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CALL FOR PAPERS:

Panel stream “Labour relations and capitalist accumulation in India”

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One of the most striking and dysfunctional features of the current unfolding of capitalist development in India is its inability to securely and productively employ the expanding Indian labour force. This inability is manifested in the existence of a massive informal sector spanning from rural to urban areas and in the reproduction of casual arrangements. These labour arrangements are to a large extent regulated by non-market institutions (such as caste, ethnicity, religion and gender) which are underpinned by unequal power relations and can be configured as sites of relationships of control over people. Moreover, they are accompanied by and reflected into a fragmented landscape of grassroots movements and social groups opposing and coping with the different forms assumed by capitalist accumulation in the country.

Labour relations and labour arrangements in India are object of plentiful research, yet rarely these are investigated in relation to the specific features assumed by capitalist accumulation. Therefore, the investigation of whither labour in India must beg the question of “what is capitalism in India”, and explicitly link the study of labour to the study of capital. Equally important is exploring the relations between the different patterns assumed by capital accumulation and the varied forms of resistance to these patterns.

It is on these grounds that this panel seeks contributions which explore labour dynamics in India in general. While particularly encouraging papers which investigate how these labour dynamics stand in relations to patterns of capital accumulation and forms of resistance to it, we are interested in all the possible declinations that this relationship can take and do not preclude contributions that investigate it in other countries.

A non-exclusive list of the topics of interest includes:

- the study of capitalistic and labour dynamics in urban centres;
- the fragmentation of capital and its impact on labour and grassroots movements;
- state-specific trajectories of capitalist accumulation and their impact on labour,
- circulation of labour, labour migration and capitalist exploitation;
- primitive accumulation and accumulation by dispossession;
- Special Economic Zones and the grassroots resistance.

This panel proposal is the outcome of a collaboration among young researchers working on India and based in UK and in Italy. It aims at further strengthening the collaboration among the presenters of the papers listed below, but also at creating linkages with any other participant to the conference potentially interested in the topic. For this reason, the organizers would welcome in the panel any other related paper individually submitted to the conference, or even the integration with a similarly oriented panel.

LIST OF ABSTRACTS:

- 1) Paola Cagna, Sapienza University of Rome: *Women working for capital: labour and gender relations in South India export-led textile industry.*
- 2) Lorenza Monaco, SOAS: *India, NCR: Labour Movement, Industrial Conflict and the role of Trade Unions within a booming Automotive sector.*
- 3) Chiara Mariotti, University of Bath: *The land expropriation scenario in Andhra Pradesh. An overview and some reflections on the unfolding of capitalism in India.*

“Women working for capital: labour and gender relations in South India export-led textile industry”

ABSTRACT

Paola Cagna, PhD student, Sapienza University of Rome

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The purpose is to explore the labour relations existing in textile industry in a town of Tamil Nadu, Karur, from a gender perspective with an effort to describe and deeply analyse the bond between patriarchy and capitalism.

Indeed, Tamil Nadu (India) is well known for its export-led textile industry along the so called “cotton belt”, mainly constituted by towns that have been quickly developed industrial clusters. Karur Town is one of these textile centres. Traditionally engaged in the production of dhoti, saree, and cotton towels, nowadays Karur is known as an international hub for home textile export where production is carried out within small and medium family-managed enterprises. An outcome of the rapid transition from domestic-oriented to export-led industry has been the massive participation of women with a consequent feminisation of labour. Women from town outskirts and agricultural villages are involved in specific tasks along the production chain as homeworkers and waged-workers. Most of them are informally employed, often through middlemen or labour contractors, responding to a specific request of the “just in time” production. For women workers, who mostly come from an agricultural background, working in textile industry represents a better employment opportunity that may represent also a sort of social and economic mobility. Further, women's needs to earn an income as well as to fulfil their reproductive roles well fit with capital needs creating an alliance that, despite some adjustments in the traditional patriarchal system, reproduces to some extent traditional women's roles.

India, NCR: Labour Movement, Industrial Conflict and the role of Trade Unions within a booming Automotive sector

ABSTRACT

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Following on a two-phases field research conducted in Delhi – NCR in 2011-12, the present work focuses on dynamics and characteristics of the recent Labour protest which has marked, with particular strength, the Automotive industrial segment in the area. The analysis of the observed case study, apart from raising important methodological issues related to the role of the researcher in contexts of deep social conflict, serves a twofold purpose. On one side, it paves the way to a broader understanding of Industrial Relations within one of the most promising 'Newly Industrialised Areas' in India. In this sense, considering recent, and ongoing, Capital – Labour power-relations and latest Labour demands,

the sustainability of the overall Labour regime perpetuated in advanced and capital-intensive production sectors might be entirely questioned. On the other side, in the wake of such a relevant and unprecedented Labour movement, expressly started from the request of an Independent Union, the whole role of Trade Unions in India, both at local and National level, must be undoubtedly reconsidered. In doing so, concepts of autonomy, representativeness, organisation will be recalled, to be then further developed in a following theoretical chapter.

The land expropriation scenario in Andhra Pradesh and its impact on labour. An overview and some reflections on the unfolding of capitalism in India

ABSTRACT

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This paper offers a reflection on the trajectory of capitalist accumulation followed by the state of Andhra Pradesh (AP), and its implications for the reproduction of inequalities through its impact on employment and labour relations.

During the 11th Five Year Plan period (2007-08 to 2011-12), AP has been one of the best performing states in India in terms of economic performance, growing at an average rate of 8.3% per year, against the national average of 7.9% GDP annual growth.

Two of the main strategies explicitly adopted by the government to prompt capital accumulation and economic growth have involved systematic and widespread land expropriation. These are the promotion of public and privately owned Special Economic Zones and the realisation of major irrigation projects. Indeed, at 2010, in AP there were five multi-product, 26 sector-specific and 43 IT SEZs, with 23 of them already operational. Overall, 18,000 acres of land had been acquired with the purpose to set up a SEZ, the majority of which (15,000 acres) by the AP Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC), and the rest by private developers. Moreover, since 2004 the government has been investing widely in the realisation of major and medium irrigation projects under the “Jalayagnam” scheme, aimed at reviving agricultural growth in the state, as well as generating hydroelectric power for industrial activities. Two of these projects, the Indira Sagar Polavaram project and the Pranahita-Chevalla lift-irrigation project in the Telangana region, are also seeking recognition of national status.

The two strategies have been claimed to have a positive distributional impact, ensuing from the creation of employment and the increase in agricultural productivity following the improved access to irrigation and electricity. However, this claim appears arguable on at least two grounds. First, the land requirements of these two strategies are going to be substantial, leading to widespread land expropriation and population displacement. The Polavaram project alone is bound to displace around 200,000 people, mainly poor and belonging to SC and ST castes. Any assessment of the net distributional impact of a capital accumulation strategy entailing land expropriation should take into account the effects on poor people's livelihoods and their employment opportunities after displacement. Second, job creation in SEZs should be weighted against the distribution of skills in the state. To the extent that the local population does not have the skills required for the jobs, the net effect on employment will involve an increase in inter-state and intra-state migration, while not addressing the problem of employment creation for the poor.

On the ground of these considerations, this paper provides an overview of the land expropriation scenario in AP, focusing on the processes triggered by SEZs and irrigation projects. In light of the recent employment trends in the state, it also considers the expected effects on labour relations and employment creation for the population in general and in particular for those affected by displacement.