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ORIGINAL ARTICLE | ISSN (0): 2582 - 631X DOI: 10.47857/irjms.2021.v02i02.052

Time and Space in the Pandemic: Compression, Distanciation and the Digital Divide

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the stretching of social relations across temporal and spatial borders, as well as the compression of time and space in the Covid-19 pandemic. It uses the theoretical arguments of David Harvey, Anthony Giddens and Doreen Massey in understanding concepts of time, space, and the power dynamics fueling social relations. The pandemic and the new norms of social isolation have only led to the development of remote work, and using telecommuter services to continue work as usual. This paper explores these new modes of services which allow individuals to work, study, visit museums, theater, and distant locations from home. However, the global trend of online work is deeply rooted in exclusionary practices, as large groups of people are left behind in this practice. The paper looks at these exclusions, and also aims to focus on the aspect of digital divide in India, and the inclusivity of online classes.

Key words: Space, Space-time compression, Flexible accumulation, Digital Divide, Pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

In a global village, the essence of location-specific time and space are often lost. Individuals from across the world are not only communicating with one another, but their everyday lives and actions are also being shaped by events and occurring on the other side of the world. The traversion of vast spatial and temporal borders is aided and facilitated by new modes of production, technologies, lifestyle patterns, art entertainment forms. This development has been termed time space compression, compression of our spatial and temporal worlds in a technological advanced environment.

Technological advancements and the internet have greatly facilitated time-space compression, allowing individuals to share the same screen space, regardless of time zones and

geographical locations. The use of smart phones, laptops, tabs and other hardware has allowed individuals to stay connected to the world even on the move. The advent of the Covid-19 pandemic has witnessed the introduction of new modes of work, education and entertainment, enabled by a swift development of telecommuter services. Despite the outbreak of a pandemic, corporations and companies have managed to maintain their production and work cycle, and educational institutions have re/established their class schedules. Individuals abiding by the norms of social isolation and social distancing may stay at home, and continue their regular working or academic lives: online meetings, classes, webinars and discussions occupy a great part of the quarantined life.

(Received 24 January 2021; Revised 20 February 2021; Accepted 02 March 2021)

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This paper begins by drawing concepts and theoretical arguments of time and space of Anthony Giddens, David Harvey, results in assignment of place in a and Doreen Massey. It also addresses the socio-spatial structure, and differential mixed blessings of social distancing and created. It then moves on to explore how and time primarily act as a means to the distinct class division that has been the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent lockdowns have given rise to the online transformation of work, education and entertainment, stimulating an advanced form of time space compression. The third part brings material and social reproduction to our attention the effects of digital divide in India with reference to such a transformation in the pandemic.

TIME AND SPACE: THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS

David Harvey, in his article Between Space and Time: Reflections on the Geographical Imagination (1990) opines forms of organization, technologies, that time and space are largely socially constructed, that each society produces qualitatively different conceptions of space and time (1). Such socially constructed notions of space and time are treated as facts or objective reality beyond the control and power of individuals, thus directing individual modes of behaviour and practices. He goes on to give the example of the modern time, which is largely based on the capitalist notion of work day. The modern clock sets a standardized time according to which we organize our daily activities. Space has attached to it a (opening up of new markets which are number of social connotations and is socially reproduced. A group through its spatial organisation maintains hierarchies, division of labour and gender roles. The phrase "a woman belongs in the kitchen" comes to mind. When we look at Oriental studies, the naming and classification of groups of people by outsiders imposes a meaning of powerlessness (for the subjects) and defines their particular characteristics

and roles. The identity of people is shaped and controlled by the connotations of the associated name. It access to power and resources. Space socially differentiate groups of people. [...] each social formation constructs objective conceptions of space and time sufficient unto its own needs and purposes of and organizes its material practices in accordance with those conceptions. (1, pp 419) Harvey points out that objective conceptions of time and space change with new material practices of social reproduction. The spread of Capitalism has forced many societies to accede to the new conceptions of objective space and time. Capitalism made way for new means of production and exploitation which in turn have resulted in speed-up and acceleration of turnover time and decision-making processes have been shortened. There has been a radical and rapid change of lifestyles, space relations and a reduction of spatial barriers. This has led to "time-space compression," by which Harvey signifies a condensation of spatial and temporal distances, because of technological innovations of communications (telephones, telegraph), travel (aeroplanes, cars, trains), and economies accessible globally).

In Consequences of Modernity, Anthony Giddens comments that postmodern modes of life have transitioned us away from traditional types of social order that we have moved beyond the conception of societies being bound to a certain place and time (2). The capitalist economic system and institutions, along with modernity, constantly urge the expansion of the system. Giddens,

however, urges us to view society in terms of "time-space distanciation", or the stretching of social systems and relations across time and space. Modern societies (nation-states), in some respects at any rate, have a clearly defined boundedness. But all such societies are also interwoven with ties and connections which crosscut the socio political system of the state and the cultural order of the "nation." (2, pp

Giddens goes on to discuss the concept of "empty" time and space, or rather the process of emptying

of time and space, in modern society. Traditional societies follow a heterogenous method of time keeping, whereby time is marked by natural, social and religious events and

phenomena, such that sowing and harvesting, fasts and feasts pick out the year and its many months. These

that may be easily understood if one thinks of the variation of seasons in different climates. The emptying of time aspect in competition among firms. occurs in the context of the industrial revolution with 'factory time' taking regionalistic and idiosyncratic systems of time keeping. The emptying of space which follows this and begins at about the same period depends on exploration cultures and lifestyles for commercial The intrusion and intervention of western travelers into "remote locations" do away with the individual identity of these spaces and create the possibility of both viewing spaces without reference to particular locations replicated and recreated into or vantages and also of substituting one "ephemeral created images" with the parcel of land for another. According to Harvey in The Condition of replication of the built environment, Postmodernity, the immense time-space events and spectacles is done for a compression in postmodern times has had an unsettling impact upon political, that with the advent of technology, and socio- economic and cultural practices along with disorientation in class struggle (3). The rigidities of Fordism were transitioned to as flexible accumulation through new organizational forms and production of technology like vertical disintegration. Along with production, the pace and trend of consumption was also altered. The concepts of instantaneity and disposability also gained popularity creating a 'throwaway society' (3) which primarily in two ways: introduction of led to tossing away of the values, sentiments, attachments in people's lives. All these changes in production andornaments, lifestyle, and recreational consumption trends, means and patterns activities; a shift to the consumption of had introduced the involvement of manipulation and psychological intervention through imagery and new sign systems. Baudrillard (3) stated that much shorter than goods). There has the umbrella of capitalism has now shifted to the production of signs, symbols and images rather than commodities. Both the production and labour markets engage in

heterogeneous times are also closely

image-building, the importance of which Doreen Massey in A Global Sense of Place anchored to particular locations; a thing has increased as it performs many functions along with becoming an important Image becomes an important element in have resulted in the stretching out of self presentation in the labour market precedence over and eventually erasing for identity building and self-realization. However, it is not only capitalism which Image has always been symbols of wealth, status, fame and power in the market, and images have moulded rather than directly on industrialization. advantage, thus making an effect of the world of 'ephemeral created images' amusing with psychological sensory belief (3). Harvey also makes use of Baudrillard's concept of 'simulacrum' to indicate how reality is perfectly help of modern techniques. This greater market appeal. Harvey opines especially the internet, capitalists can pay much closer attention to location advantages, thus diminishing spatial barriers. Flexible accumulation, deployment of new organizational forms and new production techniques have all further accelerated the time space compression in an post-modern era. Improved systems of communication and information-flow have facilitated changes in the pattern of consumptions, fashion in mass markets accelerated consumption in food, clothing, services of educational, business, and health but also entertainment, spectacles, events (whose lifetime was been a rise in the volatility of products and images, alongside the rise in the throw-away culture (use of disposable or one time use products) that individuals engage in.

writes that the combined effect of time-space compression and the overwhelming actions of Capitalist production and internationalization, social relations across the globe (4). determines our experiences and understanding, but also our race and gender. She emphasizes the "power geometry of time space compression" (4) i.e. people belonging to

different social groups are placed at

It is also about power in relation to the anyway differentiated mobility: some flows and the movement. Different social people are more in charge of it than different positions in the flow of power. groups have distinct relationships to thisothers; some initiate flows and

movement, others don't; some are more create spaces. The images produce on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it. (4, the users can interact with images. pp 25-26)

conditions to experience the images and many were left stranded and cut off from

economy and lack of transport facilities, services. The lockdown and the consequent physical distancing that were suggested as safety measures cannot be treated as unmixed blessings, since the majority of the population are

A politics of mobility and access emerges **TIME-SPACE** when we perceive time-space compression socially. There are differences in the degree and control of time-space compression, and a difference in degree of mobility and communication. Globalisation is not a homogenizing process. In fact, each space is governed by specific political, economic and cultural relations which are now stretched over the world. The global structures of power are in turn affecting the local structures and social relations: layers of histories and social relations combine to construct a place. Kellerman in Image Spaces and the Geography of Internet Screen-Space states the importance of the internet which is a part of cyberspace and virtual planning, and guidance for schools, space (5). "Whereas virtualization implies a transformation of things, cyberspace denotes a condition of visual exhibition of virtual things mainly through TV and the Internet." (5, pp 505)

One cannot blend cyberspace and virtual space as virtual space refers to the visual representation of real space and cyberspace is the digital form of communication. In effect, the difference lies in the fact that not everything virtual is part of cyberspace, while cyberspace is necessarily virtual, and through this entire internet provides a major part.

Images are normally conceived as visual representations of material entities, but as Jay (1994: 8-9) noted: There is [therefore] something revealing in the ambiguities surrounding the word 'image', which can signify graphic, optical, perceptual, mental or verbal phenomena." (5, pp 504) Images can be observed to represent the the lockdown took a bitter turn for the real world in some form but they themselves also

COMPRESSION IN THE PANDEMIC

Pandemic and the

Lockdowns On 30th January, WHO declared Coronavirus (or COVID-19) a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). Preventive safety measures included regular washing of hands, using masks when one goes outside, maintaining a distance of at least 1 meter, avoiding touching face and self-isolation. WHO also released guidelines for countries for rapid response to the virus and proper management of health sectors, resource workshops and institutions (6) The pandemic caused curfews, stay-at home orders, and lockdowns throughout the world. More than half of the world's population was under lockdown by April 2020 (7). Up until the fourth week of January 2021, 96.2 million cases of coronavirus infections have been reported, with 2.06 million deaths worldwide (8). The pandemic and the consequent lockdown have changed the very nature of lifestyle, production and work throughout the world. Managerial, executive and other desk jobs have been primarily shifted to the homes of the employees, whereas factory production still requires workers to show up amidst this pandemic in order to keep production rolling. Educational institutions are continuing their curriculum through online portals, and students are expected to make use of their internet in order to meet deadlines. In developing countries, especially India, majority of the population. After closing down almost every sector of the

susceptible to not just the pandemic, but have almost overnight provided the to starvation.

necessary telecommuter

Companies and educational institutions accommodations allowing employees and students to maintain social distance and work from home. Such an immediate transformation has been perceived as bitter-sweet by people with disabilities, includes results from a study of 1,067 since they have long found it difficult to people with disabilities (about 73% access workplace and educational institutions as most of them were not allowed to perform remote work (9). They have been campaigning for more accessibility and inclusivity in the social lockdown because of governmental sphere for decades, no such heed was paid to their demands. However, in response to the ongoing pandemic, questions of accessibility and remote work have been swifty answered by companies and workplaces (9,10).

While the coronavirus pandemic has led at work in this pandemic, between those to unprecedented restrictions for billions who can afford to have internet, a safe of people, for many with disabilities, the home environment, and basic lockdown has paradoxically opened up the world. As society embraces "virtual" shelter, are struggling to meet daily living, disabled people—who for years have missed out due to poor access—are in these conditions. suddenly finding themselves able to take part in work, culture, or socialising from Pandemic Productivity their own home. (11)

While many PWD have reported how "virtual living" has opened up new spaces for them, as they are now able to work from home, attend classes and church meetings, have Skype meetings with their therapists and doctors, others are gravely suffering because of the lockdown (11). Social distancing becomes extremely difficult for PWD, who form 15% of the world's population, as many require help to perform basic tasks (13). Online portals, whether for information transmission or for classes and webinars, are largely textual, and are therefore rarely accessible for the visually impaired. There is also a lack of content in Indian sign language for the deaf/HoH. The lockdown has further aggravated the inaccessibility of healthcare and employment for those who are disabled and struggling to make ends meet (12,13). There is an increased processes and major corporate invisibilization of the poor disabled section in India (14).

According to a report by the National Centre for the Promotion of Employment compression in a postmodern pandemic

for Disabled Persons (NCPEDP)—which era warped up the process of production male, 27% female)—over 73% of those The hi-tech giants like Google Inc. surveyed experienced serious difficulties Microsoft and others have further due to the lockdown. [...] living with disabilities has been more of a task post negligence, combined with inaccessibility to healthcare and rewarding employment. A large class divide has become increasingly visible in the lockdown. (14)

We therefore see a distinct class-division necessities and those who do not have needs and are obliged to keep working

With the closing down of major institutions such as schools, colleges, universities, offices and firms the mode of work has been completely shifted and is being carried out on online platforms, with the swift implementation of telecommuter accommodations. Productive work, such as teaching and office meetings, including important decision making meetings, and every exchange of information is now being conducted through online portals in large numbers. The internet has been transformed into a steady base acting as digital office rooms for employees, and classrooms for students, as more and more individuals join in the advent of working from home. This in turn has facilitated the practice of maintaining social isolation, and social distancing while making sure that production decisions are not put at a halt due to the safety measures issued by the governments. The time space

in an effective way, through online meeting applications.

developed and

updated user-friendly meeting applications like Google Meets, Hangout them for free. These platforms allow

Meets, Zoom Meetings, Skype, Slack and more than 100 people to be a part of a allowed users to download and use

single meeting, which is secured with password and meeting ID. As a result

these applications gained popularity among educational institutions and firms. For the Technology section, News18 India reported that "Meeting Application Zoom Meetings topped downloads for the month of February and March for both IoS and Android platforms as along with business apps, meeting apps had topped downloads with 62 million in these two months."

Online meeting applications have facilitated the introduction of webinars, or web based seminars. A significant number of webinars are being conducted daily on varied interests, starting from information dissemination to such meetings because of the about preventive health measures during the pandemic, and ranging through corporate and marketing strategies to intense academic and political debates. Seminars which were previously restricted to a handful of people, due to institutional, financial, and geographical barriers, are now being accessed by individuals from all around the world. Facebook has also played its part in the global information sphere, recreational services are also exchange by enabling individuals from around the world to listen to Live sessions and discussions. In fact, Facebook acted as a major advertising center for webinars and online activities.

consequent lockdowns. Previously, while gateways.

MNCs and similar institutions were exceptions, the everyday working of most individuals and organisations proceeded in accordance with the homogenous emptiness of national time. circumstances that surround us. Actors, Similarly one may say that space has also been further emptied out with the preponderance of online events both educational and entertaining during the challenge head-on. The fact that social pandemic: the digitization allows a dissociation of the event from any geographical location and renders it, at this challenging. The age of IGTV and least theoretically, accessible regardless Facebook Live have changed the format

of geographical though not social location.

Although the accessibility of international webinars and talks have largely increased, they follow the European and American time. As a result, listeners and participants from the developing countries have to adjust their natural, or perhaps national, time to the set American/European standards, thus allowing for a further emptying out of time and space. What must also be kept in mind is that these webinars are largely not meant for everyone, despite being accessible in theory. We are being able to gain access development of Internet services, especially with the big leap it has taken during the pandemic; however, their intended audience is constrained to the groups whose normal/national workday includes the time at which these webinars are scheduled.

Apart from mass downloads of online meeting applications, and the subsequent change in the productive being transformed entirely. With cinema halls being shut down, new films and TV series are being released on online platforms of Netflix, PrimeVideo, HotStar, and so on. Music shows, band performances, and theater have largely

One may say that time has been emptied shifted to online platforms as well, with out even further in the pandemic and the tickets being sold out on online payment

> Although nothing can equal the experience that a staged performance with hundreds packed in an auditorium, gives, it is imperative to adapt to the directors and technicians across the world that make the medium of theatre thrive, have decided to take this and physical interaction are key components of the genre is what makes

altogether: what was once used to provide sneak-peeks into the lives of celebrities has now become a global stage for performing artistes to cater to their social distancing connoisseurs, every evening.(16)

The tourism sector in every country has been hit hard due to this global pandemic. The

2nd June, 2020 stating that its estimates rise up to 80% in OECD countries (17). Organisation for Economic Cooperation show a 60% decline in international tourism, and which by December will

To cope with the losses, many websites are offering to register users for virtual tours to Egyptian Pyramids, Roman Temples and Jordanian Petra City; giving and a chance for viewers to enjoy these services without any spatial displacement. The Government of India allows one to climb to Mount Everest is also offering virtual tours of local tourist destinations, conducting webinars for the viewers to enjoy the sites and Airbnb India is allowing peoplebarriers, and connect with populations to 50 sites around the world for virtual tours enabling people to "travel from home." (18).

Collaborating with Google Arts and Culture, nearly 2500 museums (including the Louvre, Smithsonian and The live tours, museum visits and Van Gogh Museum) have started free their collections from the safety of their construction of an image or replication homes, regardless of location. While virtual tours of museums are not an absolutely new phenomenon and have been gaining in popularity, they were so many institutions.

Now one can view the pyramids of Egypt time and space constraints. from one's room in India, or England: technology melts away the distance created by time and space, virtually Despite being in different geographical locations and time zones, users of the new applications view the same screen, witnessed a global compression of the in effect sharing the same image space. The process of space-time compression by the internet. The massive rise in may be seen in action for the audience and speakers of internationally held webinars, live tours and performances. Individuals are further enabled to 'stretch' out to events occurring on the other side of the world, through the use market-driven economy has produced of smartphones and computers, and being involved in remotely located events covering almost every part of the Meetings from which there have been spatial globe.

There has also been an introduction of different background filters, which allows individuals to virtually alter their user-interaction and generate spatial location. Zoom meetings and Google Meet are among the applications creation of common space (screen that allow users to change their virtual space) for all users, along with time

background to a beach, the mountains,

even abstract art when on a meeting. A National Geographic filter on Instagram while sitting at home. Such a phenomenon shows that one is not only being able to cross time and space across the world, but also be placed virtually in different desirable locations, which probably would have been unachievable without these filters and technological modifications.

background changes evoke the notion of virtual tours that allow users to look at simulacrum, insofar as these involve the of reality, wherein the virtual backgrounds hint at the imagined reality of a year without Covid-19, where people are not in social isolation and can not previously offered either in full or by travel freely. This simulacrum, however, also allows individual users to escape

In a postmodern world which is driven by capitalist production, flexible accumulation allowed capitalists to reducing spatial and time barriers to nil. venture into every corner delimiting the geographical boundaries. As previously discussed, this pandemic and lockdown spatio temporal world occurred, induced usage and promotion of webinars, meetings, and virtual tours has led to the production of numerous images. This image production has led to a demand generation for backgrounds: the more than fifty different applications just for background filters for Zoom millions of downloads. One may follow Kellerman (2016) in saying that these backgrounds create a space that allows experiences for the users. There is also a

space compression.

Online Classes, Digital Divide and the Receiving **End of Power Geometry**

The ability to access multitudes of webinars, virtual tours, online discussions, and to keep up

with work schedules and classes come with a certain class privilege. Most

online portals for conducting classes and examinations, resulting in many

schools and universities have shifted to underprivileged students being unable to attend classes and remain at par with their classmates. The digital

pandemic excludes a sizable population online classes. She was very depressed. from essential services like education. This population may be considered as effectively on the receiving end of the power geometry of time-space compression. Their lived experiences not only comprise the social, economic and political reality of India, but also the school. Belonging to a poor family, the effect of the layered global structures of boy could not afford a smartphone for capitalist production and flexible accumulation.

Most students do not have access to unlimited data on their smartphones or of work and his father didn't have any personal computers; some have limited job. The boy needed a smartphone to to such devices. Students are also venturing out of their homes and onto the street in search of smoother network connections. (19)

Tamil Nadu and other Indian states have own life. (26) witnessed student suicides caused by

the inability to attend classes or to cope A 45 year-old daily wager from the north with the pressure of online classes Malappuram Kerala, set herself on fire as daughter a smartphone for her online she was unable to access online classes, classes.

because of her family's inability to buy a 15-year-old daughter had asked her smartphone.

The family was financially very strained she can attend the online classes but he and the girl was worried she would not be able to study further, or that her studies would be affected. Initial reports contain Covid-19. (27) suggest she was upset about not having A number of competitive exams in India access to the TV or online classes since they started. (24)

In West Bengal's Howrah district, Class X online portals. The low network student Shibani, unable to attend classes connectivity and the possible lack of after breaking her smartphone, committed suicide as she was constantly download the needed documents. missing out on the online classes. Shibani's father Santu Sau, a truck owner 17- year-old National Eligibility Cum cum-driver, said his daughter studied in Entrance Test (NEET) aspirant from an English-medium school in Bally[...] The mobile repairing shop did not open consumption, allegedly after failing to during the first phase of unlocking. Shibani's online classes commenced 10 days ago. Shibani was fearing she would

transformation of the world during the fail as she was not being able to attend

Similarly, a student of class X from the state of Assam committed suicide due to the mental trauma of being unable to attend online classes and take part in the online examinations held by his his classes.

The boy's family was very poor. His mother had gone to Bangalore in search data packs, while others have no access take part in online classes but his father was not able to get him one. From what we have been able to gather after talking to neighbours and others close to the student, it appears he was fed up with West Bengal, Kerala, Assam, Karnataka, the situation and decided to take his

eastern state of Tripura committed (20-23). Devika B., a class X student from suicide because he was unable to buy his

> father to buy her a smartphone so that failed to provide it as his income had stopped due to a lockdown imposed to

were held in September, the instructions and hall tickets of which were made available to the examinees through

hardware, resulted in the inability to Two days before Vikrapandi's death, a Tamil Nadu died of pesticide

download the admit card for the high stake medical entrance test. (28)

for parents. The erratic power supply and internet connection, the lack of have also made it difficult for many students to follow their coursework. For and students with disabilities, online classes opening up new portals for the lacking the presence of sign language and tactile accessibility. The digital divide, or the uneven access to, use of, and impact of Information and training and vocabulary is not Communications Technologies, needs to disseminated throughout the be understood in relation to social, geographical, economic and cultural factors. There exists a growing gap between the underprivileged, rural, poor and disabled population who do not have access to devices adapted to or knowledge of internet services, and the urban, upper and middle-class population who have this access. The Digital India campaign launched in 2015 aimed to provide access to all citizens to high-speed Internet infrastructure and a unique digital identity that would act as an authenticating device to avail welfare services. It made Government services available through digital means. It aimed with their class schedules. The to connect urban and rural areas with high speed internet, growth in the field of electronic services and industries, making citizens digitally literate and paid to the ever-widening digital divide that exists in India for implementation of the programme. The factors of low connectivity, lack of hardware, language

barriers and poor digital literacy were

The system of online classes and

examinations is deeply steeped in

discriminatory practices against the

poorer and underprivileged sections of

to stress not only for students but also

not looked into. (29) Such an initiation can be termed as "technological determinism," or "the idea to have exposed the glaring fault lines that the mere presence of technology leads to familiar and standard the population in India. It has largely led applications of that technology, which in continued to haunt contemporary digital transformation in India, be it through the Digital India campaign or access to suitable devices, and the lack of through the advent of online classes and invisible most of these fault lines. face-to face interaction and instructions examinations, has primarily focused on Despite its many democratising building up new Internet connections, cause further problems as most of them continuation of services without actually widely accessed and increasingly are not accessible and disability-friendly, looking at the social context. The mere presence of internet connection, a unique digital identity, and online classes are all moot if proper technical population.

CONCLUSION

In the postmodern era when time-space compression and distanciation has become a reality in all of our lives, questions of power relations and social identity become important. As globalisation and neoliberalism tends to smooth over the individual differences, a struggle for belongingness and specificity emerges alongside. Despite the outbreak of a pandemic, corporations have managed to maintain their production and work cycle, and educational institutions have kept up coronavirus pandemic, the lockdowns and norms of social isolation has given rise to new forms of work ethic, educational system and entertainment. empowered. However, less attention was This has further accelerated time-space distanciation and broken down temporal and spatial barriers to a large extent. Different communities have coped with the pandemic differently. But across these contexts, time-space

distanciation has played out universally, if disparately. The pandemic may be said around questions of access and infrastructural disparities that have turn bring about social change" (30). The societies. Mainstream representations of social conditions continue to obfusticate, stereotype or render potentials, for instance, internet connectivity is still a privilege across India, even if it is also, simultaneously, a cheaper resource. In this, it reflects the global trend that lacks inclusivity, and forgets the digital divide that remains a lived reality in most parts of the world. For most people, the here and now becomes inescapable. This warrants a better understanding of the socio-economic disparities, not only for local governance, but also for an equitable

and it is our original work.

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International Research Journal of Multidisciplinary Scope (IRJMS), Volume 2, Issue 2: 2021

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