Dirty Tracks across Border: Global Operations of Extraction, Labour, and Migration at a Railway Station on Bihar-Nepal Border

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Abstract

This paper is based on an ethnography of the railway siding at Raxaul railway station, a town on Bihar-Nepal border, which finds itself at the intersection of massive logistical exercise by China in the form of Belt Road Initiative (BRI), counter-logistical apparatus building by India, and incremental hardening of an otherwise “open” border by Nepal. The paper will analyse in detail the intricate network of labour market that operates at and through the railway siding. It will also trace the origins of commodities used in the cement factory and demonstrate how minerals are extracted from some of the most deprived regions of India at a great human and social costs. Finally, I will describe some of the latest exercise in logistical operations such as containerization, opening of a new ICP, and connecting of Raxaul with Vizag port replacing the primacy of Kolkata port for the transit of goods meant for Nepal. The Raxaul railway siding will be, hence, studied on multiple scales; global, national, as well as in its local specificity. The paper will also try to theorize the transformation of this very peculiar border town located on a unique border. This transformation is creating new labour processes, migratory processes, and also newer sites of workers' resistance along the global logistical apparatus, which this paper seeks to capture.

Overture

I want to engage with three broad questions in this paper on urbanization, labour processes and labour migration on the Bihar-Nepal border with the specific reference to the border town of Raxaul. The first question is does the border between Bihar and Nepal create a unique condition for a specific kind of urban process to take root and how do we understand it. Secondly, if there is indeed a unique urban process at play on the border does it also create work and labour process unique to itself and if it does so how are these processes related or unrelated to the larger operation of capital. And finally, what aspects of labour migration are unique to the border town of Raxaul in the context of the first two questions. In this paper, I will attempt to show that despite the open border or to put it differently, because of the

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unique openness of border between Bihar and Nepal, labour migration has its own specific character which requires a conceptualization other than internal migration like some studies do. In these studies, as a result of 1950 treaty of friendship between Nepal and India labour migration between two countries is almost similar to internal labour migration within India. One such study is by Ravi Srivastava and Arvind Kumar Pandey where they suggest that since cross-border migration is allowed legally between some countries of South Asia (India-Nepal, India-Bhutan, Bhutan-Nepal, and Pakistan-Afghanistan), the cross-border mobility of people between these countries assumes the character of internal migration (Srivastava and Pandey 2017, 6). This might be true in a formal sense, though even this is a contentious observation, but everyday practices of labour and work at the border is indicative of a very specific conditions of production and mobility of commodity and labour in Raxaul on the Bihar-Nepal border. This paper brings out those specificities.

Post the Anglo-Nepalese war and the Treaty of Sugauli in 1816, Raxaul more than emerging as a border town found itself suddenly as a disjunctive transit space for commodities and people as a result of the unique arrangement between British India and the Nepalese Durbar. In an earlier study based on historical sources, I have shown that the emergence of Raxaul as a town on the border was shaped by the tardy and cumbersome movement of goods and people both in terms of volume and efficacy of movement. Trade always assumed an informal and grey character and despite the fact that most transaction of commodities for Nepal happened through this town the scale of operation never became substantial enough in the estimation of the colonial authorities to make Raxaul a burgeoning border trade town. This insistence of the colonial authorities about the lack of trade volume with respect to Nepal was erroneous and motivated by geopolitical and geostrategic calculations keeping in mind the fear of a Russian invasion and the so-called great game. There are enough evidences to suggest that trade and commerce across Bihar and Nepal through Raxaul was substantial. Despite the economic activities, Raxaul remained an outpost and as a result of suppression of the Gorkhas and the demand for Gorkha men as soldiers in the colonial army, the central question for the colonial authorities vis-à-vis Raxaul was how to facilitate the recruitment of Gorkha men into the army. The border market during the colonial period was geared towards this labour for Imperial army logic. In short, Raxaul as a border town had to perform certain limited functions for the colonial authorities. Beyond these functions of an open border amenable to transaction in human labour for army, Raxaul remained largely beyond the pale of colonial imagination (Kumar 2017).

The postcolonial period following the treaty of 1950 did not change the character of
Raxaul to any great degree. However, the town acquired a much greater degree of importance as part of the geostrategic and geopolitical vision of the Indian state which was different from the colonial vision informed by the Great Game and fear of Russian invasion. Raxaul was used by the Indian state as a logistical chokepoint of Nepal. The history of official and unofficial closure of borders by India is ample evidence of such a vision. But post-liberalization and especially in the second decade of the 21st century following the profound changes in the logistical apparatus developed through the Chinese Belt Road Initiative and India's own vision of geopolitical and geoeconomic connectivity Raxaul's character as a transit border town is undergoing radical transformation. All the markers of its tardiness have suddenly become the nodal points of a vast apparatus of circulation of commodities and people. These developments have been studied only sparsely and in those too the predominant concern have been either trade and commerce or the nationalist agitation of the Madhesis. In contrast to such important studies, the present research is concerned with the kind of political economy that the open border creates for the border town of Raxaul and the unique conditions of labour that the border between Bihar and Nepal creates.

**Locating Raxaul and the railway siding of Raxaul Junction**

Raxaul is a block with an area of 125.52 square kilometres. According to the 2011 census, the population of the block is 176,492. Raxaul Bazar which is administered by a nagar parishad (municipal council) has an area of 5.82 square kilometres with a population of 55,536. National Highway number 28A connects Raxaul to the rest of the country and it is on this non-existent highway remarkable only for the difficulty it poses for a smooth transport of heavy trucks which it is overwhelmingly used for is through which most of the goods to Nepal is routed. Contrast this with Birgunj, the town on the other side of the border in Nepal. According to the 2011 census of Nepal, the population of Birgunj was 133,238 and is the second largest city in the Terai region and fifth in Nepal. Also, in contrast to the dilapidation of Raxaul, Birgunj is a fast growing Industrial city of Nepal. The 25-km Birgunj-Pathlathiya Industrial corridor is a testimony of the growing importance of Birgunj for manufacturing in Nepal but also as an important Industrial zone of South Asian region. The cement industry of this industrial corridor plays a crucial role in the making of the political economy of Raxaul as well as in the migration pattern of workers in East Champaran as this paper will demonstrate.

Raxaul junction was opened in 1927 with the opening of Raxaul-Amlekhganj line. Currently, there are 25 trains for passengers, express as well as local, that caters to
The railway siding caters mostly to the insatiable cement industry located in Birgunj-Pathlahiya industrial corridor. The siding is the site where all the raw materials for the factories are unloaded from the trains, loaded on trucks, and moved to the factories on the other side of the border. These raw materials include hazardous and highly polluting cargo such as gypsum, sand, coal, ash, and the most notorious clinkers. The latter is a highly toxic and polluting material against which a long movement was organized to stop the cargo movement at the railway station because of the unbearable air pollution caused by it. After more than a decade of struggle the cargo of clinker was stopped at the railway siding in the beginning of 2018 which has completely changed the railway siding but this story is for later. The clinker is now being unloaded at Narayanpur.
Bruno Latour's call for looking at “things” and their “gatherings” (2004) is a useful way of understanding the site of the railway siding. A study of logistics and infrastructure is largely about studying networks, connectivity, flows, movements and their gaps, glitches, chokes, and breakdowns. Most logistical apparatuses and infrastructure installations indeed are conceived by planners as such and, to a considerable extent, operates as such. However, there are now studies especially from the postcolonial and postsocialist experiences that tells us that formal infrastructure installations and logistical apparatuses gives rise to a whole gamut of informal infrastructures and associated logistical practices, which while largely dependent on the former have its own logic of operations which are different from seamless flows and occasional glitches (Anand 2017). This is not to say that these “local” infrastructure installations and logistical apparatuses are either autonomous or in opposition to the formal logistics. Instead, the informal interacts with the formal in complex ways not necessarily through linkages or networks but exactly in the manner which Latour characterizes as “gathering.” Interacting but not necessarily linked.

Raxaul railway station finds itself now as an important junction in the rail connectivity between ports in Western India to that in the East extending into Bangladesh and Myanmar. As Nepal looks to diversify the ways and means of receiving and sending commodities, Raxaul also is fast becoming a geostrategic counter site for the Chinese infrastructure projects, especially its railway into Nepal from the latter's northern border. Similarly, the Bharatmala project has suddenly catapulted Raxaul into a very different sort of a transit town driving the real estate prices and creating a unique process of expansion based on land prices. In an interview with a local hotel owner, Birendra Singh (name changed) I was told that land prices have risen so sharply in Raxaul that it now rivals real estate prices in Patna and the rate of increase far surpasses any big city or medium town in the
whole of Eastern region. He told that he has invested INR 1.5 crores into the hotel purely on the promise of expansion of Raxaul as a hub. He related stories about the making of the dry port at Birgunj in Nepal as the engineers on a visit stayed at his hotel. Singh displayed an acute knowledge of not only the topography of Raxaul and how it is likely to expand but also of the large scale infrastructure development in Raxaul and the larger vision of the government in terms of connectivity. He told me that the only direction in which Raxaul can expand is towards the east of his hotel where the new Integrate Check Post (ICP) has been constructed as Raxaul is surrounded three-ways by rivers. As evidence to support his argument he said that all the new residential schools that are being built around Raxaul are in that direction. When I asked him Singh about who is buying the land and for what purpose in Raxaul, he was on a less sure ground and said that he knows that some people from nearby villages are buying land in Raxaul mainly for the purpose of educating their children. There are also substantial number of people who have kept one member of the family in Raxaul in a rented house for the purpose of education which is also increasing the rent in some localities of Raxaul. However, he could not say with any degree of confidence about people from “outside” buying land in Raxaul for the purpose of speculation.

The same kind of response was given by another of my respondent Arvind Prasad who ran a small stationery shop near the block office but whose main occupation is of a Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) agent who is more active across the border in Nepal than he is on the Indian side and has clients as far as Kathmandu. He verified most of the things that Singh had said about the expansion and land and rent market of Raxaul. However, most interesting was his account of the ways in which Nepalese government was trying to create barriers to property through citizenship rules and obstructing the almost seamless exchange between the terai and the Indian side which are culturally contiguous. He said that there exists now a rule where LIC agents from Raxaul cannot sell a LIC in the terai but can do so in the valley. Since, LIC (Nepal) is a subsidiary of LIC (India) I was a little puzzled over this. To this Prasad said that the Nepalese authorities now wanted that only Nepalese agents sell the insurance policies in the terai. Although Prasad did not put it like that but it seems that this move by the government is not only to restrict the access provided to Indian agents but to also regulate the proliferation of network through such businesses and transactions that depend on extensive kinship networks and cultural ties on both side of the borders. He also said that according to the new 2015 constitution of Nepal which led to an intense Madhesi agitation in the terai, women on the Indian side of the border who are married to men in the terai, a practice
It is clear that the new state-driven logistical vision in both India and China has fundamentally affected ways in which Raxaul has become a border transit town. It is evident in the ways in which several spaces and built environment have been created of which the ICP, the dry port, the railway station, and the new pipeline are different yet complimentary components. It is in the backdrop of such logistical development that a new geography of the urban is emerging in Raxaul. This geography appears to be fragmented as well as functional on the border. It is an extremely common because of kinship and cultural ties, cannot acquire property nor can their children. This was obviously a very simplified and erroneous understanding of the citizenship laws under the new constitution of Nepal. There are strict provisions of citizenship in 2015 constitution's in Article 11 (5) and (7) that is discriminatory to women with Nepalese citizenship marrying men with foreign citizenship the reverse is not true. Women with foreign citizenship can apply for naturalized citizenship under federal law. Kalpana Jha's recent study (2017), however, shows deep fissures in the practice of the law. For our purposes, the more important point is how movement of people is being regulated in post-revolutionary Nepal and how it has affected the lives on the border of Bihar and Nepal.

It is in these complexities of two sovereign yet unevenly matched in power, a border that is open and “friendly” by a treaty of friendship signed more than half a century ago, and new geostrategic and geoeconomic vision of nation-states and corporations like the Belt Road Initiative, RITES, Asia Africa Economic Corridor, Bharatmala, and Sagarmala projects, that the humble railway siding of Raxaul junction finds itself operating. This study shows that each of the elements that go on to make these complexities affect the workers and the labour processes at the railway siding. More importantly, with the development of the Integrated Check Post in Raxaul and the dry port in Birgunj, Raxaul's very informal and grey existence is driven towards a kind of state-driven formal transit town. Raxaul is now part of the larger logistical vision and calculation which affects Kolkata port and Vishakhapatnam airport and the container industry worldwide. The intermodal transport and Raxaul's railway station became important enough for a revision of the treaty which allowed only Kolkata port to serve Nepal. There is now a dedicated rail line operated by Maersk which has now monopolized the movement of containerized commodities from Vishakhapatnam to ICD Birgunj. Raxaul railway station now has emerged as specializing in container traffic. Kolkata port now serves only a limited purpose of transporting break bulk meant for Nepal. Similarly, road transport is undergoing changes as well but which will not be discussed in this paper as it is outside the scope but part of a later study.

It is clear that the new state-driven logistical vision in both India and China has fundamentally affected ways in which Raxaul has become a border transit town. It is evident in the ways in which several spaces and built environment have been created of which the ICP, the dry port, the railway station, and the new pipeline are different yet complimentary components. It is in the backdrop of such logistical development that a new geography of the urban is emerging in Raxaul. This geography appears to be fragmented as well as functional on the border. It is an
operation of Splintered Urbanism (2001) which actually inverts the networked urbanism meaning thereby that instead of creating a variegated network of infrastructure within a city that allows for a fragmented experience of the urban, the operation in Raxaul creates discrete spaces which is related to a border function and operates as such and does not necessarily has any organic relation to the city space except perhaps creating more bottlenecks for the urban processes. Thus, the ICP although within the limits of Raxaul is exclusively a phenomenon of the border instead of the city as well. Similarly, the Indian Oil’s godown which sees the movement of hundreds of trucks in a day. And what is the case study here in this paper: the railway siding of Raxaul railway station, the function of which is exclusively to serve the insatiable need of raw material for the cement industry in the Birgunj special economic zone of Nepal.

“Working Hour’s: Round the Clock”

There is a small display on the wall of the Goods’ Superintendent of Raxaul Junction on which following is written: “Working Hour’s Round the Clock” and in Hindi: “Karya Kaal 24 ghante” and it is with some pride that the superintendent claims that this is true about the work at the railway siding. Along with this he has his own way of showing approval of the capacity of the workers to work at the siding. He said that the workers here are rakshasa (demons) who can unload an entire rake in a matter of hours. The railway siding of Raxaul junction according to the Goods’ Superintendent of the railway station is the barometer of the rapid industrialization of Nepal especially Birgunj. The assertion is borne by data. In a reply to an RTI filed by me, the data for commodities passing through the railway station meant for Nepal is available from 1997. In 1997, the number of rakes for the year was 169 which went as low as 153 in 1998. It saw a massive increase of 281 in 1999 and it was stable till 2008 which saw 281 rakes. The goods superintendent explained that this rise was due to the shifting of certain heavy commodities from roadways to the railways. The next big jump comes in 2009 at 449 rakes which went to 460 rakes in 2015 before the closure of the border as a result of the Madhesi agitation. This jump was exclusively due to the rapid development of the cement industry in Birgunj-Pathlaliya Industrial corridor which made the railway siding of Raxaul specialize in raw material for the cement industry like gypsum, slag, fly ash, coal, and most notoriously clinker which spawned off a decade long movement which finally saw the stoppage of clinker unloading at the railway siding virtually shutting the freight operation at the siding.

What was unique about the railway siding was not necessarily the labour process which was similar to any informal labour process replete with daily wage work,
contractors, middlemen, and hazardous working conditions. The uniqueness of the railway siding lay in the fact that the combined effect of border and the industrialization of Nepal created a space that could provide almost continuous employment at any given time to up to 800-1000 workers. This small railway siding then was akin to a big factory and the daily commuting labour from villages around the district almost gave that impression. The work at this railway siding was round the clock. This unique space in the backdrop of an overwhelming agrarian economy created a condition where workers could make strategies of migration around the railway siding. In almost 50 interviews that I conducted with the workers here the common narrative that emerged was that this railway siding and the clinker unloading gave them the flexibility to stay at home for a couple of years at a stretch. The workers here were not restricted to going to a definite state. Instead, their migration varied and so did the industries in which they work. They moved individually as well as in groups depending upon the kind of work they were able to get. For example, a worker whose extended life story is a fascinating account of how migration has changed the class and land relations at the source, told me that he has worked in Gujarat in constructing highways, in Pune in constructing pipelines, in Ludhiana in a factory, and his last visit was in Kerala working in the factory for animal feed. However, this was not the most interesting aspect of his migratory experience. To my mind, what was most interesting was his understanding of the railway siding as a workplace. For him, the railway siding provided a steady amount of income to sustain daily life of his family. It was only when he needed a lumpsum amount of money that he migrated. This decision to migrate depended upon whether he wanted to lease more land for agriculture or prepare for marriage at home.

In fact, most of the workers I interviewed this was the common narrative. They either had very small piece of land or no land but a combination of migration and the work at railway siding allowed them to lease land for agriculture for their own use, surplus in some years, and provide education to their children. Everyone had at least one functional bank account and an insurance policy. And although complains about hazardous clinker was ubiquitous it was clear that health risks were a distant consideration in their calculation. The complexity of out-migration, land, labour, and this railway siding will be clear through one of the long interviews with a worker. I call him Ajay.

Ajay is a resident of a village called Balwa (name changed) some 80 kilometers away from Raxaul. He comes to work at the siding for about a week and then goes back to his village for a couple of days and then come back again for work. He told me that
he has worked before in Surat, Ludhiana, and Panipat where he operated machines in garment factories. From his interview, I could gather that he usually took work in a garment factory of machine operator which is skilled work. He also said that he has been working at the siding since 2007. He was literate and unlike older could give his date of birth as well as those of his children which was not the case with the former. Ajay told that he was 30 years old with two sons and a daughter. He said that he worked at the siding for one to two years and then go out of Bihar for working as a skilled worker in order to preserve his health which deteriorates after a couple of years of work unloading clinker, coal, and gypsum at the siding. Injuries working at the siding were inevitable and painful. He lamented: “yahan 10 saal ka ladka kaam karega to 22 saal ka dikhne lagega kuchh din mein.” When I asked about what kept him doing this obviously hazardous work and take up more regular circular migration. He said that he manages to earn INR 500 daily which at times of peak production can go up to INR 750 to 1000 which is a very good amount and the earnings never go below for INR 500. When I asked if it was true for all workers at the siding he said no as some workers could not work as much as he but even then no workers gets less than INR 350 on a daily basis. And if it will be below that then there will be no point working at the siding and it would be definitely better to be circularly out-migrating on a more regular and short duration. Also, since he gets his wages at the end of the week when he is going back to his village it is a decent amount that he carries home. He has 10 kattha land which he tills but for his own consumption. However, he said he was planning to lease some land next season in order to produce not only for his own consumption but to be able to sell in the market as some of his other older co-workers were doing. He said that there were some amongst them who actually hired workers in the harvesting season while they were working at the railway siding. When I asked him if he ever thought of becoming a maith (labour contractor) himself he laughed and said that it was no longer possible for an ordinary worker to become a maith as the existing ones would never let that happen. This conversation with Ajay and several other workers brought out the complex relationship between the workers and the contractors and forms of exploitation which was based as much as on intricate calculation of logistics (number of rakes, frequency of trains, etc.) as it was on kinship, village, and caste ties.

The manner in which maiths are responsible for the organization of production at the railway siding and the complexity of linkages with global capital, cross-border trade and industrialization, and local matrix of power becomes clear through one of the interviews I had with a maith whom I call Samjhuji. He had been working as a
maith for over 25 years now and he actually inherited it from his father who started as a worker but gradually transformed himself into a maith. He, however, started as a worker in the Indian Railways working on the tracks. He was on contract but was hopeful of getting absorbed in the regular pay-roll of the railways. However, he was fired from his job because of some negligence caused because of his drinking. He was not very forthcoming about the nature of negligence but he said that the permanent railway job was not in his destiny. Samjhuji explained in detail the hierarchy of the production at the siding. He told that there were five big maiths that distributed work to the twenty small maiths like himself. The big maiths are contracted directly by the cement company or a transport company if the cement company has contracted the work to the former which is becoming characteristic according to Samjhuji. He also said that there is an intricate system of distributing work at the railway siding. He told that the five big maiths all working for different transporters and companies are free to distribute work as they deem fit but the system though contingent is not arbitrary. Each big maith normally has a rake coming every day for his clients but in those days where if one of the maiths does not have a rake coming, the other four will distribute the work on their rakes in such a manner that even the former gets work. This system works through the hierarchical system and is applicable to even the smaller maiths. Similarly, among the workers it is a clear convention that those workers who unload the cargo from the rakes will not also load the cargo on to the trucks. Other set of workers will be employed for the job. This ensures not only “work” for workers as Samjhuji wanted me to believe in the “justness” (“barabari”) of the system but it also kept wages in check by keeping up the supply of workers.

Samjhuji also said that there are times when there are 25 workers who come for work in a day and there are times when there are only 10 and he has to look for more workers or ask other maith to give him some workers. He said that the ‘scarcity’ of workers is during the cropping and harvesting seasons as most workers go and work in their fields. He told that for each wagon of coal he gets INR 1500 from the big maith and for rice INR 1000 which he said is equally distributed among the workers as well as the maith. A maith is entitled to INR 10 for himself because of his position as a contractor. There are no other privileges as such assigned to him. It is true that there is no sense of deference toward a maith from the workers but there are ways through which the maiths cheat on the workers. The negotiation for wages is always a much contested affair as the maiths always haggled over the presence of workers. There is only a sheet of paper on which the maiths note down the name of the workers and if they have worked. The maiths often say that the workers were not
One of the most interesting aspect of the interview with Samjhuji was his awareness of the precarity and contingent nature of the work at the railway siding. He was aware of the movement against unloading of clinker in Raxaul and was actually anticipating that the operation would cease soon unlike other maiths who thought that the operation was too big and profits too enormous for the cement factories and the latter will use their financial and political clout to prevent the stoppage of clinker unloading at the siding. Samjhuji was more prescient. He had told me that one of the reasons that there is a danger that clinker could be stopped because there was no formal union or official association that it would fight or lobby for the maiths' interests. One of the reasons he cited for the lack of union was the nature of the production process at the siding. He was acutely aware that the siding is only for goods in transit over which there is no “local” interest except of maiths and workers. According to him, workers are in a position to migrate and the big maiths can relocate their operations. It is the smaller maiths which stand to lose. After the clinker operation closed down at railway siding of Raxaul Junction and shifted to Narayanpur, most workers have followed there. When I went to the second field visit in March 2018, Samjhuji told me that the companies are paying more, almost double, at Narayanpur for loading and unloading of cargo but it only goes to show how much profit they were making at Raxaul railway siding that they find it profitable in Narayanpur at double the rates. While the figure of “double rates” might be an exaggeration what is clear is that for almost two decades, the railway siding at Raxaul junction acted as a conjunction of global supply of commodities, cheap labour at the border, and unique conditions of supply to make super profits for the cement companies in Nepal that are owned both by Nepalese citizens and, ironically, Indians.

Conclusion

The railway siding of Raxaul junction is overdetermined by the operation of global capital in the sense that following the commodity trail (clinker, slag, gypsum, etc.) it is possible to connect coal mining in Indonesia and Australia transiting through
Haldia port, clinker coming from iron ore factories spread across India, and other minerals from obscure village railway stations in Gujarat, Maharshtra, and Chhatisgarh. What was even more unique is that all of these trains were block trains exclusively for Raxaul. In short, this railway siding brought together symbolically and materially the dispersed spaces of primitive accumulation all across India and globe.

The unloading of clinker at this railway station stopped in January this year after a prolonged agitation. The surprising bit was not that it stopped but how quickly and effortlessly it stopped without any major disruption by workers and the cement industry although there were attempts. The fear that the workers would have to drastically change their strategies of migration and that there would be a revolt was largely unfounded. The workers actually proved to be quite nimble in their strategy. The unloading of the clinker has now been shifted to Narayanpur in Muzaffarpur and workers simply shifted there. Of course, now they work for a week or two weeks and then come back instead of commuting everyday to the railway siding of Raxaul. Statistically, they are now part of the inter-district labour migration in Bihar. It is actually the contractors who have come out the worse off from this bargain apart from the fact that now the logistical around the cement factory of Nepal has diversified.

The problem at hand now is how do we understand let alone theorize such contingent logistical spaces in an almost unchanging transit border town. One way of looking at it is that operation of capital will necessarily create such contingent spaces of last mile delivery, which will be largely true. However, what is equally true is that these slash and burn spaces of logistical capital are embedded in the more formal geologistical apparatus such as the Belt Road initiative to an extent that their operation depend on such spaces. The conundrum is though why such spaces are so evanescent. Is it because the nimbleness of capitalist calculation or the fleet footed migrant labour, an absence of working class association, or some combination of all three. The very nature of the open border, labour processes, and state-led urbanism depends on answering this question. What the railway siding of Raxaul junction teaches us though is that these spaces are never entirely abandoned by capital. The new infrastructure apparatus that is being laid out by China and India will again redefine and restructure what will be loaded or unloaded at the railway siding.
Works Cited


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