Globalization, Group Autonomy, and Political Space: Negotiating Globalized Interests in an Indian City

Narendar Pani

Abstract

The effect of globalization on cities is rarely confined to the direct influence of global institutions. To the extent that globalization alters the way a city functions, it has a more complex influence on a city. This paper uses the concepts of group autonomy and global circuits to understand the dynamics of Bangalore's global interaction. It argues that such an approach helps capture aspects of the dynamics of globalization that tend to be missed by city-wide concepts such as global cities.

The analysis of the globalization of cities has tended to follow two broad interpretations: those that see the networks of globalization completely overwhelming place and those that continue to see place as an unavoidable and critical part of any understanding of the impact of globalization on cities. To use Gyan Prakash's elucidation of this dichotomy, on the one hand we have urban theorists who argue that 'in place of the clearly defined unity called *the city*, we live increasingly in the amorphous and expanding spaces of urban networks', while on the other hand, we can recognise that 'Urban dwellers experience their globally situated and connected urban space as decidedly local lifeworlds, thick with specific experiences, practices, imaginations, and memories' (Gyan Prakash, 2008, p 2).[1] These two representations are typically seen as paradigmatically opposed to each other with little scope to form a part of a single comprehensive understanding. Once we move beyond the realm of rigorous academia to the more blurred reality of policy making, though, the ability to keep the two worlds apart begins to decline. Those who see little beyond the expanding spaces of urban networks, usually the representatives of the information technology circuit, and those who focus on specific local experiences and practices, usually those associated with electoral politics, occupy the same universe. Much as

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[1] Gyan Prakash, "Introduction" in Gyan Prakash and Kevin M Kruse (eds) *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life,* (Princeton, Princeton University Press) 2008, p 2.

they would like to ignore each other the need to compete for the same spaces forces them to work out mechanisms of dealing directly and indirectly with each other and the rest of the city. As they negotiate with each other and others for control over both geographical and political space they throw up an urban dynamic that cannot be adequately captured by city-wide concepts like global cities. This paper explores the interaction between global networks and local practices in the realm of policy making with the help of the concept of group autonomy, using it, for convenience, in the recent history of Bangalore.

The City and its Spaces

The idea of a city as a well-defined unity is deeply entrenched in the popular perceptions of Bangalore. The particular unity the city is supposed to represent has undoubtedly changed over time, moving from colonial notions of a 'pensioners' paradise' to the globalization-driven 'Silicon Valley of India'.[2] But the need to stick to one unified notion of Bangalore has consistently remained in popular discourse, despite the existence of very different realities. The term 'pensioners' paradise' originally referred to the colonial tendency in Bangalore Cantonment for soldiers who retired when they were still quite young to stay on in the Cantonment. This label did not recognise the vast difference that then existed, and was to continue to exist for decades after Indian independence, between Bangalore City and Bangalore Cantonment. The old textile industry in the City and its experiments with modern industrialization towards the end of the 19th century, through the setting up of what was to become Binny Mills,[3] had no place in this imaginary. Even within the Cantonment, there was little attention paid to the extensive service economy that had emerged in the nineteenth century to meet the demands of the British army stationed there.[4]

Similarly, the Information Technology label refers to only a relatively small part of the city. Bangalore's growth has been led by different engines at various points in its history. The initial impetus in the decades immediately after Indian independence was provided by the massive investment in public sector units by the Government of

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[2] HS Sudhira, TVRamachandra and MH BalaSubrahmanya, "Bangalore", City Profile, *Cities,* Vol 24, Issue 5, October 2007, pp 379-390.

[3] F Desouza, *The House of Binny,* (Madras: Associated Printers (Madras) Private Limited), 1969.

[4] Glimpses of this economy are elegantly captured in the mid-nineteenth century account of a Wesleyan priest, Rev. Arthur Williams, *Mission to Mysore: Scenes and Facts,* 2nd Edition, (London: Partridge and Oakey), 1850.

India.[5] As the public sector began to outsource the manufacture of components to small scale industries, Bangalore also became the base for small scale manufacture.[6] The infrastructure that was created to enable this growth and the unorganized labour that was attracted by the small scale industry boom in turn became a resource for the global garment industry to tap. Meanwhile the unionization of the public sector workforce created a relatively high wage island. Together with the facilities available in public sector townships these workers were able to ensure their children had access to higher, including engineering, education. This technical manpower was readily available when global communication technology progressed in the 1980s to a point where work from global command and control centres could be outsourced to Bangalore's information technology industry. The information technology boom was then just the latest in a series of economic impetus provided to the city. The earlier engines of growth did not simply disappear. The size of the public sector may have reduced in the era of economic liberalization, with most of them being forced to shrink, but at least some public sector units like Bharat Electronics and the aircraft manufacturer, HAL, did manage to get a second wind. The garment industry too went through substantial changes with global brands imposing labour standards, but it still provided employment to a not-insignificant proportion of Bangalore's workers. To see Bangalore only in terms of its information technology sector is then a partial view.

The consequences of this partial view are not confined to the economic dimension. Each of the engines of Bangalore's growth attracted workers from very different social and ethnic backgrounds. The information technology boom attracted technically educated manpower from other cities. In the process this engine of growth created a base for a Hindi-speaking middle class in the city. In contrast the bulk of the workers in the garment industry came from villages within a radius of 250 kilometres from Bangalore.[7] This largely unorganized primarily Kannada-speaking workforce of the garment industry was not very far from the poverty line. As Bangalore grew with the help of multiple engines of growth the workers the city attracted too were multi-ethnic.

[5]Janaki Nair, *The Promise of the Metropolis: Bangalore's Twentieth Century,* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press) 2005.
[6]Mark Holmstrom, "A Cure for Loneliness? Networks, Trust, and Shared Services in Bangalore" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 32, No. 35 (Aug. 30 - Sep. 5, 1997), pp. L11-L19
[7]NarendarPani and Nikky Singh, *Women at the Threshold of Globalization,* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2012), p 63

This is not to suggest that the multiplicity of groups that negotiate Bangalore are based on ethnicity alone; or even that they are entirely determined by economic impulses. The city has also seen groups that had serious consequences for the city being formed for apparently nebulous reasons such as being fans of a cinema star. The best known of the fan clubs is that of Dr Raj Kumar, but other film stars too had similar organizations. The city also has organizations committed to specific cultural activities, ranging from Carnatic music to vintage cars. There are also very prominent organizations that bring together people on the basis of language, religion, caste and several other social categories.

In order to capture this diversity we need to move beyond the tendency to find a single label that would best characterise a city. We would do well to go along with the view that cities are complex and impermanent aggregations of built forms, everyday practices and discourses.[8] Remnants of past practices, built forms and discourses are continuously conflicting, destroying, reconstructing or simply co-existing with later forms. The results of this process are quite diverse but they do share one common strand: they all require human action. Practices past and present are carried out through human agency. Built forms too are determined primarily by human actions. Even when built forms change due to natural causes it is human agency that decides whether to reconstruct these forms and how.

When trying to understand a city through human actions that are reflected in built forms, everyday practices and discourses, it is difficult to ignore the role played by identity groups. This impact is normally seen when identity groups assert themselves, whether it is done violently as tends to be the norm in anti-outsider movements, or more peacefully as in the cultural celebrations. The nature of these groups is well captured by Kwame Anthony Appiah's concept of social identity: "Where a classification of people as Ls is associated with a *social conception* of Ls, some people *identify as* Ls*,* and people are sometimes *treated as* Ls, we have a paradigm of social identity that matters for ethical and political life".[9]

To rely only on such a sharp statement of identity in a city may however result in several elements of group functioning in an urban environment slipping under the radar. To use Appiah's terms, it may take a while before people who identify as Ls are

[8]Martin J Murray, "The City in Fragments: Kaleidoscopic Johannesburg after Apartheid" in GyanPrakash and Kevin M Kruse (eds) *Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life,* (Princeton, Princeton University Press), 2008.
[9] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2005, p 69.

treated as Ls and even longer before there is a social conception of Ls. And well before the entire process is complete they may influence the everyday life of a city. If a group of individuals decide to see themselves as a separate group they can begin to act in a collective way that affects the nature of a city, even if others do not see them as such and they are some distance from developing a social conception of themselves as a group.

The tendency for people to act as a group without meeting all the conditions of Appiah's concept of social identity is quite evident when we consider the relationship between actions based on collective autonomy and place. A personally important action like deciding where to live is often associated with the groups one prefers to associate with. One could choose to live in a gated community with other individuals with shared perceptions of the ideal living conditions. This group may not be recognised as separate by the rest of the city, but their collective decisions would still influence the distribution of space in the city. It may then be useful to consider a concept of *collective autonomy that only meets the condition of a set of individuals seeking to act as a group in a way that is independent of the rest*. It is quite possible that such a group that acts with collective autonomy may also have the other attributes of a social identity, namely that they are treated as a separate identity group and there is a social conception of them as a separate identity. But they are not necessary conditions. We need to recognise that once a group decides to act independently its actions begin to influence the city to varying degrees.

The extent of the influence of collective autonomy on the distribution of space in a city is easy to underestimate. Given the impact of land prices on decisions of where to live there is clearly an economic dimension to the distribution of the residential land in a city. But the role of collective autonomy based on non-economic factors is not insignificant. A 2013 survey by the National Institute of Advanced Studies looked at 437 streets spread across Bangalore to estimate the tendency of members of specific groups to live on streets where their group was dominant. The exercise was carried out for a number of different groups that would normally be considered a collective identity in the Appiah sense of the term. Table 1 tells us there is a quite significant tendency for some religious groups to only live among themselves. A vast majority of the Hindus prefer to live on streets where there is no one from another religious group. And less than 10 per cent of them would live on a street where their religious group is a minority. What is arguably of equal significance is the divergent tendencies

among different minority groups to the preference to live amongst themselves. A majority of the Muslims lived on streets where others belonging to their religion were the dominant group, with as many as 37 per cent preferring streets where there was no one belonging to another religion. In contrast the Christians seemed to have no such preference.

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS BY PREFERENCE TO RESIDE ON STREETS WITH THE SAME RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Per cent of households belonging to same religious group on a street	Hindu	Muslim	Christian
Up to 20	0.66	16.33	59.34
21-40	4.22	11.46	24.18
41-60	4.61	17.19	16.48
61-80	15.68	16.33	0
81-99	2.14	1.43	0
100	72.70	37.25	0

Source: NIAS Survey of Bangalore, 2013.
Note: Totals for each religion may not add up to 100 due to rounding off.

This pattern can be attributed to factors such as the relationship between religious groups after the political turmoil of the early 1990s. The specifics of such an analysis are well beyond the scope of this paper. But it is important to note that the tendency to divide space in a city across groups seeking collective autonomy does not always fall into predictable patterns. It has been argued that caste tends to decline rapidly in an urban space. But this decline appears to be far less rapid than often believed. Indeed the relationship between some caste categories and urban space is far from insignificant. Table 2 tells us that 73 per cent of Other Backward Castes prefer to live on streets where they are a majority, and 41 per cent of them on streets where there is no one from another caste or religion.

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS BY PREFERENCE TO RESIDE ON STREETS
WITH THE SAME CASTE CATEGORY

Per cent of households belonging to same religious group on a street	Forward	OBC	SC	ST
Up to 20	35.25	1.96	44.64	59.14
21-40	36.27	5.09	21.89	34.41
41-60	16.95	19.46	12.88	6.45
61-99	9.83	32.29	14.16	0
100	1.69	41.19	6.44	0

Source: NIAS Survey of Bangalore, 2013.
Note: Totals for each caste category may not add up
to 100 due to rounding off.

The focus on residential houses may give the impression that the distribution of space has a very high degree of permanence to it. Residential houses are typically held for long periods of time, and even when occupants change it is not necessary that the social composition of that area will change. But the distribution of space could change more often. Indeed, there is even a tendency for control over the same space to keep changing hands on a predictable short term pattern. If we were to distinguish between space as an abstract category and place as consisting also of memories and practices, it is quite possible for a space to be different places at different times. Indeed, places can take on a very different character even at different times of the day. Women in some Indian cities are not expected to be present on streets alone after a specified time. And this time-based demarcation of access to streets can go beyond gender inequality as well. The state apparatus in Bangalore has enforced a rule where restaurants, but for a few exceptions, cannot be kept open beyond 11.30 p.m. Representatives of the city's police typically argues that this is because of the shortage of personnel, but it is not uncommon for them to add comments like "Night is meant to sleep. Let people sleep peacefully, without disturbance by cacophony of vehicles".[10] In addition, the access to streets can also be completely controlled for periods of time by non-state organizations. The idea of a bandh where the whole city shuts down has been used as a means of indicating unanimous public protest. Over the years it has been transformed into an instrument groups can use to reflect their power

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[10]Interview with Bangalore Police Commissioner,RaghavendraAuradkar withHM ChaithanyaSwamy, http://www.dnaindia.com/bangalore/1819889/report-no-extension-of-11-30-pm-deadline-new-top-cop. Accessed on May 16th 2013.

over the city. People can follow the demand for a bandh either due to support for that organization and the causes it represents, or due to fear of violence. Whether a bandh is successful or not is the result of a de facto negotiation between those who live in the city and those who call for that bandh. It is a negotiation that could include the use of violence.

An important part of the working of a city is then its continuing negotiations between groups with a high degree of collective autonomy. Individuals can be members of several such groups and be involved in a plurality of negotiations. The consequences of these negotiations can be seen in multiple dimensions of a city, including the use of its spaces. To the extent that globalization creates new groups with high degrees of collective autonomy it would influence these negotiations and the effects that has on the distribution of space. In order to capture this influence we would first need to address the fact that globalization means different things to different people. We thus first outline what we mean by the term before we explore its interaction with the city.

Globalization and its Contents

The vast variety in the approaches to globalization tends to be influenced by a variety of factors, including disciplines, ideologies and interests. Disciplines can determine whether we see the process primarily as one of a movement of capital across national borders or as the building of social networks. Economists would see globalization as the "removal of barriers to free trade and the closer integration of national economies" [11] while sociologists may view it as "[t]he intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away".[12] Ideologies can influence whether our focus is on the growth generated by the hyper-mobility of capital or the emergence of sweatshops in the poorer parts of the world. And interests decide which particular element of globalization we focus on. A stock broker's attention is unlikely to go beyond the flows of capital while that of an entertainer will be on the potential for interaction between the performance aspects of different cultures. Given this diversity

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[11] Stiglitz, Joseph, *Globalisation and its Discontents,* (New Delhi: Penguin Books), 2002, p ix.
[12] A Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, (Cambridge: Polity Press), 1990, p 21.

it would be difficult to come up with an acceptable precise definition of globalization that is built around the effects of this process.

We may be better served in our search for an effective concept of globalization to focus on its causes rather than its effects. Many of the effects of globalisation are the result of the reduction of the effects of distance. Indeed, those who are fascinated by the technologies of globalization have sometimes taken the process to mean the death of distance. And it is true jobs that had to previously be done in the vicinity can now be outsourced to points on the other side of the globe. While the 'death of distance' may be an exaggeration, there is little doubt that globalization has fundamentally altered the way a variety of activities ranging from business to entertainment are carried out. There has been a striking increase in what Keohane and Nye call 'networks of interdependence at multicontinental distances'.[13] We can then take globalisation to mean *a process that reduces the effects of distance across continental boundaries.*

Treating globalization as a process initiated by technological change does, however, have several implications. We cannot understand it entirely in terms of the technological changes that have come about since the last two decades of the twentieth century. There have been technological changes in the past that have also had the effect of reducing the effects of distance, going right back to the development of boats with the capacity to cross oceans. In the realm of communication technology too the coming of telephones did contribute to a substantial shrinking of the effects of distance. We then need to recognise the different phases of globalization, and not be preoccupied with the most recent phase alone. The current nature of the city would be influenced by all these elements of globalization and not its recent phase alone.

Seeing globalization as primarily a technology generated process also calls for greater clarity in our conception of technology itself. Given the rapid strides made in the technology that forms the basis of the latest phase of globalization it is easy to ignore the social dimension of this technological change. It is often assumed that once an enabling technology is developed it will necessarily be used. But whether, as well as when and where, these new developments are actually utilised would depend on a variety of other factors. Technology may have made it possible to set up call centres in Asia to address customer complaints in a city in the United States. But if tapping

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[13]Keohane, Robert O and Nye, Joseph S.Jr.,"Globalisation: What's New? What's Not? (And So What?)"*Foreign Policy*, No. 118. (Spring, 2000), pp. 104-119, p 105.

the labour on the other side of the globe is more expensive than it is to do so in the developed world, that technology will not be used. Even when the labour itself is less expensive it would have to be equipped with language and other skills that a customer in the United States has come to expect. In other cases, the reduction of distance may not be culturally viable. The same technology that takes Hindi films made in Mumbai to an audience in London can also be used to get Swahili language programmes from Africa to an audience in Mumbai. Yet while the Hindi film link is already working quite extensively, it would be a surprise if the Swahili link to Mumbai ever becomes viable on the same scale. The availability of a new technological innovation that reduces the effects of distance is then a necessary condition for globalisation, but it is not sufficient. It also needs to take into account the social, economic and political processes that allow the reduction in the effects of distance to be realized.

Treating globalization as a process of reducing the effects of distance also brings into focus the multiplicity of boundaries that can be breached. The technologies that reduce distance do not operate only across national or continental boundaries. The same process works within regions as well as within countries. The communication revolution that enabled Bangalore to become an outsourcing centre for the developed world also enables workers in the city's garment export industry to use mobile telephones to keep in touch with their villages. The impact on a city of the process of globalization, when seen in its entirety, cannot then be confined to actions across national boundaries, but must also include the movement across more local boundaries.

The relationship between these boundaries and space can also be quite versatile. The boundaries themselves need not be only those that can be clearly demarcated in geographical terms. As Sassen has argued boundaries can be of two kinds, "One is that the border is embedded in the product, the person, and the instrument: a mobile agent endogenizes critical features of the border. The other is that there are multiple locations for the border, whether inside firms or in long transnational domains."[14] The mobile boundaries ensure that the same space can be transformed by the entry and exit at different points of time of products and persons. And this process itself can be influenced by the technologies that enabled globalization. A respectable marketplace at day time can be transformed into a centre of crime later at night. The influx into the

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[14]Sassen, Saskia, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*, (Princeton: PrincetonUniversity Press), 2006, p 416.

city of protesters from elsewhere can transform the character of the site they occupy. In both cases the communication technologies at the heart of the latest phase of globalization can play a role.

In unpacking the multitude of boundaries that are being crossed with the use of the technologies of globalization we would do well to build on Sassen's idea of circuits. Her effort was to unpack the global economy "into a variety of highly specialized cross-border circuits corresponding to specific industries, more precisely, those components of industries operating across borders".[15] These cross border circuits are seen primarily as a flow of goods and services. In a narrow interpretation this confines the discussion to economic globalization alone. But there is no reason why the services should be seen in their economic dimensions alone. There are well established social circuits that can be relied upon to provide services though not for a price. Family networks can be very effective in facilitating the movement of labour and entrepreneurship across national boundaries. They also play a critical role in some social processes such as the globalisation of the Indian arranged-marriage system. To the extent that these networks provide an established flow of goods or services, and reinforce themselves with their effectiveness, they can be treated as not just a network of contacts but an effective circuit. Moreover, since the technologies that reduce the effects of geographical distance work not just across national boundaries but also within countries, the circuits of globalisation would tend to develop alongside other circuits that work across the dividing lines between the local and the non-local, in an environment of continuously changing places and boundaries. In order to capture the impact of globalization on cities we would need to unpack not just the global economy but also all other circuits of globalisation, including military, social, cultural, environmental, and even criminal.

While providing such a comprehensive picture would be well beyond the scope of this paper it is possible to gain insights into the working of this process by looking at a selection of circuits that have influenced a city. Among the multitude of global circuits influencing Bangalore the transformation of the city and its governance is perhaps best captured by three circuits: the garment manufacturing circuit, the information technology circuit, and the circuit that provides Hindu priests to the global market. While in the first two circuits Bangalore is the resource point for

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[15] Sassen, Saskia, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2001, p 347

command and control centres elsewhere in the world, in the third the city is a command and control centre.

The global garment circuit does predate the revolution in communication technology that is normally associated with the current phase of globalization. The rapid growth of this circuit too was not prompted by any dramatic new technology. What did happen was a fundamental transformation in the global clothing market that saw fashion as it was then understood going out of fashion. The emergence of the clothes of the working class, especially denim, as the new fashion allowed the production process to be shifted to less fashion-conscious places that used less skilled labour. The global garment circuit is an example of globalization being spurred by a dramatic change in the utilization of technology.

The command and control centres of the global garment circuit are the global brands that order the garments to be made according to their specifications. These orders can be quite volatile as they are dependent not just on the changes in fashion in the markets in the Western world but also on the competition among manufacturers from multiple locations in different countries. The volatility in demand has led to manufacturers emphasizing flexibility in their operations. In order to gain such flexibility manufacturers have tended to prefer young women workers who constitute around 84 per cent of the workforce in Bangalore's garment export industry.[16] Women workers in the garment circuit have been known to leave their jobs for a variety of causes that do not normally affect the same decision among men, including getting married and having to move closer to where their husbands work.

Since the cost of production is a key factor in the global brands' choice of manufacturer there is a pressure to keep wages down. This initially led to the creation of sweatshops.[17] As the discomfort with such manufacturing practices grew among the customers in the West there was pressure in world trade negotiations to set up global labour standards. This pressure was maintained till the failure of the Seattle ministerial of the World Trade Organization in 1999. Since then the focus has shifted sharply from governments to the relationship between the buyers and the manufacturers. Global labour and environment standards such as the SA 8000 have

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[16]NarendarPani and Nikky Singh, *Women at the Threshold of Globalization,* (New Delhi: Routledge) 2012, p 36.

[17]This has sometimes been justified by economists as being better than what would otherwise be available to labour in developing countries. For a critique of this view see, John Miller"Why Economists Are Wrong About Sweatshops and the Antisweatshop Movement", *Challenge*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (January-February, 2003), pp. 93-122.

been created and a network of auditors ensures they are monitored.[18] Fearing customer retribution at home most buyers react quickly to the first signs of a breach of these standards, often not hesitating to cease sourcing garments from that manufacturer.

The global standards are however confined to the workplace and do not extend beyond the factory gate. The living conditions of the workers are then very different from their working conditions and reflect their economic status of being just above the poverty line. With a majority of the workers being migrants they need to find a place to stay that they can afford. The villages that have been absorbed into Bangalore provide them such a place. Since the residential portion of these villages have been formed well before the city reached them they are not normally required to meet the building norms of the city. That initially results in the creation of tenements with shared toilets.[19] This allowed those with even residential land in the villages on the periphery of Bangalore to profit from real estate. The more successful among these investors began to look for opportunities for further growth. And the one area where their deficit in educational qualifications was not a disadvantage was politics. Access to political power also allowed them to bend the rules when developing their property. The interaction between real estate and politics resulted in the emergence of the successful real estate politician.

The technical manpower utilised in the information technology circuit throws up a very different dynamic. The availability of this technical manpower in Bangalore prompted Texas Instruments to set up a communication facility in the mid-eighties.[20] The success of this initiative along with the support provided by the Software Technology Park of India saw Bangalore emerging as a major resource point for a variety of information technology related activities ranging from software programming to operating call centres. Initial investments may have come from foreign companies, but Indian companies were soon to make their presence felt. The Indian initiatives included two major Bangalore centred corporate bodies, Wipro and Infosys. Wipro was a vegetable oil manufacturer who moved into the computer hardware industry before emerging as a major Indian player in the software services

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[18]Ingrid Stigzeliusand Cecilia Mark-Herbert, "Tailoring corporate responsibility to suppliers:Managing SA8000 in Indian garment manufacturing", *Scandinavian Journal of Management* (2009) 25, pp46-56.
[19] For a more detailed view of the garment export circuit in Bangalore see NarendarPani and Nikky Singh, *Women at the Threshold of Globalization,* (New Delhi: Routledge) 2012.
[20]James Heitzman,"Corporate Strategy and Planning in the Science City: Bangalore as 'Silicon Valley'",*Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34, No. 5 (Jan. 30 - Feb. 5, 1999), pp. PE2-PE11.

and IT Enabled Services segments of the industry.[21] Infosys was set up by a group of information technology professionals and grew to become a billion dollar company.**[22]** Its growth was realized by mixing the IT skills of these professionals with those required in the stock markets. As a middle class to riches story it became a symbol for all who aspired to follow a similar path.

These aspirations were reflected in the workers in the information technology industry looking to become a part of the upper middle class and beyond. These ambitions were seen both within and outside the workplace. Outside the confines of the workplace these aspirations were reflected in the lifestyles this technical manpower chose to adopt.[23] At the heart of this lifestyle was their choice of residence. This choice was guided by not just their relatively comfortable salary levels but also a system of income tax concessions that encouraged making use of housing loans.[24] This growing class of information technology manpower soon became the backbone of a major spurt in the demand for apartments in Bangalore. As this demand grew and prices rose, it created an additional investment demand for housing. As the demand for higher end housing grew it created a demand for a compatible commercial environment that was provided by, among other things, malls. With the IT units being concentrated in a belt ranging from the south to the east of Bangalore, the high-cost real estate too tended to move in that direction.

The global circuit to provide Hindu priests has received very little attention. This is arguably because of the relatively small numbers involved in this circuit. As more Hindu temples emerge across the world there is a global demand for priests. This demand has tended to globalize the traditional centres that train these priests. This global demand is understandably miniscule when compared to that for Information Technology professionals. Its significance can however rise far above its numbers. It provides a rallying point for social and political mobilization. And as it gets sensitive to the demands that can be made on its alumni abroad its practices also tend to get globalized.

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[21] Jay Chatzkel, "Establishing a global KM initiative: the Wipro story", Journal of Knowledge Management, Vol. 8 Iss: 2, 2004, pp.6 – 18.

[22] James Heitzman, "Corporate Strategy and Planning in the Science City: Bangalore as 'Silicon Valley'"

[23] See for instance, Lange, Hellmuth, Lars Meier, and N. S. Anuradha. "Highly Qualified Employees in Bangalore, India: Consumerist Predators?." *The New Middle Classes*. Springer Netherlands, 2009. pp 281-298.

[24] The Government of India offers income tax concessions to those who have taken housing loans.

An interesting example is provided by the Poornaprajna Vidyapeetha in Bangalore, which has been known to have its students become priests in Hindu temples in the United States. This gurukula claims to be a nucleus of traditional and ritualistic Sanskrit education. It provides a 13 year uninterrupted course with students coming in at the age of nine and above. After the first six years the students are expected to link up with mainstream education and pursue secondary, under-graduate and post-graduate courses. The connection with the mainstream is not just in terms of courses as it is not unusual to see young students clad in priestly attire playing cricket on the grounds of the Vidyapeetha. The costs of this education are met through donations, including the sponsorship of students at Rs 30,000 per student. And the finances of the system are currently working well enough for the institution to offer each student who passes the final examination a sum of Rs 1.5 lakhs "for pursuing further research and education in his lifetime".[25] These finances come from both domestic and foreign sources. The global influence can be seen in its academic activities as well. It holds international conferences designed to attract foreign specialists as well.

That the influence of Vidyapeetha goes beyond the 500 students it has at any given point of time becomes clear when we see its link with space. The Vidyapeetha was set up in 1956 in a village, Katriguppe, that was to the south west of the then Bangalore. A 25-year old Sri Sri Vishvesha Tirtha Swamiji of Pejawar Mutt in Udipi in coastal Karnataka went house to house in Bangalore collecting donations to build the institution on a three-and-a-half-acre plot. As the city grew and crowded around it the Vidyapeetha and its temple became a centre for religious practices situated in an increasingly rare relatively open space. In a practice that is not always seen in other Hindu institutions the Vidyapeetha also emphasized intellectual activity with the building of a library and a research centre. This allowed it to gain a voice in religion and religion-related political discourse. The direction of this discourse was deeply influenced by Sri Sri Vishvesha Tirtha Swamiji being among the Hindu high priests that were most supportive of the Ramjanmabhoomi movement.[26] It is no surprise then that the area around Vidyapeetha in Bangalore has been a core support base for the Bharatiya Janata Party.

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[25] Brochure of Poornaprajna Vidyapeetha Pratishtana, Bangalore, no date.
[26] Bharatiya Janata Party, "BJP's White Paper on Ayodhya and the Ram Temple Movement", April 1993

Globalization thus contributes to the emergence of new autonomous groups both directly and indirectly. Those involved in the information technology sector and their strong desire for collective autonomy was a direct product of the process of globalization initiated by the revolution in communication technology. The considerably less assertive garment workers too were a direct product of an earlier phase of globalization. The emergence of the real estate politician as a group can be seen as an indirect consequence of globalization as this group emerged from urban trends generated by globalization. The institutions related to the priestly circuit of globalization may have been created well before the current phase of globalization, but they have taken on a new form with new interests as a result of this process.

Globalization and Urban Negotiation

Much as these autonomous groups may seek complete autonomy they are not completely isolated from either each other or indeed other autonomous groups in the city. Their economic, social and political actions affect each other as well as the other groups. The economic earnings of the information technology related group generate much of the demand for real estate that the real estate politicians tap, as well as the economic resources for the production of globalized priests. And their relationships are not always mutually beneficial. They often compete for the same resources, particularly land and state investment in areas that benefit that group. The interaction, both direct and indirect, between these groups in Bangalore provides an insight into the negotiations involving a larger number of autonomous groups that go into the way a city copes with globalization.

Much of the attention on these negotiations in Bangalore has been focused on land related issues. For the IT circuit to find geographical space for itself at the periphery of the city it had to deal with villages and their multitude of small farmers that existed at the ever expanding boundaries of Bangalore. This posed two kinds of challenges. First, there was the task of acquiring land from a large number of small farmers at a time when real estate prices were booming. Among the more noticed of these challenges emerged when the President of the Bellandur Gram Panchayat used the platform of the World Economic Forum in Davos to accuse Infosys of grabbing

land.[27] And second, it had to deal with the pressures of villages that were being crowded with migrant workers living not very far from the poverty line. This caused bottlenecks in transportation as well as in terms of the image of the city that the IT autonomous group sought to present to its global audience.

The approach of the IT autonomous group to the first task was to rely on the government to use its power to acquire land. The Karnataka government extensively used eminent domain to take over land and provide it either directly to the group or for the infrastructure that the group needed. This included the land taken over for the creation of the Electronic City which went on to become the hub of Bangalore information technology circuit.[28] The government also took over land to create the infrastructure that was needed including roads and expressways.[29]

The IT group's approach to the second task of the disorder around the villages in the periphery was to try as far as possible to bypass it. A long-delayed project to set up a ring road around the city was given priority.[30] Within the city a number of long flyovers were built to ensure high speed vehicles had as little to do as possible with the crowds of a relatively unorganized city. As the city grew more rapidly and in a manner that was less organized the flyovers had to extend for several kilometres and soon became elevated expressways. The pattern that emerged was to create IT parks that met global standards and gated communities for those working in the IT parks to live in. The place of work and residence as well as the airport were then to be connected through 'world class' infrastructure. The exercise was aimed at physically creating a part of Bangalore that would have complete collective autonomy from the rest of the city; a part of Bangalore that could be presented as 'world class'.

This search for complete autonomy was always likely to run into difficulties. The crisis in water availability that Bangalore faces, for instance, cannot be kept out with gates and security personnel. But the pursuit of autonomy itself required a set of

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[27] Benjamin, Solomon, "Inclusive or Contested: Conceptualizing a Globalized Bangalore" in Darshini Mahadevia (ed) *Inside the Transforming Urban Asia: Processes, Policies, and Public Actions,* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company) 2008, pp 170-193.

[28] James Heitzman, *Network City: Planning the Information Society in Bangalore,* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), 2004, p 188.

[29] The acquisition of land for expressways has not been without controversy, with arguably the most controversial project being the Nandi Infrastructure Corridor Enterprises expressway between Bangalore and Mysore. For a summary of the project and its disputes see, G. Raghuram and Satyam Shivam Sundaram, "Lessons from Leveraging Land: A Case of Bangalore Mysore Infrastructure Corridor" Working Paper No.2009-02-04, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, February 2009.

[30] James Heitzman, *Network City,* pp 85-86.

negotiations with other autonomous groups, either directly or through the medium of the state. The conflicts of interests between the different autonomous groups may have begun over geographical space, but the negotiations around them moved quickly into the political, social and economic spaces.

The political space provided the greatest challenge for the IT autonomous group. In a democracy this group did not have the numbers to be able to control the city's politics. The numbers ensured political power remained firmly with other groups, especially the real estate politicians. A review of the mandatory declaration of assets by the candidates in the 2013 Karnataka Assembly elections reveals that at least 14 of the 28 Members of the Legislative Assembly elected from Bangalore own a considerable amount of real estate on the periphery of Bangalore. [31]

The response of the IT autonomous group to this challenge was to create an advisory body that would influence policy and monitor its implementation without a direct role for the elected representatives. This was attempted to be done by directly influencing the head of government or the party in power. The first, and arguably the most successful, effort in this direction came with the formation of the Bangalore Agenda Task Force (BATF) in November 1999.[32] The BATF was led by the then CEO of Infosys, Mr Nandan Nilekani. The state government nominated 10 members to the BATF, including five top corporate leaders, one NGO leader, one retired academic, two bureaucrats, and one Member of Parliament. Of equal significance were the categories that were not represented in the BATF, which list included urban planners. The BATF identified what it called stakeholders who were primarily agencies in charge of specific urban services, whether they were departments of the state or parastatals. The BATF then worked out agendas for each of the stakeholders. These stakeholders had in turn to make presentations on their achievements at a meeting attended by the Chief Minister. The other elected representatives were invited to this final meeting, but at this meeting they usually chose to remain spectators.

This arrangement allowed the BATF to influence the general direction of policy making for Bangalore far beyond the specific elements that it chose to take responsibility for. It then used a media blitz to take credit for what it saw as its

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[31] Calculated from information provided in affidavits filed by candidates with the Election Commission as made available by National Election Watch at
http://myneta.info/karnataka2013/index.php?action=show_winners&sort=default. Accessed on 17th May 2013.
[32] Asha Ghosh, "Public-Private or a Private Public? Promised Partnership of the Bangalore Agenda Task Force", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 40, No. 47 (Nov. 19-25, 2005), pp. 4914-4922.

successes, whether it was the Self-Assessment Scheme for property taxes or the introduction of new accounting practices in the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike. But more than these specific claims to success the BATF's influence has to be seen in terms of the larger agenda for the city that it influenced, if not enforced, through its stakeholders. And this agenda as it unfolded had a major focus on the new international airport which was being built under the chairmanship of Mr NR Narayan Murthy who was also the Chairman of Infosys. The airport being around 35 kilometres to the north of the city the emphasis was on building a 'world class' road to connect it to the city. This road was linked to a high speed ring road around Bangalore that would take an international visitor directly the south of the city, bypassing all the difficulties of living in Bangalore. From the south of the city the road to Electronic City was upgraded.

While much of this influence could be achieved by the proximity of the members of the BATF to the then chief minister, Mr SM Krishna, the support it received from the English speaking middle class in Bangalore aspiring to be a part of the IT autonomous group would not have been possible without the transformation that had taken place in the English media in the city. In the post-independence era the major English daily was 'Deccan Herald'. This local daily had retained its leadership position despite the entry of national papers like 'Indian Express' and 'The Hindu'. 'The Times of India' too had entered the city but was a lowly fourth in terms of circulation. As liberalization took root, and the competition among companies began to grow, 'The Times of India' adopted an advertising-led model across the country. It saw the newspaper as no more than a vehicle to attract advertisers, a view that has been elaborated in considerable detail by its Managing Director.[33] As a part of this strategy the paper focused primarily on developing an advertising-friendly readership. As advertisers were seeking young consumers willing to spend on foreign products or the Indian surrogates, 'The Times of India' began to cater to this audience. And a part of this exercise was to build an aspiration for a Bangalore that would be consistent with a city in the developed world which was the primary market for these products.

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[33] Ken Auletta, "Citizens Jain: Why India's Newspaper Industry is Thriving" *New Yorker,* October 8, 2012.

As 'The Times of India' rapidly grew to become the leading paper in Bangalore by a huge margin,[34] its interests coincided with that of the BATF.

Given the dependence of the BATF on proximity to the chief minister it was hardly surprising that it ceased to exist soon after Mr SM Krishna lost power in 2004. But the IT autonomous group and others with similar interests, such as the one built around biotechnology, continued to have their requirements from the city. It was then only a matter of time before other groups came up to fill the vacuum, though with much less success. The BJP government had Agenda for Bengaluru Infrastructure and Development (ABIDe) and just when it became clear that that government may not last, these groups created the Bangalore Political Action Committee which once again has representatives who were associated with the IT and biotechnology industries. Using an information technology style acronym B.PAC, the committee has an Agenda for Bangalore BPAC that demands 'world class' infrastructure for the city. And it leaves little room for doubt about what it means by the term by stating: "A comprehensive proposal for infrastructure development across all sectors has been drawn up by the Karnataka Information Technology and Communication (ICT) Group, which was presented to the government on January 8, 2013. BPAC will advocate that each piece of this proposal be taken up by the government and instituted over the next 10 years."[35]

The response of the real estate politicians to institutions that deal directly with the heads of the state government and the middle class has been to consolidate their support with other autonomous groups in the city. The dominance of language groups in identity politics in Bangalore has been quite well established. It ensures that even inter-state water disputes such as the one between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu on the sharing of Cauvery waters are converted into a language dispute. The real estate politicians than cater to organizations that mobilise people on the basis of language. Ever since the Gokak agitation in the early 1980s for the supremacy of Kannada the primary organization for mobilizing support on the Kannada language issue has arguably been the Dr Raj Kumar Abhimani Sangha (Dr Raj Kumar Fan Club). While this organization does not have the flexibility or the connections with the real estate transformation on the periphery of Bangalore to win elections, its ability to mobilize

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[34] 'Circulation figures for TOI and others' http://nwforcapitalmarket.blogspot.in/2012/06/circulation-figures-toi.html. Accessed on 17th May 2013.

[35] http://www.bpac.in/agenda-for-bangalore/. Accessed on 16th May 2013.

masses of people on the Kannada issue is not in doubt. Indeed, when Dr Raj Kumar died Bangalore observed a complete bandh.[36] And in such situations where the negotiations between autonomous groups are taken on to the streets, the IT industry too is forced to fall in line.

While the political spaces of the IT autonomous group and that of the real estate politicians are clearly different it is not unusual for politicians and political parties to try to straddle both worlds. Mr SM Krishna tried to do so by supporting the BATF during his term in power and going back to candidates from the other political world at election time. This allowed the Congress led by him to win a few seats in Bangalore, but the focus on Bangalore was rejected in the rest of the state and he lost power. The Bharatiya Janata Party had its own version of the same strategy. It provided a prominent role for Bangalore's real estate politicians including making one of them the Home Minister. At the same time the ideological support it received from the global priestly circuit as well as members of its task force for the city, ABIDe, allowed it to appeal to at least some members of the IT autonomous group. This again provided the party some support in Bangalore, but the preoccupation with Bangalore, along with other factors, cost it the state as a whole.

The difficulty for politicians to straddle the two political worlds is bound to be further complicated by the growing debate on corruption. As long as the IT autonomous group and the real estate related autonomous groups could operate in their own independent spaces it was possible for politicians to at least conceive of dealing with each of them separately. But with the intense competition among aspiring politicians in the real estate related autonomous groups, they have been more prone to turn a blind eye to the rules governing the city. This tendency received an impetus from the fact that most of the citizens dealing with the severe constraints on their resources in the process of transformation on the periphery of Bangalore have also been prone to bending the rules, especially in relation to building norms. This has prompted the IT related autonomous group to launch a campaign against corruption, focusing on politicians with a record of corruption. But the May 2013 elections to the Karnataka assembly do not show much public support for this campaign, possibly because of the large number of citizens who have themselves bent the rules.

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[36] The funeral was marked by a great deal of violence resulting in the death of five persons, including the lynching of a police constable. Anil Kumar Sastry and K.V.Subramanya, "Rajkumar laid to rest", *The Hindu,* Friday, Apr 14, 2006. http://www.hindu.com/2006/04/14/stories/2006041417330100.htm. Accessed on 17th May 2013.

Conclusion

The picture that emerges from Bangalore's experience with globalization is one of the emergence of new autonomous groups. This may be most evident in the case of interests created by global circuits such as the IT related autonomous group. But the indirect effects such as the autonomous groups that emerge from the effects of global circuits on the city, including the real estate related autonomous group, are no less significant. Globalization also has the potential of transforming an existing autonomous group, as in the case of Vidyapeetha. These groups then negotiate with each other and with other autonomous groups in the city to determine their share of physical space and beyond. The negotiations beyond the physical space take us into other realms. This paper has tried to explore the negotiations in the political space, but it would be similarly possible to explore the negotiations in other spaces, including the social and economic spaces.

Bangalore's experience with these negotiations suggests that they tend to concentrate on three broad instruments. The first is an effort to gain influence over the powers that be. This can be done both through democratic means like elections or through working out a relationship with those who the elections throw up. In this fight for influence the media, and its interests, play a critical role. Second, there is an attempt to find options that reduce the conflict for perceived physical space. The crowdedness of the former villages at the periphery of the cities is sought to be overcome by building new physical spaces such as elevated expressways over them. This may only transform the conflict from one over roads to one over resources as a whole. But to the extent that it is one step removed it appears to be easier to negotiate. And third, ethical issues are not as far away from the negotiations as cynics would have us believe. The charges of unfairness made by different autonomous groups may take a variety of forms. While the IT autonomous group may see the unfairness of corruption, the real estate related autonomous group may see the unfairness involved in those who cannot be elected exerting considerable influence over those who are elected.

The results of the negotiations with the many variables involved are quite difficult to predict. They are also bound to change frequently with a shift in any one of the factors involved. A decline in the economic fortunes of a circuit of globalization or a growth in the non-economic strength of an autonomous group, along with a host of other factors, can change the nature and consequences of these negotiations. The

unpredictability of the results of these negotiations and their potential for continuous change point to the limitations of city wide concepts, like global cities, to understand urban dynamics. City wide concepts force us to underestimate, if not ignore, the extent of the variations and the interactions that take place within a city. We may be better served by concepts that capture specific processes with a city, such as autonomous groups and global circuits, which allow for the diversity and continuing change that mark most cities. It would encourage recognition that we – with apologies to Heraclitus – never step into the same city twice.