



Exploring (De-)Regulation of Labour in the Lower Tier of the Automobile Supply Chain in Delhi-NCR

Exploring (De-)Regulation of Labour in the Automotive Value Chain in Delhi-NCR

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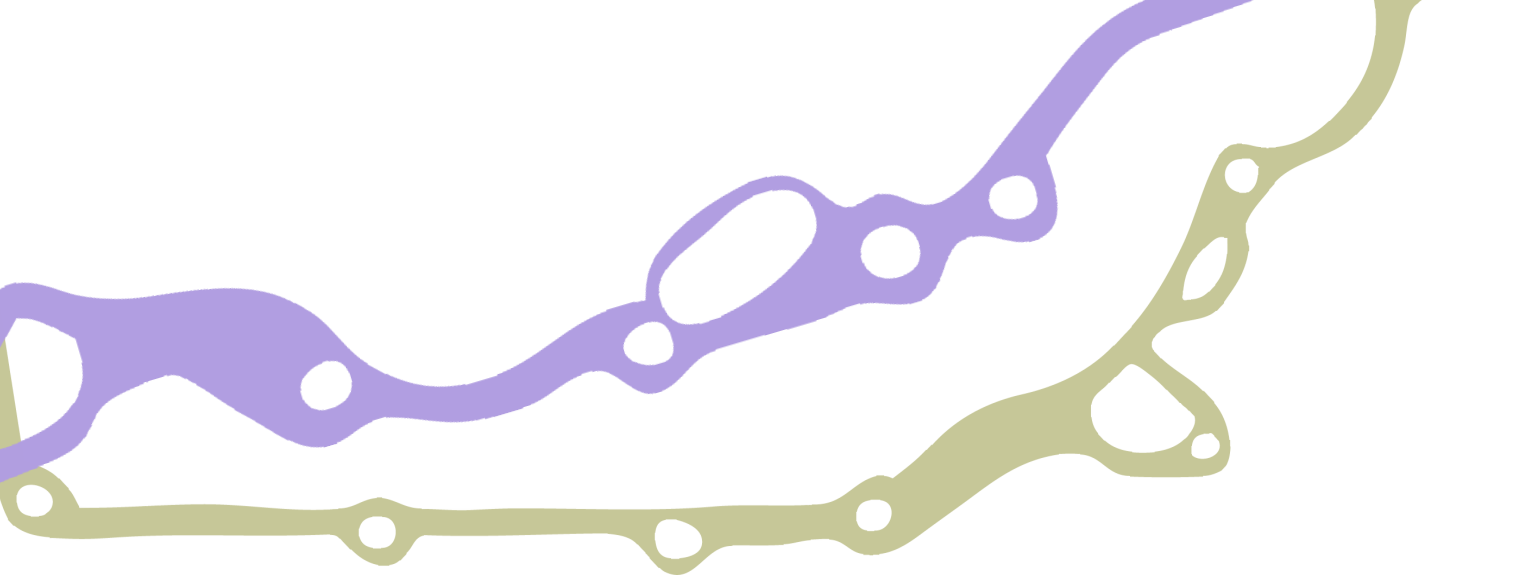
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Centre for Education and Communication





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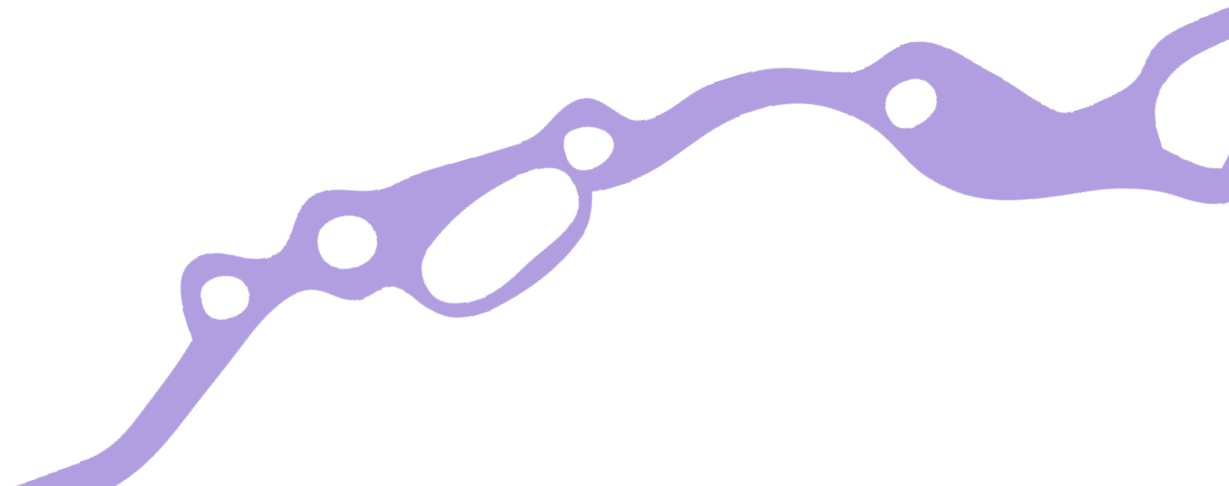
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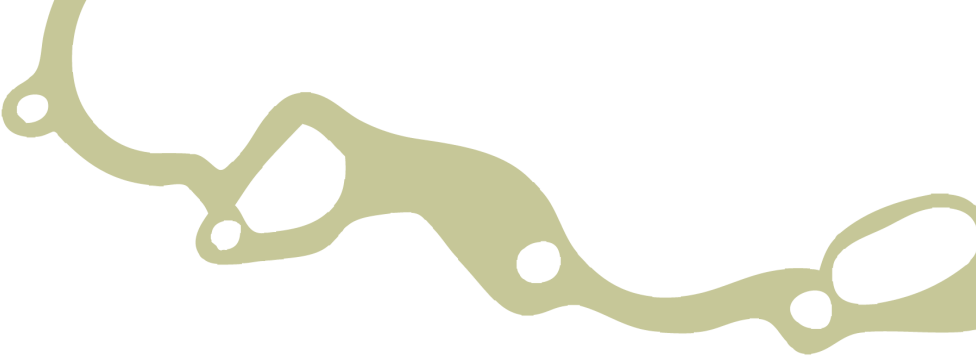




Preface

India's auto sector contributes as much as 49 percent to India's total manufacturing Gross Domestic Product. The sector is deeply embedded with the Global Value Chains and is characterised by spatial dispersal of production and supply networks. While the public and policy focus remains on the Original Equipment Manufacturers, a whole network of small workshops employing informal, casual labour is spread across the industrial land-scape of Delhi-NCR and elsewhere, intimately linked with the Automotive Value Chains. The development of such Value Chains have significant implications for concerns about promotion of decent work conditions, effective regulation of the Value Chains, and ensuring basic human and labour rights.

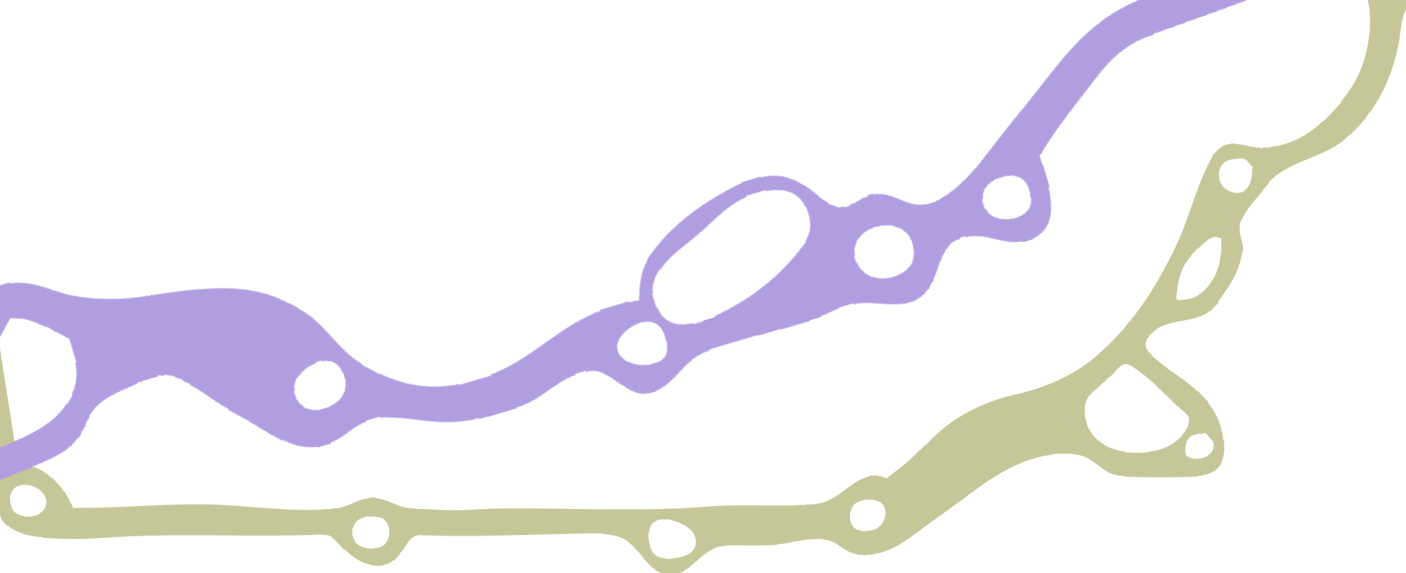
We hereby present before you the following study on Automotive Value Chain in Delhi-NCR. It focuses on three automotive firms –an equipment manufacturer and two vendors – to bring to the light the labour conditions in the Automotive Value Chains. The study examines the nature of employment



relations, composition of the workforce, modes of recruitment, work hours, access to amenities and social security in the sector. The study also examines the potentials and challenges of regulating the Automotive Value Chain, especially in the context of the German Supply Chain Due Diligence Act.

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Lokesh
Executive Director,
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The Indian Automobile Sector and Global Value Chains

The first modern car in India was bought by a resident of Calcutta in 1897. Followed by it, several industrialists and civil servants started buying cars in Bombay, Madras and other places. In 1903, Samuel John Green of Simpson & Co, Madras, built India's first steam car. The business of imported cars started in the 1910s after which many small companies started burgeoning. TVS commenced in 1912, and by 1928 General Motors India Ltd started assembling cars and trucks in its Bombay factory. Hindustan Motors Ltd, Calcutta, and Premier Automobiles Ltd, Bombay, were established in 1942 and 1944 respectively and eventually became the first of the firms to produce complete automobiles in India (Muthaiyah & Gopalan 2013).

Soon after Independence, the Government of India also entered the automotive industry. From the 1960s to 1980s Indian Automobile market was dominated by Hindustan Motors which gained prominence due to its unique Ambassador Car which was the most sought category of personal vehicle in India. The upper-middle classes including public sector employees, civil servants, politicians and rich businessmen were buying this car in large numbers. At the same time, owing to the green revolution and its impact in Western Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana, the sale of commercial vehicles like tractors used for agricultural purposes also saw an upsurge.

In the 1980s, the monopoly of Hindustan Motors and its allied firms in India was challenged by Maruti Udyog Limited. By the 1990s many new entrants started their companies in the Indian automobile market. The first grand joint venture was initiated by Maruti Udyog and Suzuki, a Japanese company, culminating in the formation of Maruti Suzuki, a big automobile conglomerate. During the 1980s and 1990s, because of the entry of many multinational auto-

mobile firms in India, a cluster of small-scale automotive component factories also started mushrooming in the neighbouring areas of Industrial settlements. In the post-1990 period, the country saw the emergence and consolidation of a significant number of automotive giants in the country, producing different types of vehicles and equipment both for domestic and foreign markets. It is now often said that the automotive industry of India, intimately linked with the global value chains, would take the country to a 'high road' of industrialisation, and liberate it from the "middle-income-trap".

With increasing globalization and the emergence of global production networks across the world in which a variety of actors work in synchronization with each other through international division of labour and new modes of corporate governance, the concept of global value chains (GVCs) has emerged as a useful explanatory framework in industrial and political economy studies. In Global Production Networks (GPNs) the production processes of each product are progressively outsourced to a heterogeneous set of actors spread globally.¹ In this context, global value chains can be understood as a quasi-integrated network of production units spread through globally. It involves all sets of activities performed by economic actors in the pre-production, production and post-production stages to bring a product to the market. Unlike in a conventional factory system, in an industrial level value chain which includes operations performed on a product only at the firm level, GVCs constitute all work performed on a product from firms in different locations from different countries.

It is said that while a conventional factory system, the production process is controlled by the manager through a centralized system of function and coordination, in the case of GVCs it is the market which perform the function of coordination and systemization of work across the chain. There have been three stages in the development of centralized factory management, viz. Taylorism, Fordism and Toyotism (Bose 2021). With globalization and cross-border integration of the production process, there has been a shift from the conventional mode of organising large-scale production to global value chains. This development has been driven by transnational corporations (TNCs) which supposedly can restructure their production processes following the best competitive advantage available to them (Seric & Tong 2019). According to the World Bank,

¹ GVCs and GPNs are explanatory frameworks, often used interchangeably. However, GVCs represent firm level networks while GPNs represents mutual relationships between firms and regions.

“participation in global value chains (GVCs), the international fragmentation of production, can lead to increased job creation and economic growth”. Ke-Mu-Yi (2003) attributes the phenomenal growth in the world economy and output after the Second World War to the ‘vertical specialization’ achieved through global value chains, where each country came to specialise itself in particular stages of a goods ‘production sequence’ .

One of the crucial features of GVCs is that they can operate across developed, developing and under-developed countries at the same time. Unlike earlier trade networks where the relationship between developed and underdeveloped nations were arbitrated through domestic and foreign trade policy by the state, global value chain networks break away from these frameworks towards greater (and institutionalized) centralisation of product-value in developed countries and larger concentration of labour supply in the under-developed countries. Here, nations and regions get embedded in the informal regulation of labour supply at a global scale.

The automotive industry of India saw a significant jump, in the post-globalisation period. In 2002, the Indian automobile sector was opened up for 100 percent FDI through the direct route. In the 2000-2015 period, a total of US\$ 14.48 billion of FDI inflow was accounted for in the automobile sector in India. It certainly transformed the overall industrial share of the automobile and automotive component sector, leading India to become the fifth-largest automobile producer in the world. India produced 29 million vehicles in 2017-18, and the contribution of the sector to overall GDP increased from 2.77% in 1991-92 to 7.1% in 2018, and about 49% in the share of overall manufacturing GDP (Miglani 2019). Currently, the GDP contribution of the automobile sector stands at 7.1% and the plan is to raise it to 12 percent in the next few years. The aim of the Automotive Mission Plan 2026 (PIB 2017) is to bring the Indian automotive industry into the top three industries of the world. While doing so, it is hoped that the sector will be the engine of the Make in India programme and the biggest contributor to the Skill India programme. Currently, around 35 million people are employed in this sector, both directly and indirectly.

In a recent report by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank on sustainable GVCs for India, it was argued that currently India only shares 1.3% of world GVCs exports (Gupta 2022), and hence to increase India’s GVCs exports it is

important to deepen the network of GVCs domestically. As was highlighted in the economic survey of 2017-18, 75% of India's exports emanate from only six states, hence there is a prospect of deepening of GVCs in other states. In the past few decades, the expansion of GVCs has happened in a few selected industrial belts. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it was argued by some that export competitiveness can be achieved only through the diversification of GVC segments into newer labour-intensive products (Banga 2021).

Such optimistic narratives about the productive potentials of global value chains, however, need to be moderated by taking into consideration their effects on the labour-relations, across the different layers of the chain. The critics have already pointed out that the global value chains operate through a stark international division of labour (and labourers) where manual and perennial jobs on products are performed by the workforce from the Global South while intellectual and high-paying jobs on the same products are performed by countries of the Global North. What is more, within the Global South itself, there is a stark difference in the remuneration structure and work conditions in the different tiers of the value chain. This differential nature of work and wages between the Global North and Global South questions the secular claims of growth and output associated with global value chains. On one hand, the total output of the world economy has increased but on the other hand, the share of output shared by workers in the back ends of supply chains has remained stagnant.

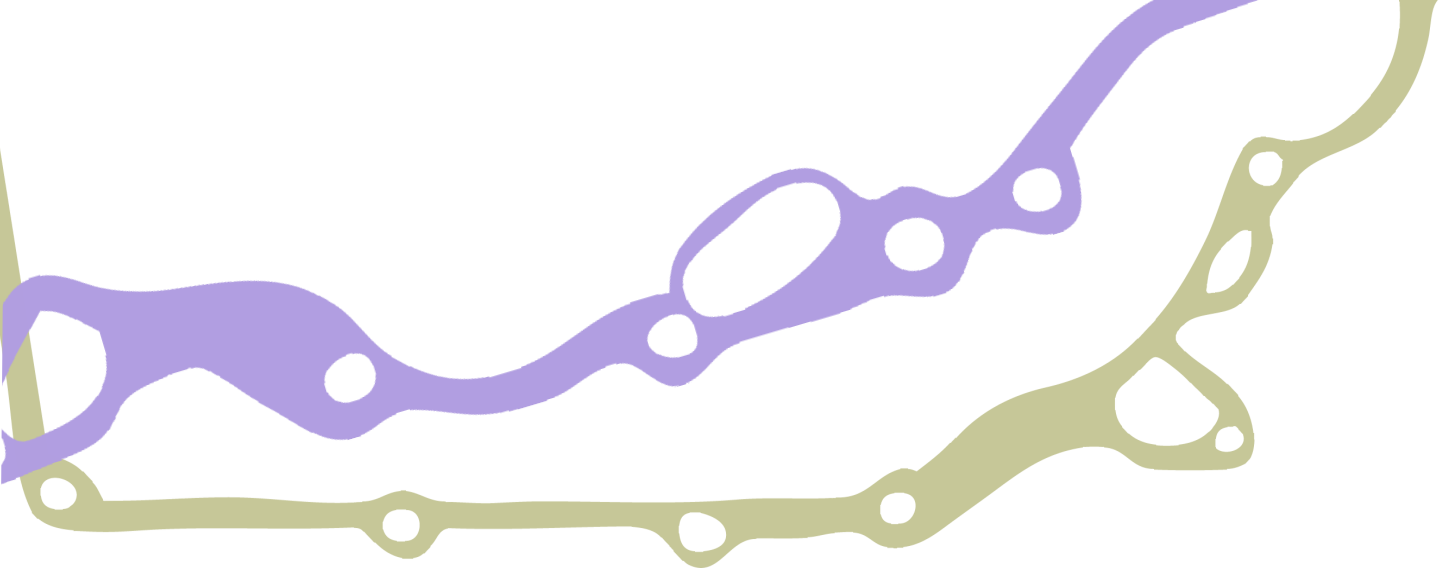
In the Indian context, increasing number of scholars now argue that the potential of global value chains to push the country to a high road of industrialisation, appear more like a chimera, than reality. Praveen Jha and Amit Chakraborty (Jha 2014) argue that employment generated in Indian garment and automotive industries, articulated as they are with the global value chains, is "mostly contractual, casual and insecure in nature". Further, "cheap labour with minimum rights to social & economic security has been perceived as a necessary precondition for attracting capital investment" and "the intensity of work has increased manifold on the shop floor and to maintain the 'just in time' production flow, the despotic control over labour process has become a generalised affair". Tom Barnes (Barnes 2018) argues that articulation of the Indian automotive sector with global value chains has led to the strengthening of a regional contract labour system in the upper tiers of the value chain. On the other hand, "in low-tier firms, this has led to the imposition of a regional casual

labour system.” Overall, “in each system, combinations of workers in different employment configurations have enabled auto manufacturing to function with a high degree of reliance upon informal and precarious work”.

This study seeks to contribute to this ongoing conversation. The study report is placed in the context of the expansion of GVCs in the automobile sector in India, and it studies the labour-relations in three automative firms, one of which is a brake manufacturer and rest of the two are suppliers to the break manufacturer. The study report maps out the forward and backward linkages of Knorr Bremse, a brake manufacturing monopoly which supplies brake systems to the Indian Railways and Metro, apart from various original equipment manufacturers. OPB Precitech and Rajhans Pressings are two supplier firms of Knorr Bremse, and the study interrogates the labour relations in these two firms too. The study report foregrounds a case of labour segmentation in these firms through a bottom-up study of labour conditions.

This study has been conducted through in-depth interviews of workers who were accessed at the factory sites. Field surveys near Knorr Bremse, OPB Precitech and Rajhans Pressings and the residential places of workers have been conducted. To understand the supply chains and labour hiring processes, while building up observations, multiple pieces of evidence were cross verified from the field. Most of the primary data gathering about factories was done at the factory gate following the work schedule of workers. Secondary data was gathered from the websites of the companies and triangulated with the primary data to develop the report. The field exercise was then followed up through a literature review and further triangulated with available knowledge about the informalisation of work and labour conditions. Trade union activists of different forums working in these regions were consulted to understand the pattern in which industrial settlements have taken place in Delhi and the NCR region.

A detailed in-depth interview of 8 workers was conducted from Faridabad, which includes 5 casual workers who work as machine helpers and 3 NEEM trainees. Apart from these, a field survey was done near the factory gate and nearby residential areas of the factories, where 26 workers were reached out, 16 from the casual/contractual category and 10 NEEM trainees. A similar field survey was conducted near OPB Precitech and Rajhans Pressings Ltd. and 7 workers from OPB and 6 from Rajhans factories were interviewed. Names of the workers have been changed, to protect their anonymity.



Labour in the Automotive Value Chain

Haryana is a leading state of India in producing automobiles and automotive components and according to the Centre for Indian Industry (CII) data of 2015, it accounts for 75 percent of passenger cars, 50 percent of tractors, and 60 percent of motorcycles manufactured in India. Two of the most prominent industrial centres of the state are Faridabad-Ballabgarh and Gurgaon-Manesar regions with the presence of Original Equipment Manufacturers like Maruti-Suzuki, Hero Honda Motors Limited, Honda Motorcycles and Scooter etc. and a cluster of manufacturing centres of automotive components and supplier companies. The automobile sector constitutes of 55 percent of the total business in Faridabad (Kerswell 2015). Faridabad experienced a 13-fold increase in urbanization after 1951 and has become the most urbanized district of Haryana with 79.5% of the total district population classified as urban and generating nearly 60% of the State revenue (Sen 2017).

The Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (HSIIDC) boasts of Haryana's unique strategic location with more than half of the state falling in the National Capital Region surrounding Delhi from three sides; its strong connectivity with 15 national highways and being under influence zone of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) and Amritsar – Kolkata Industrial Corridor (AKIC) and it having the highest per capita income amongst the larger states. Haryana claims to be the home to more than 250 Fortune 500 companies and has a robust infrastructure and efficient logistics, contributing to its high export preparedness despite being a land-locked state (HSIIDC website).

Development of the old City of Faridabad and the extension of the whole in-

dustrial area on the Highways from Faridabad to Bhallabgarh to Palwal also needs to be seen in the context of the state policies towards the management of spaces in Delhi, the national capital. The pushing out of the large and heavy industries from Delhi which create problems of air pollution, traffic congestion, and waste disposal had significant implications for the development of satellite spaces like Faridabad, Gurgaon and NOIDA. The Master plan of Delhi starting from 1962 and later the National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB) Act of 1985 both saw the development of industrial towns like Faridabad in a symbiotic relationship with NCT-Delhi, but with the aim of the plan and relocating heavy and noxious industries outside Delhi to maintain the 'pleasantness and dignity of a National Capital' (Mehra 2020).

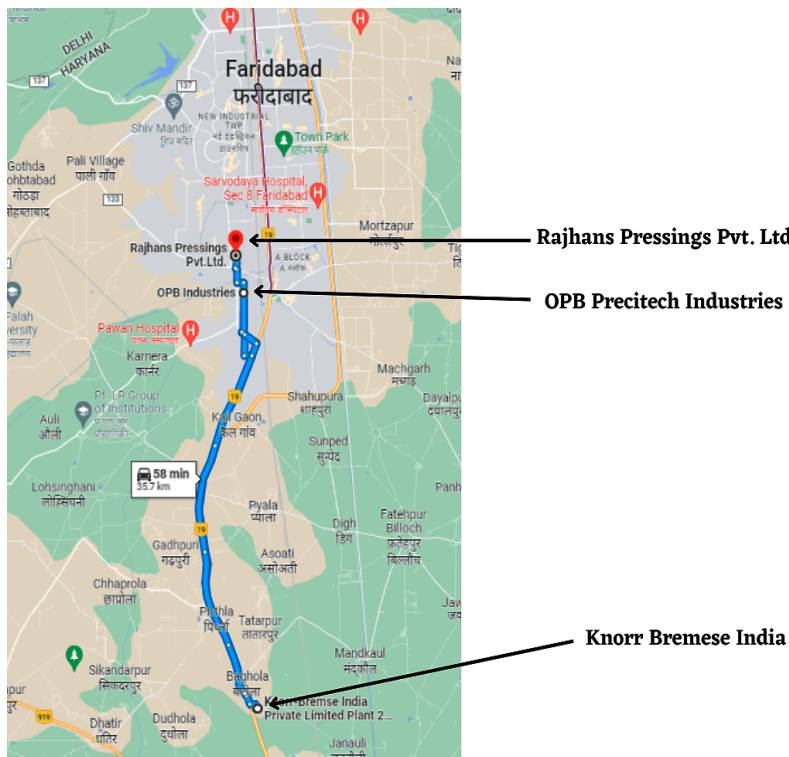
The process of new industrialisation in Faridabad is intricately linked to a process of informalisation of labour. Faridabad was primarily developed as a refugee resettlement area after Partition and with the initiative of the Governor of East Punjab (a state of India, from which Haryana later got separated as a separate state). New Industrial Township was founded to give space to manufacturing units, oil mills, ice plants, leather goods, auto parts, tractors etc. The gradual evasion of labour struggles (Banerjee 1978), and moving away from Fordist high-cost structures and institutionalized labour process helped the process of informalisation, fragmentation and sprouting of new small and medium industries in different pockets of the city over time. Heavy industries also shifted from Faridabad southwards towards Ballabgarh and then towards Palwal along the national highways. The bigger industries set up on both sides of highways have their backward linkages in the small and medium industries of Faridabad and the now informalized old city serves as a host for the supplier MSMEs (Micro Small and Medium Enterprises) to the bigger firms.

Out of a total population of 14,14,050, Faridabad has 2,15,053 persons dwelling in bastis (Census 2011). Municipal Corporation of Faridabad (MCF) hosts sixty-four slum settlements within its area, almost all of them non-notified and most of these are older than twenty-five years (Chaudhary 2019). In our field visits, we observed that these bastis are both sites of social reproduction of labour as well as sites of small-scale and home-based productions, often integrated into the supply chains. A large number of workers working in the industrial sites stay in scanty rented rooms with unhygienic shared toilets in the nearby villages areas, thereby providing a source of rent-income for the land-owners of the region. The migrant workers from nearby states and districts

of Haryana, working in these factories, remain a disempowered lot, with the local landowners often playing the role of intermediaries to capital. The whole industrial area was developed with no plan for workers' housing and the private landowners play an important role in controlling and disciplining the lives of the workers outside the factory. .

The three companies which have been studied for this report are located in Faridabad

The next section gives a brief account of the firms surveyed, their forward-



All three firms are located on Delhi - Faridabad Industrial Corridor which stretches from Faridabad - Delhi NCR (National Capital Region) to Palwal Haryana over 40 KMs.

Faridabad is the most populous city of Haryana and falls under Delhi-NCR region.

It was developed as per Delhi Regional Plan of 2001 and is governed as Delhi Metropolitan Area (DMA)

backwards linkages and the workforce segmentation observed in these firms during the survey:

1) Knorr Bremse :

Knorr Bremse is an automotive component company which started its commercial operations as Knorr-Bremse India Pvt. Ltd. in 1995 in Faridabad. Since then the company has become the largest brake supplier to the Indian Railways. Knorr-Bremse Systems for Commercial Vehicle Systems India Private Ltd. (KBI CVS) is another firm that was incorporated in February 2003 and it started its commercial activities in August 2005 in the Hinjewadi region of Pune. Apart from manufacturing brake systems for railways, it also manufac-

tures brake systems for electronic locomotives, metro, railway coaches, and commercial and passenger vehicles.

According to its website, in 2020, Knorr Bremse reported global sales of EUR 6.2 Billion and employed 29,700 employees worldwide (Knorr Bremse, 2022). It was first incorporated in 1905 in Berlin by Georg Knor. With the colonial expansion of European trade routes across the world, there was a rising demand for railways within and outside Europe. Given the background of the First World War, the overall expansion in railway networks gave rise to the demand for its locomotive components. In 1922, Knorr Bremse patented the first air brakes for commercial vehicles .

Heinz Herman (1941-2021) who was amongst the richest men in Germany at the time of his death with a net worth of \$12.9 Billion was the chairman of Knorr Bremse AG until 2021 (Forbes, 2020). He started his career as a clerk in the patent department of Knorr Bremse in 1969, and with time, he rose to become the Chairman of the Executive Board of the company in 1984. In the 1980s, the company was facing continued crises, and as a result, Jens Von Bendorfer, the then-owner of the company asked Thiele to sell the Knorr-Bremse for him, which tempted Thiele to make a purchase offer himself. “Heinz Hermann Thiele trusts in his own determination and talent” states its website and probably it was credible enough to convince Deutsche Bank and its Chairman Alfred Herrhausen to grant him the necessary loans for getting majority stakes in the company. According to him, It was an absurd coincidence, while recounting the acquisition episode once he said “I had nothing but a house with a mortgage still to pay off” (Knorr Bremse, 2022).

Knorr-Bremse GmbH – then merged with Süddeutsche Bremsen AG to form Knorr-Bremse AG. From 1985 to 1990, multiple legal and corporate reforms were introduced, from the 1990s onwards, the firm expanded its international production through subsidiaries and acquisitions. By the 2000s, Knorr Bremse had become the world’s largest braking technologies company.

There are 5 registered corporate entities with the name Knorr Bremse in India with different incorporation dates and company name status. Out of these, three entities are located in Delhi-Haryana and two are located in Maharashtra. Knorr Bremse India Pvt. Ltd has a large factory located in Faridabad near

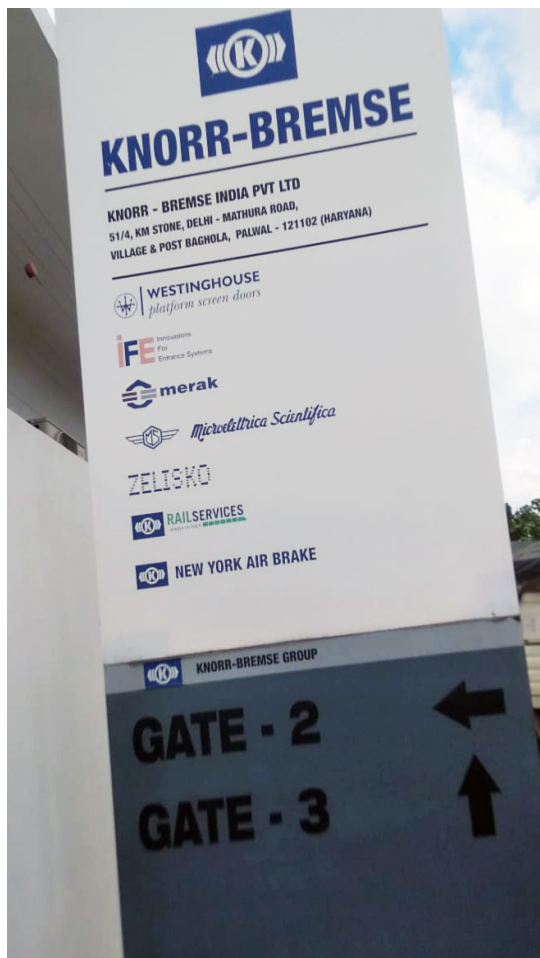
LLPIN/CIN/Form INC-1 Ref No	Company / LLP Name	State	Incorporation Date	Company Name Status
U34300DL1993PTC055954	KNORR-BREMSE INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED	Delhi	05/11/1993	Reserved
U35203HR1993PTC034722	KNORR-BREMSE INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED (TFR CO FROM DELHI TO HARYANA)	Haryana	05/11/1993	Allocated
U99999DL1997PTC084251	KNORR-BREMSE SYSTEMS FOR COMMERCIAL VEHICLES INDIA PVT LTD	Delhi	06/01/1997	Reserved
U34300PN2003PTC021545	KNORR-BREMSE SYSTEMS FOR COMMERCIAL VEHICLES INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED	Maharashtra	21/02/2003	Allocated
U72900PN2012PTC145514	KNORR-BREMSE TECHNOLOGY CENTER INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED	Maharashtra	26/11/2012	Allocated

Sourced from: <https://www.mca.gov.in/mcafoportal/checkCompanyName.do>

(last accessed on 5th December 2022)

Palwal on NH 148A. According to the website, the key products produced and supplied from this premise includes computer controlled brake systems for Diesel & electric locomotives, advanced microprocessor controlled braking systems for metro cars/train sets, advanced braking systems for LHB passenger cars² with wheel slide protection device 'WheelGrip', bogie mounted braking system for freight cars, electro pneumatic braking systems along with air suspension control equipment for EMUs'/ MEMUs', Failure indication for brake application (FIBA) device, tread brake units, air dryers, air compressors for Rail vehicles, door entrance systems for EMUs, LHB coaches and metro cars, dampers for diesel & electric locomotives, EMUs/MEMUs and LHB coaches, wheel mounted disc braking system for WAP5 locomotives (high-speed electric locomotives) and metro cars/train sets, Climate control systems and switch gears.

² Linke Hofmann Busch coach is a passenger coach of Indian Railways that was developed by Linke-Hofmann-Busch of Germany and mostly produced by Rail Coach Factory in Kapurthala, India.



Picture 1: Front side of Knorr Bremse factory in Faridabad as visible from NH 148A towards Baghel.

Picture 2 and Picture 3: Side-gates of the factory from where most of the daily operations are carried out.

During our fieldwork, we could map out three established key segmentations amongst workers in Knorr Bremse in Faridabad. The factory works in two shifts, and the average number of workers in each category has been reached through an approximate number reported by each respondent.

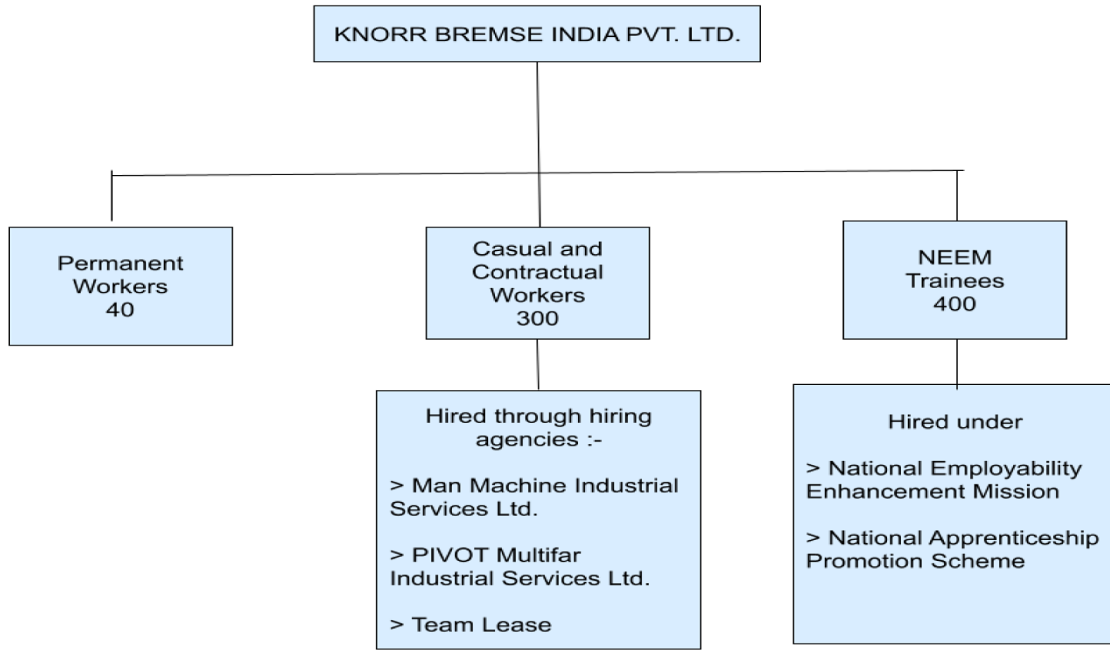


Table 1: Types of employment relations at Knorr Bremse. Please note that the average number of workers in each category is an approximate number of workers as was reported by our respondents in each category. The actual numbers may vary slightly.

- The first category of workers is permanent workers who are amongst the oldest employees of the factory and are close to the management. As reported by our respondents, this category includes workers who have a good reputation and oftentimes close relationships with the executive bodies of the company. The promotion of workers to this category is not well-defined and it is usually done by taking into account of their overall work profile and cooperation with the management. This category of workers earns up to Rs. 1 lakh – 1.5 lakhs per month, depending on their work experience and technical skills.
- The second category of workers is the most precarious lot which includes those who have joined the factory in the past 10 - 15 years until recently, after having worked at different kinds of mechanical jobs. This category was the most vulnerable of all because of the contractual na-

ture of the job, increasing age (as most of them belonged to the age group of 30-40), wage insecurity, and lack of social security. They are usually hired through hiring agencies hence the principal party to the contract is the respective hiring agency which is responsible for all legal matters. Because the company is not principally involved as the first party to the contract, it often overrides its power at the workplace. The average pay band of this category remains between Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 16,000 per month, including ESI, PF and other allowances. Over and above this, they can earn extra wages through overtime which is paid following the volume of work and demand as was reported by our respondents.

- The third category of workers includes NEEM trainees who are directly hired from educational and training institutes in the name of giving them industrial training. They are usually hired on an internship or apprenticeship basis for three years where their total wages are equivalent to the second category of casual or contractual workers. The grade pay of this category of employee is between Rs. 14,000 to Rs. 18,000 per month. Under this scheme half of the wages are paid by the government and half is borne out by the company. For instance, if the basic pay of NEEM trainees is Rs 12,000 per month, then Rs. 6,000 will be borne out by the government.

Forward and Backward Linkages:

Knorr Bremse is an automotive component supply company which primarily deals in brake manufacturing. It has direct forward linkages with other automobile assembling companies. However, in the case of Knorr Bremse Faridabad, the primary buyer of its brake components is Indian Railways, and hence, in this case, Railways remain the primary forward linkage. The forward and backward linkages of Knorr Bremse have been mapped out and explained in Table 2.

The company has outsourced manufacturing of sub-parts for its products to many small vendor companies situated in the industrial belts of NOIDA, Gurgaon and Faridabad. For our purpose, we gathered data on two vendor companies namely OPB Precitech Industries, which is a part of Brassoforge Group and Rajhans Pressings Ltd.

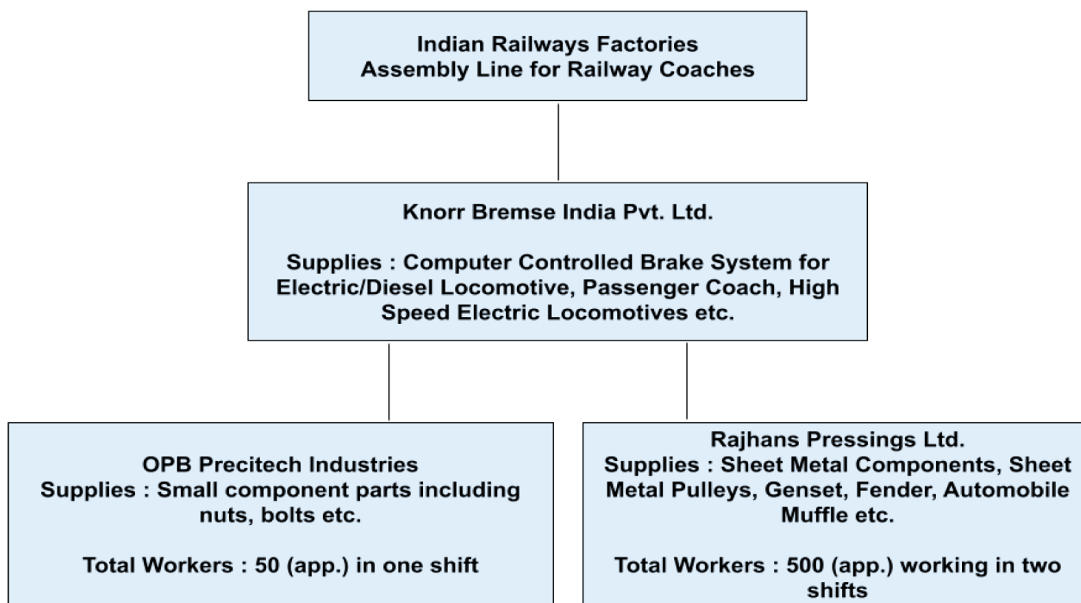


Table 2: Forward and Backward Linkages of Knorr Bremse



Picture 4: Gate Number One of OPB Precitech

A) OPB Precitech Industries and Brassoforge Group:

OPB Precitech industries is a vendor company to Knorr-Bremse. It is a part of Brassoforge Group, which is a family-owned group of business based in Haryana. The group consists of 5 different shop-floors registered within Faridabad. This group of companies deals in forged/machine components and sub-as-

semblies of aluminium, brass and copper. This group was formed in 1981 by R.C Bhatia, and since then they have developed a huge customer base in the automotive industry, valve industry and the Indian Railways. It is a vendor firm to big automobile companies including Royal Enfield, BMW, Bajaj, Hero etc. Apart from India, Brassforge group also exports parts to factories in Canada, the USA, the UK, Italy, Russia, Thailand and Australia. Currently, OP Bhatia is the director of OPB and Himanshu Bhatia is the CEO of OPB, all of them come from the same Bhatia Family.

- OPB Precitech works in a single shift from 9 am to 5:30 – 6 pm. There are around 60 employees in the factory, out of which 8 to 10 are permanent and the rest are casual on a hire-to-fire basis. The set of permanent employees includes experienced ITI workers and mechanical engineers who get a pay band ranging from Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 40,000 per month, depending on their work experience, skills and expertise. This group is usually hired through hiring agencies which maintain profiles of such engineers and ITI workers from tier 2, and tier 3 engineering colleges of nearby states of Punjab, Haryana and UP. There are no regional preferences as such in these recruitments. All the recruitment formalities are executed by the hiring agencies. The relationship of this group of employees with the management is professional in nature and has room for wage bargain. This is also because the size of the firm is small, and hence any rigidity or conflict can lead to high opportunity costs for the firm.
- The second class of employment in OPB is of low-skilled workers ranging from computer operators, clerks and security guards who also work on a semi-permanent model of employment, with recruitment outsourced to hiring agencies. Computer operators and clerks usually remain in longer employment periods because of the nature of their work and hence develop proximity with the management over time. This range of workers is also treated fairly well. Their pay band depends on skill and experience. A computer operator with basic accounting knowledge can earn Rs. 18,000 while a security guard can make Rs 14,000 per month.
- The third class of employees include low-skilled, casual, foot-loose workers who can do any kind of manual work inside the factory. OPB

has about 40 such low-skilled workers of different age groups, mostly young men from different cultural milieus. This group of workers is recruited through traditional factory gate methods and are paid wages in cash or through online transfer without any reimbursement for ESI, PF, or Gratuity whatsoever. The factory is located in sector 25 of Faridabad, hence most of these workers live in nearby bastis or about 5 - 7 KMs away and travel every day to reach their destination. They work for eight to nine hours without any formal procedure accounting for overtime. They get a half-hour lunch break where they eat samosa, chai or other such snacks from two or three tea stalls near the factory. There is a small dhaba about 200 meters away which offers lunch meals with roti, naan, chole, rajma etc. at Rs 40 (average) per meal.

B) Rajhans Pressings Ltd:

Rajhans Pressings Ltd. is another vendor company to Knorr-Bremse based in sector 24 of Faridabad. This company primarily deals in sheet metal components, pulleys and other component assemblies for the automobile sector. It was founded in 1982 by Hansraj Mendiretta who also serves as the company's managing director today. Along with him Sagar Mediretta serves on the board as director. As per the company's website, it has a total workforce of 500+ workers, including permanent, casual, and contractual workers. The factory is spread over an area of 57,000 square feet with three shop floors viz. the weld shop, press shop and pulley shop connected within the same compound.

- Rajhans Pressings Ltd. workers work in multiple shifts, usually two, starting from 8 - 9 am in the morning., The first shift ends at 6 pm, and the second shift ends in the midnight. There are around 300 workers who work in both shifts, varying according to the season and demand shifts. For instance, during August and September, in the second financial quarter, workforce engagement is high because of an increased demand push³. The ratio between casual, contractual and permanent workers is similar, around 20 percent of its employees are on a permanent or semi-permanent basis while the rest are contractual or casual, hired through agencies or direct factory gate recruitment.

³ This information is based on an interview with a worker, who has worked in the enterprise for more than three years.

Table A) Knorr Bremse

Number of workers in each Category	Approximate wage bracket (per month)	Whether the wage is paid in a Bank account or Cash	Availability and implementation of ESI or other medical facilities	Availability and implementation of accidental benefits or insurances	Availability and implementation of Provident Fund	Overtime payment	Right to form a union or scope of collective bargaining
Permanent: 40	Rs. 1,00,000- Rs. 1,50,0000	Bank Account	Available	Available	Available	Paid	Yes A union registered with Hind Mazdoor Sabha works for this category of workers
Contract: 300	Rs. 14,000- Rs. 16,000	Received in Bank Account through Hiring Agency	Available	Accidental Benefits available, Insurance arbitrarily available, depending on the hiring agency	Available, yet many workers cannot access it for technical and administrative reasons	Paid	No Workers are forced to sign contracts prohibiting any form of unionisation, be it physical or virtual. Every activity is monitored closely by supervisors. Specific Workers are targeted for any attempt at unionising Oftentimes it becomes challenging to give general feedback regarding the canteen or toilets.
NCEM- trainees: 400	Rs. 14,000 – Rs. 18,000 Half of the basic pay is borne out by the government	Bank Accounts through hiring agencies	Not Available	Insurance Scheme of Rs 1 lakh is available Accidental Benefits not available	Not Available	Paid	Not allowed, similar to contractual workers Since they are only hired for a short period of three years, the workers themselves also feel unmotivated to do collective action

Note:

- a) Knorr Bremse works in two shifts.
- b) The number of workers indicated are approximate average of one shift, as was reported by the respondents.
- c) Some workers also get travel and dress code allowances.

Table B) OPB Precitech (Brass Forge Group)

Number of workers in each Category	Approximate wage bracket (per month)	Whether the wage is paid in a Bank account or Cash	Availability and implementation of ESI or other medical facilities	Availability and implementation of accidental benefits or insurances	Availability and implementation of Provident Fund	Overtime payment	Right to form a union or scope of collective bargaining
Skilled, Semi-Skilled 15	Rs. 18,000- Rs. 25,000 Varying on nature of job, skills and experience	Bank Account	Available	Arbitrarily Available	Arbitrarily Available	Paid	No Management maintains close relationship with this category of workers
Unskilled : 40	Rs. 12,000- Rs. 16,000 Varying on nature of job, skills and experience	Received in Bank Account through Hiring Agency for some workers Some are paid in Cash who are hired through factory gate	Some hiring agencies provide it depending on nature of contract Majority of the workers don't get	Accidental Benefits arbitrarily available depending on hiring agency Insurance Benefits not available	Arbitrarily available to some workers	Paid for longer hours, since the factory works only in one shift, often time the short delays in working hours aren't formally accounted	Every activity is monitored closely by managers and supervisors. Specific Workers are targeted for any attempt at unionising Strict Hire and Fire Rules apply at any attempt of organising.

Note:

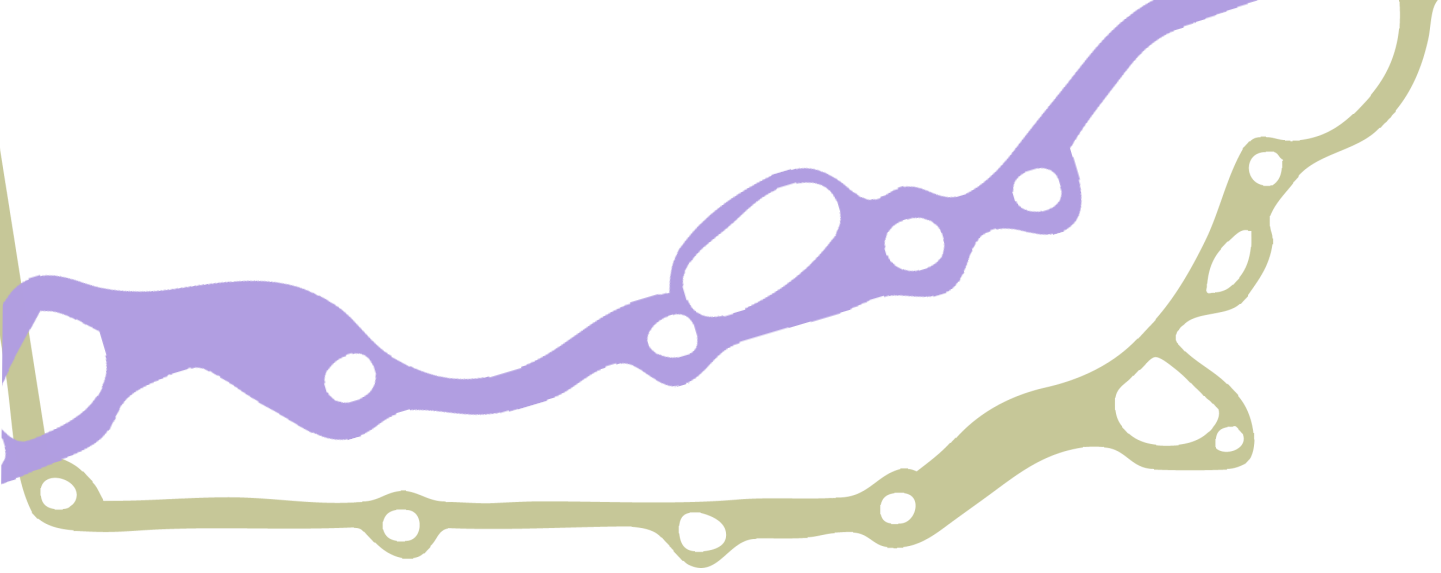
- a) Factory works only in one shift
- b) The number of workers may vary according to seasonal demands

Table C) Rajhans Pressings Ltd.

Number of workers in each Category	Approximate wage bracket (per month)	Whether the wage is paid in a Bank account or Cash	Availability and implementation of ESI or other medical facilities	Availability and implementation of accidental benefits or insurances	Availability and implementation of Provident Fund	Overtime payment	Right to form a union or scope of collective bargaining
Skilled, Semi-Skilled Unskilled 400-500	Skilled : Rs. 30,000 – Rs. 50,000+ Semi Skilled : Rs. 18,000- Rs. 25,000 Unskilled : Rs. 12,000- Rs. 16,000 Varying on nature of job, skills and experience	Bank Account In Semi-Skilled and Unskilled categories, those who are hired from hiring agencies are paid through bank and some are paid in cash, Some unskilled workers are also hired through factory gate	Available For Semi-Skilled and unskilled categories of workers it is an arbitrary practice	Arbitrarily Available to some, not available to some	Arbitrarily Available to some, not available to some Some workers face technical and administrative difficulty in accessing the money	Paid	Similar situation as described above for Knorr Bremse and OPB

Note:

- a) Factory works only two shifts
- b) The number of workers includes the numbers employed in two shifts. However, the second shift is not regular, and hence the total number of workers may vary
- c) The number of workers may vary according to seasonal demands
- d) It was difficult to break down the situation of workers for this factory in each category of skilled, unskilled, semi-skilled and NEEM-Trainees because of the short sample size and challenges observed at the field site



The Lifeworld of Automative Supply Chain Workers

During the fieldwork, we met many workers of different categories, with different-yet-same stories about their lives. In this chapter, some of the in-depth interviews conducted with the workers in the three firms of Faridabad (Delhi-NCR) have been synched together, to gain insights into their working and living conditions. The chapter also includes stories from workers who work in the neighbouring automative supply chain factories, as NEEM (National Employability Enhancement Mission) trainees and contract workers⁴.

The factories surveyed in this area during the fieldwork don't have enough representation of women workers. Some factories have employed women workers as receptionists, in the human-resource departments and other non-industrial domains. In physical-industrial work, the representation of women workers remains abysmally low. However, some textile factories in Faridabad have significant number of women employees. The broad segmentation of labour in the factories of the region is similar to that observed in the three factories under study, where workers are divided into permanent, contract, and NEEM trainees. The life world of all these categories of workers is affected by the same set of forces, yet in different and overlapping ways.

Although many of the automative supply chain firms in Faridabad fall under the ambit of the organised sector, most of their recruitment processes remain largely informal, opaque or done through hiring agencies. In Knorr Bremse, a large section of workers are hired and regulated through hiring agencies. The trainees and apprentices are hired through policies like the National Em-

⁴ Some of the personal details of the workers have been changed to ensure anonymity. This chapter is intended to give a qualitative account of their lives.

ployment Enhancement Mission⁵. Of the 18 workers who were interviewed, and 48 workers who were surveyed, it emerged that most of them had grievances about the recruitment process. In fact, over the years, there has been a gradual shift in the recruitment mechanism. Earlier, industrial workers were hired through individual labour contractors, community networks or direct advertisements. But now, the role of hiring agencies has become far more significant. The study found a large number of workers employed in the factories through two well-known hiring agencies - Pivot Multifar Industrial Services Ltd., and Team Lease, in Faridabad⁶. The existing body of research on the labour process of the automobile industry does not sufficiently account for the role of these hiring agencies. The OEMs and automotive component part manufacturing companies have a large section of their workforce coming from NEEM trainees, as well as contract workers through hiring agencies, while Tier 2 and Tier 3 firms hire their permanent workforce through hiring agencies. Some of the unskilled workers are hired through direct factory gate recruitment as well.

Tarun who works as a helper in a Tier 3 company was directly at the factory gate, and he had submitted his Aadhaar Card as his identity proof. Anil, another respondent, was hired through a hiring agency, which is the principal party to his employment contract. He has an ID card from the hiring agency with the name of the factory mentioned as his workplace. Anil informed that the hiring agency charges Rs. 1000 per month as hiring fees from him, out of his salary. Other respondents also reported about paying a fee to the hiring firm, and this seems to be a general practice in the hiring process in Faridabad.

Earlier labour contractors had a limited role in the hiring process of workers. The available information about hiring agencies on their websites (See: Appendix) suggests that nowadays they have a far greater role in the overall process, including regular maintenance of data of workers, their wage payments⁷ and transfer from one factory to another.

The educational backgrounds of workers surveyed do not vary much, except for the unskilled manual workers. Having a formal technical education is con-

⁵ National Employment Enhancement Mission was a programme that was launched by Government of India 2013 with a purpose of upgrading skills of labourer and generating employment.

⁶ Team Lease India is a B2C job searching platform. Team Lease India (2022)

⁷ PIVOT Multifar has uploaded samples of bank statements and records that it maintains on behalf of companies who recruit its labour force. It clearly shows that the wage payment process is carried on by the hiring company hence it has a greater role in the overall labour process. Pivot Multifar (2022)

sidered valuable both by the employers and the employees. Most of the workers who are working in the skilled segment are ITI diploma holders. Some have learnt industrial work after their secondary education by working in factories.

Anil originally comes from Haryana. He completed his higher secondary education in his village and then started working as a machine operator for light industrial factories on the Delhi - Haryana Border. He doesn't have an ITI degree which is why it's difficult for him to bargain for higher wages, although he has enough knowledge and experience about machine work equivalent to any ordinary ITI degree holder or a permanent worker. Rohit identifies himself as 'lower-middle class ka padha likha mazdoor', an educated worker from the lower middle class. Rohit completed his 12th in 2015, and he wanted to do B.Com from the University of Delhi. He didn't have enough marks to get into DU which is why he started ITI from Polytechnic College. He completed his ITI in 2017, and then he prepared for railway exams for one year. He is a single child of his parents. So he had to start his job early. Another worker - Suraj had spent a total sum of Rs. 10,000 on his ITI training over two years. He was happy to have recovered that sum in the very first month of his job in the first company. Ravi had finished his ITI from Haryana.

In her book, *The Caste of Merit: Engineering Education in India*, Ajantha Subramanian (Narayan 2020) draws upon the asymmetric distribution of caste privileges and how it operates in engineering education in India. Those who graduate from IITs become meritocratic industrial employees (engineers) acquiring decent paying jobs, while those who receive their education from Industrial Training Institutes or ITIs remain in low-paying jobs (workers). This is not a mere technical matter, of people with different skill sets getting different jobs and earning different grades of income, but the very manner social distinctions are maintained and enhanced, by enlarging the gulf between technical and engineering education. The large section of low-paying industrial workers in Faridabad is either ITI graduates or those who have learnt industrial skills by themselves after completing their secondary or higher secondary degrees. It was found that most of the ITI-trained workers have joined their jobs through job contractors or through hiring agencies.

The scope for upward mobility of the workers is severely limited. A temporary worker, Ravi, employed in one of the auto supply companies says - "the com-

pany only promotes four workers to permanent positions in a year; that too after you work at least 15 years, in a contract position". Having some kind of reference, or relation with the already permanent employee is also important in getting promotion. It appears that a crucial distinction between the permanent and the contractual worker is the credential and the channel through which they were employed.

The housing condition of industrial workers across Delhi-NCR is abysmally bad. According to the 2021 Housing Census⁸ in the Faridabad region, the number of dilapidated and unliveable houses is very high, even as the incoming migrant population is constantly increasing. Housing shortage in Faridabad Industrial Area is a core problem faced by the workers. There is hardly any provision of employers providing any form of housing to the workers. The workers rent out a room or two from local landlords, who are often influential notables and musclemen, and the rent rates are often arbitrary. Depending on the number of individuals living in each room, the rent per worker may vary, from a thousand rupees to 3-4 thousands. Workers usually keep a kitchen space inside their bedroom, with utensils and other materials spread around. Some workers also have their families living with them, although their numbers are smaller. The average occupancy of a rented room may vary from 3 to 6 workers. The following is a typical living situation of a worker in Faridabad:

Anil Kumar is 40 years old and he works as a machine helper. He joined his factory in 2009 on a monthly wage of Rs 7,000. He lives in a small room in a 6-room lodge in Baghel with his in-laws. One of his in-laws works as a driver while the other one is a domestic worker. Three of them live in a single room with two beds and a small kitchen-like set-up. It's an 8-room house where many other workers also live, who work in the neighbouring region. There is one common bathroom set near the front door of the building for all the workers.

In the three firms under study, it was found that in Knorr Bremse, there is an official union registered for permanent workers in the factory, but contract workers and trainees aren't allowed to be part of it. In the two supplier firms, there was no union. Any scope of unionising is crushed at the point of recruitment

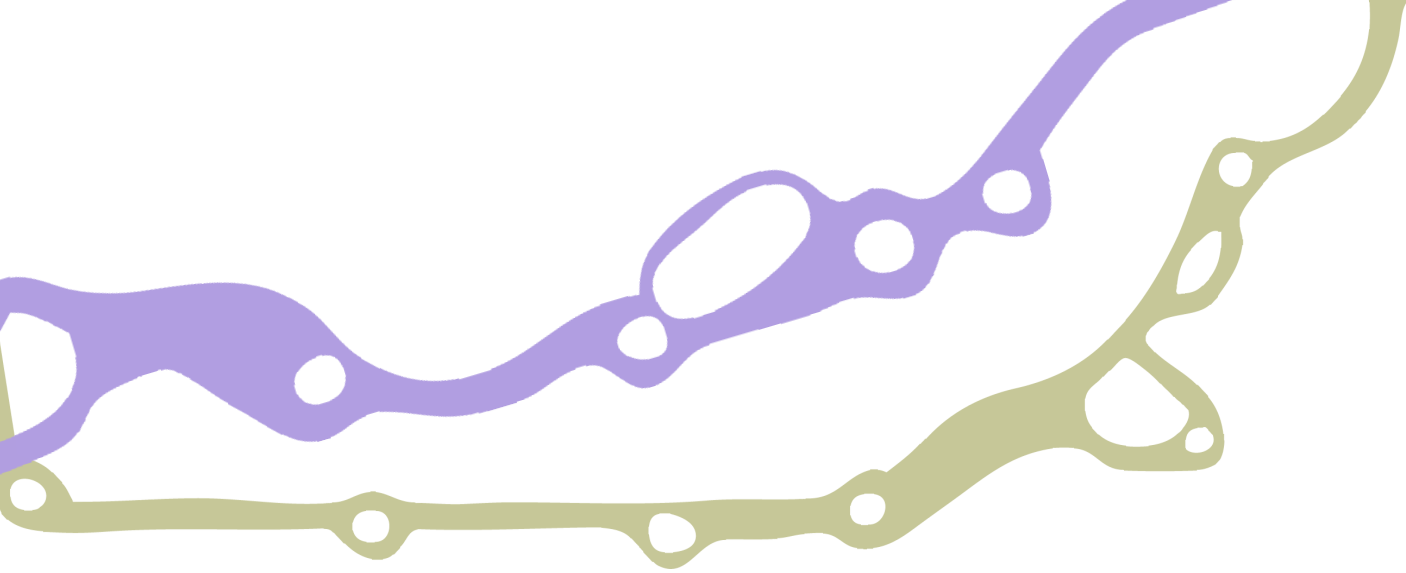
⁸ See Haryana Government (2022)

by hiring agencies themselves. Workers are supposed to sign contract papers, where they promise to not tarnish the image of the company. If any worker tries to do so, they are black-listed by the hiring agency and it becomes difficult for them to get jobs elsewhere in the region.

One of the respondents, Ravi, along with 32 other workers were thrown out of their jobs after a strike happened in the earlier company where he had worked in 2012. A few workers were also sent to jail for a few months following the strike. Ravi remembers this episode and expresses his awareness of the politics of labour conditions: “we produce value worth one lakh but we hardly receive a thousand rupees for it”. On being about whether he tried approaching management for an increment of wages, Ravi says, “if we talk about salary increment, then we may get thrown out of the job” (agar hum log vetan ke bare me baat karenge, to ye log humey nikal denge).

The automotive supply chain workers of Faridabad (Delhi-NCR) live precarious lives, with no job security, inadequate housing, meagre or non-existent social security, and are bereft of effective trade union rights. There is a huge gap between the pay-scale of permanent and different categories of temporary & casual workers. Rules regarding promotion from temporary to permanent positions are not clear, and it depends more on inter-personal relationships and networks, rather than well-established norms and procedures. There is no system in place establish a relationship between skill building and increasing pay-grade. Unionisation is actively discouraged, penalised and effectively banned. The majority of the workers bereft of the labour rights and human rights endowed to them by the Constitution.

This brings one to the question of regulating the field of automotive value chain, the subject matter of the next section of this report.



Decent Work in Global Value Chains: Regulation Possibilities

In the previous chapters we discussed about how the labour relations in the automotive value chain of Delhi-NCR are fraught with violation of labour laws, de facto ban on the right to collective bargaining and union formation, lack of basic amenities and social security in workspace. In short, decent working conditions remains a chimera for the vast majority of automotive value chain workers, especially those employed in the lower tiers.

Many scholars argue that the application of Labour Standards in global supply chains can be a way to ensure that decent work principles are observed along such value chains. To promote certain minimum conditions – such as bondage-free labour relations and effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, requires at the very least appropriate and enabling legislations. Turning these objectives into reality however is fraught with serious difficulties.

In recent years there have been numerous efforts, including legislative ones, to strengthen governance in the global value chains and to promote decent work. Among the more recent legislative initiatives, the German Supply Chain Due Diligence Act appears to hold certain promises. The following section will discuss the prospects and challenges before promotion of decent work in global value chains, especially in the context of the German Supply Chain Due Diligence Act.

The German Supply Chain Due Diligence Act

In December 2016, Germany's Federal Government passed a national plan for Business and Human Rights, aiming to tackle human rights issues arising due to global expansion of German Businesses. It aimed at providing a social dimension to global development keeping in mind the Sustainable Develop-

ment Goals of 2030. In a survey conducted in 2020 it was found that less than one-fifth of enterprises with more than 500 employees in Germany fulfilled supply chain due diligence obligations in accordance with the plan stated above. Hence on 3rd March 2021, Germany's Federal Cabinet approved draft legislation on corporate due diligence in supply chains.

The Act places responsibility on German companies and legally obliges them to respect human rights throughout the supply chains (Supply Chain Act, 2022). It follows 11 international conventions on human rights. The 'supply chain' according to the Act includes all the steps necessary to produce a particular product viz. action of the enterprise in its business area, the action of direct suppliers and the action of indirect suppliers. The Act suggests that if the violation is being committed by any supplier, factors like proximity of the supplier with the firm, size and nature of their business would be taken into account while making them accountable. The principal employee shall ensure that all environmental risks and human rights violations induced by them shall be tackled first. The term 'supplier' also includes auxiliary services like office cleaning, commercial cleaning etc. hence a violation of their rights would also come under this law. In the Act, there is no distinction between part-time and full-time employee, and the definition of 'employee' has been broadened to include anyone who has worked for more than 6 months. However, the Act doesn't include apprentice trainees .

The Act states that the due diligence obligations would apply to an enterprise's business area along with the actions of a contractual partner and the actions of other (indirect) suppliers. All the three firms covered in this study will come under the Act.

1. Applicability

The act applies to enterprises with at least 3,000 employees. From 2024, the act will also cover enterprises with 1,000 employees. The Act doesn't distinguish between part-time employees and full-time employees.

2. Definition of Employee

As mentioned before, the Act provides a broad definition of the terms 'employee' which can include everyone in necessary work within the enterprise (including auxiliary services such as cooking and gardening) given that they have worked for at least 6 months. The act excludes apprenticeship from the

definition of employees, borrowing its meaning from an already existing legislation - the German Vocational Training Act. It has to be noted that in India, because of policies like the National Employability Enhancement Mission (NEEM), a huge portion of the young industrial workers work as apprentices. In the case of Knorr Bremse India Pvt Ltd, around 400 workers are working under apprenticeship. This means that the Act may end up excluding a large number of workers from its protection.

3. Freedom of Association

The Act provides that workers will have the right to form a union and other representative bodies to ensure that any decision related to them is taken through a deliberative process. In the field work for this study report, gross denial of this freedom of association was found across the firms, including the three firms studied specifically. In Knorr Bremse Pvt Limited, while there was a trade union for the permanent workers, the contract and casual workers were not included in it. In the two supplier firms, there was no union at all. It was also found that the workers live in constant fear of getting terminated, and they are afraid to talk about working conditions in the factories, despite having many complaints regarding conditions at work. It is a clear indication of failure of deliberative process with the management.

4. Precarity and Labour Segregation

The Act states that local statutory minimum wage only suffices as a general rule and is not adequate in every case. It advocates for 'adequate living wages' which shall be calculated through a standard method. The situation of wage payment in Knorr Bremse demonstrates a systematic form of labour segregation, where contractual workers are paid unfairly low wages for the same kind of work performed by the permanent workers, and without following any standard method of calculation. The general situation of paying differential wages for the same work, through the creation of segregation of the labour force, violates the general norms of decent working conditions.

5. Due Diligence Obligations

Under the section on Due Diligence, the Act states that the enterprise must implement appropriate risk management systems and assess any human rights and environmental risks beforehand. It shall strive for transparency in the supply chain and shall act on environmental and human rights violations by the direct and indirect suppliers.

Given these provisions, it is expected that firms like Knorr Bremse India Pvt

Ltd would work towards establishing due diligence procedures to make suppliers like OPB Precitech, and Rajhans Pressings Ltd, accountable towards the compliance procedure mentioned in the law.

Looking forward

1. The German supply Chain Act needs to further lower the cap of number of workers in a factory to ensure applicability of the Act to the majority of the German companies. This needs to be done keeping in mind the fact that most of the big companies in the supply chain are actually assembly plants, and the number of workers employed directly by the factory is often not that big.

2. The exclusion of apprentices from the purview of the Act needs to be reviewed. In many countries including India, there are almost institutionalised practices of using the apprentices in lieu of regular workers. The exclusion of apprentices in effect excludes more than half of the regular workforce in many factories, and hence the scope of the application of the law reduces greatly.

3. Workers in the lower tiers of the value chain hardly have any avenues for collective bargaining. The authorities and the automotive industry need to ensure that labour has a say in each of the node of the value chain.

4. Checks and audits of important production processes, and quality management must be supplemented by reviews of the working conditions at the company facilities. For those that uphold basic labour standards in their employment, appropriate reward mechanisms can be developed.

5. The authorities can design certification, prioritisation, and tax-relief programmes for businesses that adhere to fundamental labour norms, in consultation with the stakeholders, including labour and business groups. It must be ensured that any aid or relief provided by the authorities filters down to the lowest tiers of the value chain.

6. It is crucial that automakers are required to disclose their supply networks in a transparent manner and are held responsible for upholding fair and decent working conditions along the entire supply chain.

7. It is necessary to facilitate transnational platforms of workers employed at different nodes of the value chain, alongside the ongoing efforts to build global platforms for value chain providers.



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