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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 traversal of vast spatial and temporal borders is aided and facilitated by new modes of production, technologies, lifestyle patterns, art and entertainment forms. This development has been termed time space compression, or the 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.

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This paper begins by drawing concepts and theoretical arguments of time and space of Anthony Giddens, David Harvey, and Doreen Massey. It also addresses the mixed blessings of social distancing and the distinct class division that has been created. It then moves on to explore how 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 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 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 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 results in assignment of place in a socio-spatial structure, and differential access to power and resources. Space and time primarily act as a means to socially differentiate groups of people.

[...] each social formation constructs objective conceptions of space and time sufficient unto its own needs and purposes of material and social reproduction 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 forms of organization, technologies, 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 (opening up of new markets which are 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 14)

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 heterogeneous 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 heterogeneous times are also closely anchored to particular locations; a thing that may be easily understood if one thinks of the variation of seasons in different climates. The emptying of time occurs in the context of the industrial revolution with 'factory time' taking precedence over and eventually erasing regionalistic and idiosyncratic systems of time keeping. The emptying of space which follows this and begins at about the same period depends on exploration rather than directly on industrialization. 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 or vantages and also of substituting one parcel of land for another.

According to Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, the immense time-space compression in postmodern times has had an unsettling impact upon political, 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 led to tossing away of the values, sentiments, attachments in people's lives. All these changes in production and consumption trends, means and patterns had introduced the involvement of manipulation and psychological intervention through imagery and new sign systems. Baudrillard (3) stated that 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 image-building, the importance of which has increased as it performs many functions along with becoming an important

aspect in competition among firms. Image becomes an important element in self presentation in the labour market for identity building and self-realization. Image has always been symbols of wealth, status, fame and power in the market, and images have moulded cultures and lifestyles for commercial 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 replicated and recreated into "ephemeral created images" with the help of modern techniques. This replication of the built environment, events and spectacles is done for a greater market appeal. Harvey opines that with the advent of technology, and 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, primarily in two ways: introduction of fashion in mass markets accelerated consumption in food, clothing, ornaments, lifestyle, and recreational activities; a shift to the consumption of services of educational, business, and health but also entertainment, spectacles, events (whose lifetime was much shorter than goods). There has 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.

Doreen Massey in *A Global Sense of Place* writes that the combined effect of time-space compression and the overwhelming actions of Capitalist production and internationalization, have resulted in the stretching out of social relations across the globe (4). However, it is not only capitalism which 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 different positions in the flow of power.

It is also about power in relation to the flows and the movement. Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it. (4, pp 25-26)

A politics of mobility and access emerges 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 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 real world in some form but they themselves also

create spaces. The images produce conditions to experience the images and the users can interact with images.

TIME-SPACE 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 planning, and guidance for schools, 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, the lockdown took a bitter turn for the majority of the population. After closing down almost every sector of the economy and lack of transport facilities, many were left stranded and cut off from 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

susceptible to not just the pandemic, but to starvation.

Companies and educational institutions have almost overnight provided the necessary telecommuter 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, since they have long found it difficult to 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 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 swiftly answered by companies and workplaces (9,10).

While the coronavirus pandemic has led to unprecedented restrictions for billions of people, for many with disabilities, the lockdown has paradoxically opened up the world. As society embraces “virtual” living, disabled people—who for years have missed out due to poor access—are suddenly finding themselves able to take part in work, culture, or socialising from 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 invisibilization of the poor disabled section in India (14).

According to a report by the National Centre for the Promotion of Employment for Disabled Persons (NCPEDP)—which includes results from a study of 1,067 people with disabilities (about 73% male, 27% female)—over 73% of those surveyed experienced serious difficulties due to the lockdown. [...] living with disabilities has been more of a task post-lockdown because of governmental 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 at work in this pandemic, between those who can afford to have internet, a safe home environment, and basic necessities and those who do not have shelter, are struggling to meet daily needs and are obliged to keep working in these conditions.

Pandemic Productivity

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 processes and major corporate decisions are not put at a halt due to the safety measures issued by the governments. The time-space compression in a postmodern pandemic era warped up the process of production in an effective way, through online meeting applications.

The hi-tech giants like Google Inc. Microsoft and others have further developed and

updated user-friendly meeting applications like Google Meets, Hangout Meets, Zoom Meetings, Skype, Slack and allowed users to download and use them for free. These platforms allow more than 100 people to be a part of a 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.” (15)

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 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 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.

One may say that time has been emptied out even further in the pandemic and the consequent lockdowns. Previously, while MNCs and similar institutions were exceptions, the everyday working of most individuals and organisations proceeded in accordance with the homogenous emptiness of national time. Similarly one may say that space has also been further emptied out with the preponderance of online events both educational and entertaining during the pandemic: the digitization allows a dissociation of the event from any geographical location and renders it, at least theoretically, accessible regardless 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 to such meetings because of the 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 sphere, recreational services are also 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 shifted to online platforms as well, with tickets being sold out on online payment gateways.

Although nothing can equal the experience that a staged performance with hundreds packed in an auditorium, gives, it is imperative to adapt to the circumstances that surround us. Actors, directors and technicians across the world that make the medium of theatre thrive, have decided to take this challenge head-on. The fact that social and physical interaction are key components of the genre is what makes this challenging. The age of IGTV and Facebook Live have changed the format 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

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development released a report on 2nd June, 2020 stating that its estimates show a 60% decline in international tourism, and which by December will rise up to 80% in OECD countries (17). 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 a chance for viewers to enjoy these services without any spatial displacement. The Government of India is also offering virtual tours of local tourist destinations, conducting webinars for the viewers to enjoy the sites and Airbnb India is allowing people 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 Van Gogh Museum) have started free virtual tours that allow users to look at their collections from the safety of their homes, regardless of location. While virtual tours of museums are not an absolutely new phenomenon and have been gaining in popularity, they were not previously offered either in full or by so many institutions.

Now one can view the pyramids of Egypt from one’s room in India, or England: technology melts away the distance created by time and space, virtually reducing spatial and time barriers to nil. Despite being in different geographical locations and time zones, users of the new applications view the same screen, in effect sharing the same image space. The process of space-time compression 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 of smartphones and computers, and being involved in remotely located events covering almost every part of the spatial globe.

There has also been an introduction of different background filters, which allows individuals to virtually alter their spatial location. Zoom meetings and Google Meet are among the applications that allow users to change their virtual background to a beach, the mountains, and

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

The live tours, museum visits and background changes evoke the notion of simulacrum, insofar as these involve the construction of an image or replication 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 travel freely. This simulacrum, however, also allows individual users to escape time and space constraints.

In a postmodern world which is driven by capitalist production, flexible accumulation allowed capitalists to venture into every corner delimiting the geographical boundaries. As previously discussed, this pandemic and lockdown witnessed a global compression of the spatio-temporal world occurred, induced by the internet. The massive rise in 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 market-driven economy has produced more than fifty different applications just for background filters for Zoom Meetings from which there have been millions of downloads. One may follow Kellerman (2016) in saying that these backgrounds create a space that allows user-interaction and generate experiences for the users. There is also a creation of common space (screen space) for all users, along with time-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 schools and universities have shifted to online portals for conducting classes and examinations, resulting in many underprivileged students being unable to attend classes and remain at par with their classmates. The digital transformation of the world during the pandemic excludes a sizable population 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 effect of the layered global structures of capitalist production and flexible accumulation.

Most students do not have access to unlimited data on their smartphones or personal computers; some have limited data packs, while others have no access to such devices. Students are also venturing out of their homes and onto the street in search of smoother network connections. (19)

West Bengal, Kerala, Assam, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and other Indian states have witnessed student suicides caused by the inability to attend classes or to cope with the pressure of online classes (20-23). Devika B., a class X student from Malappuram Kerala, set herself on fire as she was unable to access online classes, because of her family's inability to buy a smartphone.

The family was financially very strained and the girl was worried she would not be able to study further, or that her studies would be affected. Initial reports suggest she was upset about not having access to the TV or online classes since they started. (24)

In West Bengal's Howrah district, Class X student Shibani, unable to attend classes after breaking her smartphone, committed suicide as she was constantly missing out on the online classes.

Shibani's father Santu Sau, a truck owner-cum-driver, said his daughter studied in an English-medium school in Bally[...] The mobile repairing shop did not open during the first phase of unlocking.

Shibani's online classes commenced 10 days ago. Shibani was fearing she would fail as she was not being able to attend online classes. She was very depressed. (25)

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 school. Belonging to a poor family, the boy could not afford a smartphone for his classes.

The boy's family was very poor. His mother had gone to Bangalore in search of work and his father didn't have any job. The boy needed a smartphone to 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 the situation and decided to take his own life. (26)

A 45 year-old daily wager from the north eastern state of Tripura committed suicide because he was unable to buy his daughter a smartphone for her online classes.

15-year-old daughter had asked her father to buy her a smartphone so that she can attend the online classes but he failed to provide it as his income had stopped due to a lockdown imposed to contain Covid-19. (27)

A number of competitive exams in India were held in September, the instructions and hall tickets of which were made available to the examinees through online portals. The low network connectivity and the possible lack of hardware, resulted in the inability to download the needed documents.

Two days before Vikrapandi's death, a 17-year-old National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET) aspirant from Tamil Nadu died of pesticide consumption, allegedly after failing to download the admit card for the high-stake medical entrance test. (28)

The system of online classes and examinations is deeply steeped in discriminatory practices against the poorer and underprivileged sections of the population in India. It has largely led to stress not only for students but also for parents. The erratic power supply and internet connection, the lack of access to suitable devices, and the lack of face-to-face interaction and instructions have also made it difficult for many students to follow their coursework. For students with disabilities, online classes cause further problems as most of them are not accessible and disability-friendly, lacking the presence of sign language and tactile accessibility.

The digital divide, or the uneven access to, use of, and impact of Information and Communications Technologies, needs to 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 to connect urban and rural areas with high speed internet, growth in the field of electronic services and industries, making citizens digitally literate and empowered. However, less attention was 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 not looked into. (29)

Such an initiation can be termed as “technological determinism,” or “the idea that the mere presence of technology leads to familiar and standard applications of that technology, which in turn bring about social change” (30). The digital transformation in India, be it through the Digital India campaign or through the advent of online classes and examinations, has primarily focused on building up new Internet connections, and

opening up new portals for the continuation of services without actually looking at the social context. The mere presence of internet connection, a unique digital identity, and online classes are all moot if proper technical training and vocabulary is not disseminated throughout the 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 with their class schedules. The coronavirus pandemic, the lockdowns and norms of social isolation has given rise to new forms of work ethic, educational system and entertainment. 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 to have exposed the glaring fault lines around questions of access and infrastructural disparities that have continued to haunt contemporary societies. Mainstream representations of social conditions continue to obfuscate, stereotype or render invisible most of these fault lines. Despite its many democratising potentials, for instance, internet connectivity is still a privilege across India, even if it is also, simultaneously, a widely accessed and increasingly 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

transmission of information and technology worldwide.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest in this present research paper. This research work is not a part of any other studies and it is our original work.

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