the intricacies of cities in the Global South. Places like *bastis* and unauthorised colonies with diverse land-tenure systems are places that are recognised by the state and tagged as informal. At the same time, they are the places where working-class populations have gained social capital and political clout over the years, which helps them sustain the site of their social reproduction and put up barriers to stop the uninhibited flow of global corporate capital in the form of housing for elites or real estate.

Notes

1. The Delhi Metropolitan Area Towns are those that are located in the Delhi Metropolitan Area as delineated by NCR Plan, 2001 (it was also mentioned in the 1962 Delhi Master Plan). These towns are Ghaziabad and NOIDA in the Uttar Pradesh Sub-region of NCR and Faridabad, Gurgaon and Bahadurgarh-Kundli in the Haryana Sub-region of NCR.

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2. Industries in DMA Towns.

Year	Noida	Ghaziabad	Gurgaon	Faridabad	Bahadurgarh	Kundli	DMA towns	NCT	NCR
1981	679	1818	1551	2269	995	260	7572	45000	60144
1991	2311	4673	4126	5643	1924	507	19184	85000	123368
2001	6159	12375	7328	16653	1974	1191	45680	137000	228360

Percentage Share of Industries to total industries in NCR

Year	Noida	Ghaziabad	Gurgaon	Faridabad	Bahadurgarh	Kundli	DMA towns	NCT	NCR
1981	0.002	3	2.6	4	2	0.4	13	75	100
1991	1.8	3.8	3.3	4.6	1.6	0.4	15.6	68.9	100
2001	2.7	5.4	3.2	7.3	0.9	0.5	20	60	100

Source: Respective DICs and Commissioner of Industries, Delhi

3. Bata, Eicher, Honda Mahindra and Escorts were large-scale industries set up in 1950s and 1960s that provided opportunities to small and medium-scale industries.
4. Interview, Mr. Naresh Verma, President of Manufacturing Association, Faridabad, 10 January 2016
5. See The Evolution of Unauthorized Colonies in Bhan (2016), Chapter 1.
6. Interviews with industrialists in unauthorised colony, 2016
7. Interview, Mr. Ravi Singhla, Municipal Corporation of Faridabad, 15 January 2016
8. As per the data provided by Municipal Corporation of Faridabad, in 2016 January, there were sixty-four unauthorised colonies recorded till 2014 and all of them were regularised in 2014, in spite of their having industrial land use operations, by the Hooda government. More unauthorised colonies have started to proliferate in new sectors beyond Agra Canal.
9. A Cluster profile Report prepared by Development Environenergy Service Lt. (DESL) for Small Industries Development bank of India (SIDBI)
10. Manufacturing sector investment in plant and machinery

Micro Enterprises	Does not exceed Rs.25,00,000
Small Enterprises	More than 25,00,000 but does not exceed 500,000,00
Medium Enterprises	More than 500,000,00 but does not exceed 10,00,000,00

11. HSIIDC- Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructural Development and Corporation
HUDA- Haryana Urban Development Authority
12. Data from Municipal Corporation of Faridabad, January 2016.
13. The term spatial fix emerged in geography in the early 1970s, with the pioneering work of David Harvey. It explains the inherently contradictory nature of capital, which has geographical dimensions. It depicts the capital's need to spread over space to overcome its inherent crisis of over accumulation. It also means that capital is securing and deepening its presence over significant locations over time by investing in built-up investment (Charney 2010). Labour geographers like Herod (1997) proposed that workers also have their 'spatial fix' and workers can shape and produce the geographic space.
14. Interview, Worker named Bitua, Faridabad, 3 February 2016.
15. Term borrowed from the book of Aman Sethi, Freeman, while in interviews it was mostly referred as, *azaad or khud ka maalik* [free or ones' own boss]
16. Interview, Worker named Bhuddiram, Faridabad. 1 February 2016.
17. Interview, Worker named Rampreet, Faridabad. 10 February 2016.
18. Interview, Worker named Rajkumar, Faridabad. 9 February 2016.

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