Crowdsourcing and India's Informal economy
For DIODE

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Neha Gupta

Currently @ Serco ExperienceLab, London

Work undertaken @ MRL, University of Nottingham, Nottingham

India: labour – some context

- Population 1.3 billion people
- Says the **CIA:** The 513.7-million-worker Indian labour force – less than 50 %
- **Of those, those working in services sector:** 31% (FY 2014 est.)
- Other major sectors: agriculture, manufacturing

- The service sector makes up 55.6% of GDP
  The industrial sector 26.3% and the agricultural sector 18.1%

India: Building the fundamental infrastructure

Search on Google.co.in

- Digital economy ?

- Knowledge economy ?

What do you find :

India: Digital economy

- India undergoing a 'digital transformation'
- Discourses around 'Digital economy' are mostly about **e-governance** : Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, Mobile (JAM) trinity

- Predominantly, moving away from a 'cash' – based society – internet and mobile banking and financial services in rural areas. Digital wallets and payments—UPI, AEPS, APB

- AND Transformation into a **knowledge economy**: building the infrastructure – broadband highways, mobile internet, govt and citizen digital systems

http://inclusion.skoch.in/story/847/digital-india-digital-economy-1147.html

Ethnographic study in India: 2013.
Mechanical Turk workers – online outsourcing via AMT

India: leveraging ICT technologies

- Skype : live tutorials

- Whatsapp, gmail, gchat – sharing work, tips

Secondary business opportunities:

Rafiq (a super-user of AMT, who supports a large family via AMT income): "I am giving training to 11 members in my Skype. I just get some percentage payment from them [..] like 10% - 20% of their earning amounts. This is the extra payment I will get. So that's why I make this training."

Discussing attitudes to workers' demands

EXCERPT from an in-person interview-cum-walkthrough session with Elango, with his friend present.

Elango is the ultimate gig-economy worker, works 5 jobs (3 self-owned and run businesses and 2 jobs – including AMT) to earn a livelihood.

" **NG:** (To Elango's friend) Do you also work on AMT?
Elango's Friend: I work at a college, I have created an account and kept it but I usually don't get time to work on it. Created the account 1 year back, introduced by Elango. I first started with the ID card work (Oscar Smith), but it was boring. Boring as in you would only get $0.01 per task – required a lot of patience, felt like a total waste of life.

NG: There are some people who actually live by it.
E's Friend: They must be doing it out of ignorance. They probably are something like addicts – in this work, they don't really think a lot. It's the same job being repeated over and over. They would do anything that's being given to you.

They should set conditions for the work, we'll only work if we get this, not otherwise – then its alright.

Elango: If we ask something like that then will say close your account and keep moving.
E's Friend: You don't have to individually ask anything but talk as a group of people and say we wont work.
Elango: we cant say that we wont work, but we can request them. If we say we wont work, they ll say – then don't! They already have a lot of people, they are not even letting people to create accounts, they have to provide work to a lot of people, only then you can get regular work.

E's Friend: You should take this as a feedback. See whats happening in India and see whats happening in other countries.
NG: That's what we are trying to do. "

Discussing Paying taxes

EXCERPT from an in-person walkthrough-cum-observation session with Zaheer, a super-user of AMT, with a member of his family present who was also working on AMT.

NG: So what about taxes? Do you pay taxes?
Zaheer: Nope. (sheepish looks exchanged). Nobody asked us to.

NG: So? You keep all the money? Like.. ALL of it?
Zaheer: mmm … yeah.. ? Ha ha ha ha.

India: Income tax – some context

Why was the last excerpt interesting?

- 12.1% of GDP (FY 2016 est.) – taxes

- BUT Hardly 2% of Indians pay income taxes

Some motivation for crowd-workers in India to crowdwork:

- For most turkers who belonged to the lower wrung of the socioeconomic ladder, battling 'Indian capitalism' (and Indian semi-feudal' systems)

- Crowdwork puts them on the 'employment map' – part of the globalised economy and politics – lack of consciousness

- First dignified interaction with an employer – treated with respect + interaction in 'English' – highly regarded - gives them dignity of labour

- Non-sustainable, no long-term employment – need to work in the field they have education in

Over 90% workforce works in the unorganised / informal sector

- Wiego.org 2005-based data, the unorganised sector consisting of agricultural workers, self-employed and other workers accounted for 395 million persons or 86 % of the work force.

- Plus 29 million were engaged in the unorganised employment in the formal sector, making persons in the unorganised economy (sector and employment combined) to be 422.6 million, comprising of 92.4 % of the work force in India.

India's informal economy http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/columns/Chandrasekhar/indias-informal-economy/article6375902.ece
Wiego http://www.wiego.org/informal_economy_law/country-study-india

India: No visibility of crowdwork, no part in any labour / political / economic discourses

Discussing 'income tax' for workers of the online outsourcing platforms might indirectly bring worker issues to the fore

Image above: mturk.com

I am interested in studying / supporting / exploring policies in areas:

- Income tax policies

- Contract Labour

- Understanding 'employee rights' against basic constitutional rights - GCRF funding application

  (first encounter with a formal contract of any kind, first formal pay)

- Collective bargaining power & forming trade Unions naturally follows

- Skills absorption and knowledge transfer support

- Minimum wage, Gratuities

Check these out:

◉ **PhD Thesis:** 2017. An ethnographic investigation of crowdworkers via Amazon Mechanical Turk in India

◉ Martin, D. et al **Understanding the Crowd: Ethical and practical matters in the academic use of crowdsourcing**.
in Archambault, D. et. al (Eds.) Evaluation in the Crowd: Crowdsourcing and Human Centered Experiments (pp 27 – 69). Springer International Publishing, 2017.

◉ Martin, D. et al **Turking in a global labour market.**
Published in The Journal of Computer Supported Cooperative Work, Vol. 25, Issue 1, 39 – 77 February 2016.

◉ Gupta, N. et al **Turk-Life in India.**
In the Proceedings of Group'14 (2014) Sanibel Island, Florida, USA, 9-12 November 2014.

◉ Martin, D. et al **Being a Turker**.
In Proc of CSCW'14 (2014) Baltimore, Maryland, USA, 15-19 February 2014.

◉ Gupta, N. et al **Understanding Indian crowdworkers**.
Presented at the CSCW'14 workshop 'Back to the Future of Organizational Work: Crowdsourcing and Digital Work Marketplaces' in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, 15-19 February.