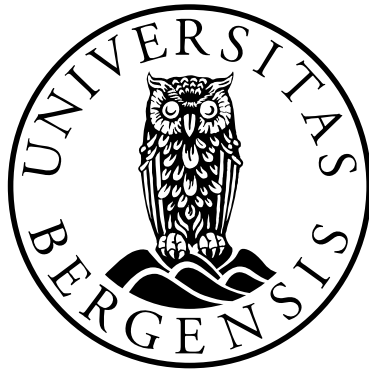Spatial Reconfigurations and New Social Formations

The Contemporary Urban Context of Kerala

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

Urbanisation and global relationships have had deep historical impacts all along the western coast of Indian peninsula in general and Kerala in particular. It is both inadequate and inaccurate to invest everything 'urban' with moments of history like encounters with foreign corporate networks (from the Portuguese to the British). This is not to reduce the importance of such interventions. For instance large scale reorganisations of life as with bureaucratisations during the British phase did indeed give rise to new power equations through active engagements with existing structures.

The present urban turn becomes interesting because of the possibility of unprecedented tendencies as well as ruptures to continuities. The immense flexibilities associated with urban ideas as in the case of cities in the making and their disjunctures with the regional patterns are important pointers. Cities now appear as free floating zones of exceptions (as those marking the field locales like Kakkanad or Vallarpadom) that could be cloned anywhere. The state of Kerala with no metropolitan centre, and historically informed by constellations of evenly spaced small towns, does contribute to some of the specific processes. But the contemporary urban processes are thought to provide radical breaks with erstwhile urban phenomena and set the stage to rethink anthropology in a newer historical and ethnographic context.

The hypothesis was that the transformations in the modes of production and production of spatialities occurring as/through social formations could be entering a unique paradigm as represented by the current urban context of Kerala. If so the reconfigurations of urban governance may be embodied as everyday subjectivities produced in some of the newly urbanising spaces, transacting in totally new ways to the historicity of everyday life. The idea of 'city' or that of 'urban' has been changing according to historical implications. It would of course become sheer reification to give a universal meaning to 'urban'. So the problematic should be to uncover the changing presentations through history.

The modern state of Kerala was carved out of a mosaic of different social and political processes that had trajectories distinct from other parts of the nation state. This is so with the characteristic colonial caste orderings, the reformist tendencies or the large scale land reforms mediated by left wing movements. The welfarist expectations associated with an imagined state or generated out of the all encompassing political public sphere, all unravel in novel equations with neoliberal urban processes/reforms.

The possible reconfigurations of state within contemporary global assemblage (neoliberal capitalist, led by extra state actors and state-like bodies) cannot be understood if processes are understood as abstract spatialities that only refracts dichotomies like global/ local, subject/object, structure/agency, etc. What may be important are the ways in which life forms negotiate changing requirements in situations. The global that gets articulated in urban processes is a composite effect of the specific social and cultural negotiations that manifest a distinct capacity for decontextualisation, recontextualisation, and mobility across diverse social situations and relationships.

The fieldwork focused on the newly urbanizing zones in Ernakulam District in Kerala. The territorial emphasis was on four study areas identified as the sites of or adjacent to new urban projects and programmes of development. Pallikkara, Kizhakkambalam, and Kakkanad lie in contiguously located Local Self Governing Institutions (LSGIs). The work at times extended to the Vypeen Island. I sought to understand how people in these places relate to each other through time and space, and how they constitute themselves in their respective living spaces in terms of historical relationships, institutions, and other linkages specific to the changing social scene. A reality that was yet to take shape often got invested in life processes as immense flexibilities. People, in such situations, restructured life as well as aspirations in characteristic ways. This was of course with consequences for the ways novel regimes and order that took form and generated concomitant rationalisations.

Content

Abbreviations

- Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP)
- Business Processes Outsourcing (BPO)
- City Development Plan (CDP)
- Cochin Special Economic Zone (CSEZ)
- Delhi Master Plan (DMP)
- DLF (Delhi Lease and Finance)
- Ernakulam District Residents' Association Apex Council (EDRAAC)
- Export Processing Zone (EPZ)
- Fertilizers and Chemicals Travancore (FACT)
- Floor Area Ratio (FAR)
- Government of Kerala (GoK)
- Greater Cochin Development Authority (GCDA)
- Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
- Information Technology (IT)
- Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES)
- International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)
- Kerala Anti-Social Activities Prevention Act (KAAPA)
- Kerala Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (KINFRA)
- Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP)
- Known Depredator (KD)
- Land acquisition (LA)
- liberalisation, privatization and globalisation (LPG)
- Local Self Governing Institutions (LSGIs)
- Local Self Governing unit (LSG)
- Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)
- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)
- Modernising Government Programme (MGP)
- National Democratic Alliance (NDA)
- National Development Council (NDC)

- Net State Domestic Product (NSDP)
- Non Gazetted Officers (NGO)
- Police-Residents' Association Initiatives in District Ernakulam (PRIDE)
- Public (food) Distribution System (PDS)
- Public Private Partnership (PPP)
- Residents' Apex Council of Ernakulam (RACE)
- Special Economic Zone (SEZ)
- Urban Local Body (ULB)
- Uttar Pradesh (UP)

Boxes

General Introduction

This thesis explores how positions/roles/symbols that sediment over time and become social attributes respond to the changing spatial order of Ernakulam district, an urban area of central Kerala, at a time when the state has been undergoing a structural transformation. What can be inferred about the changes in social relationships from the ways space is conceptualised? What are the dispositional effects of these cognitive categories that link spatial structures bequeathed by history to the social practices of agents?

The fieldwork was focused on the newly urbanizing zones in Ernakulam District in Kerala. The territorial emphasis was on four study areas identified as the sites of/or adjacent to new urban projects and programmes of development. Extensive fieldwork was carried out at Pallikkara, Kizhakkambalam, and Kakkanad. The three places are contiguously located within the Local Self Governing Institutions (LSGIs)[1] of Pallikkara, Kizhakkambalam, and Kakkanad *grama panchayats*[2] respectively. The fieldwork at these locations was extended to the Vypeen Island, formed of several sites that come under the block *panchayat* of Vypeen.

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[1] Consequent to the 74th Amendment to the Constitution of India, the Local self-government Institutions (LSGIs) are to function as the third tier of Government.

[2] The decentralised Local Self Governing Units to which several administrative functions get delegated are called so.
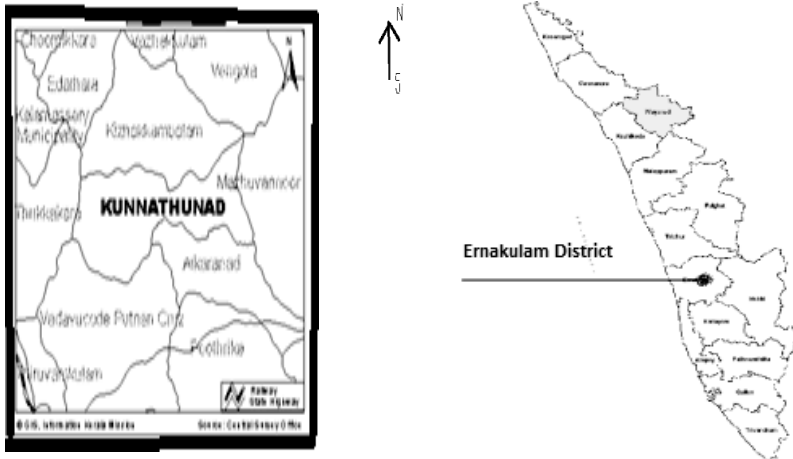
[Location of Villages]

In the social production of their everyday life, people enter into definite relations that are indispensable or independent of their will. These relations of production mark a definite stage of development in the urban context of Ernakulam, structured by corporate friendly environment. Many are forced to locate themselves along the new relationships or engagements that develop around tourism, real estate, or Special Economic Zones. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the socio economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure of the state, and the corresponding forms of spatial consciousness. The multi-site fieldwork was also a contextual attempt to clarify the everyday spatial/social ordering that may correspond to the new embodiments of state.

The city of Kochi administered by the corporation has a population of nearly six hundred thousand. After the state formation in 1956 Fort Kochi became a municipality before it merged with two others (Mattancherry and Ernakulam) and four *panchayats* to form a corporation. Business economy dominates the urban centre and the major emphasis is now on the service sector. Gold, textile retailing, seafood and spices exports, information technology, tourism, health services, banking, ship

building and fishing are the major business employers. Remittances from non-resident population form a major source of investment.

Kakkanad, Kizhakkambalam and Pallikkara, with a combined population of nearly sixty thousand lie at the north western boundary of Ernakulam District. The island of Vypeen comprising many villages, with a combined population of nearly two hundred thousand, lies on the north eastern boundary. Until recently (till the nineties), the Kakkanad region used to be an agricultural zone of small to medium land holdings. But corporate investments in the form of real estate and special economic zones have flowed in, with corresponding decline of agriculture and migration of native population. The Island of Vypeen, nearly twenty five kilometers long from south to north, straddles the lake in between this land mass and the mainland with numerous canals criss-crossing. Most parts of the island have not had long geological histories[3] and human settlements too can be traced to less numerous generations than elsewhere. Yet at present the island is probably the most densely populated island in the whole of South Asia. The population generally is of the lower middle income group. The few, who are above this level, became so during the last few decades. Almost all have been in some way or the other involved with the traditional labour sector viz. fishing and allied fields. There has generally been a decline in the primary sector of the economy, and growth in the secondary and tertiary sectors. The growth in the secondary sector, in both urban and non-urban regions, may be attributed to construction work related to private investments in real estate linked to the growth in the service sector. Erstwhile mercantilist practices have declined especially since the financial restructuring of the 1990s.

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[3] Puthuvypu incidentally (and approximately) translates as newly (sea kept) placed earth

Table: 1

Sl. No.	Class of workers	1981		1991		2001	
		No. of workers	%	No of workers	%	No of workers	%
1	Cultivators	73915	10.4	81198	9.3	58700	5.25
2	Agricultural labourers	129848	18.3	137921	15.8	89026	7.97
3	Mfr. process of HH industry	23933	3.37	13733	1.57	32219	2.89
4	Others	481886	67.9	640556	73.3	937146	83.9
	Total	709582	100	873408	100	1117091	100

Source: Census of India

[From the distribution of various categories of workers from 1981 to 2001 in the district it becomes clear that cultivators and agricultural labourers show drastic decrease (a decrease of approximately 50%) during the period from 1981 to 2001, whereas the other workers show an increase of 81%. This is a clear indication of the weakening of the primary, mainly the agricultural sector, in the district. The most dramatic change took place in the decades following neoliberal policy introduction at the national level]

I will concentrate on four significant practices/processes/conditions as they unravel at the aforementioned sites with implications for the broader urban transformation viz.

1. the presentation of space in the real estate business in its interaction with potential buyers and natives

2. types of movements ranging from evictions to forms of migration

3. the production of economic zones and their interaction with inhabitants

4. the general context of urban renewal projects as against the erstwhile urban embodiments.

The agenda was to understand how people in these places formed relationships through time and space, and how they constituted themselves in their respective living spaces in terms of historical relationships, institutions, and other linkages specific to the changing social scene. Conversations with the residents yielded information that would cumulatively approximate the oral history of the regions. With this came their impressions and opinions on the new developments. It was not difficult to win the confidence of people at the LSGIs. This rapport gave me an intimate understanding of the current priorities of governance. I could also observe how people elected to represent the basic administrative units (wards) got situated in the immediate scene, and how they formulated their relationship to the state.

The conversations yielded subjective perceptions of the systems of economy that have been evolving in these regions, and the extent to which these are perceived as important continuities of the commercial engagement, networks and transactions. There were conversational refrains that pointed to fast dwindling agricultural practices and the weakening of labour relations that once existed in the first three study areas. The narratives frequently dwelt on the policies of the emergent state that mediated developments that followed its formation. There were also accounts of the differences between the earlier phase of state programmes and the current models.

The nature of labour has also changed. New generation occupations of the formal kind are related to Business Processes Outsourcing (BPO), Software Services, and Special Economic Zones (SEZs). The staple informal engagements include brokerage, *goondaism* (equated with the brief of 'quotation teams'), and innovative

modes of financing and money chain systems. Graphic accounts were available on the pursuit of exotic and illusory sources of wealth.

A specific focus of the fieldwork was the changing perceptions on living spaces in the context of unprecedented land value appreciations, speculative real estate practices, and new labour models. Throughout my work, I followed transformations in the usage of land and natural resources in the broader socio economic context of the state. Some of these transformations have had drastic impacts on everyday life. The traditional population of the study areas, and the development-driven newer residents seemed to perceive and incorporate these changes in radically different ways. These differences clarify important aspects of human/urban spatiality.

There was an attempt to chronicle and chart local events and the important institutional nodes to which large sections of the population have been relating to. I have kept track of the major urban projects that are being announced, the manner in which they are advertised, the methods adopted for implementation, the agency factors, the nature of the projects, the broader economic context, and the related rhetoric of the state and the people.

Moving into the Field:

When I was back in my hometown, Aluva, with a much more ambitious research assignment after a Master of Philosophy, the idea was to start once again with the 'urban' material, though with a different focus. The recently concluded work was on transformation of spaces, specifically focusing public space and new religiosities. It enquired into the dialogues between the two processes and the significance of such dialogues. The aim was to explore the character of the changes in the organization of public space with particular reference to religious practice and their relation to recent restructurings of the social and political order, manifested best by urbanisation.

I was familiar with the nuances of language as well as nature of field processes, both because of the earlier work in the urban milieu as well as the all pervasive

involvement in some of the processes. This gave me certain advantages in getting closer to what went on every day. My middle class background must have helped me to become familiar and network easily into any category/class of people in the field. But being a non resident in the localities studied, it was not very difficult to keep the observer's uninvolved alienation. The plan, initially, was to begin with some of the familiar grids through the mid western district of Ernakulam, though with a different focus.

I was about to take the roads to places that were presently assumed to be newly urbanising and where people negotiated the associated processes. The work would focus on the newly urbanizing zones in Ernakulam District in Kerala. The territorial emphasis would be on three study areas identified as the sites of /or adjacent to key projects and programmes of urban reforms viz. Pallikkara, Kizhakkambalam, and Kakkanad. The idea was to seek how people in these places relate to each other through time and space, and how they constituted themselves in their respective fields in terms of historical relationships, institutions, and other linkages specific to the changing social scene.
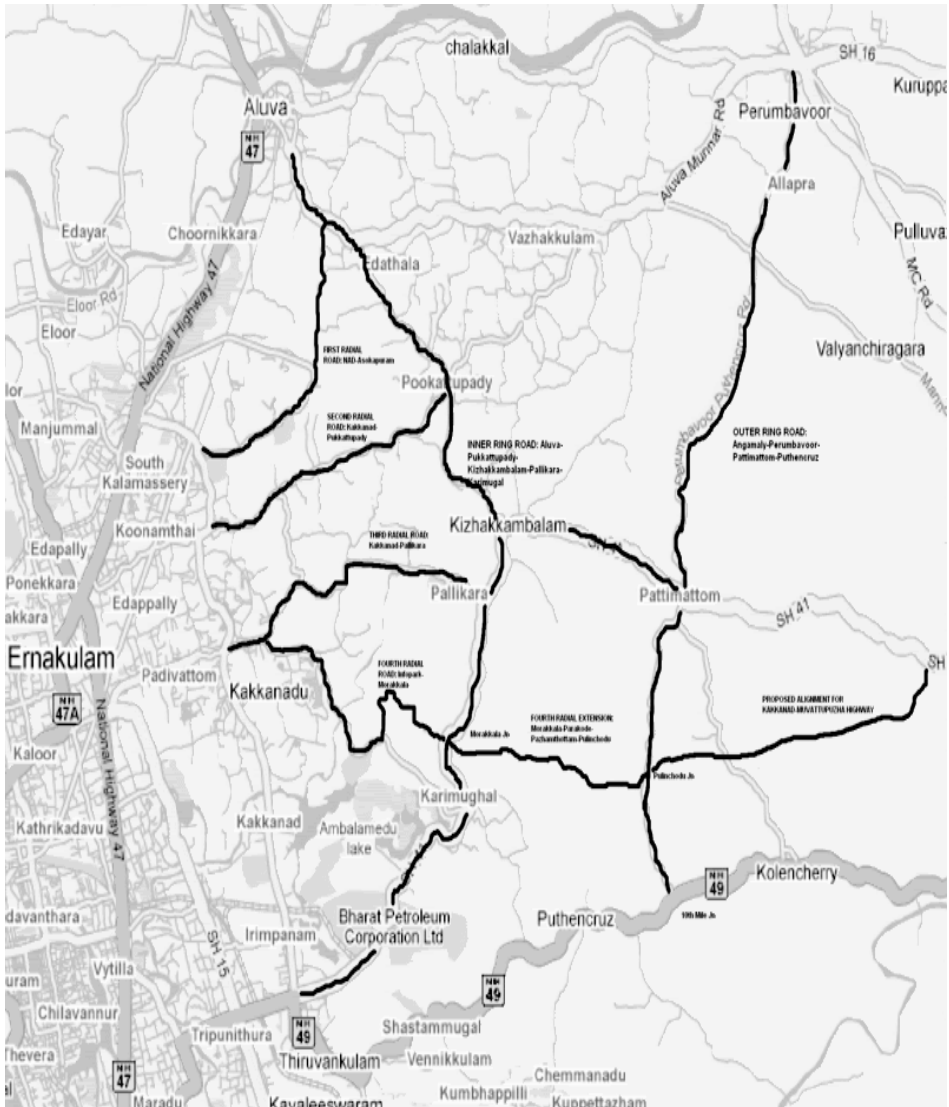
[Map of the Western part of Ernakulam District with the focal regions Marked-Out]

Starting on the newly tarred roads from the airport, what was most conspicuous were the pointers and signboards. The embedded, implicit or explicit reference was to a certain 'smart city' that one was about to reach. From the information that was already in the air (some literally so as on the billboards that blocked vision!), the 'city' was going to be a joint venture with corporate groups based in Dubai for an Information Technology (IT) based township which would, presumably, transform

the profile of the place. The roadside ad boards, almost all of them, claimed lineage to the 'city'. Wayside hotels suffixed 'Smart' to their names. Magazines and newspapers inevitably carried the 'city' as editorials, news blocks, and advertisements. The city also figured in controversy columns. Visual media was replete with discussions and a movie, *Smart City* had already been released. The city was everywhere, in the small conversations that I began with and the more targeted interactions that I subsequently got into.

[Source/Own: Billboards that Display New Connotations of Space]

In the following days, a number of people I met in public spaces, or in and around the town, turned out to be directly or indirectly involved in 'real estate business'. There were interior designers, flex board makers, brokers, and 'investors'. For most, Kochi/Ernakulam was to enter its new phase, and everything was about to transform. At the bus stations and railway platforms thousands of Hindi, Bengali, and Oriya speaking migrant labourers descended every day. The small towns uniformly scattered across Kerala, and especially the ones in Ernakulam District, would be crowded by these migrants on Sunday evenings.

I was aware that Kakkanad was the happening place and that it was going to be the new Kochi, even before venturing in detail and started to board the daily buses to

Pallikkara, Kizhakkambalam, and Kakkanad. Taking the local buses would be the most effective way to get an overview of these places that lie next to each other. In this way one could get down at random at any small point and start the 'derive', akin to the situationists' method of moving about from one location to another with no pre-determined plan. The idea of this particular 'drifting' was also to get a feel of the totality of everyday life,[4] as well as the spatial coordinates. In fact these were echoes of an earlier plan to work on the built forms; to ponder on the predispositions in the way people structure and use material environment. 'Material presence' does not mean anything by itself. Rather, the several patterns in the use of built forms necessitate a structural analysis of the spatial connotations (internal and external spaces, private and public spaces, sacred and secular spaces, gendered spaces, monumental and non-monumental spaces etc.). Such an analysis is required to understand the complex dialectics of space, and the ways people embody these. The ways social relations are formed in the context of the transforming state and conceptualisations of the material world of which the social agent is a part, may be thought about as instituted and naturalised. The present effort seeks to build on the phenomenological approaches that consider how a vital space is inhabited in accord with all the dialectics of life, and how one takes root day after day (Bachelard 1994)[5] i.e. with respect to the everyday experience of life.

Spaces of inhabitation were distributed all over. The majority of built forms could be classified as middle class, with some share of land that could be identified with forms of cultivation (whether or not actually practised at the moment). There were also

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[4] Henri Lefebvre on the Situationist International (Interview conducted and translated 1983 by Kristin Ross

Printed in October 79, Winter 1997)/ Essay: Theory of the Dérive by Guy-Ernest Debord (http://library.nothingness.org/articles/all/all/display/314)

[5] Bachelard in this case works through the way perceptions of living in houses shape spatial experiences and presentations of life.

houses with no extensive courtyards as well as 'colonies' for low income and scheduled communities[6]. These were increasingly less 'marked out', at least from the profile of built forms. There are frequent intercessions of junctions with medium sized clinics and hospitals, consumer shops, local administrative units and markets. Large number of Churches belonging to Jacobite[7] and Catholic denominations as well as some Temples could be seen. The churches are far more visible and some of them date back many centuries.

[Source/Own: Jacobite Church at Pallikkara and one of the Traditional Middle Class Houses]

Paddy cultivation has been one of the major activities of the people in the region as evident from the extent and frequency of such land. There are smaller tracts of plantation, like rubber, especially along the undulating land and the hillocks that remain. Most of the hillocks seemed to be carved up partially or wholly for truck loads of earth. Numerous trucks constantly plied the overstrained and dilapidating

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[6]Historically disadvantaged people who are constitutionally recognised in the Republic of India

[7] The Jacobite Syrian Christian Church is part of the Syriac Orthodox Church, located in Kerala, India. It recognizes the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch.The church uses the West Syrian liturgy and is part of the Oriental Orthodox group of churches.

dusty roads. Old market places may be seen in all these places. Some of them have transformed to markets, while others have become points around which present business centres have developed. There are many large and long rooted families from these places as is evident from some of the old business and commercial names at the junctions and family names written at the gates. The majority belong to either of the Christian denominations, though there are prominent Hindu and Muslim families as well, more towards the neighbouring places.

[Source/Own: Waterways, Wetlands/Paddy fields and Sites of Contemporary Earth Mining]

Roads were inevitably lined with 'flex boards' (plastic ad-hoardings) that carried different sorts of advertisements. Most of them pointed to the high rises that were coming up around the emerging Information Technology zones. Such boards were not specific to these places. On the other hand they have always been the inevitable vision-blockers along any such road in the whole district. Almost all of them are pointers to 'the city' (Knowledge City, Smart City, HDIL Cyber City, Sobha City etc., as the names go) and the perfect living space next to it and yet far away in the kind of 'ambience' depicted (One could see a high rise in the middle of coconut groves and the board would often ironically cover a tract of such a green space that is fast mowed up for some construction work). At the junctions there were

constellations of people forming and de-forming at intervals and the air would resonate with polyphonic ring tones of mobile phones and detailed and pointed talks about land deals. The majority of people at such junctions become Hindi speaking migrant workers by noon time and late into the evenings. On occasions the buses that took me back from these places, late into the evening would be packed with the migrants.

Natural and man-made formations often became landmarks in the narrative of work either because of their social constitution or as meagre points of everyday reference. Some of the natural landmarks were the Kadambrayaar river that meanders across these places and joins the Chitrapuzha (that flows further west and joins the backwaters), the several small hillocks (that suffixed 'mugal', which in Malayalam would mean 'the one on top' or 'ones with a top', to the names of many small places around), as well as the numerous wetlands (most of which, until recently, had been paddy fields). Other forms of readily visible landmarks at Kizhakkambalam included Swarnathu School, Kizhakkambalam Junction, St Antony's Syro Malabar Forane Church, Anna Aluminum Company, Cochin Steel Industrial Complex, Kizhakkambalam Edasserry Bar and Beverages Corporation unit, Panchayat Office, Government Primary School, Kizhakkambalam Market, Financing Offices, Federal Bank, Kizhakkambalam St. Josephs High School, and Several *Kallu* (local liquor from coconut trees) Shops. The landmarks at Pallikkara were the Petrol Pump, 440 Kilo Watt sub-station power grid that is under construction, Pallikkara market, Chanda Kurishu Palli (church near the market atop a hillock), Pallikkara Junction, Subramanya Swami temple, Rice Mill, Pallikkara Government Hospital, Malaykurishu Palli (church) and School, Panthaplakkal Traders and other rubber traders, St Mary's School, Chitteth Tharakan's properties, St Mary's Jacobite Church Morakkala, and the Veegaland Amusement Park.

The prominent industrial space of Fertilizers and Chemicals Travancore (FACT), the Brahmapuram waste treatment unit, the Kochi Special Economic Zone as well as the

Info Park and KINFRA[8] industrial zones were visible at the fringes of these places. The Kakkanad region that borders the existing urban center of Ernakulam to the west has a vast array of public infrastructure, most number of construction sites, some of the aforementioned industrial spaces, schools and two prominent temples

The often confronted family names from Kizhakkambalam were Koikkara, Nedumthaly, Mattamana, Kalapurackal, Kachapilly, Valayil, Kakkadan, Meckamkunnel, and Madickal, (Kizhakkambalam). Vadakkan, Vayalipparambil, Panthaplakkal, Kallappara, Chitteth, Vempillil, and Muttathottil are the names from Pallikkara. Kilithaattil, Mattamana, Mangalath, and Panackalodiel were some of the bigger families more towards Kakkanad. These families are sometimes more widespread and the characteristic networks resonate with the spatial and social histories on the region.

If one took a less real/more virtual road towards these places by way of a Google search, the visualizations were of high rises/apartment projects, the plan overlays on maps and pointers to new projects. The interactive entries of Wikimapia were inevitably those of, several real estate groups that present 'potential spaces of investment', 'Smart Cities', prominent families or churches. Thus there was a riot of markers, from everyday references, long held associations, news or the cyberspace; banking on each other, as one started to move about in the field.

Spatial Reconfiguration and the Context of Contemporary Urban Discourse:

There has been a reconfiguration of meaning and nature of spaces in the context of social relations produced by neo-liberal globalization. Kerala, a state within a nation

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[8] Kerala Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (KINFRA) is a government agency under the government of the Indian state of Kerala. It undertakes development of industrial estates, to nurture industrialization in the state

state, is influenced by policies made beyond its borders. Consequently the region has been remapped in relation to a global production regime. Since the 1990s the Indian state has adopted extensive 'reforms' that have centralized policies further in favour of neo-liberalism. Thus there is increased pressure on the state to conform to norms that contravene the social reforms of an earlier phase. These reform movements had been decisive in opening up controlled hierarchical spaces that got systematized towards the end of the colonial period. The present norms, with extensive liquidation of public infrastructure and privatization of spaces, have unleashed new sets of conflicts over territory, religion and commercial makeup. The role of the state as a welfare apparatus is changing.

The project of global free market envisages reshaping economic life in every society so that it accords with the practices of a single type of capitalism. But there is no reason for all the prevalent kinds of capitalisms to converge. Neither is this going to cater to values like 'individualism' everywhere. It is true that different forms of capitalisms emerge in different social contexts. But the phenomenal power of a flexible market system that operates in conjunction with the state demands continuous engagement with new norms of production, all geared to the generation of profit.

The exclusive and hierarchical spaces that were once opened up for the public are now being appropriated by neo-liberal capital which privatises spaces and transforms them into homogenous conduits of consumption or as a product for consumption (real estate). Spaces in the new context become arenas where new institutions (tourist industry, real estate) channel mobile capital. In the process spaces are fragmented to suit the language of tourism, commerce, or real estate. Contemporary urbanism rationalises changes on the social topography. "The task of urban governance", takes the form of an agenda "to lure highly mobile and flexible consumption flows into its space(s)" (Harvey 1989: 11).

Public institutions are liquidated and private power is established over public spaces. Land policies initiated for the benefit of multinational investments (Krishnakumar

2004) are reversing the tendencies and effects of land reform, and have been creating favourable atmosphere for corporate land holdings. The reduction of import tariffs as part of the commitments towards the global economic regime has adversely affected the agricultural system which is mostly comprised of relatively smaller land holdings. As a result land is laid fallow[9]. The easing of ceilings over landholding in favour of private players has resulted in mass appropriation of property for different business ventures (ibid).

The several changes in policies of the state and perceptions on governance employ an urban discourse replete with the production of its own spaces. The urban spatial structuring that ensues signifies the state's modernization in terms of global order. This order becomes a matter of design through which elements and functions of a place are differentiated, classified and redistributed. The productions of space throws open the question as to how people get constituted as the medium through which the spatial ordering takes effect.

Theoretical Premises of the Present work:

Anthropology becomes important in illuminating how contemporary forms of order get translated into specific cultural logic. Attributing the dynamics or power and domination to preset paradigms or points of origin like 'colonial-post colonial' or 'western', misses the ways in which social and material transformations configure in particular locations. The different orders that took shape, post independence have not been a mimesis of any western standard. Theoretical formulations and analysis often build on the assumption that modernity, rationality, or capitalism, have certain universal forms (Dussel 2001) which trace a western episteme against which only 'alternative' solidarities (based on tribe, caste, clans etc.) could be placed.

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[9] Especially towards the 90s

Urban analysis in India consequently is a terrain where the clash of what had been indigenous and what was imposed could be seen in full relief (Saberwal 1986). There have been debates pitching theoreticians on both sides of the line over issues like individuality (Singer 1972; Mines 1988 Dumont 1970; Marriott 1989), on whether values that are thought to have historical bearings in 'the West' could be read into Indian material. A few works closer to the field are on the broad urban scene in India and focus on aspects like the nuanced world of industrial labour, and elements like 'status' and value judgments in the context of urbanisation (Holmstrom 1976, 1972; Parry 2000, 2003). They merit discussion on account of their divergence from familiar assumptions, consideration of new problems, as well as their noteworthy points of departure from earlier approaches of anthropologies of the urban in India.

Holmstrom's work on the urbanisation of Garudapura after the 1950s, as well as his material on the factory workers from Bangalore, illustrates situations not merely in terms of how people adjust to a condition or how they get determined by certain ideas. It seeks to understand how people perceive their situations and what they make out of them. Holmstrom also assumes, like many others before him, that the ideology of caste is relatively uniform throughout a 'Hindu India' and sets out to understand such status and value judgments, within the specifics of a place in transformation.

Urbanisation, for Holmstrom becomes a very important setting both in time and space, and a situation that provides motives for thinking different. By demonstrating through his material that people take stock of social circumstances with result in major re-evaluations of ethics, values, and from what may be gathered from a whole cosmology, Holmstrom turns critical on the broad frame of which he is a part. For him urbanisation is a setting that proves that change gets inevitably embodied. What is essentially involved is the looser fit between facts and older ideologies which is implicitly recognized to have been otherwise. Caste, for instance, has also become more adaptable and pertain more to newer realms like politics.

Apart from the reconsideration of some of the major themes in the context of labour and more specifically within a specific spatial context, Jonathan Parry indicates that when urban themes like labour are analysed one should not get into automated assumptions like class resistance. Instead one has to understand what really takes place. The public sector steel plant becomes an exceptional zone both against the 'traditional' or private sector zones as well as the domestic spaces where life moves on a different set of values.

The works throw light on the selection of field especially of an urban type viz. that of labour and new urbanisation processes as well as the complexity they add to their broad frames. Concepts like caste, though often risk diffusion of focus away from people and processes. The selection of the particular set of practices often pre-frame caste more like an object for the production of knowledge about the exotic other. This can undermine potential radical engagement for the ethnographer, who needs to be sensitive to the reductive extrapolations that might ensue from preoccupations with alterity. As observed by Richard Bughart (1990: 261) both in the anthropological as well as the Brahmanic modes of constructing knowledge there is an inherent risk of totalizing, "social relations as systems in which they act as knowers and in which their knowledge transcends that of all other actors." Accordingly, the different anthropological mode in which knowledge about India was constructed was primarily a function of different kinds of dialogues between anthropologists and the Brahmanic points of view/expectations of social structure.

Through caste, the 'perceived' Brahmanic imagination structures the anthropological presentation as a mimesis and reduces the potential for holistic analysis of everyday practices. It may be seen that Jonathan Parry, by emphasizing the need to stay away from automated assumptions and to get into how things really work in a particular zone (viz. Industrial Labour), and Holmstrom by emphasizing the importance of situations as well as the ways people 'use' caste (as in politics), identify constructive channels that can get them closer to the people they study.

The possible reconfigurations of state during contemporary global processes (neoliberal capitalist, led by extra state actors and state like bodies) cannot be understood if such processes get depicted as, the prevalence of abstract spatialities that play out binaries like global/local, subject/object, structure/agency etc. or as differences with 'the local'. Instead, what may be important are the ways in which life forms negotiate changing relationships in situations. The new global context of Kerala does not constitute any single all embracing movement that spreads from some center to passive spaces elsewhere. It needs to be understood as the making of spaces, a reconfiguration through practices and the relationships among a multitude of trajectories. The approach cannot be the defining of everything else against an abstract global identity. As a product of interrelations, and not existing prior to actors/entities, one has to imagine spatiality as embedded in the multiple new configurations that relationships and human life assume. In these new configurations otherwise unconnected narratives may converge or the previously connected ones may be wrenched apart. In their new urban context, people in places bring up issues that arise out of the sense of living together and in juxtaposition and also the negotiation of the equally varied wider relations within which they are reconstituted.

Changing forms of control and practices of governance challenge/strain established patterns of state spatiality. Gupta and Fergusson (1997) use material from India to demonstrate how "states secure their authority and legitimacy through unmarked spatial practices that create effects of vertical encompassment," and African material to demonstrate the "rising salience of transnational governmentality". They point at "rituals of surveillance" in the everyday functioning like with the specific case of Integrated Child Development Services Programmes (or *Anganvadis*) at the local levels, an activity which they say is irrelevant to the needs of the state, as embodying state hierarchy and encompassment. The indication here is of new modalities of governance and re-statisation with different emphasis. Two of the reasons that Partha Chatterjee cites for the need to think beyond the familiar grid of nation state are the growth of solidarities and institutions of a transnational kind, as well as a moral reason based on the perception that the legitimacy of nation states in terms of their

capacity to act for the good of the people over whom it has claims, has been exhausted or undermined (Chatterjee 1997). According to Chatterjee the options, 'beyond and within' in the aforementioned moral reason need not be mutually exclusive.

More risk is getting devolved to the individual or the "enterprise" as many read (Gupta and Fergusson 1997), but there are variations in the ways these devolve across places. This becomes a central concern in the thesis. The regulatory, political, and disciplinary practices that constitute the state could only be informed by the practices and politics of life in the region concerned (Das/Poole 2004, Das 1996). These have important bearings on the ways distinct orders (states) get constituted.

The changes in consciousness as a result of intensified 'flows' in such urban contexts have been one of the central themes in social analysis (Appadurai 1996). The contemporary problems are taken outside the paradigm of the state (ibid.). They look at how modern subjectivities are carved out in 'virtual neighborhoods', thus trying to extend from the imagined communities argument (Anderson 1991) in the sense of imagining multiple worlds constituted by historically situated imaginations of people/groups. But in thinking about the structuring of alternate 'scapes' to think with, it takes an essentially top down approach. It thus imagines that states and political economic structures mediated by states have become defunct in the contemporary mobilities of capital. This takes analysis away from grounded processes shaped by specific social situations that generate the very enabling (and disabling) conditions of mobilities.

Such approaches solely concerned with cultural scapes, risk celebrating what may be observed as native and 'turned hybrid'. Flows and scapes (Appadurai 1996) as well as the thickening or thinning of networks, the enmeshment of erstwhile orders in global processes which are historically unprecedented (Castel 1992), draw the analysis to contemporary global forms manifest in urban situations. The approach may be distinct from what has preceded. There is a failure, however, to link observations with

concrete situations that articulate contemporary processes of ordering. Capital has specific ways of articulation to generate new social forms.

The notion of space needs to be problematised to understand how orders become articulated processes, and lend exceptional quality to urban situation within the practice of governmentality in Kerala. Historically, space has been a constituent element in urban processes. This will be considered for providing a backdrop and comparative frame. But space as a constituent element (Lefebvre 1991) in the way contemporary global forms take root also becomes significant. As the materialisation of global capital, urbanisation has powers to differentiate places as space and to create conflicts within as well as to generate space in various forms.

People in places have been in dialogue with major transformations in the context of contemporary urbanization. Contradictory perceptions of spaces could arise. Here space may be homogenized and fragmented at the same time. The peculiar transformations of space in the emergent orders are brought to light in Henri Lefebvre's idea of spaces as produced.

Works on Urban Spatiality:

Space in the context of urbanization has been under analysis from a sociological perspective from the 1900s, with the establishment of the first academic departments of sociology in the U.S. Earlier studies along this line adopted what may be described as ecological theory. This took the city itself as a "natural habitat of civilized man" (Park 1925: 1-46). According to ecological theory every subsection in the city reflects what holds for the entire city. Older traditions continually break down and get modified and orders resting on occupational vocation interests succeed (e.g. trade, commerce). The city presents itself as an externally organized unit produced by its own laws. The phenomenon of urban growth itself is the result of a process of

organization and disorganization. This according to the proponents includes mental ruptures of the new arrivals, relocations, or feelings of shame.

The urban centre may be portrayed as characterized by typical zones. As plants and animal forms are studied under ecology, 'human ecology' too is a parallel study of spatial and temporal relations of humans as affected by the social environment. Individuals are thought to be territorially distributed by competition and selection and human institutions are accommodated to spatial relations. As spatial relationships change, so do social relationships. These produce new challenges. The approach often leads to the establishment of natural areas, once a dominant use is established. There are always processes like competition, concentration, centralization, segregation, invasion, and succession in the creation of natural areas that form the physical structure of the city. The ecological study of urban spaces conceives science as autonomous and drained of social processes. The perespective is that human behavior is determined by universal laws and displays certain fundamental patterns. The ecological theorists took spaces as given. Their priority was the representation of the city. They preferred not to see the cities as products of social life.

Georg Simmel (2002: 11-20) was among the few who tried to link the city to the complexity of life, intimately connected in this case to money economy. He studied why the city behaves in a certain way by placing it in the social context of the market. Thus he enquired how relations in the city get reduced to the question of how much money one has. The task for him was to explain inter-human relations in terms of meanings they carry for the parties involved as well as the specific physical changes they entail. Simmel was concerned with forms (inter psychic ones). It was Weber (1966) who had set aside the distinction between form and content and conceived sociology of the city as a causal interpretation of social action. So his theory not only encompassed mentality but also recognized and accounted for the appearance of varied social types in the city -- all sorts of people meet and mingle without mutual understanding. Slums may be separated from residences by only a few meters but their points of view may be miles apart. With Weber the idea of urban space had become very complex.

Weber was writing about/during a time when the urban centres were losing their fortified autonomous (political, legal) status within the structure of the state, when the citizens were transforming into representatives of the state and agents of state interests. In the present context urbanisation has become co-extensive with the global structuring process that makes the citizen part of the global systems of production to an ever greater degree. Places are getting transformed "in relation to profound transformation in the modes of production, in relation between 'town and country', in the relations of class and property…the correct approach consists in going from the most general knowledge to that which concerns historical processes and discontinuities and their projection refraction onto the city and conversely, particular and specific knowledge or urban reality to its global context" (Lefebvre 1996: 105). It is in this context that Lefebvre's exhaustive theorisations of space become most useful as analytical model.

Unlike many social scientists who read Marxist dialectics as a static trio of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, Lefebvre brings out the relational aspect of Marxian thought (1991 [1974]; 2000). He brings out the ontological position in Marxian thought in which all phenomena have a base in the material world. According to Lefebvre, space can only be grasped dialectically because it is a concrete abstraction, such as the exchange value Marx talked about, which is simultaneously a material, externalised realisation of human labour and the condensation of social relations of production. In *The Production of Space* (1991 [1974]) he brings space within the parameters of the production process and sees it as a product and manifestation of material relations. Space according to him is "perceived, conceived and lived" at the same time. Since space is relational all the three categories are linked; so space is the physical space encountered, the sense made out of it through the various representations and the medium where people live their "everyday life". Lefebvre becomes important even in the context of contemporary reterritorialisations because the dynamics of such processes are often organised around the infrastructure of particular state territorialities and historically constituted urban processes.

In his analysis of space Lefebvre introduces an entity in addition to wage and labour relations in capitalist systems viz. the land. The liquidation of placedness in the field may be characterized as the different forms of real estate investments, which make places that are repositories of associations and meanings into potential zones for development, their value being fixed by price tags. Even the new information technology investments like 'smart city' may be perceived as the pawning of places than proclaimed intentions[10]. Lefebvre brings through land another circuit of capital which may be applied to the social context of Kerala.

As Aihwa Ong suggests, the contemporary challenge is to link, "multi-scalar reconfiguration of the spaces of power to changing forms of ruling and the cultural production of norms" (Ong 2002: 233). The East Asian case material she deals with is significant in the sense that, like Kerala (but because of historically different reasons), these places have not been neoliberal systems. The insertion into global economy has ensued in selective adoption (and continuing mediation of the leftist structures) of neoliberal norms for managing populations in relation to corporate requirements. More significant is the idea of exceptional as put forward by Ong. Drawn from Agamben, but developed in culturally specific contexts, the exceptional signifies the malleability of neoliberalism (1999) as a technique and as lived reality. Accordingly it is a technique that adapts and incorporates itself in diverse regimes across the world, and in the process carves out exceptions to what is otherwise the norm.

The flexibility in the operation of capital has been discussed as a departure from preceding organisational strategies (Harvey 1989). But what may be absent in Harvey's otherwise insightful observation are the ways in which human agencies get implied in the process or the ways in which capital flexibility is embedded. The focus on agency often reverts to the dichotomies of global and local generated in the

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[10] *Smart City Over- Smart Aakunnuvo*? R.V.G.Menon interviews people in *Sastragathi; vol. 41, issue 1*

contemporary transnational flows (Appadurai 1996). There seems to be an implicit assertion that localised communities are generated in the virtual environs or as "neighbourhoods", as a cultural and communitarian resistance and reaction to something outside, macro, and global. This too does not explain how life gets differentially embedded in distinct orders.

The contemporary techniques of governing life (which too is what neoliberalism is about), politics of subjections or subject making (Foucault 1978) are neither mere responses to processes emanating elsewhere (e.g. a northern neoliberal order invoking characteristic responses in south- an idea that Comaroff and Comaroff (2000) seem to convey) nor limited to any singular typology of a neoliberal form (Harvey 2004). It is more important to focus on specific situations where neoliberal processes may be observed to transact through assemblages (Ong 2006) that cannot be reduced to any singular global form. The idea is to get away from the structural paradigm in order to conceptualise neoliberalism not as fixed attributes with predetermined outcomes. Instead what become important are the logics of governance that are selectively absorbed into different political milieus. This is often expressed as forms of life that stand in a dependent and contingent relationship to larger problematisations that are effervescent and offer matrices (Rabinow 2003) from which contemporary orders emerge.

The Historical Component of Urbanisation:

Any enquiry into the urban make up of the west coast in general and the region that now comprises Kerala in particular needs to dwell on the unique historical structuring of urban processes. The urban nodes that formed parts of historical trading systems, like that of the Indian Ocean systems at several points of time (Chaudhuri 1985/Hietzman 2008/Abraham 2008), did not always form a centralising spatial order manifested and conveyed on later by the cities. They were parts of functioning commercial systems (Abu-Lughod 1987). Such systems in turn depended on decentralised places in the mainland linked together by inland networks. People did

not necessarily transact with any singular all encompassing order but constituted themselves as heterarchic formations until the development of relatively centralising state orders, the likes of which were more recent in the southern peninsula and especially in what later came to be Kerala.

Processes which may now be categorised 'religious' have often been significant social interventions. The historical impacts of Jainism and Buddhism (Alexander 1949/Menon 1911), as well as the presence of Christian and Islamic orders, have been significant in inhibiting any singular ideology taking root. On the contrary different orders persisted as cultural constructs with no encompassing rule (Gadgil and Guha 1993). Buddhism and Jainism were not mere religious belief systems. These could be perceived as social and intellectual movements at many levels, influencing many aspects of society (Thapar 1966). Islam and Christianity too were not found in the organised format as they are found at present, but as sociocultural hybridities. They were integral to the formation of heterarchic orders in Kerala until the consolidation of larger bureucratised state formations.

Christians who constitute a major population in my field are distributed across different categories. They become significant less as religious entities than as products of unique urban trajectories. They have often become social litmuses for the departures made by the present versions of urbanisation. Though Catholics followed by Protestants form the majority of Christian groups in India, in Kerala the Orthodox Syrian Christian Church comprises a major population (Robinson 2003) with auto cephalic structure[11] or allegiances to other eastern churches and West Asia with (like Chaldea). Historically Christian orders got themselves constituted through conflicts that ensued between the intervening powers (like the Portuguese) and established Syrian orders. Syrian Christian settlements were often benefactions of local rulers as

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[11] In the case of Malankara Orthodox Christians who severed ties with Patriarch from Antioch and proclaimed communion with ancient and independent Catholicate of the East (1912).

the community was also active in trade and commerce apart from agriculture. They received honours and privileges from local rulers (Bayly 1989) and they rendered services as pepper brokers and revenue officers (Kieniewicz 1986/ Tharakan 1998). Mercantile powers like the Portuguese who managed to get state support in Kochi against antagonists from the north allied with Arabs brought in several mechanisms of control. The Synod of Udayamperoor (1599) in fact brought in many from the Syrian groups to the catholic fold in exchange of privileges or by threat of being delinked from the orders of production (Visvanathan 1993). Migration in the south and west coast, unlike to the northern parts of India, was not an invasive process. Instead there was a lot more amalgamation (Melekandathil 2003) into existing orders making it ever more hybridizing (Weiner 2003) in course of time.

Formal Frames to Everydayness of the Contemporary:

A major attempt of the present research is to understand the conceptualisations/deployment of space. Space in the present context is a complex category that is not outside social practices and performances, but is continuously produced by social practice. All space in this sense is social space (Lefebvre 1991: 84). The attempt will be to reach an understanding of such deployments or conceptualisations through people in places that have been repositories of urban histories into the contemporary forms of urbanisation like Kakkanad or Vypeen/Vallarpadom, where people bear witness to changes of unprecedented scale. Abstract ideas about the new economic shifts take shape only through the social, political, and psychological determinations. The determinations are assumed to come into play within the spatial paradigm. The challenge is to connect the abstract concepts with everyday life in the field. This is how the practice of people in the field engages with the politics and practice of interpretation. Here I am sensitive to the idea that one cannot follow self evident assumptions of economic abstractions *pace* Bourdieu (2005).

But the several transactions in the corporate urban context (the real estate investments, the creation of special zones and the urban agglomerations along with phenomena like migrations, formation of new social groups or evictions) need not entail an assumption of state agency as has been in practice. Neither need these be the necessary culmination of a slow process of accumulation of different species of capital (Bourdieu: 2005, 1992) especially the physical and economic forms of it or the Weberian 'monopoly of legitimate physical violence' (Weber 1919 (1946)) wielded by the state. I would rather go by a frame of thought that helps to understand the structural transformation of historically constituted places with their urban specificities.

Bruce Kapferer's (2005) observations about the new power formations in the context of oligarchic corporate states provides a more processual frame of reference which is helpful as it leaves scope for space that is needed to understand people in the contemporary urban configurations in Ernakulam. The state would be one among several actors in a globally networked and financed system with forms of fragmentation and polarization. As Kapferer says it is not all chaos; on the other hand there is a systematic nature to the global processes which may be tested in the patterns in which capital is decentralized and accumulated in the urban processes. But only the historical processes of the state formation, the present socio-economic predicament of Kerala and the spatial practices as they engage with the fieldwork could lead to possible theorizations of the embodiments of state.

New urban projects like the Agglomeration-plan under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), a seven year project for urban transformations, become important frames to situate the ethnography of the contemporary. There are specific directions issued to states regarding schemes that direct funds to Urban Local Bodies (ULB), which the centre views as para-state. The states are encouraged to enter Public Private Partnerships (PPP) in the context of reduction of plan allocation. Emerging priorities in urban renewal, like the redevelopment of inner (old) areas to

conform to outer cities, are important elements of contemporary urban discourse. All these can be seen to draw the state into corporate entanglements.

In the context of corporate consolidations, free ranging finance, and the generation of transnational standards, people often find it difficult to think beyond the bounds of neoliberal globalisation. During contemporary transnational/global processes Indian cities have been studied in the way people in places are trapped in fantasies. The globally circulating imaginaries have often played a significant role in the recent urban structuration of places like Mumbai or Delhi. Images of Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) units, global business culture, or grand urban plans (like the Shanghai plan[12] in Mumbai) convey cities of action (Masselos 2008). There are works that show how lives get lived in the ways cities get conceptualised (Cinar and Bender 2007; Huyssen 2009). As Baviskar (2003) argues, imaginaries and conflicts over the branding of cities are inseparable from the material processes that go into the making of the urban. This includes everything from how people work, live, how places should look like, how local governments must function, as well as what developments must take place. As is evident from cases and narrations in my field, it is difficult to reflect on the contemporary. Only the past remains narratable. When people cannot comprehend the nature of changes, and when new directions are yet to assume recognizable forms, hopes huddle together with despair (Tsing 2005) and find shape as desires, fears or urgencies. This becomes important from an anthropological point of view.

There is much literature in urban studies that focus on economic, social, and political processes under neoliberalism and globalisation, state withdrawals from erstwhile welfarist functions as well as the urban impacts of such processes (Grant and Nijman 2002, 2004; Bannerjee-Guha 2007; Patel and Masselos 2003). There are also

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[12] An Urban restructuring plan (year 2004) for Mumbai which supposedly follows the urban path adopted by Shanghai, that allegedly involved the removal/demolition of large number of 'illegal' settlements

important works like that of Leela Fernandes (2006) that show how economic liberalisation has weakened the poor population's claims on the city because of the conflicting and dominant claims of an urban elite that seek to reconfigure space according to some of the imaginaries mentioned before.

Scholars like Anna Tsing (2000) assume that the urban has always been discussed in terms of global processes and modernisation and there is nothing spectacularly new to being global as such. What she suggests is a moving away from the idea of descriptive categories like the 'global' to a focus on such ideas as projects that are continuously made and contested over. So as Baviskar and Ghertner (2003, 2005) point out a need to focus on what such ideas represent at an aspirational or experiential level in order to understand global or neoliberal engagements with different signifiers across divides like legal and illegal, and changing terms of access to spaces.

Ideas like globalisation and neoliberalism may not work as a singular hegemonic process, but as 'situated assemblages' of logics, actors, histories, projects, and practices (Mc Guirk and Dowling 2009). So a focus on the ground may be required much on the lines envisaged by Baviskar (2003), but with specific emphasis on the historical situation of Ernakulam and taking into account the unique ways in which spatial orders evolved in Kerala. It is important to take into account frames, though absolute sounding, as the 'state of Kerala', because human practices in the way spaces are lived in and conceptualised are structured by the specific ontology of the state as well as its distinctness from what surrounds it. The welfarist state order that ensued has been unique. The state has never been entirely severed off from the politicised public sphere that produced it. The idea of welfare has been more of a persistent hope than any approximation to 'established welfare states' elsewhere.

In small villages, contiguous to each other, where I worked, a marked dissolution of 'place' in the sense of a loss of culturally familiar locale with which people relate in their everyday life, could be experienced. This remains so despite the fact that 'place'

gets invoked profoundly in narrations of the past, and delegation of the immediate past into such histories. There is a lack of reflection on the contemporary. The current reconfigurations of urbanisation inevitably include a reshuffling of economic flows, jobs and people in space, as with the special economic zones, migrations of labourers, as well as dislocations. But a massive transformation in the organisation and experience of space itself (Harvey 1989; Soja 1989) is evident. The villages are changing at a deeper level. They had been communal places invested with repositories of history, accumulated social capital, joint meanings and mutuality. They seem to be transforming into 'spaces' of contestation that require a regeneration of forms of capital. What used to be places with stable arenas of action and relations, appear to be turning into void spaces framed by urban discourses that necessitate new regimes of order against possible uncertainties or threats. While this should not lead one to romanticise a 'golden past', which certainly was replete with its own power equations, the contemporary context brings with it unprecedented burdens of hope, desires, as well as fears. This could largely be attributed to the translation of reconfigured capital on to social relationships in the specific context of Kerala.

Chapterisation:

The first chapter, Prelude, says that urban processes and global engagements have been deeply rooted in the history of the region that now comprises Kerala and the west coast of the peninsula, as part of the earlier Indian Ocean systems. In fact the unique devolutions of such processes, through different constellations of power, have been of formative significance for the modern state. The leading motif of the chapter will be the aspect of global connections in which places have been implicated throughout history and the urban formations that ensued. The chapter seeks to convey that urbanisation has been deeply rooted in history and the distinct patterns have been of formative significance for the modern state.

The next two chapters discuss what becomes significant as one venture into the field at present as overtly conveyed by certain contemporary urban situations. The Urban

Architectonics chapter goes into some of the places that are often showcased as newly urbanising. It shows that particular regions have been points in a mosaic of complexities. But the economic reforms initiated in the early 1990s, effected unprecedented homogenization of places. The dominant social paradigms were clamped down, and tendencies of absolute ordering were initiated. This is conveyed by the normative contexts of Special Economic Zones and Urban Reform Plans. It describes how as spaces that are constituent elements of global capitalism, places get into an absolute ordering resembling the hegemonic representations of space Lefebvre was concerned with.

Contemporary forms of governance get negotiated as ideas of living, development, progress, or urban renewal. This takes place in the midst of a process in which a new constellation of productive forces and relations of production are taking shape in Kochi. The chapter on the Logic of Order enquires into the logics of some of the new urban processes generated through leading themes like 'a sense of urgency' often associated with uncertainties and impossibility for reflection on the contemporary (Tsing 2005). The chapter may be seen as a departure. The marked absence of reflection on the contemporary, the concomitant urgency of the future, as well as narratives of the past characterise observations. The idea of the exceptional is represented by special economic zones and information technology spaces and the virtual (as with the new living spaces that are yet to take form), become technologies of optimization and inform governmental strategies that differentially regulate orders of living. Starting with the theme of 'urgency' that inevitably animates the contemporary urban scene, this chapter suggests the need for a theoretical perspective that can explain the links between heterogeneous processes and the ways they manifest and get realized. It is important to explain the different modes (viz. in virtual spaces of exceptional life as well as exceptional zones of virtual production) of logics that create enabling conditions for the proliferation and growth of new forms of capital. In this context, forms of exceptions can be conceptualised more broadly *a la* Ong (2006) as an extraordinary departure in policy that can be deployed to include as well as to exclude.

It is true that neo liberal forms of globalisation have disquieting ethico-political implications for those included as well as those excluded. This is where the new forms of governance ironically draw their strength from. The chapters that follow seek to dwell on some of the concrete social situations.

The Fourth chapter takes the particular case of Smart City to explain how logics and consent are generated. Unlike familiar urban types, there is a distinct possibility of similar cities coming up, and in 'Kerala' any designated space can turn 'smart'. The idea encompasses and is encompassed by people in places otherwise disparate. The particular project, Smart City, emerges as a dominant theme -- a formidable master signifier with which people engage and produce the contemporary social situation replete with unprecedented disparities. Smart City in the context also becomes a situation that delineates how the conceptual boundaries of state get altered by people (Das 2005) in securing survival and for want of incorporation in the everyday life.

All across the places, the politicised public sphere was getting ever more fragmented and eviscerated of anything that suggests an interpellation of people as subjects. Instead protocols of life materialise in spaces where erstwhile 'ideas of state' no more translate into practices. As represented by 'brokers' who earth with expectations, individuated entities resort to accumulated forms of capital. In the current milieu unprecedented expectations of inclusions and mobilities often sever them from historical/political incorporations.

The Regimes Chapter shows how the present versions of 'urbanisation' are significant and unlike earlier forms. The life forms express unprecedented flexibility and disjuncture with regional patterns. The operation of 'regimes of living' according to Collier and Lakoff (2004) does not necessarily involve the individual's insight of a given situation. Very often the life in question is not necessarily that of a reasoning being. The life in question could be expressed both collectively and individually.

Regimes here do not offer solutions to problematic situations through the mediums that have always been there. A reality that is yet to take shape ironically offers immense flexibility. The magical pursuits discussed in the chapter are both connected to the flexible reality as well the contemporary manifestation of desire. The magic parallels the bigger magic that involves the instituted practices of stock trade and the movement of de-substantiated finance.

The next chapter (Mutually Reinforcing Forms) continues the narrative of the previous chapter and argues that the ordering of the state and the people often generate mutually reinforcing forms in contingent situations. What is special is the new aspirational environment that may be aligned with the post-liberalisation phase and the unique ways in which these manifest. The cases of violence associated with 'quotation teams' and the formation of 'resident associations' become unique denouements in their mutually reinforcing format. The 'quotation teams' in the way they present themselves in daily life seem to carve out spaces that transcend the normal provisions of the state. The resident associations that often form against impending needs like 'security' engage themselves in choices that, in their format they have little agency over. But the mutually reinforcing structural aspects of the gangs and new orders of life generate logic for a changing state, not necessarily by overt state violence as experienced elsewhere in India, but through a logic of sustenance generated from below.

Chapter Appendix:

Land Utilisation/Spatial-Social Geography in Ernakulam through Recent Decades:

(Sources: *Kerala District Gazetteers: Ernakulam Supplement*, Adoor K.K. Ramachandran Nair. The Govt. Press, Trivandrum. 1981/ *District Urbanisation Report 2011-Ernakulam*- Department of Town and Country Planning, Kerala/*Department of Town and Country planning website*)

Table/Figure: 2

Future Urban Profile of the District (All the places under study will become Urban as per official reports)

Sl .No	Existing Urban areas	Future Urban areas
1	Kochi Corporation	Alangad
2	Aluva Muncipality	Kadungallur
3	Angamaly Muncipality	Eloor
4	Kalamassery Muncipality	Varapuzha
5	Perumbavur Municipality	Kalady
6	Moovattupuzha Muncipality	Cheranallur
7	Kothamangalam Muncipality	Kadamakkudy
8	Paravur Municipality	Thrikkakara
9	Thrippunithura Municipality	Chottanikkara
10		Mulanthuruthy
11		Thiruvankulam
12		Udayamperur
13		Kumbalangy
14		Chengamanad
15		Nedumbassery
16		Chendamangalam
17		Kottuvally
18		Vadakkekkara
19		Vadavucode-Puthenkurisu
20		Choornnikkara
21		Edathala
22		Elamkunnapuzha
23		Njarakkal
24		Mulavukadu
25		Maradu
26		Keezhmad
27		Pallipuram
28		Kumbalam
29		Kunnathunad
30		Nellikuzhy

[The level of urbanization shows has increased rapidly within Ernakulam. It is projected that there will be 39 urban Local Self Governing units (LSGs) by 2021, in place of the present 9 urban LSGs. This increase in the number of urban LSGs is because of the change in the occupational structure.]

Figure: 3

GROWTH RATE IN LOCAL BODIES - 2001
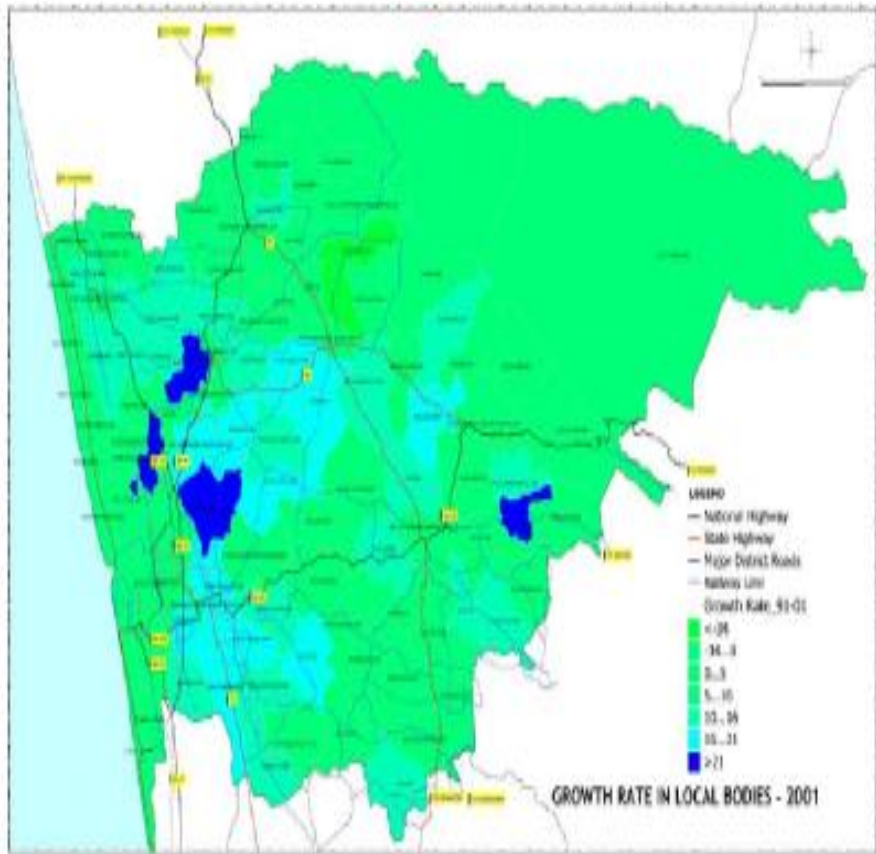
[The spatial distribution of the growth rates of population in Ernakulam during 1991-2001 shows a definite pattern as is shown in figure. The coastal region shows a growth rate of 5-10%, whereas the central region shows a population growth rate of 10 to 15%. Trikkakkara panchayat that forms the bulk of Kakkanad region (presently municipality) shows highest growth rate]

Figure: 4

[The land use map shows that the places that are designated as urban has often come up in zones that until recently were either agricultural or mixed residential and most of these have also come up near the catchment areas of major waterways]
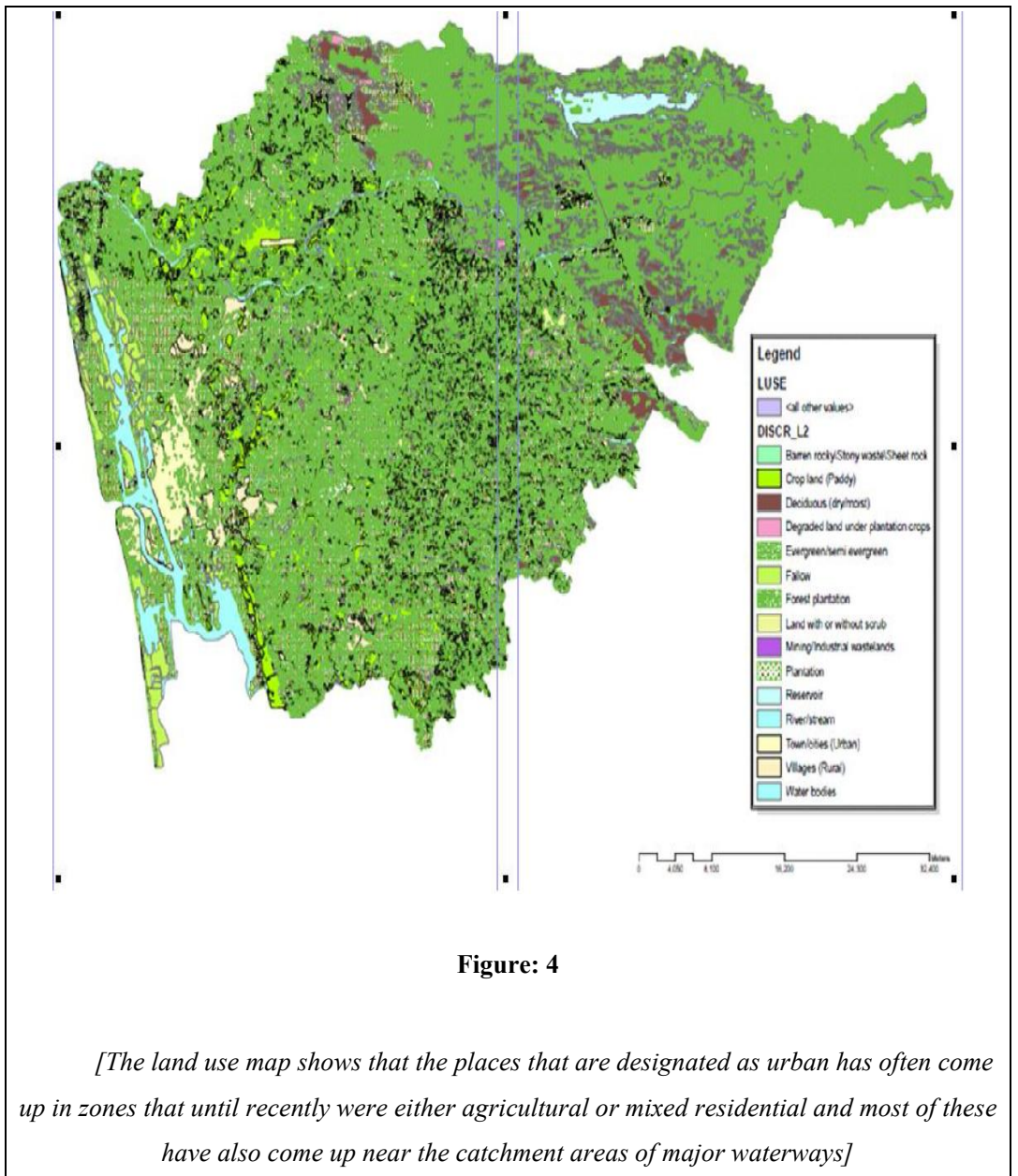
Figure/ Table: 5

Name of Place	1980	2001
Kizhakkambalam	Rural (20332)	Rural (25910)
Trikkakkara	Rural (North)11589 (South)26862	Urban(65984)
Vadavokode-Puthenkurishu	Rural(11761)	Rural(26710)

Changes in Demography within the newly urbanising Kakkanad Region

Figure: 6
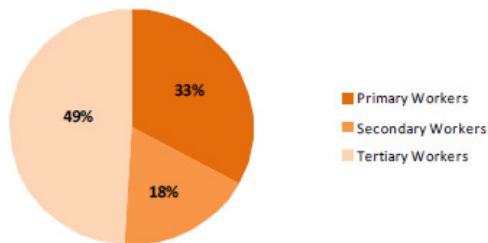
[Occupational Trend in Ernakulam (1991) not only shows a marked increase in the Service Sector occupations, but an increase in share from erstwhile rural parts. Two decades since the neoliberal policies began to take root, this share has increased much more and most of that is thanks to services related to the new urban projects and real estate]

A Counter Coda:

The problem with all kinds of such statistics, even when this provides a certain frame to compare or relate the urban situation, is its top-down approach. Thus even when numbers like population and the change thereof sounds fine, this never reflects the way people overlap across places every day, the continuities and breaks with historical constitution of people in places, the unaccountable migrants who follow untraceable channels etc. There are the several zones designated as rural or urban as well as agricultural, mixed use, or tertiary dominated. But here a clear urban-rural division is rarely confronted (this is at times even officially admitted-The 'Hierarchy of Nodes' for instance is an alternative official conceptualisation that classifies places according to scales of activity, road networks, and the geography of junctions). People who live and transact in an 'agricultural' zone may well have 'urban aspirations' and the ones in the urbanising zones may have 'rural nostalgia'. Plans and projections, even when they sound logical, do not talk about processes that cross and perforate the brims and borders of geometry and numbers. The basic figures and statistics provided herein remains significant for a top-down field overview or a peek into the 'available' information. The anthropology often develops across chapters from the interstices and carries itself across through historical and contemporary social processes.

1. Prelude to the Urban Contemporary

The chapter is a precaution. It is a precaution against tendencies to peg urbanisation to ethnocentric models, when it is about places away from Europe or the United States. Alongside must be placed ideas like modernity, or rationality, which are loosely conceptualised as 'western' (Jones 1981/North 1973)[13]. . Urbanisation is not exceptional to European histories. There have been several forms of urbanisation, and as a process it has always had global implications, and not necessarily as ideas diffusing from the 'west' to the rest. The ethnocentric paradigms of urban processes maintained by Weber[14] and other insightful theorists, carry commonalities for Europe, the United Staates, as well as for urban processes elsewhere. There are perspectives like the world systems[15] that always assumed a global paradigm, but often maintained the centrality of certain cores as against certain peripheries with respect to modernity, and urbanisation had been functional to this[16]. Such centralities are not often problematised for the historical implications of 'discoveries' and integrations starting from the southern parts of Americas. A process like the 'discovery' and subsequent resource extractions, for example, were initiated by Spain during a time when routes through the Indian Ocean system or other well formed systems could not be accessed and the only available option was the Atlantic channel

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[13] Eric L. Jones 1981 *The European Miracle*/Douglas North 1973 *The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History*

[14] *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Trans. Talcott Parsons, New York 1958

[15] Wallerstein, 1974, *The Modern World System*, New York

[16] There have been important works though that saw systems as composed of relatively autonomous entities with historical significance which can have divergent tendencies (*The Mediterranean: And the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Vol. 1, Berkeley, C.A: University of California Press, 1995/Abu- Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350*, New York, 1989)

that ended up in the Americas (Dussel 1985[17]). The picture would have been more complicated if the discussions included regional systems and cultural factors within the European mainland, as well as their religious and ideological implications. In any case it is impossible to ignore urban processes that were seldom peripheral, but developed instead as part of larger systems spread across the world (like the Indian Ocean systems). These processes were embodied in composite groups, and not necessarily represented by any singular centralising order. Historical interventions that followed, like the colonial processes and state making that are often only seen in abstract totalities, were contingent on divergent urban implications of places as will be argued.

This does not suggest any insular continuities, but suggests the need to dwell on specific dynamics that evolved as part of other interregional formations. For instance the presence of the Portuguese on the west coast and ports of what became Kerala, never ended in a simple imposition of a dominant paradigm. The Portuguese themselves, as well as their ports of call, were part of a system formed only of peripheries (Chaudhuri 1985). There are such aspects as the mediation of Arab traders, the support of comprador orders, the continuing challenges, and lack of control or knowhow of production that need to be considered. The Portuguese or the Dutch companies (Poonnen 1978) were thoroughly peripheral to urban systems on the west coast and were dependent on these and so were the English. The conceptualisation of, a singular British-empire from the Himalayas to the Indus, or from northern Kashmir to the peninsula is more myth than fact. The discussion of urban history must reveal the distinct orders in which people have been implicated in and the differing scales of such processes.

It is the context that determines the meaning of 'city' or 'urban'. It would be an instance of reification to attribute a universal meaning to 'urban'. The explanations for a city would be various, and determined by expectations and experiences.

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[17] Also Frank 1998/Dussel 2000

The urban planners have their definitions; so do the historians, the town dwellers, job seekers, the commuters, the evictees, as well as those who seek urbanisation. For the present purpose, the term 'urban' certainly should connote a distinct category. It is distinct, somewhat in the way theorists like Simmel conceptualised long back. It constitutes a distinct space where contemporary techniques of living come into stark relief thanks to several factors to be discussed later. The focus is not on any particular city *per se*. It is on the phenomenon that could be referred cumulatively as urbanisation at different points of time. For Simmel, like the way distinctive cultures got shaped by the role of money (2002), there have been characteristic ways in which urban processes got themselves defined. The patterns of evolution, as will be argued, had formative significance to the social structures that ensued. This allows for a comparative frame with which the contemporary situation could be analysed. This exercise should place my thesis in perspective.

The problematic is to uncover the changing meanings of the concept and what it represents through history. The strategy of working through contradictions that get subsumed in relations offers a method to explain the changes in the production of the urban. For instance, the social embodiments of an earlier set of relationships often determine the incorporation of subsequent modes of production. This cannot be overlooked while trying to understand 'urban formations', not as approximations to entrenched ideas, but as products of specific historical processes. The search for explanations in anthropology is a cumulative process and the critical contextualisation of the central problem through history, can offer both a comparative frame for the contemporary situation as well as avoid blanket presentations and Eurocentric readings of phenomena like urbanisation/globalization. Eric Wolf's 'Europe and the People without History' (1982) is a great point of entry to the fact that global processes, intertwined with contemporary urban processes, are nothing new. It also serves well to start addressing possible assumption of 'unchanging cultures' elsewhere. But his analysis still centres much on a European frame of reference post-1400, and in effect ignores much of the wider world outside. In other words it chooses an analytic frame that still invests much on how others who are 'written out

of history' had still been participants in a European capitalist process. Despite this, Wolf's work asserts the fact that anthropology need not turn away from history.

His work situates anthropology in its historical context and follows the genealogies of relationships of production and manifestations of power in societies and how they materialise in different identities (class, ethnic etc.). This varies according to the historical processes by which they take form. The role of people of diverse origins and social makeup in the creation of an interlinked world would not get underplayed in the process of analysis.

I am keener on the historically informed political and economic analysis of Andre Gunther Frank (1998)[18] and Janet Abu Lughod (1989). Frank encourages a reorientation[19] of views away from eurocentrism to specify the rise of the 'West'. He is after an alternative perspective of the world and phenomenon like globalization which would dismantle several exceptionisms like 'eurocentrism'. According to him, the very attempt to examine and relate the simultaneity of different events in the whole historical process or in the transformation of the whole system, even when there is dearth of empirical information (for that also has got to do with the channels of enquiries) is a significant step in the right direction (Frank 1978). Lughod's work[20] may be more important to the specific case of urbanisation. It offers a methodology as well as demonstrates how several subsystems interconnect into a larger or world system. Her chief variables are cities, since they are 'the only

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[18] *ReOrient*: *Global Economy in the Asian Age* (University of California Press, 1998)

[19] He explains the rise of the West in world economic and demographic terms that relate it in a single historical sweep to the decline of the 'East' around 1800. European states, he says, used the silver extracted from the American colonies to buy entry into an expanding Asian market that already flourished in the global economy

[20] *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350* (Oxford,1989)

comparable units in a system that included everything from city-states to loose confederations to extensive empires' (39). According to Lughod urban centers embody dynamic cultural traits that interact with commercial forces, influencing as well as being influenced by them.

According to her, cultures varied greatly in terms of what was considered significant to record, where it was preserved, and how much was recorded, and with what accuracy. It is sometimes "frustrating" to find valuable documents in one place that have no parallels elsewhere. This she calls "problem of data". In addition there is the "problem of testimony" whereby much of the primary material at disposal consists of accounts written by individuals of the time with gaps between them and the real world. What one could do is to use the selective and distorted testimony as yet another way to read and interpret. This she calls the "problem of perspective" (24-26). The strategy she evolves is to shift viewpoints noting how each society viewed itself and to compare different views of the same fact. Thus for instance European documents cannot be expected to describe the crucial trade links between Muslim intermediaries and Indian urban centers with which they traded either because of relative lack of knowledge or lack of attention. No world system according to her is global even in the sense of articulations regardless of the roles they play. Instead the world has always been informed by sub spheres or subsystems with their own cores and hegemonic centers. Urban centers at different points of time can draw surplus from the hinterlands and also through other satellite cities. At other points of time there could be a more overarching world system that works through world cities whose transactions are with one another.

The discussion of Malabar and Kozhikode exemplifies the method of working through urban subsystems while emphasizing transactions as well as transformations. The merchants of the Malabar Coast were accordingly as prominent as the ones from Gujarat at least since the ninth century. Kollam[21] was an important port of call for

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[21] Southern Coast of Kerala

Arab ships during the time of the Sung Dynasty's (Chinese) forays to the ocean. Later this port was dwarfed by Kozhikode[22]. Kozhikode's rise and fall is said to mirror shifts in west Asian trade routes[23]. Though there was a decline in the Persian Gulf as a trade centre in the Arabian Sea, Arab traders began to move towards the new urban centre of Kozhikode during the time when Egypt was under the control of Mamluks. This in turn coincides with upheavals in the Malabar Coast urban systems with Kozhikode based Zamorins gaining control (Krishna Ayyar 1938).

Structures of the society and culture undergo a much more concrete and contextualised analysis when informed by history. Wolf states that 'the world of humankind constitutes a manifold, a totality of interconnected processes and inquiries that disassemble this totality into bits and then fail to reassemble it, thus falsifying reality. Concepts like 'nation', 'society', and 'culture' name bits, and threaten to turn names into things. Only by understanding these names as bundles of relationships, and by placing them back into the field from which they are abstracted, can we hope to avoid misleading inferences and increase our share of understanding"(2). The world systems are not mere outgrowths of a 'particular economy' (colonial capitalist for instance which tends to get over-emphasised in urban analysis from parts of India). They are the results of the historical engagements of different systems with different positioning. It is important to specify the different abstractions and classifications used to describe phenomena.

As Wolf also argues, it is important to consider the qualifying aspects involved in anthropological analysis (as against political or economic ones) especially with the need to re-conceptualise urban processes through human agencies. But then people everywhere have different ways of confronting or engaging with changing orders. So

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[22] Northern Coast of Kerala

[23] Das Gupta (1967) links the process to such historical occurrences like the transformation of Abbasid Caliphite, or Baghdad.

one can neither externally apply categories on phenomena based on pan Indian models nor engage in retrospection on oriental otherness on the pretext of becoming critical of eurocentrism. The attempt is not even to put urban processes in a world systemic perspective *a la* Wallerstein (2004), which seems to suggest a fusion into seamless whole at the worst. On the contrary urban processes in which people have been implied in, like the Indian Ocean systems, had relative autonomies and urban constellations necessarily did not acquire centralising or fortified nature.

1.1 Urban Antecedents in 'Kerala':

The regions around the coasts of central Kerala centered on present Kodungalloor often come up when enquiries are made about the urban past of Kerala. Associations are often made to the ancient port city of Muchiri mentioned in *Periplus*[24]. Such associations notwithstanding, after recent archeological works, more towards the south centered on the place called Pattanam, insights into a possible urban past linked to Indian Ocean trade have come up. The newly discovered, multi-period site excavated by the Kerala Council for Historical Research, Pattanam has revealed diverse finds associated with Indian Ocean exchange including imports from Rome, West Asia and China[25]. The Pattanam site has yielded valuable evidence dating back to the 2nd century B.C. and up to 10th century A.D. Social scientific or

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[24] The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea is a text that has been has been ascribed to different dates between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD, but a mid-1st century date is now the most commonly accepted. The text is unique in providing accurate insights into what the ancient world knew about the lands around the Indian Ocean.

[25] The Hindu, Sunday, May 03, 2009 (C. Gouridasan Nair)/ Research Communication: *Chronology of Pattanam:*

a multi-cultural port site on the Malabar coast (P. J. Cherian1, G. V. Ravi Prasad, Koushik Dutta, Dinesh Kr. Ray, V. Selvakumar and K. P. Shajan)

anthropological insights and commentaries from such major breakthroughs may have to wait.

Discussions of early urbanisation centered very often on nodes along ports. From what may be gathered from some of the existing sources, interpretations may be made before getting into more recent times. The limitations of such methods are often brought to light in the context of increasing number of archaeological studies. For instance, correlations of archaeological material to the texts available have been always in practice as in the case of texts like the *Periplus* (or other ancient texts) and the tendency is now being interrogated. For instance the customary practice for South Indian archaeologists is to label sites and objects in Kerala and Tamil Nadu as "Tamil," without considering whether signifiers exist in the material record that substantiate or refute this notion of cultural separateness[26].

There are very important problematics that such a criticism can address of which perhaps the most important is the possibility of decentering existing historical narratives in a constructive manner. It is also true that these are the very texts that have led to current research situations. So enquiries into early histories and urban past can become contexts to reinterpret texts as well. Texts of the *Sangham*[27] period up to

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[26] Chera, Chola, Pandya: Using Archaeological Evidence to Identify the Tamil Kingdoms of Early Historic South India (Journal article by Shinu A. Abraham; Asian Perspectives: the Journal of Archaeology for Asia and the Pacific, Vol. 42, 2003)

[27] Refers to a body of classical Tamil literature created between the years c. 600 BCE to 300 CE. *Tolkāppiyam* and *Purananuru* are good examples. The first one is a work on the grammar of the Tamil language and the earliest known extant work of Tamil literature. It's possibly unique in the sense that it describes more the dynamics of life. Parts of it gives the classification of land types, and seasons and defines modes of life for each of the combinations of land types and seasons for different kinds of people. *Purananuru* is poetic work belonging to the Sangam period corresponding to between 200 BCE – 100 CE. It is a source of information on the political and social history of pre-historic times in Tamil

the sixth century AD, epigraphs, temple records or grants may be subjected to such exercises.

As for the purpose of the current project; the above note is meant to communicate the idea that early forms of urbanisation existed in and around the region studied. The region may have had structuring significance on the social formations that followed, resonating in later social tendencies and trajectories. So when formally written sources of urban forms in large quantities may appear more in the context of 'colonial bureaucracies' or 'bureaucratised princely states' they can not be imagined to inaugurate the very process that we now call 'urban' though several structural transformations may have ensued. But people have always entered into dialectical engagements with forms of governance and it is their engagements, and embodiments of, social orders that will inform the discussion of the urban context of Kochi and at a later phase Ernakulam. These may be important in understanding both the continuities and ruptures involved in new urbanisation.

There is a need to be suspicious of categories and models and to be aware of their historical and cultural contingencies before getting into the core of anthropological analysis. Therefore when I proceed to the analysis of the contemporary urban, it will be the phenomenon observed on the ground in ways they are embodied by people through situations that will determine any kind of categorisations or evaluations.

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speaking regions. The poems deal with the *puram* (external) concepts of life such as war, politics, wealth, as well as aspects of every-day living.

(See Zvelebil, Kamil. 1973. *The smile of Murugan on Tamil literature of South India*. Leiden: Brill/Mudaliyar, Singaravelu A., Apithana Cintamani. 1931. *An encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature*- Reprinted by Asian Educational Services, New Delhi (1983))

1.2 <u>Broader Notes on Urban Antecedents to the Modern State:</u>

The early history of settlement patterns, broadly in the region represented by Kerala must be pieced together from different sources. Among these are the references in some Tamil works of the *Sangham* Period. This refers to a set of Tamil literary works mainly composed 2000 to 1500 years B.C. These early literary records of Southern India deal with such day-to-day themes as love, war, governance, trade, and bereavement. The name 'Kerala' does not appear in the *Sangham* texts (Gurukkal 1999: 25-37; Narayanan 1999: 38-61). But there are several references to the Chera Dynasty which ruled over major parts of the region. The name is said to have been mentioned in some of Ashoka's inscriptions from 3rd century B.C and in the work called 'Periplus of the Erythrian Sea' (Sastri 1955) which is thought to have been written during the early years of the modern era. There are some memoirs of foreign travellers and inscriptions on copper plate grants as well.

It cannot be ascertained how the earlier forms of state arose in Kerala. But historical records, inscriptions and legends mention that the Chera realm flourished between the third century BC and about the fifth century AD and was contemporary with the Chola Empire similar in structure[28]. When this system collapsed by the ninth century the west coastal region that now roughly constitutes Kerala broke down into principalities which became feudal states. According to Kathleen Gough (1980)[29] in the coastal regions of Kerala, a form of the feudal mode of production developed, independently of but in crucial respects comparable to Western Europe and Japan. The infrastructure that evolves along with an extensive irrigation system did not

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[28] Sastri K N [1932]: "Studies in Chola Histpry and Administration",

University of Madras.

[29] Modes of Production in Southern India. Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 15, No. 5/7, Annual Number (Feb., 1980)

evolve in Kerala where rain fed land could remain fragmented with no need for extensive systems.

There was no state management of the economy and almost no bureaucracy in the petty kingdoms that came up[30]. There were several *Naduvazhi* (approximately a feudal chieftain) dominated enclaves scattered around with no universalised polity or large singular centralisations. *Nagarams*[31] during this time were essentially merchant guilds with their own self governing systems (eg. *Manigramams* and *Anchuvannams* were the better known ones with Syrian Christian and Jewish merchants managing the everyday affairs). From the ninth to fifteenth centuries such merchant associations seemed to have flourished. While remaining self governing these guilds paid taxes to the local monarch.

According to Narayani Gupta (1991) the great volume of coastal and overseas trade necessitated warehousing, quarters for merchants, local, and foreign, which accounted for the towns on the Kerala coast. This she thinks forms a contrast to the urban concentrations in the interior of Kerala, whose people had a marked antipathy to living in towns. But as in the case of Early Medieval Tamil Nadu (Champakalakshmi 1979)[32], with dependable hinterland that assured agricultural output, there must have been rural urban continuums. Often the networks of exchange acted as conduits in the transmission of agrarian surplus to overseas markets, as well as for the goods that came in to be transported to the hinterlands through the mediation of port cities. Commodity production of select items developed in some of

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[30] Kathleen Gough (1980) and Panikkar, K M [1960]: "A History of Kerala, 1498-1801", Annamalai University.

[31] A Malayalam word used to indicate city at present

[32] 'Growth of Urban Centers in South India: Kudamukku-Palaiyarai, the Twin City of Colas' *Studies in History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Jan-Jun 1979/ 'Urban Processes in Early Medieval Tamil Nadu' (in *The City in Indian History* Ed by Indu Banga, 1991.

the ports that developed as early urban nodes of exchange. But without a centralizing empire and replete with antagonisms between guilds or with other populations, such urban formations were prone to controls by maritime powers[33].

Even when this involved tussles with existing powers like the Arabs, the European merchant capital started gaining control over some of these nodes through alliances and co-operation with local monarchs. Until the time of Portuguese involvement the urban systems were not dominated by any particular form of governance (Chaudhuri 1985). During the Portuguese period the treaties with local powers (that gradually consolidated into larger states) provided them with goods below market prices and their control of earlier trade routes (Asian vessels sometimes had to purchase permits) resulted in the transformation of ports like Kozhikode. But this does not indicate the general decline in the existing merchant systems (Das Gupta 1967: 11). With major changes in the priorities of the relatively stronger maritime power, Kochi became more important in terms of transactions, in scale and form different from the earlier Indian Ocean system.

Changes in urbanisation during this period are not solely attributable to changes in the maritime equations though this was indeed more significant for the west coast and early forms of urbanisation in Kerala. But such important transformations in power like the emergence of Vijayanagara Empire (after 1350s) focused less on coastal trade and agrarian pursuits (Mahalingam 1940; Krishnaswami Pillai 1964; Fritz 1985) than on feudal forms of appropriation. How far this has transformed the existing systems on the western coast is little known. But this coincides with the emergence of temples as centers of production not necessarily along the coasts (Ramaswamy 1985) and the emergence of feudal systems of production in the southern peninsula. The Vijayanagara phase may be significant as an interim context of urban transformation that may be important when one thinks of the type of urban reconfigurations after the Portuguese.

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[33] Notes 5 to 7

The Portuguese did not primarily aim at the control of land masses. Portuguese ships first hugged the African coast and then sailed to the Asian waters, erecting naval stations and commercial depots on the way, seeking not continental domination, but profitable trade. It is even doubtful whether they had an all encompassing continental idea, as with many others like the Spaniards who probably did control more landmasses. In Indian Ocean, and South China Sea they encountered a trade network more highly developed than that of Europe or what became Europe (Frank 1998/Poonnen 1978). Into this complex they inserted themselves as merchantmen. They interacted with the local population primarily through commercial agents and through what may now be called clerical or artisan labour, both of native and Portuguese descent. They eventually emplaced themselves in fortified enclaves or rather emporia with the entire cultural repertoire, like ecclesiastical bodies, to surround them.

The Dutch also worked largely on the basis of contract, through their alliances with the ruling structures which favoured different networks than the Portuguese (for instance Jews and Konkani merchants in Kochi). In effect, at their topmost glory both these European powers remained enclaves among enclaves, or kings among versions of kings. It should be noted that there was no all encompassing empire in the South West during that time. The princely states that formed alliances with the Portuguese or Dutch or entered into conflicts with them were products of fragmented aggrandisement of territories around prominent feudatories. This is very much unlike the monumental empires that may perhaps be seen elsewhere.

The English too until the middle of the 1800s clung to isolated forts and depots on the peripheries (Farooqui 2006). Even when the Moghul power's collapse did facilitate direct access and threw open existing administrative apparatus, this worked much differently in the South Western peninsula. The presence of the Mysorean kingdoms as well as the armed resistance in the more northen parts of Kerala stretched into 1800s. Though the English were much better administratively networked and had significant foothold in Madras, they behaved more like large corporate bodies in

much of central and southern regions. Their settlements were scattered and few (like in Kochi) and they were seldom seen as aggressors, even when they played a major role in the bureaucratisation and centralisation of princely states more towards the 1900s. Bureaucratisation involved rigidification of what the administrators found useful for social ordering. The administration selectively used the loose *jati* based ordering in order to consolidate a caste system with pan Indian overtones[34]. Status categories and caste ordering that came about were thus byproducts of state consolidations and cannot be stretched further back with any good evidence.

There were significant reorientations in global connections and maritime relationships subsequent to Portuguese or Dutch interventions. Starting from the sixteenth century political development along the Malabar coasts started to be altered and Indian Ocean commerce started to get restructured along the prominent ports as pointed out by M.N. Pearson (1987: 71-73). The process accelerated during the British rule and brought about new economic relations and class reorganisations as more and more sections of people began to be incorporated in the colonial forms of capitalism and the concomitant power structures.

It may be gathered, broadly from the historical overview of urban processes, that urbanisation from its early form developed by and large in a decentered manner. There may have been larger concentrations of urban nodes along the early ports like Kollam, Kozhikode or Kannur but these continuously mediated with the hinterlands from where most of the products got sourced. The hinterlands underwent active incorporation into the existing urban networks (Das Gupta 1967/ Melekandathil 2001/ Major 1857). Though there could have been power centers of a feudal type, they were not of any monumental scope and the ones which were there differed in between. It may be gathered from scholarship in the field that the coastal trading guilds and *Pettas* were of different character from land and temple based feudal corporations

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[34] Ward and Conner, Geographical and Statistical Memoir, page 133; V. Nagam Aiya, The Travancore State Manual, Volume-2, Madras:AES, 1989 (1906), page 72

that later took root, in that the control over economic life and transactions was much more decentered/autonomous, reciprocal (Morrison 1997/ Champakalakshmi 1996/ Abraham 1988) and heterarchic in the former.

The traditional scholarship and literacy in Kerala before greater centralisations through states may indicate a kind of decentered urban sociality. In the medieval systems of knowledge transmission, it was never the 'Brahmanic' *vedic* systems that were popular. Instead values and ideas were institutionally transmitted and discussed across populations through popular institutional channels like *Pallikoodams* or *Kudipallikoodams*[35]. Many such institutes "survived nearly a century of competition with the organised grant receiving schools" at a later phase which is an "indication of the roots they had"[36]. Besides these, in the trading centres and 'towns' which came up in Kerala's early periods of Christian era, the Buddhist and Jain traditions of education that maintained non exclusive character made their presence felt. In the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, perhaps unlike the rest of India, 'non-Brahmin groups' acquired higher literary skills and the process was spread out. Large numbers of men and women were proficient in Malayalam in the early eighteenth century in Kerala[37]. This goes along with the need for production of a repertoire of communication that goes along with peculiar networking of people through urban nodes with no stark differentiation based on categories like 'rural' and 'urban'. Until the early 19th century or before the activities of the London Mission Service or Church Mission society there was no considerable involvement of Europeans in institutional literacy. The Dutch commercial establishments or the Portuguese traders

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[35] N V Manuel (1972) and S Desivinayagom Pillai (1929), p 203/ K erala Kaumudhi (1 983);N Jayachandran Thodiyur (1980) and Deepika (1980).

[36] N V Manuel (1972), p 32

[37] K Gough (1975), p 151

who concentrated along the coasts never had educational priorities that coincided with large bureaucratisation[38].

A major transformation in urban formation started off with aggrandisement of states like Travancore or Kochi and the contractual agreements and maritime treaties with the Portuguese. Kochi could have emerged from a relatively small harbour/entrepot centre into a major port city after European mediations, first through Portuguese and then through the Dutch East India Company. In the process an Indian ocean trading system was getting replaced by a Europe centered capitalist system, at least in ports like Kochi.

The political centralisation of the princely states of Kochi (Menon 1911) and Travancore during the reign of Martanda Varma[39] innaugrated state mediation in different realms including that of knowledge transfer. This coincides with the greater involvement of British corporate interests in state bureaucracies and urban administration. The introduction of land tax, unknown in Kerala before that[40] for instance could have resulted in a reconfiguration of places based on a totally different theory of centralised surplus extraction. The idea of an administrative centre and peripheral regions became systematised. The new urban populations mediated by the aforementioned institutions were often incorporated in the British administrative mechanisms.

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[38] S N Mukherjee (1951), p 16.

[39] Centralisation could have affected the traditional village system which can affect the services maintained in the village. On the relationship between services and administration see Vera Anstey (1957), Vol XVI, p 153/ and for the impact of centralization A P Ibrahim Kunji (1976) Ch IX/(1975), Vol. II. Part IV.

[40] P N Kunjan Pillai (1966).

Capital began to move in unprecedented scales to sectors like plantation and spice trade. But the introduction of monopolies in such erstwhile commercial networks like the ones based on pepper trade[41] meant that large populations who had once been part of decentered urban systems got de-urbanised[42].

Box: 1

Pepper networks, European interventions and De-Urbanisation:

There was a flourishing and ongoing enterprise related to the west-coast networks as well as the Indian Ocean. Such urban networks preceded the early European interventions and in effect Europeans entered as added and relatively minor players (Chaudhuri 1978, Das Gupta and Pearson 1987, Arasaratnam1986, Raychaudhuri and Habib 1982). The production through pepper networks of Malabar, in what became the state of Kerala, more than doubled in the sixteenth century alone and less than a third was exported to Europe. Sixteen times more spice was exported overland by Asians through west Asia than what went around the Cape on Portuguese ships (Pearson 1989). This is just to suggest that there have been well developed urban networks, like the pepper ones, that in fact got de-urbanised, before European and comprador state mediated urban processes set in. Similar tendencies were observed in the eastern Coromandel as well. The European trade in its new

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[41] V Nagam Aiya (1906), Vol I, Ch VI, p 411, and B Sobhanan (1977), Ch IV, p 74

[42] In the case of the state of Travancore, traditional industry (particularly weaving-described as "next in importance to agriculture") suffered a setback in the latter half of nineteenth century (V Nagam Aiya (1906), Vol 111, Ch XVII, pp 287-9.

forms, by the 17th century, cut deep into the trade that had been traditionally carried on in that region. The earlier arteries were violently disrupted by the Dutch in the course of the 17th century. Indian trading links with the Moluccas and the Celebes, Bantam and the north Javanese ports, as well as west coast of Sumatra were cut off one by one (Arasaratnam 1995). The early colonial interventions led to substantial reductions in monetary life (Perlin1983: 78). Europeans were able to take advantage of the decline in the existing urban networks of Asia. As Marshall observes the time was difficult for maritime commerce in Asia whether or not the Englishman was offering his services in competition. Only when the Indian counterparts got substantially weakened did the English influence in the west coast began to grow. But since then the ground was fast lost to British commercial orders and the later colonial state (Marshall 1987: 292, 293). There had been a definite deterioration in the commercial life in India, in comparison to conditions in the 17th century (1994:252) with the onset of British colonialism as observed by Grover. As Das Gupta and Pearson (1987: 20) observe, "the change comes only late in the 18th century, and in way it is an endogamous game. Europeans finally burst out, and changed this structure, but they exploded from within an Asian context".

1.3 <u>Kochi and Ernakulam: Formation of the Immediate Urban Systems:</u>

Written records are sparse, specifically on Kochi[43], until the fifteenth century. The sketchy records offer glimpse into the past of the region. While these serve as

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[43] Ma-Huan, a Chinese Muslim, in an Arab ship is said to have mentioned first the name, Kochi. This was in 1409.

pointers, there are no documents that represent a continuous social history of the field of study. Folklore, myths and strong oral traditions speak of Parasurama, Onam or the arrival of St. Thomas. More communitarian attempts like *Keralolpathi*[44] allude to myths that foreground the Brahminical perspective. Political descriptions and narratives of the administrative register, as found in the gazetteers, make up a mixed basket of myths, oral history, folklore and written records that throw light on the past. Nevertheless social links that existed often transcend administrative divisions or continuously engage with social orders as they are perceived from time to time. The contextual richness in the ways in which people and places must have mixed transcends the structures indicated by the records.

Major parts of Kochi and Ernakulam came within the administrative parameters of the royal house of *Perumpadappu Swarupam* (Menon 1911: 50-51) around 6th century A.D. *Swarupams* were the large numbers of small territorial units, over which a powerful matrilineal joint family exercised their hereditary political and juridical authority in Medieval Kerala. The units were often known by the name of the place as in the case of *Perumpadappu*. This region was autonomous and controlled by the secular authority of the ruling joint family (Ganesh 1999:222). The *Perumpadappu Swarupam* centered itself in *Vanneri* in central Kerala, but later moved to *Mahodayapuram* because of the persistent attacks of the Zamorin from the north. By the time of the Portuguese arrival (by 1500s) the capital was in Kochi. Kochi, after the first half of fourteenth century slowly gained prominence as a harbour. The fluvial changes in Periyar are thought to have facilitated this transformation. This coincides with the waning of Cranganore (Kodungalloor) towards the north, where the harbour got silted up. At a later period Mattancherry, which was also a centre of domestic trade, became the centre, soon to be followed by Thrissur and finally Thripoonithura, more to the south.

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[44] 18th century Brahminical work

Kochi was not like Bombay on the Western Coast, where a pre-British city did not confine the later urban formation. Though fortified at ports during the Portuguese and Dutch involvements, it was not a stereotypical 'colonial city' with spatial dualisms/racial profiling. But with the consolidation of the princely state there were divisions based on administrative centres. Kochi in course of time became one among the many small urban nodes but nevertheless a centre for entrepot-commerce with a natural harbour. There were several formal maritime agreements and activities especially in the context of the more powerful princely states towards the north and the south. For example the northern state's alliance with Arabs was strategically responded to when Kochi sought alliance[45] with the Portuguese.

The subsequent administrative structures, mediated by European maritime powers and corporations had to take into account space which had already been historically appropriated[46]. The external powers that entered into administrative co-operation could not modify the usage of space to suit their commercial requirements and as a result had to confine themselves to fortified zones. In the case of Kochi such zones were like miniatures of 'external cities' talked about in the case of Delhi[47]. Portuguese factories provide initial models of such zones. An active economic and administrative contact with the indigenous groups and urban formations was necessary. But as Ganguly (1964: 57, 68) observes, it is never clear if the Portuguese introduced any organisational change in commerce and industrial production even in limited areas or sectors and to all appearance, they made use of the existing

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[45] Zayn al-Din's polemical work Tuhfata l-MujJhidin Tuhfat is a chronicle of the stiff resistance put up by the Muslims of Malabar against the Portuguese from 1498. He analyzes society from the point of view of Muslim community especially in the context of larger state alliances with an overtly Christian power in Kochi.

[46] Meera Kosambi (*Bombay and Poona: A Socio-Ecological Study of Two Indian Cities*, 1650-1900 (Stockholm 1980))

[47] Dalrymple (New Delhi 2002)

machineries of production and commerce. Changes, as indicated before, slowly began to take effect more in terms of reorientations and re-mediations of global links.

The royal authority in Kochi existed along with the Portuguese and Dutch suzerainty. The first fort of the Portuguese on the Indian soil, Fort Manuel, was built at Kochi (October 1503) by Fransisco Albuquerque[48], on a plot gifted by the *Perumpadappu* (Sudhakaran 1999: 228-230). The fortification also helped them to pursue a channel of trade in accordance with their priorities while warding off attacks such as the ones from the earlier Arab traders. The Dutch too later set up their headquarters at Kochi and closed all inlets to enemies (Iyer 1999: 246-252). But their involvement in local politics was less than that of the Portuguese. Kochi was made into a prominent harbour for the exchange of spices from the other Dutch colonies and the place gained more prominence as a centre of commerce. Through Portuguese and Dutch occupations Kochi became a fortified zone of commercial extraction. But unlike their predecessors the Dutch did not repress the local Jews and the Christians who actively engaged in commerce (Poonen 1929, 1978). Kochi maintained a distinct cosmopolitan character, as a centre of spice trade and to a lesser extent as a ship building centre, until the consolidation of British administration after the replacement of the Dutch by the end of 18th century.

Thus there has been no 'colonial urban development' in the abstract but instead urban formations ensued from specific historical conjunctures (Raychaudhuri and Habib 1982). There were transformations in the relative autonomy of different groups over time[49] especially with the centralization of state and revenue systems (Menon 1911). By the time of the British the urban dynamics were more secured and systematized in

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[48] Portuguese general under whom Kochi was reclaimed after the attacks of Zamorin from the North

[49] Malabar(Madras: Madras Government Press, 2 nd ed. I951) Ch. 3

favour of the administrators with many erstwhile urban networks either shaped or transformed in order to fit into the new colonial modes of capitalist exchange.

In the princely state, bureaucratised and governed jointly with British administrators, the property rights of the soil were distributed among the sovereign (*Pandaravaka*) and the feudal lords called *Janmis* who were mostly local Brahmins (*Janmam* being Birth and *Janmi* having the right of ownership via birth). But the continuous conflicts between the *Namboothiri* Brahmins, who formed only a tiny percentage of the population and non-Brahmin class (Many of whom later got consolidated as the *Nair* Caste) produced significant Non Brahmin landowners as well. The intense rivalries between landlords created several intermediary functionaries like soldiers, accountants, or collectors whose functions too became hereditary and systematized more towards the nineteenth century. *Adiyans* and *Kudiyans* (approximated as Slaves and Tenants) constituted themselves within this power structure. The rights (like *Kanam*) never had the permanency of the *Janmam* rights. Before the institution of land revenue system in the 18th century the feudal lords had absolute power over land, even with the existence of a sovereign. But towards the end of the 19th century there was a major centralisation of land under the throne, through the subjugation of the independent nobles. The British aided this drive which in turn streamlined the collection of land revenue (Tharakan 1999: 360-401), which by now had become one of the major sources of 'colonial' wealth. With the introduction of a structured survey and revenue system, land administration was homogenised and revenue flowed into state coffers with ease. Though many tenants got the proprietary rights over land, the feudal order persisted, now with an increased number of non-Brahminical landlords.

A significant and even epochal transformation in the feudal system ensued. Whereas in the context of early urban formations the mercantile feudal order was less centralised and systematized, in the context of the British administration that collaborated with princely states there were attempts to mediate, systematize, and approximate urban formations to pan Indian models rationalized by oriental

mentalities[50] of administrators. But despite this and claims that the end of the nineteenth century was the biggest single influence on town growth in general[51], there was nothing that marked a revolution in the urban pattern especially in aspects like distribution of settlements and population. Kerala by the time had perhaps the largest proportion of urban dwellers, but they remained distributed in the many small towns (Gupta 1991).

Many town censuses indicate that there were no significant *jati* based spatial divisions in urban centers until the consolidation of British administration[52]. In the case of Kochi small *pettas*[53] inhabited chiefly by local Christians often conducted commerce (Madras 1893). Merchants who may be classified into Hindus, Muslim, or Christians tended to cluster together. But the Europeans made a fetish of respecting what they saw as 'caste divisions'. The needs of control systematised/legitimised the feudal order[54] dominated by such structures like the *Janmi* or *Naduvazhi*[55]. The feudal

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[50] I use oriental mentality to indicate the reification of stereotypes in existence since classical antiquity (Said 1978) and their systematization in the contexts of bureaucratisations and later reproductions in their different forms and the consequent formation of a certain attitude.

[51] C.J.Baker, An Indian Rural Economy, 1880-1955

[52] Contemporary descriptions of towns, in particular the detailed census of the town of Tanjore in 1788

[53] *Geographical and Statistical Memoir of the Survey of Travancore and Cochin*, 1810-21, Vol. 4. Madras 1893.

[54] The feudal order may be headed by either a person who has right through birth (in which case a caste order is kept intact) or by a chieftain from non Brahminical castes. Even Christian and Muslim feudal families existed. In Kochi the feudal lords were brought more under the control of king by end of 18th century.

[55] Refers to the network of landed aristocracy that evolved in Kerala. The peculiar type of feudal relationship in which each Nadu or District had its own hereditary or nominated governor. The territory ruled by the king for example was divided amongst hereditary

order was kept intact to make 'colonial' extractions well managed. "From the beginning of colonial supremacy, in the period of early accumulation, and through the early 19th century, the chief method of colonial exploitation in India was extraction of revenue, chiefly land revenue. The chief consequence of British rule was a sharp intensification of feudal exploitation of Indian peasantry."(Tharakan 1999: 364-365) But at the same time many tenants got permanent occupancy rights on the land during the beginning of the nineteenth century[56]. Thus even with a predominant feudal form of extraction there were significant transformations in ownership.

After the first movement of Indian independence (1857) the administrative policy was handled directly by the British crown. The economy was thrown open to free trade. The East India Company was no more a monopoly. The existing market that rested on monopoly capital gave way to an economic development that supported 'colonial' capital. The policies pursued during this time took Kerala and the trading centres of Kochi through a phase which oversaw a decline in local industry and the domination of sectors that facilitated 'colonial economy' (commercialised mono crop plantation[57], raw material export)[58]. "The traditional trade pattern consisting of export

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chieftains (as units called *nads* ruled by *naduvazhis*) and in turn for military purposes into smaller units called *desams* ruled by *desavazhis*.

[56] Under the regime of Sakthan Thampuran (1790-1805). There was a centralisation process in Kochi during this time.

[57] Early forms of plantation did exist in these regions and plantations like pepper with commercial significance possibly manages by groups like Syrian Christians were in place for a long time. In fact the involvement with pepper and inhibitions to abandon this had often kept some of them away from coffee plantations initially (P K Michael Tharakan, 1998, CDS Working Paper)/ K.N.Ganesh, "Keralathinte Innalakal, (Malayalam), Cultural Publications Department, Govt. of Kerala, Trivandrum. 1997, pp.89-90, and Jan Kieniewicz's '*Pepper gardens* and market in pre-colonial Malabar'. See also J. Innes Miller, *The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 80

of manufactured goods also, had ceased to exist. In its place this region, like other parts of the colonial empire, had become a food producing and raw material producing appendage of British economy" (ibid). The feudal order exacerbated contradictions in the context of new relationships of production. The newly empowered landed gentry among the *Ezhavas* and the organisational strength of *Pulayas* especially by the 40s indicate the class reconfiguration and subsequent challenges to the feudal order that repressed such communities[59].

By the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century the persistence and consolidation of a feudal hierarchical order along with new economic relations had created a contradictory social environment (Rajeevan 1999). The 'caste system'[60] in Kerala acquired a strong correlation with class structure and consolidated to a rigid ideological system. This creates conflicts between two forms of class relations viz. the rigid ideology of 'caste' based on feudal controls (Gurukkal 1999)

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[58] In Kochi, a centralisation process initiated during the regime of Raja Rama Varma, popularly known as Sakthan Thampuran (1790-1805) had already put much of the land under the sircar which facilitated colonial administration. The pattern of development involving the Kochi harbour, the canals and roadways in the latter half of the century too helped colonial patterns of growth.

[59] In 1907, the Pulaya Harijans formed the *Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sanghan* (SJPS). The Ezhava Social Reform Movement (ESRM) and the SNDP were increasingly vociferous in their demands.

[60] Caste System is a meta category used instead of or to translate and interpret two different schemes - the Varna, theoretical scheme based on idealized Brahminical traditions and some medieval codes, and the Jati as used in certain ancient texts selected. The significant changes in the structure of agricultural practices with the proliferation of Brahman settlements, the institution of caste and ideology to structure the peasantry etc., in Tamilakam, is talked about by Dr. P.M. Rajan Gurukkal. He says, "In Kerala the genesis of a similar society seems to have become complete before 9th century A.D. as evidenced by the inscriptions there." (Historical Antecedents, Perspectives on Kerala History-The Second Millennium).

and colonial capitalism. The awareness of oppression under the hierarchical system (Namboothiri 1999: 426-455) became intense among the '*avarna*'[61] (*Pulayas, Ezhavas*) that broke ties with the traditional order mediated by laws of untouchability to venture into the new avenues "based on monetization and commodity production" (ibid 429-430; Mohan 1999: 456-485).

Many tenants gained permanent occupancy rights with the several changes in land policy during the early phase of twentieth century especially with the Tenancy Act. From the administrative point of view the increased apportionment of land for agriculture (both cash and food crops) translated into more land revenue (ibid.). The expansion of agriculture and the involvement of a wider section of population in the production relations weakened the customary authority of overlords including temples and Brahmins (Ganesh 1999: 123-179). As indicated before, the new economic opportunities took the contradictions with the persistence of feudal 'caste' hierarchies to a snapping point. Egalitarian notions of space evolved with the reform movements which threw open erstwhile hierarchical spaces like approach roads to temples or administrative premises. Land redistribution and reform during the tenure of the first elected communist government after the formation of Kerala State significantly transformed the casteist categorisations and class map of the place and politicised the urban spaces in Kochi to an unprecedented degree.

1.4 Urban Configuration since the Formation of 'Kerala' till the Nineties:

People in many ways had constituted themselves against the social structure as a concrete opposition to the different forms of ordering (the entrenchment of 'caste based feudal orders' mediated by Princely states and the British or forms of administrative control that were part of the general 'colonial policy') . The social

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[61] Varna literally means colour. In the context of 'caste system' (system of Varna), the avarna means the lower 'caste' people and savarna means the upper 'caste'.

structure was reciprocally shaped by the public in so far as new legislations came with the formation of Kerala State[62]. Though there was fierce opposition from the landlords and religious authorities like the church groups, and even the imposition of presidents' rule on occasions (1959, 1965) the Communist government implemented policies aimed at redistributing land, and providing education, pension plans, minimum wage legislation, and housing for the poor (Kannan 1988). The policies of land reform initiated by the left wing governments indicate the level of political reflexivity the public had reached through their active involvement in the making of opinions and the changing perception of spaces as means of control that need redistribution. The policies initiated soon after the formation of the state imposed limits on land ownership and distributed surplus land to the landless on unprecedented scales.

It was made clear when the first left wing government took office that it was not their immediate agenda to form a socialist or communist ministry and that it was impossible to make even a formal arrangement given the limited power under the constitution of India. That any such programme requires certain pre-requisites was also stressed by the first chief minister, E M S Namboothiripad (Pillai 2007). The structural evolution of what constituted as the left was distinct from the modern European versions or the state formats it acquired in China or the USSR. The social and historical specificities here were crucial in the structuring of state practices. What

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[62] A new Legislative Assembly was created with the formation of Kerala State, for which elections were held in 1957. A communist led government came into office, perhaps for the first time through an election process. Subsequent radical land reforms introduced by E.M.S.Namboodiripad's administration favoured tenants and labourers. There were several educational reforms, some of which irritated certain communities. There were programs for sections of the poor are combined and establishment of the public (food) distribution system (PDS). Special nutritional and health programs for prenatal care and for children and pension schemes for agricultural labourers make up the most extensive social security system in India (Kannan 1988).

came to be was never a post revolutionary imposition of a singular state order, but an embodiment of equality that managed to transcend several forms of rigid orderings, maintained before the formation of the modern state through consolidated princely formations and foreign administrative orders. The ideology of equality emerged in the several spaces of exceptions that survived different forms of ordering, through the fragmented urban constellations without monumental proportions.

By the 1970s there was a paradigm shift in the class configuration of the state, ensuring greater devolution of power to the excluded, and the end of landlordism and the rights through birth (*Janmi* status) that marked the previous century. A new public space was produced out of the popular demands that emerged since the previous century. Though there was an institutionalization of community based movements out of the once reform movements, a non casteist and de-feudalised language mediated by the communist movements, trade unions, and cooperatives (re)emerged. Components of modern state citizenship based on equality got entrenched through urban institutions.

There was a rise of large educated middle class as well as the withdrawal of large populations from an earlier agricultural production system with feudal overtones into salaried jobs. The 'welfare state' often operated in a nation state system which increasingly starved the state of resources needed to maintain status quo. For example, the state allocations to sectors that achieved a certain level of progress like health or education received lesser support in subsequent plans (George and Krishnakumar 2006). In effect, welfare was maintained along with disincentives. All this became exaggerated as part of the structural adjustment plan implemented after economic liberalisation. The new agricultural policies that were being implemented as a part of the structural adjustment programme tended to push up the costs of production which had huge impacts for the majority who were middle level land owners. There was an unprecedented withdrawal from the agricultural production process. Industries that catered to the primary modes of production were affected as well. Forms of stagnation in the production process that began to take root from the

1970s got compounded with soaring unemployment and lack of sustainability in social welfare expenditures[63]. In a state that maintained a public employment registry, unemployment reached large proportions.

Formal public jobs that incorporated the educated declined with new pressures on the welfare state while there was a rise in the new informal sectors that offered jobs with no security or 'fair wage'. This inaugurated another phase of urban transformation with larger migrations in the context of the destruction of primary sector, or resource depletions in 'rural regions'. Such migrations were not necessarily to the urban regions within the state but mostly to business centers like Bombay or to the Persian Gulf. The urban context was remade and reconfigured in the situation of extensive migration of Keralites to the Persian Gulf and elsewhere (Lukose 2009). This initiated another phase of global articulation which gets compounded by major urban initiatives happening in the context of liberalisation.

1.5 The Situation in Kochi-Ernakulam:

In the case of Kochi, after the formation of the new state, the place lost its urban tag and became one of the *taluks*[64] in the district of Ernakulam. Concomitant to the urbanisation of mainland Ernakulam, part of Fort Kochi, which used to be a port or a 'colonial entrepot', was peripheralised or suburbanised as a dense residential zone. But the inhabitants of Kochi confronted the present with memories and mentalities structured by a past. There are large variations in perception based on long associations, age, migrations, and distances. But in Kochi all the different perceptions come together in the everyday that transacts the memories of the past and revealed realities of the present. The strong narratives of urban life in Kochi are an admixture

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[63] K K George, 'Whither Kerala Model?' Session 7, ICKS-A, Vol 5, pp 8-10

[64] Revenue division in the district

of the stories, divergent ethnic past, and the convergence of experiences in the commercial spaces[65].

The mainland town, apart from housing many of the administrative offices and the courts (the High Court of Kerala is in Ernakulam), also received large number of middle class consumers. The process of commercialization and modernisation gave rise to new middle social strata of commercial farmers, traders, petty industrialists and professionals who in turn structured the urban dynamics of Ernakulam. The town began to grow into its present form on the boom in consumption, starting with such contexts as the success of rubber plantations in the surrounding places (like Kottayam district) and because of the redistribution of wealth after reform processes.

On a relative scale, but unlike other urban spaces in India like Bombay, Ernakulam too became a town for migrant-settlers, most of whom, came for work in the different public offices, banks, or trading centers. But there were major points of difference. Unlike some of the major urban systems elsewhere characterised by the existence of a dominant node like a primate city[66] (Castells 1977/ Mc Gee 1971), Kerala's urban system is comprised of constellations of evenly interspersed small and large towns. Even under conventional and standardized classifications based on criteria like demographical trends it is difficult to strictly dichotomise 'rural' against 'urban'. Terms like 'ruralopolis' have been coined under such circumstances (Sreekumar 1990). Ruralopolis is meant to evoke the image of an urban spatial structure arising from the concentration of rural communities. It has been conceived in the tradition of

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[65] The 'Chinese fishing nets' that now catch more tourists than fish are reminiscent of the contacts with the Ming dynasty of China. Arabs who later replaced the Chinese, the vestiges of Portuguese, Dutch, and English settlements; all form part of the cosmopolitan history and weave holistic social memories that often circulate as urban heritage.

[66] Such a city can be disproportionately larger, both in size and significance to the next ones in order.

describing extended settlement systems like megalopolis or ecumenopolis. But what this essentially indicates is the difficulty rendered by the historical trajectories of urbanisation that complicate strict spatial divisions. The degree of concentration of people and urban activity, even in the relatively more urbanized Ernakulam remained the lowest in India (Sankaranarayanan 1977). The differences in the scale of activity in between the relatively uniformly constituted small towns and bigger urban node are rather gradual, though broad functional divisions may be made (Janaki 1954)[67]. Even in those rural regions that have had long time associations with the urban nodes there was a continuous rise in wage labour. As in the general case of Kerala; significant proportions of the labourers in these rural regions engaged, unlike in other regions of India, in sectors other than agriculture, especially in the primary processing of agricultural products and small manufactures (Krishnaji 1979).

But as mentioned before, by the 1980s a transformation of urban profile was well in the making, mediated by external remittances, and exaggerated now by liberalisation policies that had slowly started to set in. The urban centre began to sop up the increasing number of people who came to work in the several private sector initiatives especially following the progressive decline of the existing production system in the peripheries and unemployment among large numbers of educated populations. The migration to the Gulf after the 1970s has been of a much higher scale than all the other forms of migrations within (Mathew and Nair 1978; Menon 1994). This was due to the economic boom in the gulf which in turn coincided with economic stagnation and unemployment in Kerala. Almost half of the migrants from India were from Kerala and this could be because of the historical relationships with the gulf countries (Nair 1989/ 1999). The remittances from the gulf peaked at the beginning of the eighties (Amjad 1989/Nayyar 1989) and often resulted in major changes in the profiles of town centers throughout the state and to a greater extent,

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[67] Thus there could be administrative towns like Thiruvananthapuram or Kozhikode, Commercial or industrial towns like Alapuzha, Mattancherry, Ernakulam, or Kollam; and agricultural markets like Kottayam or Chenganasserry (Janaki 1954)

that of Ernakulam. There has been for instance a burgeoning of retail activities and flooding of consumer goods through town centers, that otherwise grew as local markets.

There were greater infrastructural pressures by a coming together of a relatively more commercialised urban structure and characteristic patterns of consumption along with possible transformation in values and aesthetics (Osella 2007). There are more roads per capita in Kerala than the Indian average, but the road density is also four times the national average. The problems of garbage disposals are most pervasive and uniform here than elsewhere in India resulting in health issues that over burden the existing healthcare system[68]. There has also been a multiplying effect on land value and with the real estate business making a major entry, land prices have soared beyond middle class aspirations. So the core of the town increasingly has been occupied by middle to upper middle class as materialization of their investments. A large part of this was constituted by non- resident Keralites who made real estate investments for the future. Many erstwhile inhabitants felt the pressure of the growth of commerce, real estate, and congestion. They sold their land and moved out of Ernakulam. More than the other small towns in Kerala, Ernakulam had already become an urban space for consumption relatively devoid of permanent residents, by the time the corporate restructuring of the state took shape towards the nineties.

Under neo liberal globalisation contemporary forms of urbanisation display a total deconstruction of earlier forms that suited the territorial state, and the rationalisation of a new form that represents "universal tendency of capital" that Marx discusses (in relation to industrial capitalism). Accordingly the control of space rests with agencies that traverse and transcend territories. The state increasingly becomes a facilitator of the flow of capital than a planner of welfare. In the new context the roles and import of Ernakulam or Kochi stand reversed. Places are devalued to be perceived as spaces lying waste and vacant and 'available' for consumption in its different forms.

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[68] Reports in The Hindu from 2009 to December 2011

Ernakulam thus becomes a place congested with construction and it is no more an inevitable urban center. Kochi is already tucked away as a repository of the past, and as a tourist destination. The global agents wield control over tourism and real estate industry in the string of spaces that constitute old Kochi as a heritage zone.

Contemporary urbanisation is increasingly shaped by corporate capital. The densely packed commercial streets, the ever increasing value of space (the horizontal land surface and vertical spaces of apartments!), the simultaneous implosion (for lack of space) and implantations (into the once outlying villages and agricultural zones) indicate 'the urban' becoming a tissue of the global production organ.

The normative context of neo liberal globalisation, changing state structures and relationships of production weave an architectonics where people and places are in continuous engagement and new logics are in the making. The politics and economics influencing the course of urbanization mediate new urban centres with global markets. The neo liberal modes of production have de territorialized the extraction of surplus value in an earlier capitalist system. This may be seen in the case of the remapping of Ernakulam, with Kochi becoming the tourism/heritage zone and villages around Kakkanad transforming as 'cities'. In the subsequent chapters the urban scene will be shown as undergoing a spatial and temporal shift. The focus will be on the contemporary forms of urbanisation as this happens in villages east and north of the erstwhile urban centre, places that have been peripheries. Subsequently where Ernakulam might be used, this will refer more to the district administration and not to the post 1950s urban centre discussed here. There will still be continuous historical interventions throughout the thesis.

2. Urban Architectonics: From Heterarchic Places to Absolute Spaces

2.1 Distinct Phases of Urban Architectonics

Architectonics refers to the forces that have determined the structure that ensues. In the present context this is about urbanisation, the paradigm in which the social analysis will proceed. The dominant fact about the contemporary context is that the world is increasingly shaped by a rather pure version of the logic of capital, embodied in the neoliberal policies exemplifying post reform India. Any critical theorization must be situated in relation to the everyday transactions that embody the logic of capital which implies a grounded reading of the political economy of the present. The micro-management of the state processes are subject to a set of policy prescriptions that are to be taken for granted, or which increasingly turn normal.

It becomes imperative to explain what neoliberalism constitutes, as such terms will often be used to describe the contemporary situation. The neoliberal context is not one in which there is a neoliberal space and another one which is out of it. On the contrary this has become more of a descriptive tag for an encompassing order, where everyone has to be neoliberal. But the way it becomes so needs explanation and the contemporary urban context of places helps to further the explanation.

As will be shown through distinct cases from some of the places that have been focused upon, there is a move from what used to be heterarchic to more absolute forms. The function, direction, as well as the ways in which such shifts become embodied practices will be discussed in the chapters that follow. In the present chapter, two distinct historical phases of the region of Kakkanad, which form the focal point of my work, will be juxtaposed. In both phases people have been parts of urban processes of global proportions, but in distinct ways. The first of these phases resonates with a time period in which they have been part of decentered urban networks yet to be brought under any encompassing order like the state.

There was the intervening period in which the region moved relatively out of the urban spectrum when some of the earlier urban nodes like Ernakulam became the new urban centres. With the formation of the state, Kochi, that used to be the 'colonial urban centre' lost its central position and became one of the taluks in the district of Ernakulam. The large godowns[69] that represent the commercial past of the islands lay closed, many of the early trading houses were converted into tourist attractions, and people were deprived of basic infrastructure like clean drinking water and transportation facilities.

[Source/Own: Entry to one of the godowns that is now in disuse/or put to new uses]

Lanthenbatheriyile Luthiniyakal, a Malayalam novel by N.S.Madhavan accurately documents several conversations of people travelling back in boats from work in the factories of Ernakulam. They talk about the electric lights that may be seen from the

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[69] Ever since the trade shifted to mainland the importance of the bazaars and godowns of *Mattancherry* was reduced. Many old spice godowns here are converted to antique shops targeting tourists and many remain closed.

islands (which were once centers of trade and urbanisation). Many of the middle aged inhabitants of Fort Kochi and Mattancherry talk of the time when people increasingly started looking up to Ernakulam; of the lost significance of bazaars in Mattancherry; the closing down of many popular movie theatres in Kochi; the large godowns that went out of use; or the deterioration of employment. Kakkanad got stowed away as an outlying village of the Ernakulam Urban centre.

The effects of land reforms that were carried out in the sixties and seventies had been effective in the eastern villages of Ernakulam that are now getting urbanised[70]. Even when the hegemonic alignments of regional power blocks and central governments, at several points, intervened to water down re-distribution, the left movements found their rooting in the political public sphere of these places. Thus *Karshaka Sanghoms* (farmer collectives) occupied *michha bhoomi* (excess land) in the region and organized struggles for increased agricultural wages. The three major feudatories; the *Edapally Swaroopam*, *Punnorkodu Mana*, and *Chathakkal Tharakan*, were targeted[71]. They once enjoyed the residual prestige of royal patronage and controlled both land and labour based on a thoroughly ordered and bureaucratised surplus generation from rice cultivation. The last of the three, a Syrian Christian feudatory, was described as something of a 'terror', signifying the overt forms of violence associated with the feudal system.

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[70] Kizhakkambalam, Pallikkara, Thengod, Kakkanad, where the field work focused on- all eastern villages of Ernakulam.

[71] All the rest were *Pattakkar* (who had to give a certain share or amount as *Pattom*) and field labourers.

[Source/Own: Present form of the residence of one of the Christian landlords in the region]

The left movement, like elsewhere, started off as an agrarian movement for *patta bhaagam* (rights over leased land) in the 50s. At first these were not coordinated by people from the immediate region but by some personages of the early left[72]. There was a person from *Kolencherry*[73] close to the region and later some from Kunnathunad (collective name for the locality) as well[74]. The movement gained popular support in the sixties, and by the seventies became very strong. In the seventies, with the commissioning of a dam, and related agrarian reforms, in the predominantly agrarian society, *muppu krishi* (three times harvest) took root.

Noticeable were the strategies adopted by left formations against the state, through the seventies. Occupation of those lands which were held in 'excess', arguments with the state structures, as well as the court that broke with the official norms, all

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[72] Like K G Kartha (Perumbavoor), P. Govinda Pilla (Perumbavoor), P M Krishnan Nair, K Aliyar (Aluva) etc.

[73] by the name C A Varghese

[74] Like K A George

happened both during the left and the congress led governments. There were several *Vayanasaalas*[75] as well that came up through library movements. Trade union offices and *Vayanasaalas* were spaces for debates and discussion. There had been a consolidation of the working class not only in the agricultural sector, but also among small scale and traditional industries, municipal and bureaucratic workers. In general there was an increase in rural wage labour. The radical unions across sectors, bolstered by the communist party matured into pressure groups advancing particular interests. Theatre groups were active, as they had been all over Kerala[76]. Towards the eighties, following major redistributions of wealth, there was a tapering off of movements of change and a reordering of the everyday life on the basis of new needs and challenges. In the past two and a half decades though, the changes have been profound.

The autonomy with respect to the forms of production that existed in heterarchic order slowly diminished with the incorporation, first as a region with primary forms of production, and later as one of the residential zones in the context of urban congestions in Ernakulam. Though most of the people still depended on agriculture as the means of living, there were many towards regions like Kizhakkambalam who sought entrepreneurial ventures in secondary sectors of production. Many also became employed in public sector jobs. With land reforms, there was a burgeoning of a category called middle class, who increasingly became dependent on the urban centre of Ernakulam for employment as well as for consumption. Everyday life continued to be mediated by institutions like the church and extensive familial networks. The public sphere, which had found form through anti-feudal struggles

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[75] The main junction in Thengod is still known by the name.

[76] The drama Paattabaakki by C.K.Damodaran, a political drama that talked about need to change the agrarian relations, for instance was staged all across Kerala and especially in places where karshakasanghoms were getting stronger.

initiated by left movements, was sustained for a longer time by libraries, trade unions, and political participation.

A second phase of global incorporation comes in the post reform context. The economic reforms, "accelerated trade liberalization, which involved doing away with quantitative restrictions on imports and reducing customs tariffs, with attendant revenue implications. It dismantled controls on free operation of large industrial capital, domestic and foreign. It provided a host of direct and indirect concessions to industry, reducing the tax base of the government further. It provided a host of concessions to foreign investors in the hope that they would use India as a base for world market production" (Ghosh/Chandrasekhar 2000). In the subsequent years there was a marked deceleration both in the industrial growth of the previous decades and a domination of service sector activities. The effect in the service sector was the proliferation of low-wage, low-productivity service jobs.

The situation changed the very parameters of what is considered possible in the existing constellations. Zizek rightly calls such situation 'post-politics' (2001) in the sense that there is a futuristic presentation of new choices, as in new forms of living/ordering in contemporary urban situations. The older models are imagined to be disappearing as the social and political groups are percieved to have fulfilled their promises and have no new contract with the present[77].

As a prerequisite, the welfarist order that evolved through social reforms, as part of a political public sphere, and most importantly through land reforms had to disappear. There was an encompassing welfarist possibility after the formation of the modern state. A welfarist possibility is not the same as a systematized welfare state, as will be argued out in subsequent chapters. Rather, it is a politicised idea that springs from collective recognition of forms of subjection. This must, in the contemporary period,

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[77] Such situations are ddiscussed extensively in the final chapters

confront what Georgio Agamben calls global state of exception exemplified best in instances of urban renewals.

New ways of ordering have come with the adoption of neoliberal norms by the modern nation state. The insertion of state into the contemporary global economy required selective absorption of neoliberal norms for managing populations according to corporate requirements. Emerging models of urban restructuring need to be in line with the directives and prescriptions of international monetary organs like the IMF and World Bank[78]. The new mantra is that growth must have absolute priority, unlike before when development was not the necessary sequel to growth (Sen and Dreze 1996). The only way to bring about that kind of gowth is by creating incentives for capital at the expense of redistributions away from masses (Patnaik 1995). The new urban spaces started to selectively operationalise such plans with 'trickle down' promises for the future. The norms facilitate the everyday functioning of a truly transnational corporate class spread all over the world and use the time space co-ordinates of flexible production techniques (Harvey 1989) to designate places (as spaces) with specific functions within the global production regime. So the epicenter of neo liberal reforms is neither external nor internal, but takes characteristic effect in a contemporary urban discourse in places hitherto informed by forms of exceptionalities.

Juxtaposing case material from both the global phases of Kakkanad makes visible the differences in the translation of contemporary urban architectonic on places. While the aspect of placeness got maintained in the earlier heterarchic phase, the contemporary phase liquidates all aspects of placeness and implants the idea of space. Yi-Fu Tuan describes places as "centers of felt value where biological needs, such as those for food, water, rest, and procreation are satisfied." (1977: 4). But there is no

[78] For more on the links between Urban Reform packages and Global monetary institutions see The Economic Times and The Hindu reports (2007-2009) [e.g. Story titled "World Bank's $1b loan for JNNURM to come with strings". Economic Times. Dec 10. 2009]

watertight division of place and space, with place gaining a coherence and social endogeniety and space on the opposite pole signifying anything that fragments or disrupts this order. The relationship is complicated to the extent that placeness becomes also a function of disruption and fragmentation, a fall out of a sense of all these. But place certainly has been connected with the dependency communities have formed with the locality of concern in their everyday life.

Such place bounded relationships, can change over time as a function of the processes in which people in places get implied in. The sense of place can also take new forms, like that of nostalgic recollections of place bound events or become progressive processes (Massey 2005) rather than a frozen entity. There may never have been a coherent and homogeneous place ever in history. Rather it has always been "a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus" (ibid: 1994). But in contexts of major transformations, disruptions etc. the way people make sense of place depends on whether they look inward (resulting in nostalgic portrayals) or outward (at times resulting in futuristic expectations). As with the phenomenological approach (pace Heidegger) place is any day an orientation where a thinking of being gets structured.

2.2 <u>Places as Heterarchic Constellations:</u>

Sence of place and spatiality have always been in continuous evolution and have their bearing on wider social relations. There has never been an idyllic time when power, subjection, and control did not exist. But the forms of control and organisation have varied. Before the formation of stable bureucratised state orders all pervasive and systematised ordering of life was never a possibility. Because of the heterarchies of ordering and availability of resources, people could always relativise, mark out the powerful, and perceive themselves as part of self sustaining systems. For instance it was only when relationships of hierarchy got entrenched as religion that a singular caste ordering took effect in states like Travancore (Ward and Connor 1863 (1994)/Aiya 1906). Heterarchy thus refers to a qualitative order that ensues as a

function of the decentered urban processes in which people in places have been implicated and which offer spaces for exception even while getting incorporated in powerful processes like 'colonial' administration and empowered feudal orders.

In the regions around Kakkanad there were several social constraints in local forms of control. *Chittethu- Tharakans*, who were commissioned agents of kings, were Syrian Christians who held on to huge tracts of land and exercised both overt and covert forms of control on the population and sometimes took control of the everyday functioning of the church in places with large Syrian Christian populations. Their actions and activities are recalled with mixed feelings of fear, irritation, and sometimes admiration.

But there were conditions under which separate zones of exception could co-evolve, and it is also not the case that different groups of people incorporate any singular order. The *Namboothiri*[79] might exercise certain privileges and so could the *Tharakans*, especially as the contact groups of the princely states of nineteenth century, but others could not be assumed to incorporate this as any holistic scheme of sociality not to speak of any singular religious form of ordering[80]. Those who held power were perceived as such and their powers were never inevitable. On the other hand there have been popular myths or stories about those who held power that rationalize their being as serendipitous, untruthful, or illogical.

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[79] The prominent Namboothiris were the ones in *Swarnathu Mana*. There were lesser *Illoms* near *Manakkappady* and *Brahmapuram*.

[80] Such forms of organization like the one based on Jati, were probably more effective towards the administrative centers or religious centers which were also centers of wealth in a fast monetizing system. That is probably why it was more towards such centers that twentieth century resistance to authority adopted the discourse of caste in the case of Kerala (Vaikom and Guruvayoor Satyagrahas). But places were either not yet part of a homogenous system of production or perceived thus towards the twentieth century.

According to local lore *Tharakans* were *cheratta kachavadakkars* (Coconut shell traders), and the source of their wealth is traced to the discovery of a treasure. Such lores are fairly common, and these gain credibility from the past practice of hiding gold and valuable under the ground. The pioneer had two daughters, one of whom he wanted to marry off to a prominent Syrian Christian family in Pallikkara. Though the family had reservations in forming alliance the wealthy pioneer sought the help of the Arackal family who wielded power in the region. The options were to give consent to the marriage, or to face eviction. The Christian progeny got titles in exchange of wealth[81] from the king and became what they were known afterwards, the *Tharakans*. Though people have been subjected to forms of power, this had never been all encompassing and there were spaces of exception because of the more heterarchic ordering of places.

In the beginning of the 1900s, in the Pallikkara region[82] not all spatio temporalities were/could be controlled in any absolute sense by colonial-princely state bureaucracies. Inhabitants of places could fall back on distinct social geographies even when extreme forms of constraints got imposed. Only a few had ownership of land (as in formal titles) or money wealth during the time. The formal ownership of land could even be one of the means of control as heard in instances when land was given off to people in order to impoverish them through oppressive taxation (*karam koduthu mudikkuka*- literally to immiserate/impoverish someone through tax extraction). The system in effect deprived the adversaries, often successful merchants and local feudatories, of their liquid assets. And monetary wealth was put into use mainly by those directly involved in commercial networks with urban

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[81] Many of the Syrian Christian groups were the first to hold surplus wealth through monetisation of trade.

[82] As well as many other places towards east of Ernakulam, as evident from further field material

administrative centers[83]. *Velloor namboothiri* used to have power over the region. The *kudiyetta krishikkar*[84] were taxed by a certain amount by an officer. This was before the institution of basic tax and was based on measurements like *dannu* (*aashaari kol*- Refers to the measurement rod used by carpenters) made up of 28 *angulams* [near an inch] multiplied by four formed *dannu* [or *kambalavu*- literally measure of the stick]). A large part of this tax went to the *mana* (dwelling place of the namboothiris) and via the *mana* to the king. The region came under Pallikkara *devaswom*. There were Nair overseers for the *mana*. Arackal family was one such.

The *Tharakans* were a group who held power. They were Syrian Christians who were also commissioned agents for the ruler. But the *Tharakans* despite their often overt exertions of power still maintained certain local rapport. C.P.Tharakan[85] for instance was exceptional in the sense that he had initiated several social welfare measures. The pioneering work was the construction of a bund (*chira*) to prevent *oruvellom*, (over flow) thus starting a period of double cropping in the whole region. Towards the beginnings of 1900s when most of the region still came under the tutelage of feudal vassals of Travancore, those who paid a certain level of tax could vote and the Tharakans certainly did. The present one was even a member of the *praja sabha* (assembly before State formation[86]) who initiated projects through the king. The first

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[83] Or in the case of Syrian Christian traders cum agriculturalists who migrated to some of these field areas.

[84] Term used mainly for Syrian Christian farmers who migrated to these places

[85] Hails from a prominent feudal house with royal patronage and privileges (the name Tharakan was a title gained through royal decree).

[86] The Sree Moolam Praja Sabha was developed out of its predecessor of legislative council (1888), in 1904. The intention was to increase participation in state administration. But the membership was limited to representatives of merchants and landlords. The membership at first was through nomination from taluks (revenue subdivisions) by district heads from amongst landlords who has a certain revenue. By 1905 voting system was introduced but

chira was made at *koonan anjili* (a tree species), which was a huge bent tree.[87] In addition to this the Tharakans flagged off the Aluva Chitrapuzha road, Kadambra Papparakkadavu canal and a canal to the market (used for trade).
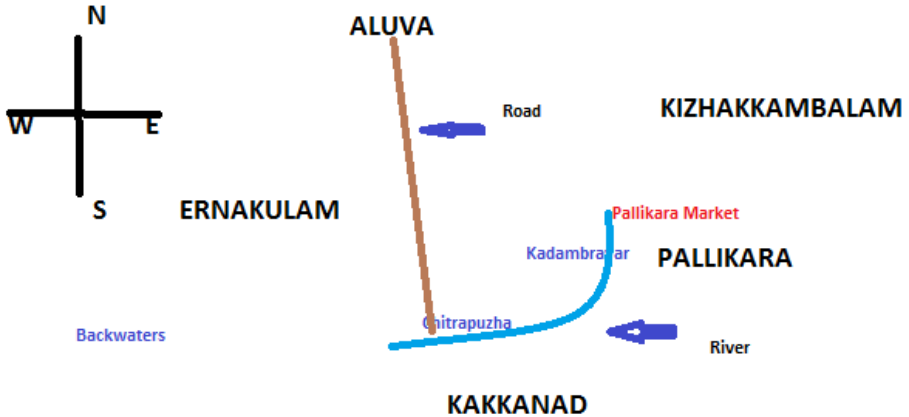
[Source/Own: Rough Layout of Landmarks Mentioned Above]

When he died the land paid respect to the man[88]. It was through such local figures that people related to the authority,. It is true that many such positions were more thoroughly instituted by the British in order to ease the system of production/extraction.

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with similar regulations as to who can vote. Later university graduates were given right to vote. By 1921 majority were elected members.

[87] This one still stands, but has been over shadowed since the coming of the Fertilizers and Chemicals Travancore (FACT).

[88] They read out a *mangalapatram* a line of which he recalled (pallikkara talodi kumarapuramakki chamacha maanyan-roughly the man who caressed Pallikkara and made it into Kumarapuram). Kumaarapuram is a name used for the region though this doesn't indicate a place name (like Kuttanad region spread over Alapuzha Kottayam districts known for paddy fields).

But this never resonated with any homogenous conception of a caste based system, also considering the fact that a large majority of population never really came under such orderings (Christians groups, and the Muslims towards the North and the South). Most of the regions were never conducive to such mythical orderings; though spaces around seats of local powers like the temple approximated casteist order. Wherever this happened it took mathematical precision because as indicated before ritually scattered orderings became consolidated and entrenched as caste in everyday life only towards 1900s and through bureaucratic and state mediations. This in fact speaks more of the historical conjuncture of regionally specific factors like; a heterarchic feudal base, several hieararchical and reciprocal relationships, and the rise of an impending colonial capitalist order in parts of Kerala. It also points to the depth of naiveness behind any such assumptions about any type of holistic incorporation of such ordering among all sections of population.

In 1759, two years after its victory at the Battle of Plassey, the British East India Company came in possession of land near Calcutta where there were salt works. Utilizing this opportunity to make money, they doubled the land rent and imposed transit charges on the transportation of salt. In 1835, special taxes were imposed on Indian salt to facilitate its import. This paid huge dividends for the traders of the British East India Company. The taxation laws introduced by the British East India Company were in vogue during the ninety years of British Raj which followed the demise of the Company. The construction of a fence to prevent smuggling of salt which was commenced during the Company's rule was completed during this period (called Great Hedge of India[89]).

When the Crown took over the administration of India from the Company in 1858, the taxes were not repealed. Sources indicate that by 1858, British India derived 10% of the revenues from its monopoly of salt. Even after the Salt Satyagraha (1930) the salt tax remained in effect and was repealed only when Jawaharlal Nehru became the

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[89] Moxham 2001

President of the Interim Government in 1946 (Singh 2002; Moxham 2001; Chandra 1966; Kulke and Rothermund 1998).

But salt for the people of Pallikkara was not necessarily controllable or taxable. Here it all started from a plant called '*Eera*'. The plant holds salt in its stem when salt water from the backwaters seeps into the freshwater river *Kadambra*[90]. The phenomenon is called '*Orovella kayattam*'. Because of the seepage during the tides it was impossible to have two crops of paddy. So single cropping was the norm (*Pokkali* like). Along with this they had an indigenous way of producing salt when its extraction from sea water was a British prerogative. This method of making of salt was different from the commercial production from sea.

The process was to collect *kachil* (dry straw) and mix it with *Eera* and burn this to ashes. This is put in fresh water and thoroughly mixed. After the sediments and ash settle they collect the water that remains and lets it evaporate. What is left out is the salt, something the British taxed away. *Kachil Uppu* extraction was a major time occupier along with small scale activities like *Kuva* (arrowroot like) cultivation. This was well noted during the mid 1930s. Bullock carts were used to take products to markets in Malappuram. This used to be a very long journey with lots of happenings and social relations formed on the way[91].

Making salt was part of an earlier urban system of production that had been relatively decentered. During a period when the imperial/princely state managed to maintain

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[90] Kadambra has been a natural irrigator of agriculture even before the bunds came into use. The river joins Chitrapuzha that in turn joins the main branch of Periyar that takes the waters to the sea.

[91] The *Vadakkan* family to who I interacted a lot for instance narrated the family relationships formed along the bullock cart trading routes from Angamali in the north towards Pallikkara.

bureaucratic control over urban nodes and ports, such systems remained out of their purview. The history of hegemonic transitions that accompany paradigm shifts in the global systems determining urban processes suggest that succeeding systems always get embedded in the preceding ones and must depend on their dynamics before they finally become systemic transformations (Arrighi 1994/ Ganguli 1964). The transition phase stretches long[92], determined by the hegemonic processes that encompass particular places. In this case places were never entirely brought into the production logic of colonial capitalism, even when there was considerable capital accumulation through princely orders. Subsequently they became one of the many self sustaining systems of life exempt from the bureaucratic everyday. The point is that even when there was a bureaucratic everyday that 'efficiently' managed an overarching system of colonial accumulation there still existed parallel geographies where sovereignty was limited. Such exceptionalities in the system of production for everyday life, as in the case of salt making slowly disappeared with transformations in the dependencies on local resources since the formation of modern state.

The point is that the sense of place that comes out of such a constellation of exceptions is optional and can be relatively more resource bound and autonomous in times of constraints. There was still no singular normative order in practice, though things began to change as the idea of state got more entrenched.

2.3 The Coming of Absolute Space:

Through futuristic emphasis involved with contemporary urban trajectories, speculative investments take precedence over planning. But the new urban plans are so coded that the public assumes all the risks. The potentials for antagonism in the opposition between use-value and exchange value that Marx talked about gets fully

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[92] Nation states, before it got consolidated had to go through a liminal phase, in which city state system was important.

realized in the new order. In the process the domain of exchange-value acquires autonomy, is transferred into the specter of self-propelling speculative capital which needs the productive capacities and needs of actual people only as its dispensable temporal embodiment. In the new urban situation the sense of place, gets generated out of absolute mapping of people in places.

The pace and course of neo liberal reforms and corporatisation eighteen years or more since its inception have been held in check by continuous interventions by the left of centre forces. These forces are reverberations of a politicized public space of reform movements and leftist struggles. But urban renewals and special economic zones suggest the coming into being of absolute forms of ordering in which private capital gains virtually unrestricted control over the decision making process. A state within a neoliberal nation state is doubly away from much of the decision making process. Lefebvre, in his study of social production of space (1991) has emphasised the historical role of global capitalism in making space a constitutive element of contemporary socio geographical organisation. He suggested that the urban space is simultaneously a locus, a medium, and a tool of hegemony. A fine blend of persuasion and coercion is always at work in the organization of the city. His "representation of space" alerts us to that domination of space intrinsic to a mode of production and planned to fit the vision and requirements of the elite. The dominant dimension of space strives to produce and reproduce social relations by molding "representations of space" and "spatial practice"- space as it is perceived and used by its people. The contemporary cosmologies of some of these places suggest an absolute discourse resembling in its effect the hegemonic structures Lefebvre referred to, but taking shape as novel orders.

Box: 2

Becoming Well-Defined and Legible:

The illegibility of places constituted, among other aspects, by their geographical peculiarities like hillocks, ponds, water channels, or fields; produce spatial boundaries that privilege forms of local knowledge. So in the past, if a certain load of red stone had to be transported to the backwaters or agricultural produce taken to market, one had to depend on the complex networks and technical knowhow. It is only by depending on local know-how that broader and wider urban networks became functional. The part played by such knowledge systems and micro-social processes could not be easily substituted without consequences to urban orders. The illegibility of places is a matter of the kind of exceptions (exceptions to norms) that constituted the global systems and state forms that preceded the neoliberal versions.

The latter is about a totally new form of exception which liquidates every form of illegibility (norms as exceptions)and creates abstract forms with no bearing on any ecological or topographical peculiarity. The kind of exception topples any kind of peculiarity with respect to a place and creates a homogenised abstract order that could be replicated anywhere. Every other form of exception gets negated in the making of neoliberal order itself as an exception.

Thus contemporary Kakkanad is in no way different from another corporate investment zone, though the social processes that systematically situate such an order have everything to do with placedness and peculiarities of people. The enabling conditions for the contemporary processes may be interwoven with the historical constitution of people in such places. Thus a certain family may use the long standing networks to start a business, and attain major contracts. In addition there is a burgeoning promise of wealth and social mobility that incorporated more and more people as cogs in the formidable machine of 'vikasanam'. They become brokers, collection agents, and new entrepreneurs, but all in processes dictated top-down.

There is a powerful utilitarian logic of productivity, language of security as well as accessibility that accompanies any urban programme. The streamlining of taxation and reduction of slummification projects, JNNURM reforms, the security talk that surrounds apartment constructions, the de-bureaucratisations in several single-window provisions, or the empowering of urban local bodies are all elaborations of the same. But the exceptionalities in the contemporary urban scenario follows the pollution of environment, depletion of resources, creation of new forms of poverty, and the corporatisation and privatisation of state. In effect the exceptionalities follow negations of options to fall back on in times of constraints.

In order for the new urban processes to transform places into spaces for development there needs to be disparities in knowledge as well as a complex articulation of people into the new organising regimes with overarching considerations for the supply side of capitalists of a different kind. Thus in a scene of conflict related to eviction, the parties who are to be displaced know last and if one closely studies a given locality more or less everyone is involved in the same process (real estate in most instances in Kakkanad). As Charles Tilly observes (1990) the invention, elaboration, and deployment of certain abstractions involve a move from more indirect forms of control that rest on local forms of power to more absolute forms of order that leave no space for any other exception.

The urban processes do not merely describe or remap, but strive to shape people and landscape that fit the techniques of observation. What the state forms have not hitherto done, since independence and modern state formation, the contemporary urban techniques accomplish and optimise in newly urbanising places like Kakkanad.

Maps Depicting the Regions where Contemporary Forms of Urban Negotiations are Taking Root as well as the New Spatial Designations that Wrap Places in the Context of State Mediated Urban Renewals.
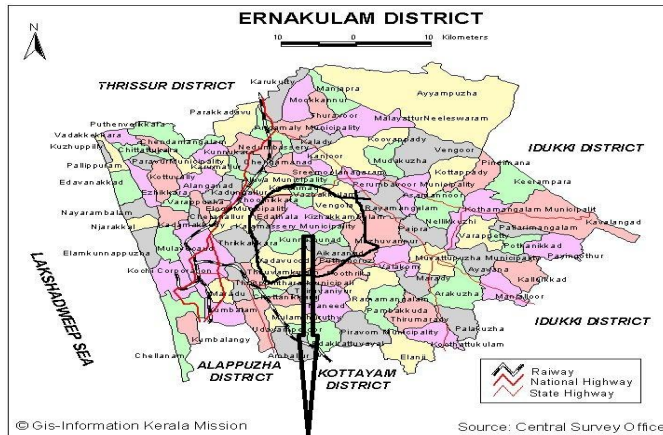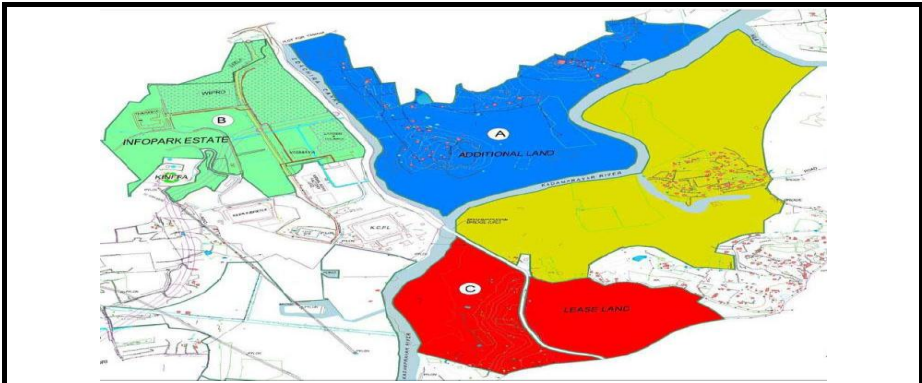
There have always been power impositions but any attempt to homogenize or unify urban landscape has been subverted because of the existence of exceptions to norms in the making. Everything operated in a more amorphous and heterogenous spatial logic linked to placedness and mutual dependencies. There were a range of relationships of difference, autonomy and dependence with vast hinterlands like those around Kakkanad that constituted the heterarchic urban system, always leaving space for non homogenised imagination.

Contemporary urban transformations resonate with the global efforts to prop up the capitalist production system after the post world war heydays of the seventies, following the prescriptions for massive state restructurings by the Washington consensus. Novel organisational techniques had to be developed in order to preempt political reactions from massive pools of dissatisfaction and marginalisation. The comprador capitalist order[93] of India too stood to benefit from a transformation of the developmental state into a corporate state that gives free rein to finance capital. But there had to be ways in which wealth and assets get transferred from masses to capitalist interests, now located transnationally. For neoliberalism to become

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[93] Will be discussed in subsequent chapters

accumulation by dispossession as Harvey imagines (2005) there has to be a reinstitution of practices that once got challenged to differing degrees during the anti-colonial struggles. Thus there has to be commodification and refeudalisation (privatization) of land that got redistributed to the greatest extent in parts of Kerala, formalization of several informal relationships to property or the *exclusivisation* of property rights, suppression of the political public sphere that had become a sounding board between people and the state, commodification, informalisation and flexibility of labour and destruction of resource bases, monetisation of land to most extreme forms, and complete compliance of everyday transactions to market forms.

The state which is supposed to have the monopoly over violence *pace* Weber has to play a promotional role in order to re-align places in total accordance with neoliberal order. But this becomes a complicated process here especially with an entrenched welfarist system and the presence of a politicised public sphere dominated by the left. The urban renewal in places creates spaces of exception that delineate an alternative ordering. Places like Kakkanad come under the immediate purview of such processes. Remapping the villages that are otherwise portrayed as 'backward' and antediluvian, sets new frames of reference for people who have to negotiate contemporary forms of exigencies, that will form a major part of the issues that will be taken up.

The monumental transformation in patterns of investment, spatial configurations, employment, as well as class relations get translated locally into material transformations of a scale hitherto not witnessed. The futuristic turn given to ideas like *vikasanam* and 'world class (ness)' (Ghertner 2005) is accompanied by the new roles assigned to transnational bodies and credit rating agencies in urban governance.

With comprehensive urban reform packages[94] under way, bodies like the World Bank, or the Asian Development Bank (ADB), are given free rein in urban policy

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[94]the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) will be in focus

making through new public private partnership channels. Whereas the state still exercises the maximum possible intervention in urban affairs, urban policies still keep an exceptional spatiality as do such provisions for the designation of special economic zones. The newly constituted urban bodies enjoy relatively greater powers in terms of capital utilization and there are other regulations that go contrary to the welfarist provisions under the state. Thus employment generation, provision for the poor, costs of land transactions, etc. will not come under the responsibilities. In addition there will be a service charge for social welfare. Under the new scheme the private investors need to have a risk free milieu as well in spaces of investment. So the market determined global mediation offers least autonomy to specific places. The governments are pressed to carry out such measures as a *sine qua non* for any central assistance. The role given to international credit rating agencies under JNNURM (Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission is the most recent urban initiative) reforms as well as the parallels between urban reforms and Special Economic Zone clauses with respect to the directives on states[95] point to such issues and will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Directions like that of the removal of land ceilings, objected to on political grounds at present, lead to refeudalisation of once redistributed resources. If the colonially strengthened feudal order was sustained by new revenue systems and formalisation of hierarchies, the new accumulative order is sustained through the dissolution of politically incorporated clauses. Land had already been subjected to the market formats like speculation and profiteering and the proliferation of real estate sector around the urban scene in Kakkanad needs to be put in conjunction with the green signal given to one hundred percent foreign direct investment in the real estate sector since 2005. Formalization of transactions and the discourse of 'efficiency' is also about the liquidation of informal social infrastructure and their supplementation by directions generated elsewhere. Neoliberalism translates into a restoration of class

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[95] For instance regarding removal of existing clauses in land reforms (Urban Land Ceiling Act, Rent Control Laws, reduction in stamp duty, etc).

dominance as Harvey suggests, through unprecedented centralisation of land as a tradable commodity affordable by a few. Contemporary legislatures in order to streamline land transactions, maintenance of state's stake in urban provisions like transport, and the fixing of minimum value etc., mediated by the left, need to be seen as the maximum extent to which an earlier welfarist system could be stretched in the face of reforms.

The present rhetoric of decentralisation seems to resonate with the developmental state and more specifically the people's planning process[96] that allocated even more resources to the local bodies in Kerala. But the scheme envisages unprecedented uniformity in policy making. This means the local bodies and elected planning structures have little choice beyond central directives. People's representatives at the local level say that the funds that they have at disposal is meager compared to the kind of money that flows in, or the cost of present economic activities like the one around the information technology park connected with real estate business. For instance, the annual budget of nearly ten million must be divided into different sectors (service, industrial, others). So each sector gets only a pittance. The local bodies are pressurized to generate funds from volunteers under a self help system.

Some of the procedures geared up to provide for basic resources in certain panchayats that have been fighting for this for decades (like Vypeen, the chain of islands –west coast of Ernakulam district) should be placed in the context of the needs of the corporate investors. The *Goshree Bridges*[97] could be seen as symbolically bringing a newer idea of ordering, management, and development into the politicized public space. Campaigns for basic infrastructural provisions have been active in Vypeen ever since the formation of state. And the aforesaid bridges noticeably get

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[96] For detail refer to Isaac and Franke 2002

[97] The series of bridges connected the once scattered islands in whole to Ernakulam mainland.

commissioned when the state is ever more pressed to move more along the neoliberal line.

Consequent to the arrival of these bridges there was phenomenal flurry in land procurement[98]. Fences started to be noticed where none existed. Absentee land holders (those who held more land) suddenly came back to build walls. At one instance in a local body office a non resident local person came in to discuss a deluge of concerns regarding the walling of his property and the construction of a building near the boundary. Purchasers were ready even when one contemplated selling. The rivulets and water bodies[99] that remain after the ecological degradations that accompanied real estate processes are now to be mapped in as exclusive tourism zones. Developmental organs[100] , with exceptional powers and autonomy undertake do transform places that "are fragmented and are held among umpteen number of people into "prime locations in Kochi, making the city's mainland look up to the area" (*Property Plus* June 10 2006).

Box: 3

Jose: Being in the Island

Wit, puns, and theatricality inform the interactions with a villager named Jose about his everyday. Jose was seventy three when we met. He is in certain ways a self proclaimed cartoonist who launched himself during the first communist government.

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[98] "It is a busy time for document writers", Article by Shyama Rajagopal, *The Hindu* Saturday, Oct 29, 2005

[99] These ironically used to be the channels of communication and trade in these regions (discussed in following chapters)

[100] like Kerala Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (or KINFRA)

As a Congress party fellow traveler he started caricaturing EMS[101]. Vypeen for Jose is an island of art and there are some prominent names in the list[102]. Jose[103] lived with his wife, a daughter in law, and two grandchildren in a relatively old house separated from the street by a line of small shops. His cartoons lay scattered all around the shop frontage, where there is a workshop, and a few lottery vendors as well.

Jose is a block member of the congress party. The leading motif in all the conversations was that he is an *ariyapedunna*[104] cartoonist. In one of the witty episodes in the evening Godson, a friend who runs a stationary store, asked Jose whether he thinks it is good enough to be a cartoonist. He replied that he is an *ariyapedunna* cartoonist. Godson replied that it is not enough and that he probably needs to stand in the street wearing *Khaddar*[105] of party men and wave arms or get

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[101] E M Sankaran was the first Chief Minister of the State of Kerala in the first elected Left cabinet.

[102] Like Sippy Pallippuram, Sankaraadi, Vincent, and Bapootti.

[103] He has three sons all of whom have been named after famous astronomers (Armstrong, Michael Collins…). He wanted them to at least have famous names as he put it to me! The daughter in law is the wife of one of them who works at the Kochi Port trust. The port is slated to be incorporated in the announced transshipment terminal projects involving international (Dubai based) corporate groups. There is another son who is in the police department and who is currently on leave. He is visiting his wife who works as a nurse in the U.S. She follows of the line of many women who have migrated like this from the state.

[104] Roughly 'famous'

[105] Type of white cotton dress worn by politicians, especially congressmen- A symbolic backlog of Gandhi's famous exhortation that all Indians wear locally spun dress, the khaddar at present has other connotations.

involved with the union activities around construction sites[106]. Money lies there. Godson asked him whether he had any *paisa* (an expression/ refers to basic unit of currency- one hundred paisa is equivalent to a rupee- presently all denominations below 50 paisa are in disuse) to spare. Jose said that this may be true but he remains famous. Their witty conversation swung between *arivappedunna* cartoonist and *onnum edukkanillatha khaddar netaavu* (roughly penniless political worker). Godson says that Jose Mattathil, the cartoonist exists only in the 'place' (the island). And the place is ceasing to be.

The conversation suggested a crucial transformation. The Vypeen of the present is an island which until recent times had an exceptionally politicised public sphere, entering into a discourse that reconfigures places along a continuum of urban processes based on corporate investments and special economic zones. The neoliberal logic of urban spaces is fast remapping places, setting the material world (as new roads, bridges, hotels, or living spaces) as well as the rules (evictions, rehabilitations, setting fair prices, or surveillances). Designated zones of investment have begun to erect makeshift gates at points. Parts of places that used to be usual social haunts towards the start of fieldwork eventually got cordoned off, with private security men preventing entry, often with 'reluctant smiles'!

By delinking economic policies from the political public sphere, the local geographies (does not mean they have been untouched, but as base resources for local life, they have been pegged to local necessities) of individual places become 'flexible resources' with no encompassing value. Instead they serve the immediate requirements on an unprecedented scale. The environment is strained and drained through sand and earth mining in the hillocks of Kakkanad or Pallikkara, exploitation of ground water, cutting of timber, filling of the Kadambra river, and dumping of waste in nearby Brahmapuram, declared a waste disposal zone. Resources that have

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[106] Unions are reputed to go for bargains with many of the builders in exchange of no interference.

been in the commons across places feed privatized activities. The new attempt was to seek profit from abstracted spaces for investment.

Living Spaces

State and Central Institutional spaces

Special Economic Zones

Living Spaces (scattered) and Ex-Fields/Water bodies
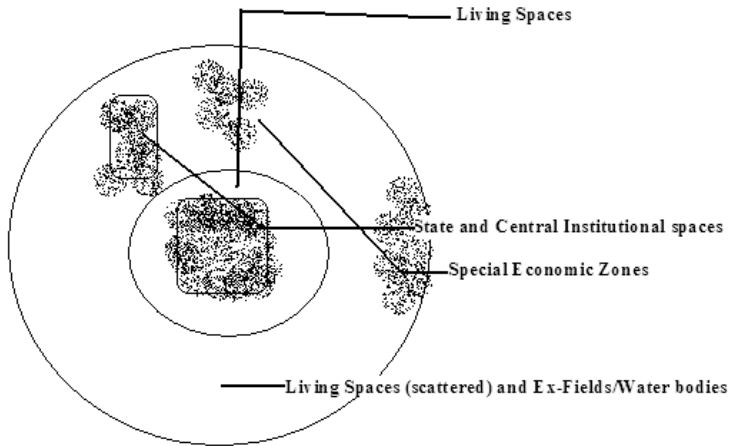
[Source/Own: Earlier geographies of everyday life getting overlaid by designated spaces of investment in the contemporary urban order]

By juxtaposing two distinct phases of the places that negotiate contemporary forms of urbanisation, the chapter brings up structurally determinative forces as well as the distinct global mediations. People in places have always been in such constellations of forces. But the question is what marks out the present forms of transactions exemplified in urban situations. As against the earlier global phase the present order is more of an encompassing factor, than a mediating force to the heterarchic constellation of places. The techniques, ideologies, and practices of "urban managerialism" become fundamental to understanding the processes at work (Pahl 1984; Saunders 1981). In the context, processes in places have to remorph into apparatuses which propagate specific ways of thinking and acting.

As Harvey observes, "… urbanisation… is framed by the concrete abstractions of space and time, and internalizes all the vigour and turbulence of the circulation of capital under the ambiguous and often shaky surveillance of the state." (1989: 229). What becomes important for the present context is the shift in urban perspective and the way places get articulated. Urban processes mediated by heterarchic trading nodes networking with hinterlands differ in their implication from cities as one of the several components of planning and welfare post independence. At present there is a paradigm shift of spatial imagination involved in the city/urban centre becoming the dominant discourse of development as exemplified through newly urbanising processes. With places increasingly getting incorporated in global capitalist production, people are left with lesser options to fall back on. The spatial logic of urban processes are absolute because it is deeply enmeshed in the supply side of global capital mediated by a facilitative state. Everything about the place that feeds into the supply side of capital is permitted. Everything else about being in the place must be liquidated to make way for this absolute spatiality of places.

3. Logic of Order during the Urban Present

Urbanisation in its contemporary manifestations in Kerala, is mediated by neo liberal forms of globalisation. A leading motif in all my field engagements has been a tone of 'urgency' that has been associated with the contemporary processes. It would be premature to subsume all these manifestations within the rubric of the 'urban'. The mixture of enforced and all encompassing commodification, spatial transformation, and urban chaos associated with the maturing of neo liberal forms of globalisations through the state generate situations to discuss 'the urban' as forms of social manifestations. Urban processes in the post 1990s have been marked by an unprecedented tempo, mediated by a plethora of signs purportedly indicating the arrival of new forms of life. The marked absence of reflection on the contemporary, a concomitant urgency for the future, as well as narratives of the past characterise my observations. The present section seeks to elaborate the contemporary urban context as forms of ordering mediated by a transforming state. This helps to build a discussion (through the following chapters) on how neoliberal forms of ordering become a pervasive form of rationality whose formal and global character allows it to enter into new relationships with value orientations historically grounded in Kerala.

3.1 Instituting Neo Liberal States of Exception:

In seeking to elaborate the contemporary urban situations as forms of ordering to fit the neoliberal paradigm, the trope of exception gets continuously deployed. So it becomes necessary to clarify what I mean by exception at different points.

Historically, what I indicate never entails an idyllic and autochthonous place bound existence but spatial specificities functional to the particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at particular locus (Massey 1994). As already discussed, exception-signified spatial orders of decentered and heterarchic polities shaped by exceptions to norms or a kind of mutuality in the structuration of norms in place bound associations.

In its contemporary deployment exception has to undergo a theoretical re-elaboration. Georgio Agamben who has extensively theorised exception as in states of exception (2003) employs exception (suspension of law) as a means of encompassing life, the theory of the state of exception becomes "the preliminary condition for any definition of the relation that binds and, at the same time, abandons the living being to law". The state of exception is more like a liminal zone between politics and law. Contrary to conditions opposite to 'the normal' that invoked states of exception, contemporary states institute permanent states of emergency, and thereby abolish the traditional distinctions within constitutional forms among agencies like the legislature or the executive blurs. Instead a 'legal mythologeme analogous to the state of nature' becomes the rule. The state of exception, in this way, makes democracies indistinct from absolutisms.

In the post neo liberal context, when people transact increasingly with the post developmental state as well, exception signifies something entirely distinct. States of exception, at present have begun to set the dominant paradigm once again through urban scenarios, what become important are peculiar strategies in which the global capital is engaged with. Ong (1999) who essentially adapts Agamben's elaborate theorization of 'exceptions' to neoliberal contexts across the non Western worlds calls this the strategy of 'graduated sovereignty' whereby different segments of populations get subjected to different forms of governmentality as the defining relationships of power between the state and its subjects (Foucault 1991). Presently urban plans derive mostly out of the contracts with private capital and generate a mixture of spatial disciplines and managements techniques. There is a major shift in what 'exception' signifies. If it used to signify spaces that in effect were exempt from dominant forms of order, at present techniques of neoliberal globalisation itself creates exceptions to any possible barriers to its adoption/incorporation. In other words we are pressed to talk of neoliberalism itself as composite techniques that create exceptions (ibid.).

Several major transformations followed the political emphasis on neo liberal policies and foreign investment across the nation but with certain particularities in Kerala. Economic diversification had been particularly pronounced in rural settlements in Kerala transforming them into towns by 1990s (Eapen 1999). The specificities of the agrarian system suggest a higher level of diversification of the rural economy compared to the rest of the country (ibid 1994). Historically too the share of non-agriculture has been much higher in Kerala. This is almost one third of the male workforce *vis-a-vis* one fourth for the whole nation. (Krishnamurthy 1971) nearly a century back. The national sample survey estimates a significant increase in rural non agricultural employment among females by 1990s. The proportion of manufacturing labour from rural areas in Kerala closes the rural urban gap compared to the rest of India. But currently household manufacturing has decreased significantly, and has been supplanted by corporate ventures. Rather than secondary production or agricultural forms of production the emphasis, barring a few exceptions, is on software based services, and business process outsourcing kind of work, with a collateral burgeoning of construction and real estate activities. Political and economic institutions had been radically reshaped through the 1980s/1990s, in large part in pursuit of foreign direct investment.

The structure of state finances has been transformed to greatly reduce taxes on capital and profits in an effort to attract foreign investment, leaving the state heavily reliant on revenues from fixed income groups. In addition greater centralisation during this time reduced the central share of state revenues of individual states like Kerala (Budget 2005-2006) with implicit pressures towards private participation in service sectors which came mostly under the social welfare schemes. As is mentioned by the budget report presented in parliament (Feb, 2007) tax exemptions of various kinds to corporates came to nearly 50 percent of the revenue. Before 1990s the tax revenue had been used for central developmental processes and social welfare. But afterwards the tax regime was restructured in favour of corporates, foreign investment and creation of conducive environment for investment. The bulk of exemptions likewise

in monetary terms during the prior post 1990s come to a significant figure[107]. This corporate economic growth under this regime of exceptions is currently presented as proof of general welfare. The tendency has even exaggerated during the recent bout of recession during which the state actually bailed out many private ventures, while the rhetoric of private efficiency ironically reached a high pitch.

The education system has been transformed largely through the creation of a large sector of what is called 'professional education' which is oriented heavily towards global business and technology. Large numbers of young people with basic education now get groomed into the production side of capitalist profit as flexible-insecure-informal labour, which has in the process transformed the social structure. State governments and urban development bodies invest in infrastructural support for parks and zones with all the technologically and politically facilitative conditions, as was pioneered in Bangalore at the cost of social welfare(Shiva 2000). A major population addressed by the futuristic urban discourse being young, changes in their schooling demand attention. This is more so in Kerala where the majority are formally schooled. Here the education system (often applauded for its welfarist overtones both as public educational institutes or non profit missions), gets structurally constrained in the new economic environment that favours self financing ventures. Thus there has been a proliferation of 'professional institutes' especially in the private sector which cater to corporate labour needs. In fact the Prime Minister's Council on Trade and Industry (PMCTI) constituted a *'special subject group on policy framework for private investment in education, health and rural development'*. Noted corporate leaders from India, Mukesh Ambani (Convenor) and Kumarmangalam Birla (Member) constituted this special subject group. They suggested the implementation of the World Bank prescriptions and privatisation and commercialisation of higher education in the country. The report *'A Policy Framework for Reforms in Education'* (*Website*: http://www.nic.in) was drafted. For Ambani and Birla, education is a very profitable market over which they must have full control and for their industrial

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[107] Nearly 16 lakh crore (lakh is100000 and crore in 10 million)

requirements "education must shape adaptable, competitive workers who can readily acquire new skills and innovate." An 'ideology' of competitiveness was instituted with logical extension towards exceptional zones and regimes of neoliberal growth.

Current urban renewal plans, among other elaborately defined restructuring of places, make provisions for special zones like the SEZs. SEZs on the other hand (SEZ Act 2005) mention the word 'urban' in only two places, one to note that Ministry of Urban Development may form part of the Board of Approvals, and the other to provide fiscal relief in case a unit moves from an urban area to an SEZ. The latter indicates that an SEZ may even get defined against the urban. But, exemplified (Lecture by the Development Commissioner[108], Feb 18 2010) by the SEZs there has been a shift from a hierarchical form of organisation and bureaucracy to a network system with shifting connections to external partners and customers. As implicit in certain field conversation with SEZ software workers, the spread of connections across the globe and the integration of each team into dense sets of local and global networks have cracked the time-space container of the firm or the nation. An array of other protocols (monetary, certification, technological) creates the 'possibility' of ties that cut across territories. The SEZ is instituted by the state as foreign territory through certain exemptions accommodated within legislatures. Even when an SEZ does not mention 'urban,' contemporary forms of urbanisation (JNNURM[109] in the case of Kochi) seem to be structured by the norms of such exceptions.

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[108] Development Commissioner is the nodal officer for Special Economic Zoness and help in resolution of problem, if any, faced by the units or developer. The commissioner head each zone and is the head of the Unit Approval Committee.

[109] Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission is the most recent urban initiative. The framework or some of the major components of the initiative are: Preparation of City Development Plans (CDPs) by respective cities with a 20-25 years perspective, sector-wise detailed project reports to be prepared by identified cities listing projects along with their financial plans, a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) to be signed between the central government, state governments and ULBs containing the time bound commitment on the part of states/ ULBs to carry out reforms in order to access central funds under the Mission.

3.2 Formations of the Contemporary Space:

1. Virtual Spaces for Exceptional Living

Following the first interest rate reductions made by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government in the years following 2001, there was a burgeoning marketing of different forms of living spaces. There was blanket transformation of land into real estate property especially in the peripheries of Kochi, centered on the rhetoric of futuristic development and employment opportunities in corporate ventures. This became the basis for the massive increase in real estate property prices. Low interest rates triggered huge interest in individuals to borrow to own new living spaces. Parallel to this it has now become next to impossible to build houses at an individual level at least up to middle class level. There is no labour available for such work. Material cost has skyrocketed and it is not easy to have small contracts. Even erstwhile wholesalers in town find it difficult to get materials.

Following are some advertisements/presentations of new living spaces carried by large roadside billboards, televisions, movie halls, private radio networks, as well as several shopping festivals (on occasions promoted by the state):

> ➤ *2 and 3 Bed Royal Apartments- Near Gandhi Square- Tripoonithura- Located in an exclusive neighbourhood with reminiscences of centuries old heritage*

> ➤ *Breathtaking Apartments in Kakkanad set on sprawling green landscape with beautiful waterfront view (Photograph of Coconut groves all around with lots of other trees and a lake in front)*

A television/movie theatre presentation of another builder:

> *A hunt for marriage alliances are on for a daughter in all the usual ways of matrimonial advertisements…several replies come…with place names like 'Pachaalam[110]'…they are all kept away…but then comes a response with the address saying 'from Skyline (a prominent builder)'…this time there is not even a reason for doubt or lack of confidence…Skyline vouches for 'taravaditham[111]'!*

Another ad is of the private money transfer agency called Western Union that has recently been incorporated with state postal units:

> *The famous actor Nasser is a concerned father taking a walk down the local road, getting worried every time he sees his son 'idle away' (kaashinu kollathavan) at a typical kavala (usually small centres in villages where roads meet with small shops-where people used to sit and talk for long hours)…the dad tells his son that there is a world outside the kavala…then there is a fast forward in time…the father takes a walk along the road…says he still finds his son when in need at the same kavala…this time he comes near a new office of Western Union Money transfer from where he receives money sent from abroad (by his son)-* (The Western Union office incorporates his son who is no more the idler, but on the other hand an efficient expatriate) .

Until very recent times[112] the provisions in the building rules for Kerala had been more lenient than elsewhere in India. For instance in 2007, following certain accidents the government reviewed the 1999 building rules. They found the laws as

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[110] Small Coastal Village in Kochi with majority lower middle class population- Now bordering regions that are fast incorporated in new 'urban' processes.

[111] A glorious familial tradition

[112] Certain amendments to the Municipal Building Rules 1999 were introduced in 2010 with stricter norms for building.

much more lenient on provisions of basic security and accessibility as against in other parts of India. The proposed amendments (2009) were heavily opposed by building lobbies (The Hindu reports 2009). Barring few steps in the face of impending disasters like above, there has seldom been any effective intervention on the part of state bodies in matters of 'construction activities' that have become the prime economic activity in the last decade. Thus in the context of the larger policies of increasing the supply of credit for real estate activities, huge numbers of real estate projects have taken root. In Kochi they have been inevitably linked to the new economic ventures as well as urban projects.

New living had already got virtually mapped out in the everyday as visible in the numerous billboards with photographs of interiors and landscaped exteriors blocking aerial view all over Kochi where most such activities are concentrated. All these happen much before the actual projects materialise. Spaces of better life get sold out much before any materialisation takes root. It is in presentations and the social response to ideas of new living that the virtual spaces structure the everyday.

Popular presentations of new living, often incorporate the familiar and rooted, be that landmarks or historical investments. Thus anything from the heritage of a palace town (in the case of the Cochin princely state's capital Tripoonithura), independence movements (in the case of a Gandhi square), or a natural lake or green patch become visual backdrops or components of narratives. In reality almost all major real estate projects ironically materialise through a total negation of the past: no natural greenery is safe from massive earth work, the hills are practically wiped off to bring in earth to fill lakes ponds and even small rivers, and the structures that inform 'heritage' in any place (except for the few that feed into the tourism heritage discourse) are pounded to ground.

In order to endear the new economic discourse of real estate mediated 'new living', repositories of feudalised cultural capital (like 'taravaditham'- good family lineage) or recognised icons of social standing often get deployed. Most of these presentations

are informed by a spatial logic. For example the 'kavala' or small junction where local roads met, with small shops and verandahs have been meeting places and discussion arenas. There is at present a re-spatialising of such kavalas with a motetised utilitarian logic transforming such spaces. So instead of remaining as a space for idle talk the kavala now hosts 'the western union money tranfer' office where entrepreneurially oriented youth transact with their homes in cash.

The *kavalas* in effect are the roadshow version of globalised capital carving out spaces of exception deploying culturally acceptable language and harking back on earlier forms of living when this comes of use. The dialectic of the idea of exceptional life has been far reaching in Kochi with people actively engaged in discourses to the point of material transformation and reengineering of spatio temporalities. There is always an impending requirement to fill up the lacks in the existing order to prop everything up for development to take root.

If we notice the transformation in association with land it is easier to understand how the above types gain effect. Land as such becomes a repository of value in the context of neoliberal reforms. When land goes in ever more into speculative practices there is a prolific rise in real estate and construction activities. The state adapts to new forms of capital and works in symbiosis with private corporate bodies. Bribery, nepotism, and loopholes in the legal system take new dimensions. Mostly they become decontextualised events or topics for 'breaking news' in the media. Environment is massively degraded through sand and earth mining, exploitation of ground water, cutting of timber, filling of lakes and rivers, dumping of waste, and the changing of rules governing coastal zones. Natural resources that may be considered commons are fed into privatized activities and profit hungry ventures. Such practices are so naturalized that they may not even sound illegal or disruptive (quite the contrary on occasions), in the face of an overwhelming futuristic rhetoric. Locally such practices get accommodated in the interstices of informal relationships. The rationale of a virtual space of exceptional living structured on possibilities of speculation and

commodification percolates existing land based conflicts, providing these with an unprecedented urgency.

People start to engage themselves in the prevailing discourses of security, violence, and good living. They are engendered into new living even when many overtly lament consequences like pollution and high cost. Class gets redefined in the overwhelming participation in conspicuous consumption. People attain class mobility even on debts. Conspicuous consumption is not limited to those with liquidity. Rather it could be a result of the embodiment of a discourse of new living. The state as well as the non-state institutions (churches, temples, community formations, unions etc.) entrench such practices and in the process transform themselves. Every festival, be that state sponsored or religious, becomes predominantly a shopping festival.

A fair ground at Trikkakkara temple is an interesting case in point. Annual fairs take place at the ground around Trikkakara *Vamanamoorthi* temple during Onam season starting on *Atham* and ending by *Thriruvonam*. Small shops sell festival wares, the products that are common across festivals in Kerala. The shopkeepers have been setting up shops for the past few years. Almost all the products come from Tamil Nadu. The food items that are sold in packets come from the Pollachi region while the other consumables come in from Madras. The shop keepers are not of any particular community or religion. The fair ground owned by the temple unravels more of a hybrid space, with products from small scale industries in another state, vendors from another place, and a motley mix of temple goers and consumers. The fairs as well as the functions in connection with Onam acquire a predominantly commercial character with the related myths about the place at best becoming a backdrop.

Most aspects about the event are recent additions to the festival itinerary. Elephants feature across temple festivals. Some years back they marked select temple festivals or feudal/authoritarian spaces. The elephant mediated performances like

kudamattom[113] were particular to some temples. Now they are given a more plebeian character and have become inevitable for every single festival, though the scale of these events varies (Instances of Elephants getting irritated and running amok have become more common. On an average, two news items of this kind appear every month in newspapers!). The temples even advertise the elephants by the names given (like people they are very often given a first and second name. The first name mostly indicate where the pachyderm belongs- Family, Place, Temple) in flex boards across the roads. People talk about particular elephants in the context associating themselves with an imagined and glorious tradition with all its feudal marks. Local lore about particular elephants associated with temples and prominent upper class families circulated orally and later in print as '*Anakathakal'* are linked together. Icons with feudal investments like the elephant are reinvoked in the contemporary context with sponsorship tags and festival flex boards that remind one of commercial advertisements.

[Source/Own: Festival Facades and New Living Spaces Nearby]

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[113] Colourful exchange of umbrellas on elephant tops-Used to be specific to Trissur Pooram festival

The involvement of several newly formed residents' associations especially in the newly urbanising zones is visible. A year ago there was a demand from a Council of Residents' Associations that the government recognize these associations as basic constituents of the democratic system (in place of the elected local self governing bodies) and endow them with statutory powers. There have been many independent demands and self help roles assumed mostly as proclamations and also as symbolic actions with overt state support. The police and residents' associations have on occasions come on joint platforms of community policing stressing the need for security and police reform. Apex bodies that are constituted very often feature as a player in many of the urban issues. Residents' Associations are projected as functioning the same way as the less formal neighbourhood alliances that could be observed even now in the less urbanized areas. Residents' Associations have become bodies that collectively involve with state bodies. For example, the Ernakulam District Residents' Association Apex Council (EDRAAC) is moving towards establishing platforms for interaction with different government bodies. They have platforms to sort out issues with the police and to involve with the police in community policing citing increased violence[114].

Here they come out with performances that follow rehearsals, organise events and involve in phases of festival arrangements. The associations in Trikkakkara often have names related to Onam (*Thiruvonam* and *Maveli* residents' associations being the prominent ones- superficially invoking the myths). The new high rises and gated communities as well are named in the region based on the Onam legend and the Trikkakara temple.

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[114] According to the present system, local issues are sorted out at the meeting chaired by respective Circle Inspectors. Police--Residents' Association Initiatives in District Ernakulam (PRIDE) plan increased monitoring activities around such residence areas. More about this in a subsequent chapter.

All this happens at a time when there is a a pronounced outflow of those who may be called natives and the dissolution of earlier social relations. Many sell their land at inflated prices and acquire land where real estate is cheaper. The only defining association with the land in efffect is the one based on commercial significance. In the places immediately around the temple almost all are new comers. It is their dwelling places that acquire the aforesaid names and tags.

The region in Trikkakkara, until recent years was sparsely populated. This changed only after the arrival of an engineering college and the buoyant real estate prices with the commissioning of special zones of production in Kakkanad. Groups with new spirituality and religious trappings too have started to feature in prominent festivals like the one at Trikkakkara. Amrithanandamayi or 'Art of Living' organisations for instance make their presence felt in invitation handouts by the festival committee. They are assigned sessions in the long festival itineraries[115]. The marriage auditorium or *kalyanamandapam* (with platforms for the staging and re-enaction of marriage rituals taking place in temples) called 'Thiruvonam' too attract people from far away to conduct marriages in this temple and thereafter organise feasts in the halls rented out. Many now think it auspicious (and convenient- with the halls and parking lots built in) to arrange the marriage here during an already auspicious season. Here they are provided with a complete marriage package.

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[115] The spiritual spaces of both these organisations exist in a collection of similar spaces offered by a rising tide of spiritual icons, godmen, and godwomen (Mehta 1996), who also constitute themselves with a network of organisations in accordance with their financial power. The similarity is in the definition of their spiritual spaces against the anomic tendencies of the globalised world (symbolised by the increasing violence in everyday life, of the stress of living). As organisations, they function as sovereign states of exception, guaranteed by the state.

Often there are welcome signs put up by the temple branch of the Communist party and makeshift welcome gates to the festive grounds set up by local financiers. A finance group for instance sponsors almost every stall that is set up. There are advertisements of astrologers and jewellery/garment shops. The festive space of Onam is a bandwagon that brings together different actors and along with the temple (intricately associated in modern times with the Onam legend; with Vamana as deity), a multimedia that projects a heterotopic[116] present.

The festival grounds themselves once used to be spatio temporal zones of exception from regid and religious forms of organising social life and brought together otherwise disparate populations in what became carnivalesque spaces. At present, with the incorporation of the logic of capitalist consumption and neoliberal forms of ordering (whether as forms of conspicuous consumption in the advertisements of elephants, the participation of residents' associations in the festival organisation, the sponsorships and visual presence of real estate and new age financial institutions), the carnivalesque underpinnings recede and the festival ground essentially becomes a space for legitimating the present kind of exception capital enjoys.

The urban reform provisions (e.g. JNNURM provisions to relax land ceilings in urban zones or creating exceptions for the conversion of zones of primary production for other purposes), the massive use of public spaces for the dissemination of rhetoric (e.g. Proliferation of billboards that block view), or positivistic non intervention at local levels (e.g. In the name of social relations in the locality); all become instances of a normative transformation. There is hardly any space available outside these virtual spaces of the future unless as repositories of nostalgia, 'landscapes' or heritage (presented in movies, new tourism project of state). People invest in reinventing fading traditions and stay away from addressing contemporaneity. The contemporary

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[116] In the sense of Foucault's *Of Other Spaces* (1967) – the kind of heterotopic placedness is"capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible".

stays short of expression, new living engenders a glorious past in its discourse as an exception to the everyday otherwise full of evil. In the material transformations or qualitative changes the dialectics animate images of the past in the hope of a better future. As Benjamin (1973, 'Paris, the Capital of Nineteenth Century') notes, in the case of the evolution of fascism, images intermingle the old and the new as ideals transfiguring the promise offered but blocked by several aspects of the present. The utopic images although stimulated by the present, hark back to the past for contemporary justifications.

2. Exceptional Spaces for Virtual Production

The transformation of Kakkanad as a place in contemporary times unravels and elaborates the basic shift involved in the institution of exceptional zones of virtual production. Virtual production in the present context is constituted by the knowledge based information technology ventures that dominate the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and spaces of production modelled on the concept of SEZs. Unlike the classic institutions of secondary production in Kochi that are public/state owned, unionised, and with demarcated jobs and Fordist structuring, the present ones have egalitarian and flexible overtones where people address each other by first names, use management slang etc. But most of the production involves software based outsourced work with the labour much further away from sources of investment and the product more distanced and elusive. Instead of overt deadlines to regulate work, spatial threats of global competitions regulate workspace pressures.

The recent geographical history, informed by the prevalent mode of production and relationships as well as the zones of virtual production (SEZ), helps to explain further the contemporary logic of state. Fifty years back much of the day's work was in the agricultural fields. This happened only during the appropriate seasons. The first division of the day's work lasted till about 2 in the afternoon and the next started in the evening and went late into the evening. But apart from the activities, either as a labourer or supervisor at the fields, the next major activity in Pallikkara was the stone

business, the transfer of red stones found aplenty at this place to places further west like Mattancherry. The market has been the meeting spot for many.

While loads of red-stone were transported away from Pallikkara[117] chillies, onion, lime etc were brought in with the help of *kallu vallams* mentioned in earlier accounts of stone trade. The stones would be cut to size manually and taken as headload towards the bund to a point where the river and the boats could be accessed. Thus thirty to forty labourers, men and women, would carry the stone to the boats where they received a '*Kolli*' for each stone. The polished sticks worked like a token later when they went either to the *muthalaali* (the proprietor) or to the market. In the first case he or she could get 'anas' for a certain equivalent of *kollis*. Or else the *kollis* themselves could be used as currency. These *kollis* could even be transferred to others if needed.

Everyday labour was not in place, for wages or for other compensation. Much of the time was taken up for inland fishing. Fish was taken to the market. There was no system of home delivery as seen today. But some of the key people in the area were granted this privilege. Later this became more of a norm in every case. Market witnessed a reduction in everyday crowd with many such changes.

Other than paddy, tapioca was planted. But more often this happened only in the fields of the richer people who could afford to wait longer. Local ways of making salt too were in place. The geography seemed to go hand in glove with the patterning of time. Thus there were the hillier places that supplied stones in most cases and very often housed the labouring class. The low lying areas were more often paddy fields. Streams striated these places and were often the paths for communication with roads still rare, or not in place.

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[117] East of Kakkanad
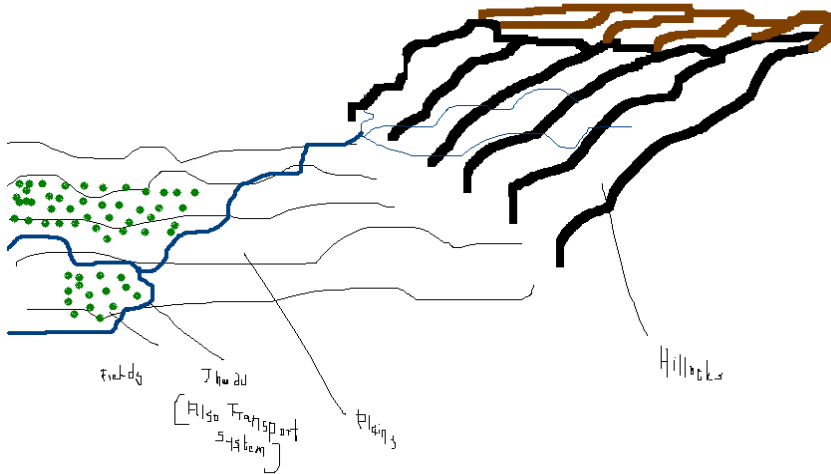
[Source/Own: Rough Geography of Kakkanad and Places Nearby Four Decades Back]

Major transformations in the spatio temporal organisation happened with the laying down of road networks. Streams became useless as paths of transport and became suppliers of food and water. Now hills have become almost entirely the sources of raw materials for the burgeoning real estate market. The scale of business has caused many of the hills to be 'un-earthed' and flattened resulting in the breakage of small springs that led to the streams. Canals that followed the construction of dams for large scale irrigation are either getting clogged or being filled up in the context of the commodification of land. Fields too are getting filled up and walled in as tradable plots. Streams and riversides retain their social significance only as spaces of leisure or relaxation. They become rapidly dematerialised from the local relationships of production.

Earth once again becomes a primary resource for the region. But in its new incarnation, it is but the building material for corporate and other construction work. Each and every small hill is a potential resource. Agriculture has halted; the huge labour population is almost entirely migrant[118]. Labour accidents that are quite

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[118] Increasingly from North Indian states like Orissa, Bihar, West Bengal or arguably migrants from Bangladesh

common in large scale construction activities, are settled quite easily with the migrant labour. By law the 'labour officer' has to visit all the sites of construction and ensure that the labour act is implemented. But in practice such visits do not take place. It is almost as if migrant labour constitutes itself as a body of exception; they can be paid less and expected to work beyond the existing labour norms, and under non-unionised terms. The majority of the locals either fit in somewhere along the chain of businesses that feature urban processes, and the more educated ones largely work in the software parks or Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) units that cater to delocalised demands. Timescapes (the perception people have of time) in relation with the place may have undergone major shifts in Kakkanad. Kakkanad in the contemporary situation has become synonymous with ideas like Infopark, Smartcity, Kochi Special Economic Zone (SEZ), etc. All are specific projects initiated or supported by the state and have together inherited the place[119].

Except for the dwindling numbers of natives (who have a slightly nuanced experience of the place), the place stands for all that future development stands for, they are waiting for a new city that is not quite like the erstwhile cities of congestion and traffic blocks. This is a 'smart' city that will be built around zones of production dominated by information technology. The contemporaneous memorisations of natives, mostly replete with 'nostalgia' and hope at the same time, offer senses of place (Massey 1994) that are flexible and do not interfere with the Kakkanad of the present. This is a city that keeps a disjunctive relationship with the past and gets built anew every day as facilitative spaces of virtual production.

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[119] Plus the nearby Village of Pallikkara becomes synonymous with a private entertainment park.

[Source/Own: Hillocks Cut Away for Construction Work/Spaces of Production at the Kochi Special Economic Zone]

As the discourses signify the Special Economic Zone in effect are different to the extent that they are entitled to privileges and exceptions. The prototypes of such zones go back to those in Ireland in the 60s or to come closer to home, the Export Processing Zones of Kandla in India. In India the Export Processing Zones (EPZs) were transformed into SEZs in 2001. The export zones had already done away with certain provisions for 'barriers' that remained since independence. Duty free zones get projected as essential components in an economic outlook dominated by needs of foreign exchange (forex). The need for more forex gives rise to SEZs instead of EPZs. The development Commissioner in charge of the Kochi SEZ draws an analogy with the formula-one race[120]. Like in such races the SEZs test aspects to the utmost. They are just labs to perfect out elements for a volatile but promising 'market'.

In fact the context of SEZ in India is portrayed not as a belaboured and sophisticated process as in China where such a zone can come only as a one-nation-two-systems

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[120] Lecture at Union Christian College in the town of Aluva, Feb 18 2010

policy. The image of democratic state bears no compact ideological commitment. Instead it conveys an equilibrium state of consensus whenever any major policy change or restructuring gets presented alongside abstractions like national progress or development. The post-1990 liberalisation only made things perfect doing away with the impediments that still remained by way of an act in 2005. What remained a policy of free trade in EPZs have become statutory clauses with the SEZ act. There are provisions to keep at bay the bureaucracy which hindered development in erstwhile modes of production. The 'single window' policy and the generation of a 'legal fiction' of foreign territory within the state boundaries through exceptions of several kind (e.g. Customs, tariffs- there is a even a special cell of Customs to serve the specific needs of the Kochi SEZ), lend positive and futuristic orientation. Unlike the EPZs that specialised only in goods, the SEZs are more oriented towards 'services'. The services mainly constitute information technology mediated outsourced activities that employ the majority on the supply side of global capitalist production networks (as productive labour pools).

There are certain roles assigned to the respective states (Kerala in this case). These are duly fulfilled and the local populations are presented as the beneficiaries. The state government must extend all the Municipal services. The state has to extend exceptions and ensure the smooth functioning of the SEZs. In effect the roles for the state become synonymous with the welfare services for neo liberal capital. Clauses like the ones against denotification of SEZs (an SEZ can never be stopped or denotified. In case of any mismanagement by the developer the state takes charge and ensures smooth functioning) in effect apply to, and appropriate welfarist human rights discourse for corporate bodies.

Within such SEZs, apart from the fifty percent of land that has to be used for the respective processing[121], the rest can be non processing township like spaces. The

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[121] For more clauses and provisions refer to www.csez.com or http://www.sezindiainvest.com/Areas_specification_for_SEZ.htm

advantage with Information Technology dominated parks is that they require less land and are easier to set up. Thus models for information technology parks are circulated in most of the small towns in Kerala, as the formula for the future. At the national level out of the more than five hundred approved SEZs, three hundred have been notified; most of them IT dominated.

The tax exemptions are legitimated on the ground that the developer has to set up infrastructure. Unlike in China, where the zone land is publicly owned by major municipalities having planning capacities (Ong 1999), in India the land can be privately owned and the local bodies can be eventually written off by granting the zones municipal status and autonomy. The state virtually abdicates governance (in the developmental-welfarist sense), except in setting the normative grounds for granting exceptional status, and outsources the task of development to the private sector. In order to set up a Special Economic Zone the state can select only waste or barren land devoid of habitation. But this can easily be bypassed by 'legal' provisions to evict people citing other purposes like for public infrastructure.

In the case of Kochi Special Economic Zone, there was no such issue as here the preceding model of EPZ in effect transformed into SEZ. But the EPZ did have provisions for evictions and clearing of the land to become an Export Processing Zone. Even in the case of present private Information Technology projects like the Smartcity there is no way people can be pressurised to clear away. But here as well, there is a 'legal' provision to clear the barriers through the state agency called KINFRA. It is from the KINFRA with statutory authority, that land may be bought by the private corporate from Dubai on an extraordinarily long lease. Thus there is hardly any instance of flouting of 'law' involved and the facilitative state also maintains juridical propriety.

The labour laws too are supposedly abided with as claimed by the development commissioner. The development commissioner will be in charge and respective

states can make amendments[122]. The Panchayati Raj institutions that are responsible for decentralised power arrangements in India or the Decentralised Initiatives in Kerala[123] will be eventually out of purview. Acts like Industrial Township Act work this out by granting the SEZ based zones self governing status. The SEZs, like the one in Kochi, are to be seen as 'test labs'[124]. The discourse of such zones of exception is juxtaposed against earlier models of bureaucratised development, and with urgency in the race for the future.

In its evolution into a zone of exception Kakkanad directs our attention to how every global workspace is shot through with connections to geographically scattered places. This is unlike earlier modes of production based on agriculture and commerce that could be better grounded with reciprocal controls and have visible links between sources and destinations. A commercial network with Mattancherry Bazaar depends a lot on local market timings, the availability of market goods, seasons of production, as well as the regional peculiarities. The market (as with the idea of 'exception') is no more the same. Presently a zone of exception can come up at any place with the state machinery guaranteeing the terms of producers. By facilitating the approximation of a foreign territory within the state, the state effectively negates earlier exceptions (to norms) and forecloses the possible conflicts that are bound to arise with the penetration of finance capital.

The legalised guarantee of exceptional status replete with ideologies and practices of competitiveness mobilise and restructure time and space, and hence geography, in the service of neoliberal corporate interests. Kakkanad as part of a nation state is

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[122] As did the state of Gujarat, a state marked out in certain political campaign as a pro-developmental state. This is incidentally the state where a genocide happened few years back in which the state machinery was implicated.

[123] Initiated by the Left Governments

[124] Word used by Development Commissioner in the talk referred to in footnote.

reshaped into an exceptional 'location' (Brenner 1998, 2003) for virtual production through incentives, infrastructural support, and land use policies in the pursuit of mobile investment. Through such strategies, the state is drawn ever more into the management of space.

3.3 The Exceptional and the Virtual: Logics of a New Order?

Virtual spaces of exceptional life as well as exceptional zones of virtual production become significant where people get implicated in the contemporary state practices as forms of governmentality. The idea of governmentality (Foucault 2006) is used to refer to the array of knowledge, and techniques related to the systematic and pragmatic guidance and regulation of everyday conduct. The governmentality apparatus unlike the territorial state no longer functions in accordance with territoriality of the surface area, but with the populations -- the instrumentalisation of economic knowledge about such populations as well as the controls exercised by apparatuses of security. Presently this gets done through selection from the melange of processes centred on the exceptional zones in Kochi, the prototypical space of new urban processes. The projections of Kakkanad as elaborations of Kochi, the institution of Special Economic Zones as well as Urban Renewal Missions, have generated a discourse of governmentality with neo liberal emphasis. This results from the unprecedented infiltration of market driven truth and calculations into the domain of politics. Dialogues with private corporate entities are transforming the state from welfarist apparatuses for people into zones of exception where human resources are made available. The consequence is that individuals are induced to self-manage according to market principles of discipline, efficiency and competitiveness exemplified by such zones [Talk by the *Development Commissioner*, Cochin Special Economic Zone (CSEZ), Feb 18 2010]. In the projections of exceptional zones of excellence like Kakkanad one can sense the evolution of a possibly new set of normative categories. Thus such spaces, while excluding many, nevertheless promise an eventual incorporation in novel regimes of 'good governance'.

States of exception in their various unravellings have been analysed before Agamben. Carl Schmitt invokes exception to delineate friends and foes in the context of war (Schmitt 1985, 2004). For Schmitt the primary trope for analysis was dictatorship. Dictatorship which encompasses the stage of siege is essentially a 'state of exception'. In so far as it presents itself as a suspension of law it defines a concrete form of exception in itself. Georgio Agamben used exception as a fundamental principle of sovereign rule that is predicated on the division between citizens in a juridical order and outsiders stripped of juridical or political protections (Agamben 1998). According to him "The subsequent history of the state of siege is the history of its gradual emancipation from the wartime situation to which it was originally bound in order to be used as an extraordinary police measure to cope with internal sedition and disorder, thus changing from a real, or military state of siege to a fictitious, or political one. In any case, it is important not to forget that the modern state of exception is a creation of the democratic-revolutionary tradition and not the absolutist one." (Agamben 2005: 5)

Agamben's work provides a backdrop here. Considering the historical specificity of Kerala, elaborated in previous chapters, as well as the fact that it is certainly not the same human rights regime that Agamben is concerned with, I compliment this using Aihwa Ong's work. Ong conceptualises exception more broadly, as an extraordinary departure in policy that can be deployed to include as well as to exclude (Ong 2006). The politics of exception in the era of neo liberal forms of globalisation for her has disquieting ethico-political implications for those who are included as well as those excluded in shifting technologies of governance and demarcations. Ong explores how the market driven logic of exception is deployed in a variety of ethnographic contexts (China, Malaysia, etc. with different and well formed regimes of their own) and the interrogations set in motion, unsettle our understanding of established patterns of citizenships and sovereignties.

Though there are essential changes in the way states function, they come by way of entrenchment of new forms of governing life, a realignment of processes more in line

with globalised production systems mediated by corporations. Techniques of living (labour life or otherwise, public or private) are highly context specific and they do not easily coalesce into any global multitude (Hardt and Negri 2005)[125]. While management practices or governance may be highly mobile, their transmission, translation, and implementation in diverse zones can only be conceptualised as situated, relying on an array of institutionalised practices that are contingent and varied in their political possibilities. This is precisely why any analysis of forms of life that follows would need to be historically grounded.

People negotiate contemporary forms of governance; whether as ideas of living, development, progress, or urban renewal, in the midst of a process in which a new constellation of productive forces and relations of production is taking shape, as in Kochi. There are not many terms available to designate the emergent social forms. Instead of allowing us to think of the historical reality they designate, they relieve us of the duty to think. This should account for the scarcity of reflections on the present from the field, and the relatively extensive narrations on the past. Baudrillard would say that we cannot think of the present because we are locked in an early paradigm. On the other hand the approach that would at least open a possibly to think about the present and its several forms of relations must work through the dominant paradigms in which the everyday is expressed, viz. as states of exceptions and virtual regimes of production.

Kakkanad, in its contemporary context, an exemplar for futuristic growth, demonstrates the interplay of exceptions (Ong 2006) in places where the power of a

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[125] The idea of people with minimum income acting in networked concert, using rhetorics of global or transnational citizenship and appropriation of the new means of production and forming a common democratic platform is far fetched and not grounded. The problem is that the idea of multitude is generated a lot in the format of anti-capitalism without problematising the capitalist form as it takes root in divergent politico-historical circumstances.

welfare state has never been as absolute in structuring forms of life, as would be the case with certain modern states in Europe. Neoliberalism itself has not yet become the general character of technologies of governanace. Rather, neoliberalism as exception unravels in sites of transformation where market driven calculations are being introduced in the management of populations and administration of urban spaces.

Earlier forms of production and the relationships of production were grounded more locally in the sense that these operated more in accordance with reciprocal processes even within the different power systems. The non monetised exchange of local produce or temporal differences between nearby places in the scheduling of market days until five decades back, the symbiotic institions like clubs, libraries, or political formations through the interactions of natives with those who migrated as workers in the early industrial spaces,[126] etc. demonstrate a mode of spatio temporal mediation that had been less disruptive. The modern linear everyday a la Lefebvre, that entails captalist production, was yet to be an instituted practice even with state mediated orders until the neoliberal phase started to rationalise and rectify any deviation from norm and to make null the inevitability of erstwhile spatial referents.

At present the conditions of exceptionality are liminal states of extraordinary decisions to depart from generalised norms to intervene in the logics of ruling and of being ruled (Ong 2006). In the Schmittian sense, exceptions are invoked to delineate friends and foes. For Agamben exception becomes a fundamental principle of sovereign rule that is predicated on the divisions between citizens and those stripped

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[126] A case in point is the Hindustan Machine Tools company that came up near to the field in the 60s. Many, from different parts of Kerala, who started to work here, eventually migrated and settled around the place. They amalgamated into the local life starting up agriculture, forming common political platforms as well as clubs. Particularly interesting was the way many who retired from the company maintained close ties with the company and the locality through workshops and small scale entrepreneurial ventures.

of juridical and political protection. In the case of virtual spaces for exceptional living and exceptional Special Economic Zones, the exceptional and virtual become part of the everyday of places by the incorporation of cultural investments as well as vestigial icons of erstwhile social worlds. In this context exceptions can be conceptualised more broadly *a la* Ong as an extraordinary departure in policy that can be deployed to include as well as to exclude. It is true that the politics of exception in the era of neo liberal forms of globalisation has disquieting ethico-political implications for those included as well as those excluded. This is where the new forms of governance ironically draw their strength from and this is where the talk of the development commissioner mentioned before becomes significant. The virtual in such a circumstance becomes a vast repository of material aspirations and phenomenological experiences delegated to a 'glorious past' in order to be realised in a 'future'. The present form of governmentality does not seek to fit places into any existing neoliberal format. Rather, the logic is to reposition the 'oikos/hometown' in its web of symbiotic relationships for the strategic production of several material and social values.   This in turn becomes a repositioning of several inclusions and exclusions about new spatialities with the virtual setting the new protocols.

Here exceptional is an extraordinary departure in policy that can be deployed to include as well as to exclude. Rather than envisioning exception as sovereign exception (Agamben) that marks out excludable subjects who are denied protection, exceptions here become strategies of ordering that point to a transforming state and hence a new structural context for anthropological analysis. The virtual and the exceptional in their spatial interplay become the normative logic of a new order that sets in through a positive urban discourse centered on optimisation of places and people as conduits for global capital. There is the inclusion of selected populations and spaces -- as targets of exceptional living (e.g. township plans or gated communities in Kochi) or virtual production (e.g. in SEZs) associated with neoliberal reform. Technologies of optimisation inform governmental strategies that differently regulate populations for optimal productivity, increasingly through spatial practices that engage market forces to an ever greater extent in the everyday transactions.

4. Smart City: The Idea in Search of a City

Smart city is the name of a project marketed by a corporate entity based in Dubai, which has been offered infrastructural and resource moorings by the state in Kerala in Edachira, a small village near Kakkanad, on the eastern part of Ernakulam. The project has been publicised and popularized as a self-contained Information Technology (IT) and IT-Enabled Services (ITES)-township which will be developed by the State government in partnership with the Dubai based investors/developers.

Dubai Holding[127] manages and controls 20 companies, which operate in real estate, hospitality, finance, healthcare, energy, research, education, entertainment, media, internet, tourism and biotechnology. The subsidiary groups of this company, TECOM and Sama Dubai, are involved with Smart City Kochi, the name given to the Information Technology (IT) based township to be realised. Dubai Internet City, a corporate venture in the economic free zone of Dubai, is the main investor. The Smart City Infrastructure Private Limited is the company registered under the Indian Companies Act.

The initial discussions between the state government and the Dubai investor started in 2003 when the Congress led coalition held office. Amidst severe opposition a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed. The major opposition was from the left formations. Major concerns were over the transfer of land, a major part of which would be free, to a company which is not primarily a software company. In the context, the deal, according to the opposition, could only be seen as a real estate deal. The plans to give up the state owned Info Park[128] was also opposed. The earlier MoU

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[127] Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum as the Ruler of Dubai holds 99.67% of the company.

[128] Infopark, is an Information Technology park developed by the Government of Kerala. The government of Kerala, through KINFRA had transferred land to Infoparks Kerala, which is an independent Society fully owned by the Government.

was altered once the left formations assumed government. Thus the transfer of state owned Info Park was stalled. The investors from Dubai had since had apprehensions about the revised Special Economic Zone policy[129] of the state government as well as the negative responses to the transfer of certain land as 'freehold'. Freehold rights relate to the rights the corporate investor/promoter[130] claims to possess with respect to a certain percentage of land. This includes the right to sell such land if need be. But the left government took the stand that this is not possible and absolute rights like the right to sell cannot entail any agreement and that this even falls outside exceptions granted in the Special Economic Zone rules. Then the investor wanted such rights to come outside SEZ rules as they said the framework agreements grant then such a right. Eventually the government had its way, granting certain rights on condition that the land cannot be sold. There have been many public debates over inordinate delays and lack of clear statements. The role of Malayali corporate businessman, M.A.Yousuf Ali, based in Dubai, in mediating the talks between government and investors in Dubai, has been significant in reaching interim agreements.

The confusions over exemptions granted within Special Economic Zone regulations as well as corporate investments signify contemporary challenges to the spatialities

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[129] The left government brought in a state-specific SEZ policy (2008) which would be binding on all SEZs, including the ones already sanctioned. The revised policy contains conditions, mainly to ensure the welfare of workers and to curb the real estate interest of the developers. The state government has insisted that 70 per cent of the land should be utilised for industrial purpose. This is a major shift from the Centre's policy, which stipulates that only 50 per cent of the land needs to be used for industry. (The Indian Express, Tue Sep 30 2008),

[130] A person or body of persons, company, firm and such other private or government undertaking, who develops, builds, designs , organises, promotes, finances, operates, maintain or manages a part or whole of the infrastructure and other facilities in the Special Economic Zones as approved by the central Government.

hitherto exempt or buffered out of the dominant order. The welfarist apparatus as well as leftist politics is stretched to their maximum in confrontation with a corporate present and they have to enter into reconfigured relationships with respect to the order that has to ensue. There is a more evident corporate involvement in the everyday running of state and the role of expatriate population becomes increasingly significant, not just in terms of investment (as with post 70s), but as active participants in the neoliberal order as exemplified by the Smart City.

For the people the Smart City could have several connotations. For people of Edachira what was noticeable was the violence in the wake of the project proposal, inadequate compensation, land price, or the need to reconcile with something *inevitable*. For others this is a grand project the leftists have been interfering with. It is *vikasanam* (approximately, 'development'-- a catch-all jargon). It is a prototype; it is the new city; it is a politics-free zone; it is the influx of huge numbers of migrant labourers and information technology. Smart city might be all of these or representative of what follows when the present/contemporary becomes so fragmented that reflection becomes difficult.

The project has emerged as a dominant theme -- a formidable master signifier with which people engage and produce the contemporary urban order. As a master signifier the idea has become self referential to such an extent that it has set the terms of much of the discourse. The strings of "signifiers without a signified" (Zizek 1989), (from the depictions/presentations of new living spaces, of 'cities', or societies to outbursts of organised violence in movies[131]) have got themselves subsumed in the 'city'. The city in this sense is neither a fixed entity with an urban center nor a metropolis[132] with outlying peripheries that have to depend on a center. But position and significance of specific places are altered through radical shifts in associations

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[131] There is a movie by the name 'Smart City' for instance that exemplifies this.

[132] In fact there has not been a metropolitan centre in Kerala. There have only been small towns and relatively larger ones that are contiguous with places around (Eapen 1999).

people make as inhabitants or citizens. A distinct possibility of similar cities coming up looms as a likelihood in Kerala wherein any 'designated' space may become a 'smart city' at any moment. The idea encompasses and is encompassed by people in places otherwise disparate with possible shifts in erstwhile logics of spatial organisation.

The encompassing idea gets materialised as spaces that overlay places and in which human beings are organised in new ways. There is a normalization of life in new terms and one cannot but relate to such overarching ideas. Whether as opposition to certain conditionality, inadequacies in compensation, choice of location, complaints of political involvements, or demands for incorporation, people in places are relocating themselves along new coordinates. And when they do so both when drawing from and withdrawing from a certain social order they may be entering new biopolitical paradigms.

4.1 The Urban Context of Smart City:

There have always been significant deviations from the normative frames of urbanisation (Chatopadhaya 1982/ Sreekumar 1993/ Smailes 1969) in Kerala. Those who are considered urban dwellers as per statistical parameters have always been lower. In fact there are no cities with more than one million people and only three with more than a hundred thousand (Chatopadhaya 1982). All of these have once been urban nodes of an early urban process, which has been discussed before, and are constituted along with a string of such towns, mostly along the coast (there are a few inland towns of similar scales as well -- mostly near navigable rivers). What is noticeable about most of the towns before the nineteen nineties is their multifunctionality. There has never been a unifying logic for urban centers as could be said about the rest of India in terms of functions (Commerce, Industry, Services). Urbanisation after nineteen fifties here has not been directly correlative to industrialisation or commercialisation, as is the case with towns elsewhere, but have been continuations of existing functionalities (ibid.). Thus most places remain bound

to primary forms of production like agriculture albeit with radical reorganisations. There have not been significant forms of migrations to the towns. This is mainly the result of the redistributions of wealth during land reforms and the development of basic infrastructure in an egalitarian manner through state welfare.

The process of urbanisation which was contiguous to primary forms of production has always been mediated by political processes in the form of unions as well as organised workers since the nineteen thirties. After the nineteen sixties capitalists as a class have been much less determinative to urban processes compared to the rest of India (Kannan 1988, 1990). The land reforms did away with the agrarian capitalist class to a great extent and the role of industrial capitalist class has also been moderate. Urban centres/small towns have been dominated by more distributed mercantile capital since the sixties but that too has been mediated by organised labour.

The otherwise informal and unorganised groups in production, dependent on feudal relations sustained by a colonial order, effectively got encompassed by political organisations. But by the nineteen seventies there were new structural challenges. In the context of increasing wage cost, there was a move away from existing primary sectors to less labour intensive arenas or utilisation of migrant labour from other states (in the case of small scale industries). There was an increase in the number of skilled/educated class as well as considerable reduction in infant mortality as a function of better public health care. There were other factors like increase in life expectancy, as well as better access to infrastructure. Increased unemployment coincided with the first major wave of gulf migrations (Kannan and Pushpangadan 1988 and 1990). Starting from the nineteen thirties there has been a net migration of people from places as a function of getting implicated in colonially mediated global processes like depression (Zachariah et al 2003). The trend was revived during the seventies but on a much larger scale. Unlike the thirties, the migration has been to places outside India, especially to become part of the global phenomenon of oil boom in the Gulf countries. The remittance economy had already started making significant

impacts on the urban profile of small towns spread all across, during the time of economic reforms.

There was a qualitative change in life (Matthew and Nair 1978) which was not determined by urban rural divides. The change coincided with new strains brought in through unemployment as well as migrations. A highly contested condition was produced in the distributive system as a result of the coming together of social development (Dreze and Sen 1989, 1996) along with low accumulation, as well as the growth of a new consuming class that was not confined to exclusive spaces (Lukose 2005; Kannan 1990; Isaac and Kumar 1991). By the end of the nineteen nineties in the predominantly agrarian regions around Kakkanad, the dominant primary sector was no more agriculture, but mining and quarrying which was related to the demands of the construction sector. In the secondary sector the emphasis was less on traditional sectors but on electricity, gas, and water supply. With the primary sector almost completely subordinate to the service sector, urban trends were also reversing to be less dependent on specificities of places and were being unified into an order determined by a globalised tertiary processes.

Contemporary forms of urbanisation in the newly 'incorporated' places are clearly post reform phenomena. Reform here refers to the acceleration of the process of financial liberalisation since 1991 by the then Congress government. Since then, there has been well "orchestrated action by successive governments, international agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Official economists -- several of them -- have been dividing their time between New Delhi and Washington. Almost the entire electronic and print media have been portraying the policies of liberalisation, privatization and globalisation (LPG) as both inevitable and desirable[133]". The intrusions of the state as regulator and participant have to be held in check. In the words of C.P. Chandrasekhar and Jayati Ghosh, all this makes, "... curtailment of the fiscal deficit the fundamental task of fiscal policy. It

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[133] (Athreya 2002: *Market failure: A convincing case.* Available: http://www.frontline.in)

accelerated trade liberalisation, which involved doing away with quantitative restrictions on imports and reducing customs tariffs, with attendant revenue implications. It dismantled controls on free operation of large industrial capital, domestic and foreign. It provided a host of direct and indirect concessions to industry, reducing the tax base of the government further. It provided a host of concessions to foreign investors in the hope that they would use India as a base for world market production.[134]"

The practices of state that get articulated in the context of urban processes are not unrelated to the specific social and cultural problems of the places in question. But they may also be manifesting a distinct capacity for decontextualisation and recontextualisation, abstractability and mobility across diverse social situations and relationships. It has to be imagined as embedded in the multiple configurations that relationships and human life assume. In the situation, otherwise unconnected narratives can be brought to converge, or previously connected ones may be wrenched apart.   People in places, in their new urban context, bring up issues that arise out of the sense of living together and in juxtaposition, and also must negotiate the equally varied wider relations within which they are reconstituted.

Smart City, for the analysis that has to follow, will be both a specific project as well as a recurring theme. The discussion will be built around two of the many initiatives[135] in the post reform context of the Indian state that have had wide implications for the field in question. They are:

1. The institution of an authority for infrastructure development with statutory powers, namely, the Kerala Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (KINFRA). As a nodal agency with statutory powers, it works in tandem with central agencies, urban local bodies, or Special Economic Zone directives.

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[134] C.P. Chandrasekhar and Jayati Ghosh (2002)

[135] Government of India (1995-96): *Economic Survey*, Ministry of Finance, New Delhi.

Special offices have been instituted[136] and specific clauses for acquisitions[137] have been invoked to make the work smoother.

2. Association with a comprehensive urban renewal mission called Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)[138]. Post 1990s, states are pressed to be mediated with such reforms if they need central support. Among the many clauses are the empowerments of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) that need to enter into more Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) as preferred modes for implementing projects under the urban programme.

Contemporary forms of urbanisation may be displaying a total deconstruction of earlier formations while formulating orders that re-articulate "the universal tendency of capital" that Marx discusses[139]. Accordingly the control of space seems divided between agencies that traverse and transcend territories. In the context of the state this evolved with reformist overtones into a state founded on ideas of equity (Oommen 2008) rather than growth figures [be that of Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) or Net State Domestic Products (NSDP)]. This could be getting into a situation wherein erstwhile models get challenged or are rendered unsustainable in a centralising neoliberal order. Whether as a facilitator of the flow of capital, a referee for a given order, or an entity that maintains the few "intrusive" mechanisms (Mani 1996) in the federal order, the idea of state might be in transformation.

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[136] Like Special Tahsildar for Land Acquisition

[137] Invocation of clauses that indicate urgency (A2-120/06-Office of the Special Tahsildar) over normal clauses. For instance, in connection with the laying of infrastructure (roads, rails) to a port based project of 'national importance' at Vallarpaadom, the urgency clause was invoked.

[138] *http://www.ksudp.org/Abtout_us.html* and *jnnurm.nic.in contains the official details*

[139] with reference to industrial capitalism

Fort Kochi, the older urban centre, has been already tucked away as a repository of the past, and as a tourist destination. The global agents wield control over real estate in the string of spaces that constitute special economic zones[140]. The densely packed commercial streets, the ever increasing value of space (the horizontal land surface and vertical spaces of apartments!), the simultaneous implosion (for lack of space in the erstwhile urban centers) and explosion (into the outlying regions east and west) point to 'the urban' becoming a tissue of the corporate production systems. In the context the media praises entities like KINFRA for their "enviable record in kick-starting growth" (Parthasarathy 2005).

In the more northern parts of India, historically, cities have been large administrative centers and monumental capitals of very large empires. They had been centralising forces and forted zones which later became ripe for 'colonial administrative ordering'. The urban centers were relatively more distributed and were marked more by transactions with the hinterland than by distinctions[141]. This might also have to do with the absence of monumental empires in Kerala and the relatively smaller states that came at a later stage. The cities that evolved among many urban nodes with distinct features later became urban centers of an independent nation state. Even then most cities kept their local identity and continuity except for Kochi which became more a settled urban centre with shifting populations, with its harbour becoming a premier node for the nation state.

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[140] Since the policy for setting up SEZs was introduced in 2000 (which offered setting up such SEZs in public, private, or joint sectors) many erstwhile Export Promotion Zones became Special Economic Zones. Cochin Special Economic Zone is the first of such kind in Kerala. The port based ventures at Vypeen and Vallarpadam, as well as the Smart City project tries for such a status.

[141] For more see: Varghese, Rachel A. *MPhil Thesis titled 'From Archaeological Sources to Aspects of Early Social Formation in Kerala: Trade and Communication Indices, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2008 (Unpublished)* /Discussion in the historical background.

What is special about the present forms of urbanisation is probably the way the new 'cities' have sprouted. They do not necessarily evolve out of existing urban centers though this is how it is often portrayed. On the contrary these are flexible cities which can be planted almost anywhere and more so where the state has been almost uniformly urbanised by way of population, public infrastructure, or education.

4.2 Being with 'the City'

When I started the fieldwork in 2008, the roads to Edachira from Kakkanad were banked by dilapidated-vacated houses or small business[142] and populated by load bearing trucks. These trucks, expensive cars parked by the tracts of agriculture that remained, small talks by the street, or the smallest signs by the roads bore evidence of what would replace almost every other major activity viz. construction. Until recent times, the place had been dominated by small hillocks. Many such natural formations have been razed to the ground to be converted into filling material to raise low lying lands, marshes and fields for urban projects. The land is flattened for high rise apartments, except in those cases where a hillock is terraced for expensive living quarters called villas with names like 'Green view', 'River-View' or 'Kadambra.'[143]. The hills have been razed, water tables depleted, piles driven into the ground, and the whole place is being spliced into distinct 'smart spaces' as they are trendily called.

The spaces have taken after the name of a project that is to be the new mantra of development viz. information technology. The local Kadambra River must supply more than hundred thousand cubic feet of water for the upcoming project. An offshoot of the river called Edachira Thodu physically divided the space provided for 'Smart City' from the existing, state managed information technology park called

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[142] Like the toddy shop past Edachira

[143] The name of the small river that runs in these places

'Info Park'. Both the ventures are predominantly information technology based business process outsourcing of software enabled services that depend on cheap labour of educated youth available across the country. Concomitant to these developments, primary productive means and occupations like agriculture[144] and industry[145] have been fast superseded, replaced by what is often talked about as collateral necessities viz. new living spaces.

The facilitating spaces for IT together with new living spaces that 'have to' cater to the levels of expected spending are collectively referred to as the smart city. Posh educational institutes with exorbitant fee structure and networks of new retail outlets are being built. A few locals, for different reasons, have already moved out from the village after selling their land at inflated prices to apartment builders, while many who lived within the proposed 'special economic zones' have been served official notices of eviction or summoned before special Land acquisition (LA) officers[146]. Near the Edachira Canal could be seen a makeshift tent. Inside were some people who resisted eviction. One of the ladies in the tent who had been living in the region all along named some of the larger land owners with 'political clout' who started out with villa projects in anticipation. There were many 'investors' from elsewhere who had made phenomenal land purchases, though *benamis*[147] when many sellers had no idea of what lay ahead. Those like her family who are economically less privileged, who now resist eviction, came to know last. She told me that information has become classified. Their everyday, replete with uncertainties about what is happening to them

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[144] Though corporate forms of it are encouraged elsewhere in India (REF)

[145] The ones in the Aluva Eloor belt

[146] Form No. 4 C, Notice A3- 1231/09

[147] Approximately 'one without name' and in this case refers to proxy names under which the land gets registered. After a certain stretch of land is vested under many such proxies, the anonymous investor, can wait for a conducive clause or scheme under which the 'properties' could be registered in his name.

and all around, has problematised loaded terms like 'knowledge society' and they ask whether ideas in vogue necessarily signify anything.

Despite the evictions and outflows the villages still hold inhabitants whose families have been here for many decades. Large and small families have devolved characteristic relationships with the new connotations of their places. This is more so for the villages of Pallikkara or Kizhakkambalam where there has not been any substantial change in the population profile except for the small numbers who have moved in from neighboring Edachira and Kakkanad which have become 'project sites'. There has been a major transformation in these regions, not the least in the visible dwindling of agriculture or the transformation of geography.

Terraced hill sides are visible from a distance before one reaches the pocket roads that take one to these compensatory spaces. Kareem, who was in the forefront of the campaign against forced acquisitions starting from the ones for erstwhile Export Processing Zone, said that the KINFRA or the statutory authorities would not come to the table without sustained campaigns. Delegations from these places as well as those from the eastern parts of Ernakulam where people were being evicted for port based projects have been in dialogue with the state. Though there is no provision for private entities to forcibly acquire land or evict people for any kind of project, the industrial policy[148]as well as the modified SEZ policy allows acquisitions by state bodies like KINFRA for 'the greater common good'. These statutory bodies may subsequently make resources available after removing whatever needs to be. At Edachira most of the campaigns were not against the project *per se* but for compensations. People say that they are not against *vikasanam* but need either market value for their land (This demand is more vociferous in the case of large landholders) or compensation. Some told me the 'Edachira package' was a relatively successful campaign.

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[148] Industrial and Commercial Policy 2007, Department of Industries and Commerce, Government of Kerala (GoK).

[Source/ Own: Major Transitions: Over a year the place where the house stood got leveled and where we stood a fence appeared. The guards told us that we may be trespassing into 'Smart City' property]

Not far away from the spaces for rehabilitation was the hillside from where one of my field acquaintances narrated the story of swimming across the Kadambrayaar that flowed down the valley to a toddy shop where he as well as his friends had everyday gatherings. Some months back a large, though old, *tharavad,* could be seen here. Now a long green fence extends from the spot all the way down the valley and enveloping the river. Uniformed officers of a private security agency informed us that this was 'Smart city' property. Over these months our designation had become that of trespassers. The Kadambra River since then has transformed from a small clean rivulet -- an element of everyday life of the locals. From its transitional status as a dirty water body in the wake of the flurry of construction work and waste disposals from Ernakulam and everyday use by thousands of migrant workers, it has re-positioned as 'Kadambrayaar Tourism Project' along a chain that includes amusement parks that occupy the remaining hillocks[149].

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[149] The tourism department has hence appreciated entrepreneurial abilities of Kochauseph Chittilappally who was awarded for this 'eco-friendly' project. He has been a resident in this part. The site was once a rubber plantation held by the present MD who also heads one of the major enterprises in India.

Meanwhile hoardings along the roads, talks in the evenings in middle class homes and advertisements across media projected new living spaces -- and at much 'attractive rates'-- during recession. More and more land visibly was getting cordoned off for real estate developments of some kind. Certain locals were keen on co-opting places into narratives as where a particular 'film actor' is said to have purchased land or the 'spiritual guru' Santosh Madhavan[150], who was recently arrested held property. They were either vociferous about the illegalities in land deals or keen on the nature of scandals. They said, much like the lady who faced eviction, mentioned above, that all benefits go to those who have the best connections. Then they went about talking about the *ashram* where the *swami* molested young girls, whereby emphasising the anarchy that accompanies *vikasanam*.

I got a call from a Non Resident Indian acquaintance, enquiring about an apartment complex "five kilometers away from airport and just 20 kilometers away from Smart City and Port". When asked what he wants to do at the Vypeen gas terminal or smart city each day or whether he has frequent air travels to make, he was not too happy. He asserted that he has already done his homework and examined the statistics and that I was only required to enquire the going rates for booking an apartment that faces the river.

A rickshaw driver took me to the site where a new apartment/villa project was about to proceed to the construction stage. Some form of function had just concluded at the site which was filled with nutmeg and arecanut trees planted by the ex-owner of the property. Ads had been put in the newspapers announcing a consecration ceremony called *bhoomipooja*. By the time we were there the main function was over and the priest had left. Some who were in charge of the functions compelled us to get into the tent where they served a sumptuous menu.

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[150] Arrested in charges of fraud, child abuse, and molestations. He was sentenced to prison on charges of molesting underage girls.

There were people with mobile phones up their ears talking about land and real estate and some who were having small arguments here and there. The consecration ground seemed to be abandoned. Even though the rickshaw driver told me later that this was to please the *Bhoomidevi*[151] because a massive alteration was to be made on the land, neither he nor the ones around were familiar with any such act, certainly not one of this scale. Some though, reasoned that it has to be elaborate because of the scale of the project, which was unlike an individual house where the rituals, if any, could be different and on much smaller scale. *Bhoomipooja* seemed more of a void contemporary institution that could rework the lack of tradition to legitimize an apartment complex.

From our conversations it later turned out that the driver himself was in the real estate chain as a small time broker who is now currently engaged in a number of negotiations between parties willing to sell land, parties who have saleable land, and parties willing to buy them. He said that usually for such large projects as the present one we were visiting, there would be several brokers like him who later flock to the person who spends a lump sum amount after acquiring the land from individual parties on a usually inflated rate facilitated in turn by the major investor. So brokers like him survived on commissions that come to amounts much higher than their 'official occupations' (drivers, clerks, public servants, or even jobless youngsters). When asked whether he knows the usual buyers, he said that it would be difficult to know the buyers as the information would be confidentially held by the builders. As for those who sold their land, with the lump-sum that they get, they could buy property elsewhere. In the present case the ex-owner had hence moved north to Palakkad where land was cheaper.

Some like this driver have mostly left brokerage since the state government streamlined documentations linked to land transfers and the decrease in the number of

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[151] Bhoomi=earth; devi=goddess

transactions during the recession. Many told me that they had lost a lot of money over expectations, and incurred debts, though there were also 'success stories'.

The Smart City Project is yet to take off after official inauguration. There have been debates[152] starting from the modifications mooted by the Left government that followed the Congress led government which signed the deal. Though some aspects of the earlier deal (like transfer of Info Park run by govt.) were stalled and sterner statements made (as the ones on the provision of 'freehold land' the investors asked for) the state govt. was not against the project. Questions from the state apparatus regarding the financial status of the company post 2009 recession, ultimatums to abide by certain clauses as well as possibilities for seeking alternative investments; too were not against the idea as such.[153]

The various new practices of the state, in its post reform phase have certainly demanded radical re-ordering of local lives. But as Veena Das says it is wrong to assume that they submit to such conditions passively (Das 2004: 20). At the same time new found occupations or engagements (brokerages, commission agents, ad board business or contracts[154]) in themselves do not constitute any form of resistance. Rather, it is more about "the ways in which the conceptual boundaries of the state are extended and remade in securing survival or seeking justice in everyday life" (ibid.). The practices and politics of life have important bearings on the way the state gets constituted. In many ways the state has been on the peripheries of the mainstream

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[152] Ref: Dailies from 2008 to 2010, Television Reports, Roadside speeches.

[153] On the other hand the investors from Dubai, through press conferences keep communicating that if "all the conditions in the framework agreement including the Special Economic Zone notification, registration of lease agreement and stamp and registration duty exemptions were met".(Reported by the Financial Express)

[154] Discussed in detail in the chapter on such phenomenon, which for general purposes may be tagged 'Labour'.

processes of the nation state. The practices of the state itself and in the ways it came to be have been exceptions to the rules.

The rhetoric of *vikasanam*, exaggerated by the smart city, has informed the ontology of similar models elsewhere in Ernakulam. What may be observed is that the state in its post reform phase has gone along increasingly with the new economic priorities. The differences from other parts of India are qualitative and can be reasoned only by the ways different political orders get constituted. For instance there are fewer instances of overt forms of violence like the ones witnessed in Orissa[155] or Gurgaon[156] in connection with new economic embodiments like SEZs or townships. Compensation schemes are sometimes lauded even by the campaigners as the successful outcome of their campaigns.

Several unique processes have devolved out of the urban situations in the last few years. Situations that involve land acquisitions and characteristic engagements with people in places elaborate important transformations in the everyday functioning of state and delineate how people, the corporate agencies, state, as well as the overarching neoliberal system create absolute orders and new hierarchies. The state which remains mediated by a politicised public sphere cannot sever off from the local predicaments without facing electoral consequences. Several rounds of negotiations and reviews follow any decision to implement a project[157]. The neoliberal turn of the state translates into responsibilities invested with the state and this trickles down to

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[155] For mining operations in Orissa (Ramakrishnan, July 2010, Frontline)

[156] http://gurgaonworkersnews.wordpress.com/

[157] Minutes of the Meeting of the Appellate Committee (22/10/2005)/ The Vaduthala Janakeeya Samithi (1/7/2006)-Letter to Revenue Minister, State

local levels where people enter into several forms of negotiations[158]. This is unlike situations elsewhere in India where the state has always been an alien entity only to resurface as an absolute form of intrusion. In the places focused upon, people have meticulously made use of provisions like right to information[159] to get a picture of the bureaucratic processes and entered into dialogues with the state and bureaucracies in several forums (legal/informal/appellate committees). The state itself is structurally constrained between corporate predicament[160]/ neoliberal strictures and the welfarist tradition/intrusions from the political public sphere. Urgency clauses[161] get invoked and notices get served, at times bypassing many of the provisions. Conflicts within the system like the ones between Colonial Land Acquisition Acts and Right to Life Article 21 point to present structural reversals. But all of these get subjected to different levels of deliberations.

Noticeably though, in contemporary urban situations people enter into formats of bureaucratic negotiations and create forums in which justice is sought within the new

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[158] The Special Tahsildar (L.A) Letter to District Collector (4/7/2006)- circumventing several procedures like Environmental clearance and invoking special clauses-The decentralisation of responsibilities to the most local levels- The coming of new hierarchies

[159] Under the provisions of the Act (2005), a citizen may request information from a "public authority" (body of Government or "instrumentality of State") which is required to reply expeditiously or within thirty days. It needs also to be noted that such an act also get passed in a time when corporate business interests are given a freer hand in affairs of the state. But it is a fact that in Kerala, it is often the stakeholders who have made most use of the act.

[160] Cochin Port Trust to Chief Secretary, Govt. of Kerala (14/8/2006) – Indications regarding pressures on the state caught between structural constraints and welfarist history.

[161] Minutes of the Meeting of Chairman, CoPT with District Collector and Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (20/6/2006)

order, that does not become antagonistic of processes and challenges from outside[162]. They question non implementation of agreements with stakeholders (themselves), protection of vested interests (like real estate lobbies), and circumventing clauses within (like those in SEZ rules). But through negotiations over price and compensation, people are also incorporated in the urban process unlike in other instances in India where the state is only a violent intruder and does not enter into mediation between corporates and people. The situations exemplify how there is a fragmentation of responsibility away from the state on to people as well as the fragmentation of political formats into characteristic engagements, with the effect that people are never against reforms or projects, but seek claims within. In addition to the fragmentation of responsibilities, liquidation of several implicit and informal mechanisms of sustenance (like living and drawing resources from a particular place for a particular time, but with no formal titles), results in the additional burden of confronting the bureaucratic mechanism in its corporate predicament in order to receive a fair deal in negotiations[163].

On a comparison with situations elsewhere in India, we see that albeit the delays and arduous negotiations 'to get things done' as investors and business people often complain,[164] as people more or less engage with state, fragmented reasons for hegemonic orders are also manufactured out of such contemporary engagements. Another major aspect to contemporary forms of engagements with urban orders is the increasing normalization of arrangements that come out of it. A compensatory package proposed can become the comparative gauge. The package itself may not have been realized in full, nor would there be any guarantee for the assignment of corporate responsibilities (like in providing employment for the evictees) as a result

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[162] Decision taken after Meeting on Deciding Fair Value by Purchase Committee on Fast Track Basis presided by Collector (October 2007)

[163] W.P. C. No. 30141 of 2006(s), Ruling on Petition Filed in High Court

[164] Minutes of the Meeting (12/6/2008) Pertaining to Rail/Road Connectivity of Major Ports across India

of state mediation. There is a normalization and naturalization of the process of engagements, as exemplified by land acquisitions and ensuing negotiations in places.

With the fragmentation of people on the receiving end of contemporary orders into groups that seek their respective claims and enter into comparisons, the idea of well-being ceases to be mutually encompassing as the following case seems to illustrate:

Some of the inhabitants of the island of Valanthakad recently sensed that the life worlds they have been used to, even without official supportive documentation, are currently under challenge. They in some sense became arrogated into what Ashis Nandy would call 'unintended city' (Nandy 1998). Thus their life worlds become implicit spaces in a new order even when not getting featured in any master plan. In this case a small population totally dependent on primary resources from the lake in effect gets cordoned off their means of sustenance in the course of fragmentation of the place into zones of investment. For small populations at margins[165], the state in practice has been an informal entity that never interfered (nor intervened) with their ways of life. But now they confront a recalcitrant state and negotiate fears of mutually exclusive public anger loaded with supportive reasons and statistics.

Natives of Valanthakad Island[166] mainly subsisting on fishing and agriculture have always sought entitlements to the land they live in with no positive response. The total area of this island is nearly 350 acres besides <u>puramboke</u> *(no man's land for which there exists no formal title deeds), mangrove, and excess land (michabhoomi). Some of the islanders remember paying levies to the Tripoonithura Devaswam long time back, indicating that the land was in charge of the Devaswam. Afterwards there has never been any active interference and the informal entitlements continued till now.*

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[165] In the case of larger populations that have been on the margins of state processes, like Vypeen islanders, the situation is rather different.

[166] Various Issues of Mathrubhoomi

Until recent times the panchayat officials of Marad came and collected the coconut from the excess land in direct control of the state. This suddenly stopped. Marad panchayat of the Ernakulam district is often cited as an exemplar of vikasanam. The investors who flocked towards a Chamber of Commerce seminar encouraged the nine hundred plus local bodies in Kerala to follow the example set by Marad. Of late the panchayat has been promoted to Municipality status reasoning the inability of the existing mechanism to handle the type of developments. Recently some of the locals who went to collect clams and oysters were stopped and questioned by people 'on duty'. They were told that they were trespassing. Suddenly boundaries became visible. The islanders grew apprehensive that their land was getting alienated. Their claims of subsistence being 'informal',, the apprehensions have become real fears.

Certain natives were even taken to police stations for challenging some who they saw as 'intruding' into their island. People became concerned that the existing laws were getting eased out for the benefit of a certain real estate 'developer'[167] to start a township complex spread over Marad stretching into their island. In order to get over the land ceiling eighteen companies were shown to be taking ownership. The state has supposedly agreed to provide single window clearance for many projects. It is probably the only state in India to have a separate legislation for the process. The stated objective for such a process is the expedition of various clearances for new projects either in the form of approval or rejection. Thus there is a stipulated period from the date of application to the decision unlike the much more time consuming bureaucratic routines with respect to other matters that require official mediation.

The positive/supportive rhetoric was the promise for employment to 75,000 and an investment of 50000 million. The islanders felt powerless before such figures and apparent state support. Their fears are compounded when their places become mapped as investment zones and properties in Google earth or Wikimapia. Many observers as well as protesters allege that the state relaxes/suspends several acts and

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[167] called Shobha group

legislations (Coastal Regulation Zone notifications/Kerala Conservation of Paddy Lands and wetlands Act 2008/ Forest and Wetland Policies 2008) as well as the radical and historical Land Reforms act (1963) in order to promote this corporate project. They say that the fears of a 'meager forty eight families' who subsist on the ecosystem fade away against information technology based projects that have brought in a huge real estate sector replete with speculative land values and consequent accumulations in the name of futuristic 'vikasanam'.

The concept of *vikasanam,* decades back had more or less specific connotations. For instance it was the carrying out of the five year plans in the sixties. The first left governments had taken the state to the margins of national policies by laying out different schemes of action for operationalising these plans. *Vikasanam* informed by formation of food committees, committees in the fields of education and health, as well as fair price committees (Gopalan 1980/ Subramanian and Prasad 2008) has also acquired a class character and a social capital that persisted even after the concept became more of a signifier signifying nothing towards the post developmental nineties. Now it has been pegged to a chain of signifiers capable of encompassing people as necessary building blocks, producing material transformations in lives and geographies.

[Scene from Valanthakkad Island[168]]

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[168]   (Source: http://emiljohns.blogspot.com/2010/03/save-valanthakkad-island-calling.html)

The contemporary predicament of the 'global metropolis' (Nigam/Menon 2007) in the case of Delhi may be a significant comparison. How processes take effect depend much on the characteristic constitution of people as citizens in these places. At present, this involves the de-territorialisation of the 'third world' metropolis, a sundering of ties with its national location and its integration into a handful of global cities (Aditya Nigam uses the term only descriptively. He does not relate it to any particular global city theorist/theory)[169]. There is a total overhaul of ideas of 'self reliant' industrialisation and a 'relocation' of Delhi among a grid of cities that cater to multinational investment flows. So the whole infrastructure of the city has to be changed and people re-accommodated. The supplementation of small industries, to the production of Gurgaon like formations, to the sprucing up of the city for commonwealth games, caters to this new inflow of global capital, with capitalists scattered transnationally as comprador agents.

In the case of Delhi, people accommodated as underpaid labour and dependents of this newly created industrial order (of the 60s) are now being removed with the "rhetoric of cleaning the city and making it healthy". In the context, a Master Plan of Delhi drawn up in 1962 with help from a team of the Ford Foundation gets invoked[170]. The plan is actualised better in the contemporary context and not without

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[169] In the case of Delhi though one could see new class alignments along with the downgrading of traditional manufacturing and emergence of a producer and financial services complex that Saskia Sassen talks about (1991). But the population that Aditya Nigam focuses on is obviously different. He doesn't use global city to communicate agglomeration economies of cities that accelerate coordination and communication of global scales (Castells 1989) or to talk about global economic pressures on governmental policies (Fainstein 2001).

[170] The plan was based on an elaborate idea of zoning wherein residential, industrial, and commercial zones were spatially segregated. There wasn't to be residential provisions near to units, thus preventing the formation and mushrooming of 'illegal' squatter settlements. Positive rhetoric for the new urban plan was generated out of the interregnum (e.g. cased

key revisions [Delhi Master Plan (DMP) 2001]. The provisions for residential space for the poor are now brought down to almost a fifth of what it was! What has to be taken into account is the transformations that different state orders within the larger Indian context undergoes in terms of global interconnections, and how urban configurations, transnationally mediated, create contestations over space, resources, and livelihood (Bannerjee-Guha 2009).

Urban spaces in Kerala, never had phases and the scales of industrialisation as with Delhi or violent ways of introducing industrialisation (as during the 70s emergency) that involved active demolition of slums and settlements[171]. The contemporary situation replete with evictions, relocations (as seems more overt in the case of Valanthakad, more systematic in the case of Edachira, or in between in the case of Vypeen Island) or labour migrations, often accompanied by unprecedented forms of inequality (Subramanian/ Prasad 2008), bring up some of the urban trends Nigam discusses.   Further, what is more evident is the reconfiguration of state in the urban context when people in places are currently subjected to new formalities and strictures concerning laws that overrule existing informalities as in the case of

filed in courts citing pollution during this time) between the original plan (60s) and its invocation in the 90s.

[171] This doesn't mean that people didn't confront forms of violence here. Crucial points like the 1920s or during food scarcities and price lowering created by depressions (1930s), repressions of agrarian revolts in Malabar and the states (in 40s) as well as labour revolts in traditional industries like coir (in Alleppey), and the iron handed repression of leftist movements that took the agrarian revolts into another level post independence (Gopalan 1980) are instances in which people have confronted violence and informed political public sphere. But in Kerala it was land based agrarian questions that came to the fore and in turn gave rise to a reformist state, unlike the violent repressions that persisted in the north (Delhi, or in the case of mill workers in Bombay- the labour itself came in through rural to urban migrations- they had to undergo several rearrangements of spatiotemporalities (Nigam and Menon 1989/Chandavarkar 1994/ Anand 2007/ Farooqui 2006)

inhabitants of Valanthakad who suddenly are not 'entitled'. A bourgeois, consumerist, and globalist aesthetic is also responsible for the remaking of the urban invoking exceptional clauses from colonial times (Chatterjee 2004). Thus a Land Acquisition Act of 1894 that was supposed to give infrastructural amenities for 'colonial' forms of extraction[172] could be re-invoked with ease through institutions like KINFRA[173] to remove or relocate people. Or Urban Reforms could do away with clauses of historical land reforms[174]. Nevertheless here they seem to generate most of the resource out of characteristic engagements with master signifiers like 'smart city'. Such relationships radically engineer what the state becomes. These generate material effects out of virtual spatialities. This calls for the need to explore the aspirational environment, rather than the empirical reality of the city (Baviskar 2003) *per se* in order to understand how the particularities in the way ideas get embedded translate into actual changes.

We are talking about a present when the central government is planning to issue unique identity cards that will eventually carry biometric information. An office has been set up for this and one of the biggest corporates within the country has been vested with the authority to chart everything out. Nandan Nilekani, the ex-Chief Executive Officer of the software company Infosys now heads The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). He has hence talked about the benefits the scheme holds for the '*aam aadmi*' (commoner), that it reduces red tape and it helps

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[172] With the colonial Land Acquisition Act (1894) the state dispossessed at least fifty million people of their livelihoods.

[173] With reference to several documents (e.g. KIN/PLG-137/08-09; B8-5096/08; G.O. (Rt) No. 861/2007/ID)

[174] Kerala Land Reforms Act, 1963. Individuals were prevented from owning, holding or possessing land in excess of the ceiling area with effect from first January 1970. With reference to JNNURM proposals (*jnnurm.nic.in/nurmudweb/Reforms/Primers/.../5-RepealULCRA.pdf)*

labour that moves across different states to seek welfare[175]. There is a whole network of corporates that work with the state[176] and become material for proclamations for a flat world with neoliberalising states like India at the helm[177]. None of such schemes have taken root so far, neither has the world become flat, and nor has welfare become coextensive with the state across India. But they have already generated public rhetoric and people already talk about necessary re-orderings of everyday life.

Unlike some of the key arguments about the reconfiguration of space and embedded forms of violence as a function of global capital (Castells 1996/Gupta and Fergusson 1992), the state in fact has become ever more important to understand contemporary situations. Urban situations have refashioned sovereignty to mediate with global processes.In the process people have been delinked from places and are differently articulated to global financial circuits through 'smart cities' that work through exceptions (Ong 2006). Even in places where the state keeps its space of intervention as with the leftist state, strategic alliances are formed with the corporate sector. The secessionist cultures that Spivak (2000) talks about in the context of urban Bangalore, is a much more spread out phenomena in a welfarist state, where demands of incorporation go along with those for state protection. The demands for smart cities are the first steps of severing links with existing social order and getting relinked into what is perceived as an immensely flexible global present.

[175] News and Press Releases in 2009 (The Guardian, Times of India, The Hindu, Malayalam Dailies etc.)

[176] Among others is the assignment Tata Consultancy Services have been given to work alongside the External Affairs Ministry regarding the issue of passports to citizens (2008 newspapers).

[177] In his 'The World is Flat: Brief History of Twenty First Century', that became popular in certain circles, especially amongst some youngsters who work with software enabled services in urban centers, Thomas Friedman iconises globalisation of twentieth century, the Indian trajectory, and cities like Bangalore.

In Kochi, people talk about ways to become Bangalore and ways their cities can get *smart*. Rickshaw drivers or BPO workers have rationalisations for speeding up the process. For some the left has been throwing spanners into trajectories of growth. They have figures to show, from that of GDPs to days lost in *hartals*[178]. It is almost as if people in places all around Ernakulam have to get ready[179] to receive the city. The symbols are all around and the reasons come from vilifications of the contemporary, creations of opportunities, and forms of '*saakshyams*'[180] across places. The state in Kerala may also be getting reconstituted in these places. All governments now assert the 'fact' that IT and Tourism are the growing sectors, that loans should exceed deposits, that exceptions need to be created, malls need to come up along pilgrim routes, and that traditional labour norms need to change[181]. The information technology centers like Bangalore did not appear naturally. Public infrastructure was steered for the corporate investors after systemic evictions, urban agglomerations and massive geographical changes (Srinivasan 2001, 2002). But Bangalore too is more of an idea pruned of its everyday life that strings well with 'smart cities' of now.

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[178] These are mass protests often involving a total shutdown of workplaces, offices, shops, courts of law as a form of civil disobedience. It has origins in the independence movement. Off late there have been court verdicts against such modes of expressing protests and debates in all forms of media.

[179] Conversations with A.M.Geevarghese, teacher, University of Kalady.

[180] This is a Malayalam word approximating 'witnessing', which involves proclamations of personal and direct knowledge of something. This may be seen in religious forms of gatherings but more to my purpose in the gatherings of chain marketing groups and amongst groups that are in elusive 'pursuits' (I discuss these in detail in another chapter).

[181] Official Communications and conversations like the one with the Finance Minister (2009 Interview by V.D.Selvaraj in *Kalkaumudi*)

The Smart City as a project may or may not be implemented to full effect. If it does there will be specific aspects to the way it functions, the types of employment, the corporate involvement in the everyday life, or the minutiae of exceptional clauses invoked as part of Special Economic Zones. But what becomes more important for the present is the way the idea sets the contemporary urban discourse, the way people engage with a process (of 'city' making) that is yet to be realized, and more importantly how an idea replete with futuristic intonations engage with an increasingly challenged welfarist model maintained by continuous political engagements.

5.'Earthing'[182] With Expectations

Multi-storey apartments have proliferated, especially in the Kakkanad region. A new 'site' appears almost every week and the finished and partially finished structures are the most visible symbols of transformation in the region. The advertised intention is catering to the needs of information technology spaces that are getting developed. The majority of these are developed by Malayali corporates based in metropolitan cities in India and some who are based overseas. Though the construction boom started off after the mid nineteen seventies as a result of overseas remittances (Harilal 2003), the contemporary process has not been a logical follow through.

Instead, this is directly linked to the post nineties economic policies and the growing role of the state as the promoter of corporate order. Neoliberal Indian state has been both a continuation and reconfiguration of the nexus between corporate business and the state (Bhaduri and Nayyar 1999). These groups have in fact determined the direction of reforms since the nineteen nineties with phenomenal state support (Corbridge and Harris 2000). In the newly urbanising places in question the 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey 2003) has been buffered out/watered away to a great extent by state intervention with respect to compensations, labour rights, or drawing of frameworks. But these do not curtail financial reforms that provide easy routes for real estate investment. Unlike some of the overtly violent processes through which real estate business got established in cities like Bombay, as represented in popular usages like 'mafia raj,'[183] here these evolved by getting

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[182] Used in the sense of earthing apparatuses in electrical installations that earths out any surge and maintains the balance.

[183] This involves a combined rule of powerful people, their muscle men and local encroachers who operate in connivance with revenue and police officials. Such activities have often become part of the processes at a ater stage, but were never the modes of establishment in Kerala. For certain reports: "Mafia selling Night Safari land". The Tribune, 2007-07-03/Indu Bharti, "Usurpation of the State: Coal Mafia in Bihar", Economic and

embedded in the social capital[184]. With infrastructural facilities evenly spread out, the sector fast became the major employer in fields like construction, especially a situation from which secure jobs and primary sectors of production had been going out. In addition the migrant manual workers who flowed into such spaces too saw themselves co-opted in a relatively welfarist order[185].

More significant is the involvement of those who could be categorised middle men, the facilitators of land based real estate processes. The characteristic roles played by their informal networks as well as the conditions offered by a welfarist infrastructure have spread out corporate investments evenly and co-opted people in a hegemonic process. Through case materials from the urban scene in Kakkanad, the chapter intends to communicate how neoliberalism becomes embedded and generates encompassing processes.

5.1 Birth of a Flat: A Case of 'Entrepreneurialism'

A conversation at the trade union office in *Kizhakkambalam* was peppered with reminiscences. After the occasional 'loading-unloading'[186] work, the evening routine would be to step out, relax for a while in one of the fresh water ponds, go fishing in

Political Weekly. Vol. 24, No. 42, pg. 2353. Oct. 21, 1989/ "Land mafia buries lake, encroaches govt land". Deccan Herald.

[184] The sum total of resources that accrue to an individual by virtue of possessing a durable network of more of less institutional relationships with mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992)

[185] The newly introduced Kerala Migrant Workers Welfare Scheme 2010 provides welfare measures to the migrant workers who come to Kerala from other states/Union territories.

[186] Unionised sector that deals with different forms of shifting, transportations, cuttings, removals etc. for private as well as public purposes. The Act connected with (Kerala Loading and Unloading Act 2002) has precise definitions- www.kerala.gov.in/dept_lab/act1.pdf

the Kadambra, or laze around the green paddy fields that marked the place 'once'. But now, even though the money they get is more and the work, more frequent, the evening routines have changed. Much of those routines and leisure are 'nostalgically recalled'.

The 'nostalgia' is about the question of the imminence of forgetting or about a certain kind of absence that Milan Kundera[187] wrote about. The truth is that the agricultural milieu, mercantile orders or the everyday routines, from where reminiscences draw from, are not too 'past'. In fact the scenes had been alive even three years back. Nostalgic reminiscences often became backdrops to the expectations and excitements about 'today,' compelled to sever itself abruptly and radically from the 'yesterday'. The impossibility to reflect on the contemporary went together with the possibility to narrate the past. Nostalgia in the sense can also be understood as symptomatic of societies 'incapable of dealing with time and history' (Jameson 2001). Above all it suggests a delinking or severance of relationship with the then and there and personalised and euphoric packaging of the sense of place into flashbacks to a 'past'.

There was the case of a youngster who dropped in at the union office at Kakkanad. He had come here to meet some of the union members to talk about an important issue. He, like many other youngsters had found a vocation in small contracts and land brokerage two years back, following the new boom in land prices. Presently he wanted to enter into a 'fair deal' with some of the union members over the matter of unloading some tiles. The real unloading would be done by three Bihari migrant labourers and the union members would get a share as part of the informal 'contract'.

Social relations at a given locality are the key to any type of brokerage as he claims. One basically knows people who know others and who can eventually link up with a major builder or some other entrepreneur in the urbanising zones of Kakkanad.

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[187] *Ignorance*. Milan Kundera. HarperCollins; 1st edition (October 1, 2002)

Before registration of a certain sale, the land could pass through several hands bringing in margin money to middle men like him. He was disappointed with the present legislations by the left government. This has reduced the space for informal arrangements and *marichu kachavadam*[188]. Transfer of land through authorization, or power of attorney has been restricted, unless the parties are related. Informal practices in land deals, that tempted adventurous youngsters and others into this business, have been curbed. Many are returning to their erstwhile professions. They cannot be happy with modest income, in the context of burgeoning money flows into newly urbanising zones and visible signs of material wealth, whether represented by gaudy houses or profusion of automobiles.

Our young entrepreneur describes compulsory norms [like stipulations on minimum road width and Floor Area Ratio (FAR)] as *vikasna-virudham* (anti-progress/development). His acquaintances in the business are carry-overs from the regular evening conversations, as well as routine gatherings at the several art and cultural forums. As represented by the processes in which middle men like him get into and the contemporary role of 'unions' as facilitators, there are radical shifts in roles and expectations in the face of futuristic growth in the region. The changes are about how people participate or incorporate in the present against what is delegated to the past or showcased away as nostalgia. The reasons are grounded and local and the capital from erstwhile relationships feed into configurations in the making that escape earlier forms of placedness.

The different stages in the birth of a 'flat'[189] start with the finding of a suitable location. In one of the cases narrated, the initial buyers were a retired government

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[188] Transacting, (in this case 'land') several times, before actual registration. Each transaction involves a commission.

[189] A flat refers to any of the many multi storey apartments that are being built for the purpose of 'living'.

employee and a storekeeper from the locality, who turned 'entrepreneurs'. The 'entrepreneurs' discovered a potential seller using their knowledge about the person as well as his social background.

There was an acre of land (minimum area for a high rise being half an acre) belonging to a person hailing from the southern region of Kerala. His father was one of the many who went to Persia (going to Persia is a popular way people refer to pre-gulf oil boom migrations to the Arabian Gulf region), and married a Baghdadi. He bought land in the present location and built a house here, but never bothered to occupy. Instead this was given out for rent. He as well as all his relatives became expatriates in the United States[190] .
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During what was perceived as a major land boom, in year 2005, our 'entrepreneurs' discovered a potential seller in the absentee owner. Quick contact was made by one of them. The potential of 'unused' land as a 'site' was immediately conveyed. Besides, the huge monetary gain could be used to purchase much more land in his native place where land price remained lower. Thus the negotiations took place. There was no need of additional brokerage as the buyers were all from the same area.

Once a deal was struck; money got pooled in and the property was bought with the help of a loan. The idea was to follow the trend and invest money in a high rise flat. But then hindrances were perceived by this collective who were not professional builders either. The new panchayat rules for building were already in place and a lump sum of Rupees 36 Lakh (3600000) was to be paid to the local body as fees for construction. In addition different sanctions were needed like ones from the Fire

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[190] A large number from Southern Parts of Kerala, like Tiruvalla have become expatriates. Lots of houses remain locked in these parts.

Department, Aviation (because of the proximity to the airport), and the Pollution Control Board.

In addition, the construction per day would cost Rupees two and a half lakh (250000). This was a big amount and the local labour unions had to be co-opted and hence paid a larger wage (Rs.350 a day per person as against less than half this amount for the majority migrant labourers who had started to come in by the latter half of the 90s). Because of all these difficulties the buyers decided to sell off the land to a North Indian contact. The buyer offered them an amount which would avail to them some profit over what had been spent. The new buyer was more of a professional builder[191] consortium from New Bombay who had easy access to funds like the private equities (the provisions for which have been relaxed since the nineties) as well as black money (unaccounted money).

Even then advertising had to wait because of the phenomenal rise in the cost of materials like iron needed for initial piling and pile capping[192] (which is the major work). There were around 60 labourers at this point and all were from the state of Maharashtra. They usually accompany major builders. All of them have pools of such labourers. Buyers, who are relatively fixed, like in the present case, are rare as they seldom have embedded resources like money and labour. So they eventually become "earths".

The labourers find wages and working conditions in Kerala extremely friendly when compared to their home grounds as well as some of the major metropolitan centers.

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[191] DLF (Delhi Lease and Finance started in 1946), Shobha group, Confident group (Bangalore based Malayali), Mather etc. are some of the major builders here.

[192] Often sited as environmentally damaging as the process dredges out dead soil as well as affects water tables and natural springs. Water scarcities are beginning to be reported from places around Kakkanad.

The local unions had already fixed a ratio of migrant labourers against the union (7:3 in the case of piling work). What the union members demand is popularly called 'nokku kooli' (literally meaning wages for the on-looker!). The process suggests a change of role as well as the evolution of unions as pools of arbiters in such events. One of the buyers even says that the elected local bodies have been co-opted into the process. Some even demand money from the buyers for local body activities[193].

The social contacts of the first buyers are still maintained by the new builder for needs like arranging living spaces for the labourers as well as selling some of the units (the selling in almost all cases happens before building and housing loans are made available by the builder). Some of those who were involved with the project say that both the recent recession in the U.S as well as the need to regularize un-accounted money, should work well for the completion. Accordingly overseas exhibitions in the US and other places target expatriates who are drawn by prospects of investment.

The case, the subject of gossip on occasions, became predominantly a case of 'entrepreneurialism', which has a positive overtone in these places. But what often are not too visible are the whole sets of relationships that come into play. And this is not about an inert transplantation of relationships, but relationships replete with role reversals and rationalisations that take on a life of their own. They draw on historical investments in social capital for the purpose. 'Entrepreneurialism' becomes an everyday process through which ends can justify means ever more and generate the logic for major changes in the state dynamic itself. Rather, the forms the state is acquiring take life amidst such processes.

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[193] Though this remains to be verified, another chapter talks about possible changes in the way local bodies function, as an informal state apparatus in the changing state order.

5.2 <u>Of 'Earthing' and New Brokers:</u>

Land brokerage as such is nothing new. But what is 'contemporary' and special are the multiplying levels of participation as well as the ramifications brokerage undergoes at present. The routines seem to have undergone major transformation during the last five years. The number of youngsters who end up in informal sectors linked with land transactions has increased several folds. And noticeably, large numbers of youngsters have assumed occupations like brokerage that had been the domain of the middle aged, the retired, or the un-educated. The reference here is mainly to the more local transactions involving people in the same locality or nearby areas, and not about the more formalised brokerage-firms (which could have implications on the long run). But the people involved find themselves implicated in processes that extend beyond the local.

Among the several titles or roles that youngsters have assumed of late are brokers, collectors, real estate employees, and *goondas*[194] (thugs). All of these feature at one point or another in land transactions which have multiplied several folds. The nature of labour and the necessary relationships may be presenting/structuring new norms of job relations and relationships in public and private spaces.

Brokerage, as an occupational option, kickstarted among young school drop-outs and the jobless much before the current real estate boom, which runs parallel to the current urbanisation programmes centered on the development of Special Economic Zones and ports. During the period (end of the eighties–the beginning of the Nineties

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[194] The Kerala Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act 2007 defines a "goonda" as "a person who indulges in any anti-social activity or promotes or abets any illegal activity which are harmful for the maintenance of the public order directly or indirectly and includes a bootlegger, a counterfeiter, a depredator of environment, a digital data and copy right pirate, a drug offender, a hawala racketeer, a hired ruffian, rowdy, an immoral traffic offender, a loan shark or a property grabber".

when neo-liberal policies were getting implemented at the national level) most of the village level transactions had been quite informal. Though legal norms had been in place with regard to processes like the registration of transactions and conversion of erstwhile paddy fields, the enforcement lacked rigor.

People had started dividing vast stretches of paddy fields into 'plots', by the end of seventies when there was a major transformation in patterns and levels of consumption and cost of living (Lukose 2006). In certain regions acute shortage of labour was felt after gulf migrations. Besides, there was increased pressure on the cooperative sector that provided credit for agriculture after land reforms, towards the end of eighties[195]. This practice got much exaggerated all over Kerala during the structural adjustments of the nineties when agriculture was widely considered 'un-profitable' especially in the food producing sectors. The phenomenon in Kerala coincides with much disastrous fall-outs in the form of farmer suicides and agricultural indebtedness in the rest of India[196] (Sainath 2006; Chandrasekhar and Ghosh 2002; Agriculture Statistics at a Glance, 2006). But in the course of such practices much of the existing fields were either water logged or cut off from irrigation. Even though there were minor tussles there was never a concerted opposition, nor general calls to protect agriculture.

At the same time the economic life of the people has been undergoing a major transformation with the disappearance of permanent jobs, diminishing support for agriculture, and the rise in the cost of education and health. Talks at homes and public

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[195] Reports in *Nirakathir*, Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) supplement

[196] Suicides and indebtedness were reported from Wayanad or Idukki as well. These are regions where people have been more dependent on farming both in the cash crop and food crop sectors. But the tendency was halted to a great extend by symptomatic solutions by leftist governments like institution of Debt Relief Commissions and consequent debt relief measures.

spaces like *kavalas* (Junctions) reflect these new concerns. The worst of these often get published as 'human interest stories' in the media. The media itself had transformed, to be dominated by private visual media by the 1990s[197]. The events in family life like birth, school enrolment, and marriage seem to be gaining new dimensions in thoughts and discussion. For instance, in the case of marriages, there had been shared concerns, cutting across these regions, about the cost of marriage. These have given way to grand feasts[198] and exorbitant dowries of an unprecedented scale. This has been especially so after the gulf migrations of the seventies. Many in the village have land, but the land is increasingly left fallow, and many have to deal with an acute liquidity crunch. Small savings had been the norm earlier. But whatever remains in such reserves is fast depleting, and the earnings of the older generation as pension are proving inadequate for the new economic life and new needs.

It is in such a context and in the general context of unemployment (Aravindan 2006) even of well qualified people that young males of the aforementioned category began straying into new career avenues that surfaced. Thus contemporary forms of brokerage are initiated at the *kavalas* and *chaayakkadas*[199] frequented by the young and the old of the region. These spaces had once been part of the political public

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[197] The first private TV Channel, Asianet, commenced operations by the end of 1992 and started transmission by August 1993.

[198] Such feasts until two decades back were organised either in ones own yard or at one of the relatively open places which were not as compartmentalized, physically. The organisation, the preparation, and the serving, at feasts were all done by friends and acquaintances. Only the most necessary items which were not available locally had to be bought. At present feasts are increasingly outsourced to catering groups or in cases they are not, they don't involve as much local participation and the resources available locally are fewer.

[199] These are small village hotels often serving coffee, tea, and a regular set of snacks.

sphere. Conversations that took place in such spaces invariably concerned the everyday. These have now become sites of new interventions.

The standard gambit rests on initial queries to identify 'financial need'. Then the talk moves to certain unrecognised assets that are at hand viz. land which is presently lying fallow but holding immense potential thanks to the imminence of *vikasanam*, and proximity to facilities (ranging from roads to the Airport; banks to the Container Terminal). Even if the land is cultivated, the financial returns would be inadequate to address the new pressures of life. The youngsters with contacts outside the region then seek potential buyers.

The availability of land appears to have gone up. In the local context both parties to a deal could be bound by parameters of prior acquaintance and could be informed of the mutual everyday needs. Those identified as potential sellers may have apprehensions about the deal, and may decide to opt out while their neighbours go ahead with similar deals. In such cases, when the land around has been sold and walled up, the owners of unsold properties could feel cramped for space and restricted by the reorganization of adjacent land. Any productive activity on their land becomes impossible.

In due course, such people get ready to sell their land as well. This is where the young brokers are more successful. They present a case telling the seller that there is no more demand and that the price that they might get is much lower that what they would have got before. Thus the broker ends up with more commission (usually three percent of one third of the total cost, which is usually advanced by the buyer). Many youngsters earn liquid cash this way and the news spreads among the community of these young brokers. Even when a transaction is not made a 'token,' is earned, which is a nominal amount that both the seller and buyer pay informally to the broker.

Brokerage becomes more sophisticated during the second phase. Bigger brokers from elsewhere make their entry. Many of the local brokers become informants for the bigger ones, as the new entrants need local contacts. In the improvised and almost standardized jargon of the trade, the local contact becomes the 'earth' (in the sense of 'Earthing'[200]as in electrical installations). The local person literally *earths* his most accomplished patron. A *Karaar* (deal) is entered into which parties like the seller, the earth, the broker, and the buyer, involve in contexts like 'familial needs'. Major links in this network are the village or revenue officials who are generally passive accomplices, but turn into local *earths* occasionally. Their familiarity and grip on 'land records' add to their value, and their involvement guarantees some extra income. In most cases after a small stint of apprenticeship as *earth,* many of the youngsters graduate as fully fledged brokers who are more mobile and can go in search of land elsewhere. Promotional rhetoric in an intimate local idiom, the ability to annotate new developments within the local context, and familiarity with the local people and their cultural sensitivities lend an edge to this kind of home-grown brokerage.

With experience, local brokerage gains considerable subtlety, and often properties change several hands (*marichuvilkkal*) on the strength of semi-formal agreements, before finalization and formal registration of the sale. A particular property may also be showcased for a while as 'in demand', for a manipulated price spiral.

By the time of the present land boom, most of the land had been parceled into plots as ready products for the land market and locals generally had become used to the idea of land as commodity. More money began coming in with the arrival of Non Resident Indian money, into the real estate business especially after the nineties. With the flood of money, criminal gangs[201] mushroomed to carry out tasks like the filling and

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[200] Often houses have such visible Earthing structures-the term has been localized for long.

[201] Discussed in another Chapter in the section 'From *Keerikkadan Jose* to Quotation teams'

leveling of land. Such activities involved the circumvention of legal restrictions, and hence would have been difficult for the transacting parties to take up on their own. Part of the money involved in land transactions would have to be diverted to such gangs comprising unemployed youngsters, and at a later stage, to youngsters who found this to be an attractive career option.

Village officers, government officials, and the police got more incorporated in the process to the extent that such involvement got naturalised to the highest possible extent. Real Estate activities swelled the escalating volumes of money in circulation. Much of such activity being on the wrong side of the law – but enjoying bureaucratic patronage and involvement -- developed into a preferred channel for the circulation of unaccounted money. Of course, the new activities generated concerns, fears, and apprehensions in private and public spaces. The much needed legitimations came from a newly spawned breed of god men/women. They could give a spiritual aura to economic activities and desires of a new kind. They, and their adherents, themselves were immersed in extravagance or dreams and promises of extravagance. Religious assertions, like the resistance movements, are produced out of the needs of changing social relations. Common to all the forms of new religious assertions, whether these be represented by god-women or god-men, community consolidations or spiritual exercises, is the promise of alternative spaces. They offer prophylactic for crisis, social disintegration, decadence or disenchantment in the shape of universal love, sense of solidarity, or promise of moral order. They counterpose spiritual spaces against the social structure.

The growth and reinforcement of organisational apparatus gains them state-like potencies with no reciprocal obligations (Kapferer 2005: 9) and hides the exclusion of people *de facto* and *de jure* from the decision making process, through forms of inclusions. The spiritual exercises and the arts of living discipline the crisis ridden social body by asocial rationalisations and optimisation of time and space, whereby they exercise bio-power (Foucault 1979, 1978). They school people in self-government that produces individuated bodies that fit into new demands of work and

consumption. The liminoid states of new religiosities legitimate social structures through opposition.

Of late, the State Government has taken steps to amend the land registration rules in order to stem the flow of black money and the corrupt practices prevailing in land registration cases. Until recently primary contract documents did not need to be presented at the time of registration. But according to the new amendments to land registration rules, the primary contract document should compulsorily be presented. This would bring the actual transaction value into the government records. A fair price categorization has been made to lay down market value brackets for land. The indices for the determination of fair price include the nature of land, and proximity to different kinds of roads. The new classification has been published and made available to Village Offices for verification and monitoring.

The rise in the number of criminal gangs, popularized by dailies, the unaffordable prices of land and material, along with the efforts to 'order' the process (fixing fair values and new registration rules) have triggered the consolidation of all the parties involved in land deals. These networks, by virtue of their inclination to violence, have attracted the appellation, 'mafia,' which has been adopted and standardized by the media, often with romantic overtones. Many of the major builders and corporate groups have got hold of large tracts of land through well functioning networks of brokers. The boom has reconfigured land and priced it beyond the reach of most people. Even the fixation of the fair price is attributed by some to a master plan. But this may be discounted as it does not, in any manner, figure in the complex narrative constituted by the ingenious consolidation of the different players that constitute the land *mafia*.

In this situation criminalization itself becomes a portrayal of what went wrong with the system, very much like portrayals of the recent recession as 'what went wrong'[202]. Thus just as markets need correction in the shape of state resources, criminalization necessitates correction in the form of ordering and security. In many ways brokerage in the way portrayed here represents a liminal phase between the crisis of the state as it has been (in the context of neoliberal centralisations and resource constraints) and the corrective (re-ordering of the state within the neo liberal order). The everyday aspect of the 'caucus', that becomes 'mafia', constitutes a pool of protocols or "*normative communitas*"[203] which involves a necessary distancing from any ideological implication in the political public sphere while still drawing on social capital in the face of crisis/change. Besides, it refers to one of the sites where the new state form, in the making, certainly draws its logic and legitimation from.

It is often the myths woven around the major signifiers, the institutional apparatus or the liminoid phase (Turner 1969) they offer (the urban reforms) that take the form of barricades. The liminoid phase into which people withdraw voluntarily from their everyday life and thereby escape an alienating social system establishes a state akin to 'communitas' (Turner 1992). So here a full unmediated communication is established or a communion attained, with the social system. Thus the 'individual' is often isolated from the society and schooled for the outside in these liminoid spaces. Here states of exception and exclusive spaces become sovereign spaces, that instead of augmenting the existing state apparatus, erect corporate bodies with state-like potencies (Kapferer 2005: 8-10). In the process these sovereign spaces constitute themselves outside the existing order, and in this exceptional state create zones of indistinction between outside and inside (Agamben 1998: 174-177). It is a

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[202] The Crash: What Went Wrong? The Washington Post examines the origins of the economic crisis

(http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp- srv/business/risk/index.html?sid=ST2008121600014)

[203] Turner, Victor. *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University. 1975

"fundamental localization" which is not limited to inside or outside normality or chaos, but the threshold between the two. The individual is sought to be acclimatized to the alienating outside while constituting himself/herself in this exceptional state.

With the breakdown of relationship with the signifiers, people crave for new rationalizations in order to constitute themselves in the given social structure. The omniscient circulation of wealth, materialisation of capital and futuristic discourse of urbanisation have created new standards of lifestyle. The market has taken the products further away from the relations of production. Advertisements and media work together to manufacture needs which, in the context of alienation from production, need justifications.

What distinguished[204] the political public sphere has been the positioning of public against private interests. This has been a legacy of political movements, spearheaded by the left that effectively led to redistribution of wealth as well as the institution of state forms that have been pitched against a powerful center. *Jeevitha Soochika Prashnangal* (roughly social welfare index), the rational use of machinery, interest free loans for various purposes, etc. had been frequent topics of discussions in the public sphere. The primacy of such issues had been taken for granted in a social situation that facilitated a certain level of generality (Kideckel 2009) thanks to mutually encompassing issues that are extensive with the generation of the political public sphere.

The practice of life on everyday basis is seldom a transaction with transnational or globalised conditions as such (Sassen 2003), as with signifiers that materialise for many against a non-responsive/representative state. Protocols of life materialise in spaces where erstwhile 'ideas of state' become alienated from the 'practices of state'. As a result, the left formations that have historically played the most significant role

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[204] Unlike other places where the public private contrasts is not evaluated or emphasised to such a degree (Kideckel 2009).

in the production of those ideas are re-evaluated. Their stances can be deemed archaic while continuing to draw on the material effects. The complaints and criticism of the state against constraints imposed by the center, become subject of coffee table wit. The state is presented as a parasite for the already burdened center.

During the liminal phase, with ideas dissociated from the practices, the state gets evaluated in accordance to the ways individuals are related to new capital and institutions (Balibar 2004) and moreover to chains of expectations. Processes like brokerage also fall in this category. Trade union offices often become facades in the context of the changing face of labour. Those who are members of the union are more often associates of processes like real estate, rather than concerns of better wages or improved work environment. The real labour has been transferred to migrants from other states[205]. Zizek (2010) refers to Badiou's thoughts of a world-less universe (1990) which in turn is a reference to Marx's thoughts about the "de-territorialising" force of capital. According to *The Communist Manifesto*, capitalism dissolves all existing forms. In other words, for Zizek, no one relies any more on "mechanisms for interpellation of individuals to subjects". There is an institutionalisation of a value neutral free play of ideas or a "blind drive with no symbolic value-form attached". In the contemporary period, a similar situation is in the making, especially with the severance of state, from the ideas that once enlivened it as a logical extension of the political public sphere.

People espouse signifiers that signify virtualities and "re-create" themselves often against the ideas that once animated the public sphere (the left, protests, trade unionism etc.). Those who were interpellated as subjects to a mutually encompassing public sphere are now bereft of any such holistic order. Thus *vikasanam* or a new 'city' can mean different things for different groups and most are immersed in a world of meanings with self generating truths from everyday lives (as brokers,

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[205] On the other hand large labour pools of Malayalis in BPOs, Gulf States, privatized finance etc. exist as fragmented entities, dissociated from any kind of effective unionization.

aspirant parents, contractors, future workers in SEZs etc.). In its neoliberal predicament, exceptional urban orders, through everyday truths, people get ever more incorporated in the corporate processes.[206]

The systematic corporate takeover of state has been typical of the larger Indian context, whether as the metamorphosis of feudal structures that persisted or corporate inheritance of the metropolitan nerve centers in the North. The neoliberalising Indian state had already been held captive (Monbiot 2000) mainly by the corporate structures that empowered themselves during the latter half of 1900s (Tatas, Birlas, Reliance)[207]. The Indian state reached a compact with corporate interests in such spaces (Kapferer 2005). But since the nineties the corporate form nevertheless has been getting ever more entrenched and breaking out of earlier bounds (ibid.). In the context the spaces that once got left out of post colonial state orders are getting arrogated starting from the margins (remote Tribal zones of Orissa or Mining fields in Karnataka). There the "infelicities and excuses on the part of the state" (Das 2004:227) become violent exercises of corporate sovereignty.

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[206] I draw on Bruce Kapferer's (2005) work on the subject in a chapter that discusses the theoretical premises.

[207] Emergent capitalists during the pre-independence days, like Samuel Aron or S.S.Codder, never went on to have much of a role in the way the emergent politics shaped the state structure in Kerala, as the Ambanis for instance did. On the other hand the left movements and aspects of reform movements (SNDP for instance was registered under companies act) generated an environment of redistribution and egalitarianism that set a platform for much of the later processes. Gulf migrations post seventies (Lukose 2009) and the post nineties situation has certainly produced images like the 'entrepreneur' often against the erstwhile associations with state.

Processes unfurl distinctly from other places in India where people confront urban processes. Here the state has never been an alien entity. Instead the everyday functioning of state in localities like the ones studied has been moderated by a political public sphere. So when a new order becomes instituted in the urbanisation drive there is no need for an "excuse". Instead with the fragmentation of mutually encompassing political processes, the complaints are more of "being left out". The social orders across places are getting ever more fragmented and eviscerated of anything that suggests an interpellation of people as subjects. Instead as part of a liminal and exceptional order, people device new means of living like contemporary brokerage that draw on their placed-ness, but 'earth' with expectations.

6. Regimes of Living

Through centuries there have been migrations to Kakkanad-Kunnathunad-Kizhakkambalam[208] from regions farther north, settlements of agriculturalists as well as traders, formation and expansions of networks as well as movements of labour linked to agricultural and trading cycles. Later there have been social mobilities as a result of re-distributive processes initiated by left movements. In the seventies there was a migration of workers and their families to the district administrative centers that got located here. Employee quarters and many other institutions started to emerge. The period coincides with the gulf migrations and associated transformations in life[209].

The contemporary phase coincides generally with post-2000 urban reforms and specifically with the 'development' of Kakkanad as the predominant Information Technology zone. Land prices that were among the lowest in Ernakulam district have skyrocketed. Large majorities from the region, with larger share[210] of per-capita land, have become potentially rich or super-rich. Consequently there have been visible transformations in phenomena like consumption and experiences of mobility. There have been several re-locations, both by 'choice' as well as official compulsion. In addition, there have been unprecedented migrations of labourers from other states in India, who primarily arrived at the numerous construction sites, and consequently made their presence felt in the public spaces.

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[208] See Map in the Box *Syrian Christian Settlements, Nodes and Networks through History*

[209] Though these regions as such were not high up the migration chart. For a general scene in Ernakulam *Desadanathinte Mishihakal* (Musafir, 2008, The State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Tiruvananthapuram)

[210] Compared to regions like Vypeen, towards the west, that also confronts similar developments.

After setting a regional historical backdrop, the section discusses the contemporary forms of mobilities. The purpose of the historical backdrop is to state that mobilities as such are not novel. The narrative offers a comparative scheme. What is totally novel are the contemporary morphologies assumed by mobilities, both of a social kind and physical ones like migrations. The argument is that the contemporary forms are more about a new logic of ordering associated with the expansion of neoliberal processes that the state of Kerala is implicated in.

6.1 Historical Networks as Repositories of Capital:

The regions of Kunnathunad (Pallikkara), Kizhakkambalam, and Kakkanad until two decades back had been predominantly settled by people engaged in agriculture and commercial activities. There had been migrations in search of agricultural land and for trade at different points of time especially among the Syrian Christians, both from the northern and southern regions[211]. Communities from the region have featured in the overland trade and commercial networks with long histories. It is not just the Syrian Christians[212], but the landed gentry as well as the former labouring communities too, have been constituted by/in such migrations, settlements and production systems. The labouring communities in these regions, a century back, followed a seasonal migratory pattern in accordance with the agricultural seasons in the north and south that coincides with the familial networks of landed Christians.

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[211] Accounts of family migrations in *A Short History oh the Koikkara Vadakkan Family and Genealogy (1764-2001)* by V.J.Mathew (2002).

[212] They formed a significant population in these regions.

Box: 4

<u>*Syrian Christian Settlements, Nodes and Networks through History:*</u>

The early settlements of Syrian Christians in these regions may be attributed mostly to the movement of families from place to place with respect to characteristic engagements the summative nature of which may be called urban. A lot could be gathered from tracing the hinterland system of Kochi since it started to gain importance as a port in the 1500s (Kieniewicz 1986/Galetti 1912/ Melekandathil 2003).
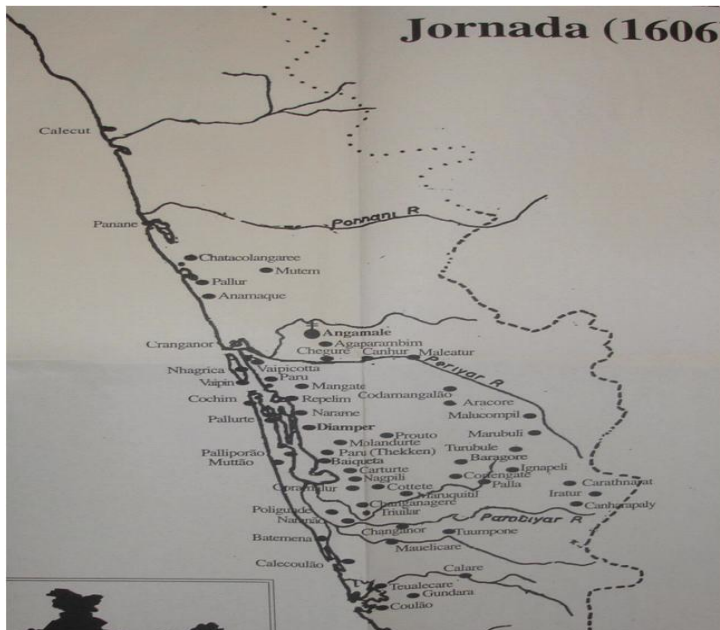
[Map showing the possible networks between ports and hinterlands that once formed the urban system towards the middle regions in Kerala. Courtesy: Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes: A Portuguese Account of the Sixteenth Century Malabar by António de Gouveia]

The hinterland system, that formed nodes and networks of the urban system that functioned within the west coast, has already had a long history with ports further

north of Kochi and the Western Ghat routes that transacted with Indian ocean systems, and political and trading networks of global proportions that flourished during the time. In the old world systems and Indian Ocean systems the Syrian Christians played a vital role (Melekandathil 2003/ Anklesaria 1958/ Barbosa 1967/ Menon 1970/ Mateer 1991) because of the lasting linkages with religious and commercial networks of West Asia. The Portuguese were pressed either to integrate the existing urban systems in Malabar as comprised in these regions of Christian groups amongst others, or forcibly overtake such systems through strategic alliances and major missions like latinisation. Initial attempts like the synod of Udayamperoor were not entirely successful from the point of view of the Portuguese. Hence, another synod had to be convened in Angamali in AD 1603.

Angamaly was already a major settlement of Syrian Christians (Podipara 1957, 1971/ Tisserant 1957) after their migrations from ports and commercial centres further north and especially after the attacks from Tipu Sultan at a later stage. Besides spice trade and other commercial activities, there were extensive Syrian Christian settlements that focussed more on agriculture in Angamali. Angamali was mostly peopled (and it remains so) by Nasranis. It was well connected by land and water routes to the coast. The arrival of families in Angamaly itself was thus a result of establishment of newer authorities in Kodungalloor or settlements further north which itself was a historical amalgamation in the context of interactions with the Middle East.

In the context there were migrations from Angamaly (this especially after the attacks by Tipu in 1700s) to regions like Pallikkara, constituted along some of the prominent urban networks that stretched from Coromandel coast to the west coast. The early land routes connecting Kadamattom, Kolencherri and Mulanthuruthy[213] (Jacob 1985) intersected in some of the places near to the field. Settlements that were agrarian in kind had started taking root from early times and one of the earliest Syrian churches to be established was in Pallikkara. The agricultural markets in these places all the way from Angamaly to further south also had indirect links with the Corommandel coast through Tamil kingdoms. The remains of Kottavazhis[214] in some of these places are standing evidences of once well functioning overland urban networks. Families maintained lasting links, though the modes of occupation underwent transition in relation to broader political processes. People integrated themselves in characteristic ways to changing orders while making use of the capital they possessed.

What may be gleaned from the settlement patterns and movements of people, especially in the case of Syrian Christians in the field regions, is their historical embeddedness in urban processes that were in no way locally determined or insular processes. On the other hand starting from early global systems like the Indian Ocean systems (Frank 1998/ Tome 1967/ Galetti 1912) or the networks that extrapolated from the Coromandel Coast, they were thoroughly global. But the

[213] *Inscriptions in Kothamangalam Valiapally* built in AD 800- The Bishop Mar Basils route from Coromandel Coast to Kothamangalam was through the once flourishing trade route

[214] The routes through which commodities were transported as head loads.

coming of centralising state processes towards the nineteen hundreds left fewer spaces for exception from dominant orders and as a result the urban processes also became more centralised. People in places in many cases ceased to be active participants in processes though they continued to resort to long standing capital acquired historically as some of the entrepreneurial/industrial ventures mentioned in some sections demonstrate.
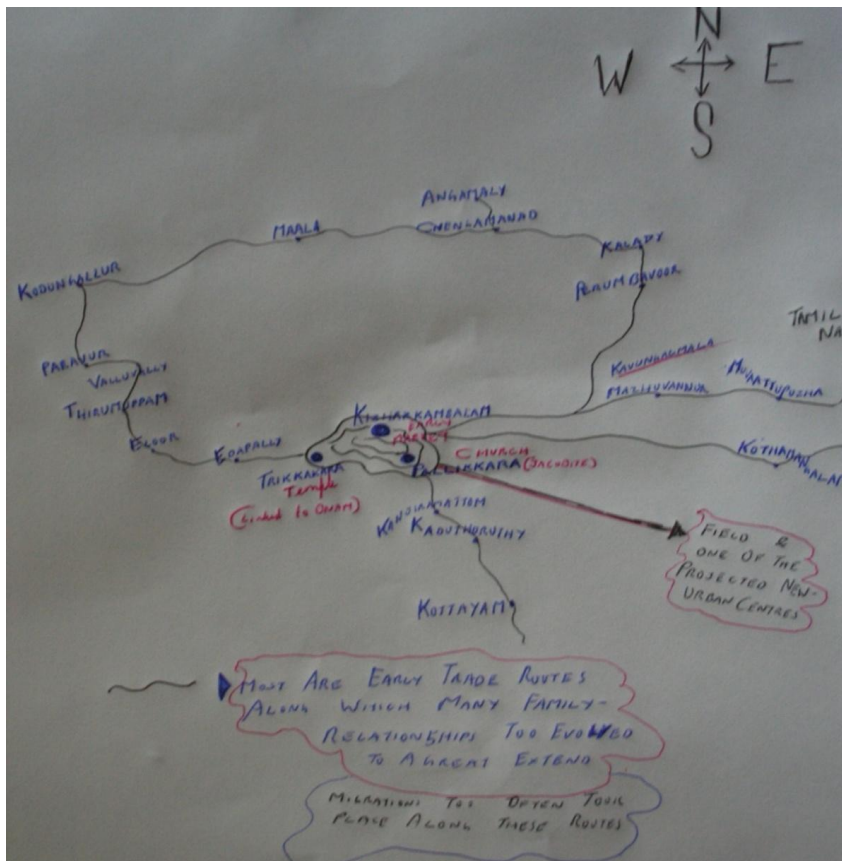
[Source/Own: The following is a tentative map for the field with some of the major migratory and mercantile/trade routes as can be made out from the fieldwork. People have been relating constituting themselves in these regions through the several relationships and practices through years. Settlements historically were determined to a great extend by familial networks formed alongside commercial networks and migrations for agriculture.]

Facades of old networks could still be seen in the settlement patterns and roles played in social life. But in the contemporary order people are fast getting severed from anything that suggests a bearing with such urban precedence. They are getting reintegrated into another global urban phase, the nature of which becomes the trope of some of the enquiries made in the thesis.

Inland migration routes formed important segments of the early urban systems and were systematically underplayed/ omitted in works that confined urban processes to port cities and entrepot commerce (Heitzman 2008). Entrepot commerce was only a part of the urban processes/constellation in Kerala, replete with several networks and nodal points linked by inland waterways and land routes (Deloche 1994; Schenck 1997; Das Gupta 1967). Only by the end of eighteenth century, and carrying on into the nineteenth century, with the consolidation into states and with the operation of British bureaucracy, did many of the segments in these urban systems get dysfunctional/ delinked. But many of them persisted as familial relationships and spatialities that had to be resorted to as repositories of capital by administrations (Chaudhuri 1978; Gupta 1991).

People got constituted in places that were along rural urban continuums which were the norm in the South Indian peninsula since medieval times (Champakalakshmi 1991; Appadorai 1936). In places where the so called hinterlands were also resource rich, people developed separate markets and guilds. The progress of urbanisation during the time often manifested in relationships that were not status bound (Stein 1980). The activities and networks got ever more incorporated into larger systems (Champakalakshmi 1991). Land ownership was not an essential category or prerogative of any particular group. Instead it kept on changing in relation with the rise of markets and settlements (Ibid). The Syrian Christians, who form a major group in the field, have been shaped by some of the aforementioned processes. Though predominantly agriculturalists, they were much more disposed to commerce. They

often incorporated their commercial links[215] as well as networks of seasonal labour during their movements to different places. There was even a system of mobility among the labouring communities called *kizhakkottu pokuka* (going east) after the agricultural season in the region. They went as far away as Pala (south) along the long established routes and brought news and stories when they came back. And they were not ordained labour, but became 'labouring communities' for specified periods of time and always had other options in life[216].

Many of the places in the field have been parts of commercial systems that took root many centuries ago. Buddhist and Jain networks of trade and commerce (Alexander 1949; Kerala Charithram 1965; Travancore Inscriptions 1941) animated places like Trikkakara and Pallikkara/Kunnathunad. Such routes[217] can be assumed to have been appropriated by trading orders who established themselves along these routes in later periods. All these are subjects for archaeological studies but are indicated here to state that most of these places, as they are confronting the contemporary situation, have been repositories of migrations and mobilities that had implications in much

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[215] Memoir of the Survey of the Travancore and Cochin States, p. 84, 142

[216] The name Pulaya for instance literally means owners of fields. Groups like Pulayas or Parayas has resource options as well as land that were not encompassed in any dominant order. They have also been in charge of certain domains until the eighteen hundreds. (Ravi Varma, L. A., Castes of Malabar, Kerala Society Papers, Vol. 111, Series 9, 1932, p. 193/ Pillai, T. K. V., Travancore State Manual, Travancore Government Press, Vol. I, 1940/ Krishna Iyer, L. A., The Travancore Tribes and Castes, Government Press, Trivandrum, Vol. 11, 1939/ Saradamoni, K., Emerqence of a Slave Caste, The Pulayas of Kerala (Hereafter, Emergence), People's Publishing House, 1980)

[217] Red Lateritic routes of trade often paralleled coastal routes as well as some of the early royal networks. For example one route went like this- Parur-Panykkulam-Eloor-ManjummalVattekunnam-kakkanad-Irimpanam-Tripoonithura-Mulanthuruthi-Kanjiramattom-Arayankaavu (From North east to South west and from the final point it links up with another sand route in the present southern district of Kottayam)

larger processes (Chicherov 1976; Chaudhuri 1985; Das Gupta 1967). In a sense all these were already hybrid zones. I refer to hybridity in its anthropological as well as historical dimension in the sense that the regions in focus have existed as hybrid spaces through forms of mobilities (Abu-Lughod 1991/Frank 1998), and the perspective is that they cannot be studied as *tabula rasas* (Clifford 1997). But I do not limit these to any 'colonial' or 'post-colonial' episteme/paradigm either.

There have been prominent systems that stretched overland through regions like Trikkakkara into eastern foothill towns like Kothamangalam[218] and in turn got linked with Tamil Nadu (Madura, Coimbatore) on the other side of the mountain ranges, mediated by Poonjar and Kanjirapally[219]. There were also networks of commerce that stretched north towards places like Angamaaly[220]. The *pettah* (guild) at Angamaly, one of the prominent nodes in the urban process (Ward and Connor 1994 (1863)), along with Edapally (Valath 1991), had often been the point of contention in struggles between Catholics and the Syrian orders[221]. The market at Pallikkara,

[218] (Valath 1991/ Travancore Archaeological Series Vol I-XII, Trivandrum). Most of the Syrian Christian Settlements (Palayur, Niranom. Kollam. Kodungalloor, Kothamangalam, Kunnamkulam) are considered Kerala's 'pre-colonial' urban nodes and served as centers of international trade and transport. They have been linked with maritime trade for centuries. There were lots of mercantile amalgamations between groups as well (Bayly 1989; Vishwanathan 1993; Neil 2004)

[219] Aerthail, Jacob. *Kanjirapally Nootandukaliloode*. Kanjirapally 1985/ *Inscriptions in Kothamangalam Valiapally* built in AD 800- The Bishop Mar Basils route from Coromandel Coast to Kothamangalam was through the once flourishing trade route.

[220] All were parts of urban systems with systems of exchange and trade links that connected with one of the many ports on the coasts, though later they either got de-linked or 'colonial ports' monopolised sea trade. These were not cities in themselves but were ports that formed parts of different urban systems while maintaining themselves as important nodes.

[221] Struggles that started with the arrival of Portuguese and alliances they made with local rulers. Claudius Buchanan, 1811, Menachery G; 1973, 1982, 1998; Podipara, Placid J. 1970;

controlled by Syrians, came up consequent to the loss of Edapally to Catholics. Hence there was a '*Vadakke Chanda*' (Northern Market)[222] as well as a '*Thekke Chanda*' (Southern Market)[223]. People from Kizhakkambalam as well as regions further east resorted to this market in order to exchange products for fish, onion, chillies etc. The *thekke chanda*, operated mostly by Muslims, specialised in *Vettila lelam* (betel leaves) and there were extensive *Vettila* fields towards the west of Pallikkara. People from as far away as Ernakulam and Mattancherry frequented this market. Transport of goods to places further west and to the ports were exclusively through waterways[224]. Country boats plied from river Kadambra, through Chenbumukku *thodu* (water channel) to Edapally thodu. The latter stretched all the way to the river Periyar. From here one could take land or waterways to the sea[225].

During the British period, following the rationality of official boundaries, entities within the Madras presidency and the allied states often got pooled together. But everyday life sustained the distinctions, though increasingly overstrained after bureaucratic centralisations by the end of nineteenth century. The urban processes in which people were implied in and in which the social life got structured, did not comprise cities with urban concentrations or exclusive ports. The latter came with the British economic and political interests and with the empowerment of state systems (Sreekumar 1993; Lawson 1861). Urbanisation as a normal, decentralised and inclusive process became more of an exceptional process.

Leslie Brown, 1956; Tisserant, E. 1957; Michael Geddes, 1694, Dr. Thekkedath, "History of Christianity in India"

[222] that continued to operate on Mondays and Thursdays till some decades back

[223] Towards a region called Peringala where the mosque came up close to the market

[224] The roads came only after the 1940s

[225] Many such thodus have since got filled up. The routes coincide with some of the earliest trade routes (Valath 1991)

Capitalist urbanisation during the time "framed by the concrete abstractions of space and time" internalized "all the vigour and turbulence of the circulation of capital under the ambiguous and often shaky surveillance of the state" (Harvey 1989: 229). The type of urbanisation does not convey the patterns in which people and places informed and animated urban processes in these parts of Kerala. Generalisations on the social life from capitalist urbanisation during the time often generate simplistic judgements. Thus, for example, the marked absence of urban concentration inland often got wrongly reasoned as people's apathy to towns (Gupta 1991). Certainly there was an atrophy of decentered urban constellations, during the British period.

In the place of numerous points of exit, mediated by different smaller ports, the external trade was now monopolised by Madras, Calicut, or Kochi (Gupta 1991; Lawson 1861). Even with unprecedented consolidation into state orders, the British still could not have much of control over the inland networks[226] and mobilities that persisted despite getting ever more based on bureaucratic systems as well as legislations[227]. There was no urban revolution[228], so to speak, during the British period in Kerala, except where they had more direct controls under the Madras presidency (where the size of urban area was large). The urban pattern in Kerala remained mostly dispersed.

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[226] Munro's Evidence, cited in *The Fifth Report,* 150/also The Cambridge history of the British Empire, Volume 2 By Arthur Percival Newton (1940).

[227] In parts of Tamil Nadu there were forms of de-urbanisations and de-populations as a result of stronger controls (Census of urban centers like Tanjore between 1788 and 1871).

[228] Baker, C.J. (1984) An Indian Rural Economy, 1800-1955/Gupta 1991

In all these regions the British were heirs to a well developed urban system, which they could build on[229]. During the time people and resources of many of the places got indirectly linked to British global engagements[230]. For this the inland waterways as well as land routes had to be depended upon. The colonial requirements like the building of the port in Kochi and the allied construction activities were perceived as an enterprising option. *Kallu Vallams* (boats that carry granite) were modifications of country boats. People used them and continued to resort to the existing channels of communication[231] that transported betel leaves and lemon grass extracts. Pallikkara region became famous for such *Vallams*. Along with Maala the region became famous as a *kallu vettu sthalam* (quarrying place)[232]. Many from this region also prospered through the business especially during the present waves of urbanisation further east centered on the port[233]. The manufacture of *Kallu-Vanchis* was a craft in itself. They were made with locally available Anjily wood. Up to six hundred stones used to be transported in such *vanchis*[234]. But the British rule did lead to alterations of

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[229] F.Buchanan (1807). A Journey from Madras, I and II

[230] Increase in railways and roads for wood and cotton during American Civil war and later during the First World War. In this the formalisation of temples as resource pools under the strict control of Brahmin allies (in Kerala Namboothiris and Nairs), the surplus pagoda funds as well as rationalised land revenues helped the administration (Government of India, Home (Revenue) Consultations, 1843/ Cochin State Manual 1911)/Chaudhuri 1978

[231] There were transports of goods to Mattancherry market

[232] The identity makes a re-emergence at present during contemporary forms of urbanisation centered along the region.

[233] Such channels of transport persisted during the post independence urbanisation of Ernakulam as well.

[234] The work was not a prerogative of any particular community. Mancherikkudi Paily, Moideen, and a person named Raman were among the prominent stone merchants from the region. Later when road transport was well in place, the mode of transport ceased to exist. Many of such vanchis became houseboats. A woodchopper from Thevara owned the first of

long established commercial patterns and to the atrophy of earlier urban networks as well as massive depletion of resources (Menon 1911; Sivaramakrishnan 1999; Kunhikrishnan 1991; Tharakan 1999)[235]. There are narrations of extreme forms of depletion as well as famines from the nineteen twenties as well as during the world wars, overheard or experienced by locals.

With urban processes ever more bureaucratised[236] the states enjoyed unprecedented power and operated with the alliance of certain groups (Namboothiri Brahmins and certain Christian groups like the Tharakans in the field). The position and power of these groups and centralising state orders cannot be assumed to draw on any mutually encompassing logic of status. Instead this had to be maintained by the monopoly of violence and mathematical impositions and rigid definitions of *jati*[237], unlike the northern parts of India. Though feudal ordering based on *jati* was never of the same scale as could be found in the Malabar regions towards north of Kerala where British administration was more direct (Gopalan 1980; Ramachandran 1992)[238] there was a relatively greater institutionalisation of relationships to land and investiture of power

such converted boats. More towards the contemporary period such boats were included in a staple tourism itinerary. Ironically in its new role they have often got misrepresented as one of the traditional means of luxury transport!

[235] Revenue/Forestry records: Regional Archives Ernakulam.

[236] F.W.Ellis and Munro. Three Treatises on Mirasi Right, Madras. 1852. 145; Minute by T.Munro 31 December 1824.

[237] Jati becomes synonymous with caste during the British.

[238] Thus in Malabar where the caste based feudal orderings were most rigid, the movement consolidated (through revolts like Moplah revolt-early 1900s) into strong peasant movement that had points of differences as well as parallels in nationalist movement. In Travancore and Kochi where the feudal orderings were never as rigid, movements started off as ones for economic re-distribution, as in the coir factory movement of Alapuzha or in the wharfs of Kochi (Divakaran 1967; Gopalan 1980; Ramachandran 1992)

with certain groups, through the state systems (Travancore, Kochi). In other words people were left with least space that was exempt from the logic of state and thus were forced ever more to relate to a singular order. They were left with lesser options. During colonial forms of urbanisation, life for many became less flexible. It was more difficult to seal oneself from the affairs of the state. It was also harder to keep the "dissolving effects" of monetisation[239] at bay (Harvey 1989). There was a "repressive rigidity in the functioning of social relations and moral codes" (ibid: 235).

Tharakans for instance were commission agents. The title also indicates 'a noble trader'. They, along with the Namboothiris and certain Nair families, held immense power in most of the regions studied and owned vast stretches of land. But their authority and acceptance was backed up by their control over forms of violence[240]. There are popular stories about these groups. The Tharakans were known to have discovered pieces of gold by accident and hence initiated a success story. They were considered by others as having lowly demeanour. Their regal links and authority were never deemed legitimate. Very often there were conflicts over their roles in church affairs. As with one of the *Manas*[241] and the Namboothiris there, only those who benefitted from their power had high regard. Thus there have been Nair overseers associated with them. For most there were derogatory names (*Tuppan, Tandan* etc.) as well as associations with misappropriations of wealth, or other misdeeds. One among them was even murdered, through a secret plot, by one of the antagonists. Thus relationship with the feudal order was mediated by fear and antagonism.

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[239] This is not to suggest that monetisation itself was a product of 'colonial intervention' (for more: Articles by Dharma Kumar and Irfan Habib in Cambridge Economic History of India Vol. 1 and II). Rather there was a singular state mediated monetisation during the time.

[240] For some of the legal norms and exceptions (Menon 1911)

[241] Namboothiris' residences

There were many other nuanced aspects to relationships between the labouring groups and several land owning groups. Thus, there were two crops a year during the youthful days of one of the oldest labourers in the region[242]. One was called *Njaalu* which was during the Edavam-Midhunam months (corresponding to May-June) and the other was called *Maari* which was during the Kanni month (corresponding to September October). The first during the monsoon season did not require extensive irrigation. The second one involved intense labour during the process of *Thekal*, whereby water was directed manually using a wooden container/vessel from the water body (Kadambra River or the wells) towards the channels that ran into the fields.

As told by some of the earlier interviewees as well, there were Christian families and Nairs, who owned land apart from the most powerful feudal orders during the time. The differences in relationship were crucial. In those days food was provided at the residence of the landlord. The Nairs maintained the system of *teendal* whereby a certain distance was to be maintained with labourers. So before food was served, pits were scooped in the yard in which the leaves were kept. *Kanji* was poured into this leaf lined containers. Only after the food was served could the labourer approach the place. Labourers perceived this as nothing but inevitabilities of being on the receiving end of a system with which they are forced to negotiate. It operated differently with the Christian land owners who did not have problems in keeping proximity to the labourer. In certain cases the labourer could even sit around in the verandas. So there were differences among places. Exceptions to forms of ordering[243] that had been there earlier, when the state order was not as total and when life not singularly monetized (Chicherov 1976), got reduced after the consolidation of land and revenue systems.

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[242] Nearing ninety years

[243] (Varma 1932/Saradamoni 1980)/ As well as Background Chapter One

This also coincides with the institution of police forces[244] and the consolidation of feudal orders directly beneficial to colonial extractions. It is during this time that the identities as labourers got ever more fixed, even though this eventually led to consolidations against the system.

According to some in the older generation who have been labourers, many of the Nair families in the region had to stop agriculture very soon and resort to other activities. The system had made them dependent on ordained labour relations. The fall of corporate families created further strains. The Christian landowners did continue paddy cultivation for a longer time, but increasingly resorted to less 'labour intensive' options. However, the mobility of those linked with land, got relatively restricted and the relationships became more codified[245].

By the end of the British rule, feudal order along with new economic relations created a contradictory social environment (Rajeevan 1999). The relationships of labourers to land owners and forms of monetisation already prevailed[246]. But the point is that

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[244] Travancore State Manuals/ From a policing system that was based on customs and that was more limited in scope to a much more unified system that empowered state as well as those close to the state (Samuel Mateer. *Njaan Kanda Keralam*. Trans. To Malayalam by A.N.Satyadas/Proclamation prohibiting the punishment of slaves by private owners, reserving the right to the Sirkar, Sl. No. 1060, Regional Archives Ernakulam)

[245] Fore more refer to (Saradamoni, K 1980/ Walter Hamilton (1828), East India Gazetteer, Vol. 11/ Chendarasserry, T.H. P., Ayyankali Smaraka Grandham (Malayalam), Prabhat Book House, Trivandrum, 1974). Elsewhere in south India, where the British were in direct control, many segments/groups that formed important links in the early urban system, which could not be categorised within the new system, even got criminalised (S.H.Blackburne. 'The Kallars: A Tamil Criminal Tribe Reconsidered'. South Asia No. I. 1978).

[246] In aspects like migrations and settlements in the regions as well as in trade

these were not absolute[247]. There have been exemptions to such relationships because of the availability of other resource bases. This was especially so for those who became 'labourers' only during certain points of time. The relationship became rigid in the context of state administration that deprived some of the earlier resource bases and consolidated a singular monetary system as well as a feudal order. This in effect checked the formation of a category called 'agricultural wage labour' that eventually led to alienation from land. But the *jati* system got systematised in correspondence with class structure during the time and thus got consolidated into a rigid ideological apparatus. This created conflicts between two forms of class relations viz. the rigid ideology of caste based on feudal controls (Gurukkal 1999) and colonial capitalism. The state had to promulgate several ordinances to relax the order by the end of the nineteenth century (Menon 1911). In most of the present places the feudal ordering was never as absolute as they were in northern Kerala. Though relationships to land had imposed several constraints on social mobility, they were always underpinned by options mediated by the relatively flexible space engaged by Syrian Christian networks as well as the several mercantile amalgamations and hybridities between groups through centuries (Bayly 1989).

The reformist movements and leftist movements in Kerala were exceptions to the rule in that they effectively challenged the existing orders of production when in the rest of the country much of the feudal and corporate orders persisted through

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[247] From the patterns of early landholdings one cannot assume any absolute singular order. Thus even when 'oligarchic corporations' made their presence felt (Gurukkal 1992) in certain spaces like Brahmaswams, their impact cannot be generalised and there were different types of such corporations with different codes of conduct as well as spaces that were exempt to such forms of ordering. Rather forms of ordering can be inferred to be stronger within certain groups like the Namboothiris in the medieval period (Veluthat 2009) and got generalised and rigidified as part of consolidation of state systems after 1800s.

independence[248]. The tenants could not now be evicted. An ordinance even banned evictions for rent default. Since 1957, many more became land owners. In addition, large numbers of labouring groups occupied land as part of the *karshakasamarams* (farmers struggles) against the non implementation of the original reform package initiated by the first leftist government (Gopalan 1980). But this radical transformation in relationship to land had implications for the productive activities that were to ensue. People here did continue with an agrarian system for a much longer period (until the 80s). But the awareness of oppression under the feudal system (Namboothiri 1999: 426-455) became intense among some of the working classes who broke ties with the order mediated overtones of *jati* to venture into other avenues "based on monetisation and commodity production" (ibid 429-430; Mohan 1999: 456-485).

Agriculture that once generated surplus within a rigid feudal order was no more a 'profitable' option, in the context of ever increasing monetisation of everyday life[249]. But with the mediation of cooperatives that provided credit for agriculture, there was a rejuvenated involvement of people by the seventies[250]. But by the nineties' liberalisation of economy, there were more restraints on such exceptional state initiatives. Only agriculture that demanded less labour did survive[251].

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[248] In northern India where the feudal relationships continued, the field of agricultural production assumed corporate tendencies by the time of the much advertised green revolutions (Dubash 2010/Gupta 2010/Jodhka 2003), whereas in Kerala, there were no singular orders that could withstand reforms to such a level.

[249] Much of the everyday life was not mediated by money and most of the requirements were locally met with. Exchange of produce at the kavalas as well as in between was very much in practice even after unified monetisation took effect.

[250] Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) Surveys

[251] Rubber as a plantation came here much later. Many sited the option of Rubber as the chief cause of the reduction in paddy fields.

Neither the state processes nor any powerful groups had absolute influence over each other, unlike the rest of India. But people used the social capital associated with long networks in order to re-position them. Unlike many other parts where landed orders like Namboothiris did not cope well with radical changes since land reforms, here they showed much more flexibility. There have been many stories of Namboothiris taking cues from Syrian Christians in adopting plantation[252]. There were others who made use of the existing networks to enter into financing[253] and contract work, though the field was dominated by Christians.

In most parts of Kerala the burgeoning investments after gulf migrations did not go into primary or secondary sectors, but starting from the production of living spaces, they went into highly visible forms of consumption (Lukose 2005). There has been a short circuiting of redistribution of resources and social mobility to consumption of services. This got a fillip with the gulf boom. Concomitantly there has been a highly visible deterioration of agriculture, and hence primary production, especially since the seventies. But here, the social capital translated into forms of entrepreneurship.

The social geography continued to resonate with several historical relationships/conflicts[254] especially in the case of the Christians. The market at

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[252] That enjoyed certain exemption in land reforms

[253] There was a certain Namboothiri at Ambalamukal who was known as '*Vesham*' (poison). This person ran a financing business and charged phenomenal interests.

[254] Edapally on the western side of my field, used to form a major link to the coastal zones. As a result of the several conflicts between catholic orders that operated along these regions and the local Syrian orders, the Syrians had to retreat, when the Edapally Swaroopam (the local ruler) supported the Carmelites (Valath 1991). A faction of Syrians came back to Pallikkara where they were offered land to set up a church around which the earlier markets came up.

Pallikkara remained the prominent market until the seventies when another one came up at Kizhakkambalam. The flow of people as well as the life around changed since then. A person named Andreos, a Catholic, was the mastermind behind the Kizhakkambalam market. Kizhakkambalam was a Catholic centre while Pallikkara was more Jacobite[255]. Though a cattle market was also started here to pull in more people this never took firm roots. In addition there were several conflicts over certain plots of land[256] near the Jacobite church. At a point the conflict developed into a fight at the market place with Andreos and certain Catholic families on one side and the Jacobite group (led by Chackappan who had claims on the land, through certain church documents) on the other. It was the *Margavasikal*[257] who did the thug work on either side[258].

On the other hand Chackappan went on to secure an industrial loan via a contact in Tripoonithura, further south. Things did not start on a grand scale. There was a shed with nothing much happening. There were conflicts with Andreos and his band. The turning point was the utilisation of conjugal relationship with a family who originally hails from further south in Kottayam district. The member of this family was at the time, a central minister. The marriage was between his brother's son and a girl in

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[255] Syrian Christian order that structured itself after conflicts with the Catholic order that got imposed with state support during the Portuguese (Joseph Cheeran, Rev.Dr. et al. Indian Orthodox Church, History and culture. (Malayalam). 2002/ Vishwanathan 1993)

[256] Where Chackappan's family is said to have conducted 'Myal' cropping once (with tekiya vellom-water drawn up manually in containers). The Jacobite church used to receive pattom from this land.

[257] By which was meant those mainly from the Pulaya working class who converted to Christianity

[258] Later Chackappan lost the case on a negotiation at the Supreme Court level because the documents with Andreos were found to be genuine. Thus at present a three floor building, owned by Andreos' family could be seen next to the factory owned by Chackappan's family.

Chackappan's family. Chackappan was successful to get a quota for the material to be used for industrial production in the sixties. Even then the industrial work didn't kickstart. Instead the material had to be sold in Tamil Nadu to secure working capital and to procure the lathe and roller for the production. Things were sold locally at the initial phase. Then trade spread. Later another industrial venture from Ernakulam was bought and added to a fast diversifying industrial group. The establishment now undertakes export production and plans to start an industrial park in the near future. The networks and fissures among the Christians helped to transcend a given situation[259].

A person from Edachira who is now forty remembers a time when his father who worked in a bank in the town was the only contact the whole region had with the post independence urban centre of Ernakulam. He would bring in news and happenings from there. There used to be only one bus service on the Ernakulam Kakkanad road[260]. Since then a bridge has linked the region to Ernakulam[261]. People have become familiar with the material world that comprises cars[262] and new consumables. The scope of everyday needs has been widening ever since.

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[259] Networks as well as conjugal relationships helped some to perform well materially. There have been parallel stories of the earliest contractors as well as entrepreneurs who build on the capital emanating from long lasting networks.

[260] The bus service was noticeably titled *neethi* (justice).

[261] The Ayyanad palam linked Trikkakkara to Kakkanad

[262] One of my field contacts recollected his brother breaking his knee while trying to climb a *kozhikoodu* (fowl coop) in order to see "a once in a blue moon car". Correspondingly in the popular movie scenes in Malayalam that featured automobiles, only two or three models were to be seen even in the beginning of nineties and these were more often incidental to the scenes. But hence then there has been magical displays of newer models and brands in movies and there were even scenes that focused entirely on the automobile aspect.

Four decades ago the first major housing projects started to take root at Kakkanad. This happened in the context of the planned urban development[263] activities that was beginning to take root. The phenomenon incorporated some of these surrounding villages to the urban processes centered at Kochi/Ernakulam. Thus certain state bodies were relocated from Ernakulam to the region. Consequently there was a new migration. This was the arrival of employees and their families. Prominent contractors and engineers from the region[264] sensed the opportunity and mobilised their social capital once again to play key roles in initiating housing projects[265], which were the first of its kind. The Mavelipuram region received early waves of migration from far of places (within Kerala) as did the later NGO[266] quarters.

6.2 Contemporary 'Regimes of Living'

Mobilities of groups in their historical social forms, like in the case of Syrian Christian networks, were repositories of social capital. Through time, several orders had to depend on these repositories. The networks have been vestiges of poly-centered urban systems. In the heterarchic ordering each element in the system possessed the potential of being unranked or ranked in a number of different ways (Crumley 1995; Bondarenko 2005). There are multiple power structures in operation

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[263] The kind of planning and development represented by activities of the Greater Cochin Development Authority (GCDA) is at present getting replaced by Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and parastatal agencies with access to market capital and with private participations (Discussed in Earlier Chapters; For more details: http://www.ksudp.org/Abtout_us.html)

[264] Names like Paul P. Mani and Chacko Pillai from the region.

[265] Navakeralapuri and Mavelipuram (which was a Greater Cochin Development Authority Project)

[266] NGO-Non Gazetted Officers. Their union is the largest service organisation of the Government employees of Kerala. The strikes that the union initiated in 1967, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1978, 1984, 1985 and in 2002 were milestones in the trade union history of the state.

here and they represent types of networks that allow different degrees of connectivity. I use heterarchy to represent the urban processes not in the sense that there were no relationships of authority or power, but to say that they were not rigidly ranked in any singular way; and designations as traders, land owners or labourers allowed space for flexibility, as resources were not strictly classified or singularly monetized. During the British bureaucracies the existing networks often got re-worked as inevitable channels of 'colonial economy'. The potential of staying socially unranked in such a system was becoming low (Bondarenko 2005). The relatively rigid state order, as mentioned before, carried its own contradictions, which translated in the political public sphere mediated by reform movements and left movements to social mobilies.

In the case of states elsewhere, the formation of such modern rational structures was preceded or mediated by the *sine qua non* of terror (Taylor 1975; Wokler 1998). In other words in order to realise such holistic orders a reign of terror was necessary. Every place has its own reasons for terror. Terror is rooted. But neither such terror nor a logical conclusion of rational totality of state came to be in Kerala because the state took shape, politically and socially, on the margins of a larger centralising federal order following independence. The exceptionalities that characterised the social structures in this part of the world, through grassroots left movements, substantiated into a reformist state (in the social reform sense). The agrarian system as well as relationships to land underwent radical transformation since the land reforms. During the time several new groups got linked to forms of social capital aggrandized over time, while others articulated themselves in radically new ways like entrepreneurialism and the carving out of new avenues (e.g. becoming leading contractors) in the process of state mediated urban development.

By the nineties the federal structure had transformed into an absolutist centrist order and the state had to reconstitute itself within a new totality. Significantly, the social mobilies as well as the contemporary forms of migrations take life amidst a gamut of state measures that could only be associated with the most authoritarian of

regimes. Thus colonial land acquisition acts[267] are invoked with renewed rigor (in new normative frameworks that have been espoused in the post neo-liberal phase), evictions for large information technology projects re-stage massive '*kudiyozhippikkals*' of the fifties (*kudiyozhippikkals* literally mean 'to evict from the dwelling place'/evictions soon after the left government was deposed; Gopalan 1980) and exemptions are made to urban land ceiling clauses[268] (that followed land reforms). The contexts as well as the medium are of course different, as are the people involved. But massive resource accumulations, especially in the shape of land, take one to pre-land reform era. '*Edayalekhanams*'[269] in churches resemble the ones during '*Vimochanasmarams*', when community formations and churches came out against leftist policies and government, with the tacit approval/ support of centrist structures as well as global power centers (Iyer 1959, Moynihan 1978; Howard 2003).

At present networks and social capital are getting radically re-oriented in an order that is totally out of bounds and in which people are getting ever more implied in. As contractors, farmers, traders, or members of 'prominent families', people start to articulate neoliberal processes and 'experience' a new sense of mobility. They regroup themselves in the process and negotiate the space with a whole new set of processes and actors. These processes are embodied in extraordinary levels of consumption, ecological transformation, and skyrocketing land values. They must contend with actors who make their presence felt as investors, criminal networks or

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[267] 1894 act was created with the expressed purpose of facilitating the government's acquisition of privately held land for public purposes

[268] Discussed Earlier

[269] (Approximately pamphlets from the shepherd to the flock)/These pamphlets become involvements in political affairs (Some of the recent ones were anti-leftist and suggested to vote for the opposite camp and had strong words to criticise left stand on practices of certain church run institutions)

migrant labour from other states. Location specific social capital has always been inherited, related to, invested in, or depended upon at several points of history. This is no longer adequate. Contemporary protocols of mobility, even when seemingly rooted in the same locality, are about a repositioning of people from localities to circuits of capital that are without boundaries of places or states. Even new state forms are getting ever more entrenched and consequential. In other words specificities of locations as well as rooted forms of capital do not offer the same sense of well being in the context of reconfiguration of life along ideas that are yet to take shape. In the current condition, with claims that time and space have got compressed and life has become ever more flexible, social capital has to be generated anew every moment. And inevitably, it is "economic capital" as such, real or fictitious, sans source and identity, that needs to be pursued, depended upon, and which is flexibly convertible (Ong 1999). Contemporary life in places has become liminal as it gets caught between designations of identity. It is also the site of disruption, intervention and innovation.

Rows of houses with their right angled streets at Mavelipuram could still be seen next to the local administration office. But at present there is the back drop of a skyline that is getting punctuated less by hills and more by high rises. These are apartment complexes initiated by several major builders in the country. They stand next to half broken hills that take on mythical shapes and surreal juxtapositions. Local level bodies[270] report unprecedented levels of transformation in the whole region. This, they say, is because of the proximity to urban centers of Kochi and Ernakulam or the additional space required for the upcoming projects based on information technology. They suggest a naturalisation of the contemporary processes -- an early urban trajectory represented by state mediated planning and development. But the question is, "whether this is so? Or whether what happens at present suggests something radically new and contemporary?"

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[270] 2007-2008 -2009 periods (from Edathala, Kunnathunad, Vadavukode Puthencruz panchayats)

The place where I met one of my informants was called *Navodaya*[271]. It is a name of a studio that no more exists. Earlier the name of the place was *Chennamvelimukal* (the suffix *mukal* indicates an elevated land or hilly terrain) as confirmed by an old man having tea. Likewise *Uralukuthipaara* (the suffix *paara* means rocky) had become Bible College and *Valliattumukal* became *Vikas Vani*. All these names took root in the last couple of decades when new institutions started to come up. They replaced names that signified the earlier geography. But at present even these names are turning into mere facades. In one of the new buses charted through the region a youngster was once asking the bus conductor (who issues the tickets), whether the bus goes to *Sutherland*. Another asked whether it would take her to *Veegaland*. These were not names of any of the places. One is a multinational company that specialises in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and the other is the name of a water theme park at Pallikkara. But none in the bus were confused and neither was the conductor. New land marks were already familiar here. There were many like these youngsters who travel back and forth everyday as well as thousands of migrant labourers who do not speak Malayalam who either live here or travel to work at one of the hundreds of new apartments that are coming up. The labourers live together with many others in a place further north, called Marampally. They pay two hundred rupees a month as rent for a common minimum living space. The daily wage of three hundred is more than double they get elsewhere and they get their 'savings'.

Nearly forty acres were being 'developed' to install and ensure un-interrupted power supply to the information technology zone. This was a central government project that moved on a fast track basis. Most of the land had been acquired from some of the long rooted families in the region. They say that the compensation that they got was negligible when compared to the speculative price of their land. Most of the plots had been paddy fields a decade back. When some from the region resorted to real estate business there was severe water logging. In addition much of the labour went to the

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[271] The name comes from the name of a studio that was located here.

construction industry. According to the authorities the field lay fallow for many years and slowly site inspections got started. But the family members say that they never had prior knowledge about any plans and neither did they have time to intervene. By the time notices were served decisions had already been made. The representatives at the local level too never helped to get a 'fair deal'.

The local finance networks still function as suggested by their name boards by the roads. But many say that the business is weak when compared to the new generation banks that deliver portfolios of easy loans. Since the nineties, banking in general has been dominated by greater financialisation. The local scene refracted this contemporary logic of capital that identifies even the poorest as "worthwhile-that is, profitable- people to lend money to"[272] (Callinicos 2010: 24). It has been more than two years since many youngsters from the middle class families in the region began to enter new generation professions consisting of new banking, Business Process Outsourcing (BPOs), and the Software sector. There are many who finished their respective academic programmes, be they management courses or software related ones, from private institutes that charge high fees. Such institutes have proliferated in the state in the last decade. Easy loan facilitates education in such institutes in greater numbers. Afterwards the youngsters enter the aforesaid professions. Increasing number of these people bank on the software zones of Kakkanad. The parental generation financed their children's education while mostly employed in secure public sector jobs or through farming (though not always in viable milieus since the 90s). The educated amongst this generation have had their schooling almost entirely in public institutes with no fee, or in the several church or mission run schools. The majority of these people, in turn were parented by farmers or trades people.

There are unprecedented levels of consumption, exemplified best by the 'fascination' with automobiles in the region. Everyone wants to own a new model and most of the

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[272] It is all increasingly becoming a part of the name transnational process that creates subprime markets in the United States

middle class families keep changing their cars. Many families own three to four cars on credit or with large amounts of liquid cash in exchange of small stretches of land. Many of the evening chats dwell around automobiles (and all their minute details). Many of these discussions intimately engage with brand names to the extent of identifying people by the automobiles they use, on lines like '*oh the guy who goes around in a Bolero through Pallikkara junction*'[273].

If the contract system was the first major intervention in house building in these regions during the last decade, it still depended on existing networks and local resources. Even during the period (80s) when external remittances, especially from the Gulf, created a large remittance economy (Krishnan 1994), the cost of construction, often mediated by local contractors, pertained more to the building of the main structure. There was not much scarcity for basic materials like sand, stone, brick, or cement. Presently it has become next to impossible to build houses for an individual[274] at least up to middle class level. There is no labour available for such work. Material cost has skyrocketed and it is not easy to have small contracts. Bulk contracts like the ones found in the case of high rise developers and even state facilitated economic zones reduce possibilities for individual deals. Even erstwhile wholesalers in town find it difficult to get materials. Besides there is an acute scarcity of natural resources like river sand due to massive dredging that coincided with the speculative real estate. Even so people invest much on 'house making'. What is different at present is the dependency on materials and resources that are not locally

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[273] In fact cars have almost become the identity of people from the region. Instead of family names people are associated with Bolero, BMW, or Chevrolet (which keep changing all the time and generates talks).

[274] Survey of Building Sites, 1999/ Building and Builders in Kerala: Commodification of Buildings and Labour Market Dynamics- K.N.Harilal and Mathew Andrews. Discussion Paper No. 22, August 2000. KRPLLD, CDS, Trivandrum.

produced (Italian marble, Mexican grass etc.), and the services of interior decorators (especially in the case of construction for the upper class). The greater share of cost is spent on embellishments after the finishing of main structure. Some are entirely occupied with landscaping the '*kaadu pidicha*' (that which has become wild) surroundings and thus keeping it distinct, paneling the houses, usage of a particular tile, paving the courtyard (that not so long ago was used to dry farm produce) or using a particular paint (some with conspicuously bright colours which a couple of years back would have raised more than a few brows).

Middle class houses are being converted into rentable rooms in anticipation of the large number of employees who could arrive at the new work-sites (not migrant labourers). Others are setting up tourism projects linked to the local river. Those who ran small enterprises (industries) have become interior designers and labour contractors. Prominent contractors from the regions own lorries and tippers that transport earth and materials to filling sites at the Special Economic Zones, Information Technology Parks or Construction sites for new living spaces that are yet to be occupied. All are getting ready for the future.

Spending 'leisure time,' is a major concern. This is increasingly being reduced among those engaged in new generation labour. A lot of time is taken up by elaborate conversations on consumables. A number of youngsters go for long drives in their automobiles, sometimes with friends or with their families. They check out new hotels, and savor 'natural beauty' in far off 'locations'.

The contemporary situation has severed people from their earlier potentials to resort to social capital or many of the networks that could assume sympathetic morphologies through state orders suddenly become defunct. They need to re-link themselves to orders over which they have no real control and thereby experience a new sense of mobility disconnected with the immediate 'past'. Since the start of the contemporary developments in Kakkanad around the Information Technology zone and the construction boom many 'sought out' new avenues. Sasi who did masonry

work, for instance, joined a company that supplied supervisors for a drinking water scheme carried out with Japanese assistance. During an interim period of no work at this site he joined a group that mostly operated on construction sites.

According to Sasi, the rise in land price helped many around here. He talked about the family into which his sister is married (where he goes to have lunch). They had small tracts of land here and there, which until a decade back had next to no value for money. But presently they have sold a part of their land that has earned them more than ten million in rupees. They still have land left like this one near the construction site. The plan now is to build a shopping complex here and to demolish the present small house and build one as the top floor of the shopping complex. The complex is expected to be ready by the time new residents move into high rise apartments. The scale of the shopping complex as he described it was moderate and smaller compared to the ones coming up in towns, not to speak of the large number of malls and shopping centres that are moving in. But Sasi is already in the process of building on a chain of possibilities.

Some of the prominent contractors from the region have been on the look out for opportunities to link up with the work at information technology sites. They have bought lorries on bank loans and these ply between the construction sites and the hillocks that are being denuded for the earth that is needed. Drivers from eastern high ranges, who are used to rough conditions and who are not used to driving here, are often employed in order to speed things up and in the process numerous accidents occur. Others are involved in sand dredging from rivers. Sometimes public outrage over drying up of rivers invites state measures. Passes are issued at certain spots and over certain time. Thus there is a 'legal' and 'illegal' dredging[275]. 'Sand Mafia'

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[275] There are further and specific legal clauses like, the Kerala Anti-Social Activities Prevention Act 2007 that specifically defines and addresses such issues. A person involved in aforementioned activities will thus become "depredator of environment"- one who, "by any direct act by which he derives pecuniary or commercial benefit, commits an offence

violence is reported in newspapers. But the fact remains that a great many people are involved in the activity.

Hillocks, ponds, water bodies, and fields- all of which were local repositories of natural resources, are becoming captive to speculative capital ventures. They are feeding into the profiteering facilitated by the new economic tendencies. Places are becoming host to social disasters, and conflicts. It is the unhindered availability of capital and the lack of land in real terms which is a major cause for the present crisis. The channels that capital assumes through the confusions and espousals have been setting the tone and rhythm of practices people engage in. But despite the source or channels of investment there is a need of perceived profits. For most the agricultural and industrial options as they have seen in the state are no more viable. The alternatives are in information technology, tourism, real estate, and land transactions, all of which constitute the neoliberal production sphere over which there can be no real control, and which offers immense flexibilities for 'inclusion' with no exemption .

Often capital circulates in fields that are deemed unethical or socially unacceptable. There has not emerged a social code of conduct for many new ventures. What is legal or what is illegal is a diffuse zone with respect to new economic activities. Meanwhile fields like real estate and speculative ventures when applied to land have been affecting what remains of agriculture and the subsistence sectors. The dream of buying land for oneself is fast becoming unrealistic. There is a radical reduction of 'options'. When erstwhile sources of income dry up or when priorities and needs change and when people start depending more on urban nodes for employment,

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under any law relating to protection of environment or rivers or under any law relating to sand mining from any place or under any law relating to quarrying or mining, or who commits or abets the commission of offences punishable under any law relating to conservation of forests or wild life". But in effect all of these clauses get exemption in the coming together of informal and reciprocal relationships that feed into dominant rhetorics like *vikasanam*.

patterns of mobility become 'regimes of living'. The operation of 'regimes of living' according to Collier and Lakoff (2004) does not necessarily involve the individual's insightfulness of a given situation and very often the life in question is not necessarily that of a reasoning being. The life in question could be expressed both collectively and individually. Regimes of living do not offer solutions to problematic situations through the mediums that have always been there. The problematic situation often produces uncertainties that result from the difficulties in the previous ways of understanding (Foucault 1988). But such regimes often involve contingent means for organising, reasoning about or structuring ethics. The contemporary lives in these places are often animated by orders that articulate the hybrid experience as practices contingent to a neoliberal order.

There are magical tendencies that apparently fly off the tangent. The reference is to accounts of pursuits of exotic and illusory sources of wealth. Several individuals and groups are involved in committed quests based on seemingly strange ideas. For these they spend both money and time in great degrees.

The *naagamanikyam* incident was perhaps the earliest of such quests:

This is about a very special stone which has magical powers. The stone is thought to emit its own light and can be viewed only in specially arranged conditions. These items have been thought to be in possession of certain people about whom many involved in the quest have information which they pass on and thus get networked. Subsequently they make long journeys to places, and report having seen this very special stone.

In addition to many who have testified to have been hoodwinked, the Nagamanikyam episode has resulted in murders, suicides, as well huge financial losses. Large majorities who have pursued the Nagamanikyam have been formally educated and belong to middle classes and above. The promise of quick wealth has been the driving

factor. The claim is that the substance, if possessed, will lead to instant material plenty. The myth is that certain snakes (cobras with hood) live for nearly thousand years. By the six hundredth year they start losing their eye sight. Such snakes inject poison in special stones called 'vellarankallukal' (kind of stone-white in colour) that result in the stones getting self-luminescence. It is with the help of such stones that these snakes find their way and hunt their prey afterwards. The stone is either safely kept in the mouth or they carry this on their head. The Nagamanikyam processes by black cobras are the most powerful. There are also stories that the stones get manufactured from the hundredth year itself. The few such stones there are have presumably travelled from deep forests and such zones, probably via forest dwelling people, into the hands of some of the extremely rich at present.

The agents who run the show seek huge initial investments in the case of Nagamanikyam in exchange of promises to witness the luminescence at special places. The initial investment itself precludes the under classed or deprived from starting off in pursuit. Instead most that have gone for long journeys and invested time and money into the deal have been professionals and relatively well off businesspeople. The agents talk about nagamanikyams of different grades. For instance there was one possessed by a businessperson from Mumbai that would fetch thirty million Indian rupees. The price is tagged to luminescence. Another possessed by a doctor would cost less. Individuals as well as small to medium groups have been known to take long travel, sometimes to places in neighbouring states, in order to view the magic. Some come back and confess that they have lost all their money and that they have been fooled by showing cheap stones on which light was focused or by laser beams shot on translucent capsules. There are at times several stages, with investment for each stage.

Others have been known to give large sums of money to meet people in charge of the next stage of pursuit. Subsequently they come to know that they have been fooled. But by the time, those involved in the stages that preceded would have disappeared. As cameras and mobile phones are strictly prohibited, no one can capture the real

scenario. Some when they tried to protest and ask for their money were threatened with dire consequences by thugs hired for the purpose. In a few cases groups managed to get back part of the money lost from the agents that they could get hold of. According to many who have gone on such pursuits, there are many who do not even open their mouth out of shame and shock.

People from around have travelled as far as Karnataka or Tamil Nadu and have spent days in travel. Vydooryam stories from Nedumangad in Thiruvananthapuram district may also fall under this category. The legend is that on the banks of river Karamana lie large unexplored reservoirs of this precious stone. There are people in this region or those who go there, who continuously engage themselves in the process of digging deep in the ground in search for the stone. The latest in the series involves a set of youngsters, many of them employed, in their thirties or forties who are in search for 'matter' from the metallic roof tops of temples (makudams) or domes of old buildings. They say with conviction that as these structures have stood through long periods they have accumulated immense amount of energy from lightning and other earthly/heavenly discharges. The matter has strong "pulling" powers. They claim to have specific gauges or units for the measurement of strength[276]. Because of this capacity, so the story goes, the matter is in huge demand and that too from agencies like the NASA. As the myth goes there are agents all over India. There are many old structures. But if these youngsters in quest can collect enough matter (they have presumably collected nearly two kilograms) and get directly in touch with the NASA, they could make a fortune.

The youngsters even had their version of the Babri Masjid demolition by the Hindu fundamentalists many years back. According to them, Babri Masjid was a candidate for the 'matter' they are after, thanks to its old dome. The members in the higher

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[276] Interestingly, this is expressed in RP which is expanded as Rice-Pulling capacity. For instance five RP would mean a grain of rice could be pulled in from a five foot distance towards the matter.

echelons of the right wing, Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) knew this and the demolition in reality was an attempt to get hold of the million dollar matter. All the above mentioned people were very serious about what they say and their searches have a rationale and their presentations have meticulous narrative coherence. One of the youngsters mentioned in the last case even promised 'some millions' to my friend if a deal could be struck via his children in the United States.

The cases of magical pursuits have underlying commonalities. They are, above all a contemporary manifestation of 'desire'. This particular phenomenon has to be differentiated from relationships often woven between the magical and the condition of poverty. The state of poverty has been shown to result in unique forms of adaptations that manifest even as characteristic behaviours or subcultures [Lewis 1996 (1966)]. Others talk of complex recognition that people attain of capitalist processes they are implied in (Taussig 1980) and the crisis of status quo, getting expressed through the magical. This implies active forms of response to structural violence like poverty. Certain links between poverty and magical pursuits may well be manifest and may have continuities in parallel phenomena like lotteries. There are individuals at the lower segment of the economic spectrum who inevitably queue themselves up in phenomenal numbers every single day at liquor shops. They devise innovative plans to pool in their resources to have a drink in case of any shortage of cash. They forget the day that passed by and start each day anew. In the evenings they flock around the burgeoning numbers of lottery vendors. The owner of one of the shops once said that he knows people who come every single day and invest almost half of the days income in lotteries. The conspicuous crowds that gather around lottery vendors in every single town junction or the innovative 'pooling mechanisms' in liquor queues, may well be a *summum bonum* of hopes, despairs, and resignations/adaptations to patterns of life.

But unlike such phenomena, magical pursuits inevitably involve middle to upper middle class people who are, according to an interpreter, in a "get rich quick" mode. Like in the case of a secret metal inside old 'petromax lamps', they go after

unsubstantiated matter that will eventually fetch them huge amounts of easy money. There is a network of people who get associated with the process and the communication builds up and constitutes the magic.

This has to do with the post nineties context more than anything else and in fact the magic parallels the bigger magic that involves stock trade and movement of de-substantiated finance, that have become instituted practices. In a social milieu that becomes the embodiment of such practices, desires too must take exotic forms.

Human desires and their materialisations whether these are in the choice of automobiles or in the conceptualisations and construction of living spaces, appear to be moving through a significant phase. There are recurring themes in the elaborations that suggest normative shifts. As Campbell (2004) might put it, one needs to understand human desires as constituted in order to understand different motives involved. Broad processes have to be considered here. Gulf migrations (70s) are thought to have inaugurated a new phase of social mobility based on consumption. The 'phenomenon' has been viewed as representing complex articulation between hybridity and essentialisms (Osella and Osella 2000). But in the present scenario, there is a need to move beyond the polarities of social essentialisms and hybridities and from too much analytical investment on gulf migrations. Gulf migration, which of course was a significant intervention in the economic sphere, can hardly be generalized as a causative social phenomenon everywhere, and certainly not with the places in concern. Observations like, the importance of 'cash' in social life may be true (ibid.). But this is not to be rationalised in primordial and pre-capitalist relationship with cash getting reproduced in images of excesses (ibid; Betaille 1962) and re-births of essentialised identities. If isolated from the historically facilitative environment that encouraged banking based on 'savings' and the significant impacts of cooperatives[277] for instance, the analysis becomes ungrounded.

[277] Even when there are pressures from the centre, the cooperative sectors that came up as a result of political mobilisations still keeps the trend in Kerala.

Whether or not 'successful', people are rational entities that respond to historical givens and transform in the process.

The neoliberal context post 1990s is a historical moment with radical reversals in forms of ordering. The state in everyday life has been an entity that can be approached and entered into dialogue, with functioning local bodies that can be personally related to. Emergence of a large middle class and continuing state support for all the basic needs produced a social ambience of equal opportunity as well as mobility. But post 1990 the state that was co-extensive with the public sphere, thanks to its marginality and externality to larger nation building, became constrained and consequently had to get more incorporated. Neoliberalism is an extremely malleable technology that instead of limiting the scope of governance becomes instituted practices that create exceptions to business as usual by the ways it gets embedded (Ong 2006). It gets embedded precisely at a time when the state can no more live up to people's expectations. With the political public sphere getting severed from the state in its new predicament, there has been a production of competing individuals bereft of subjectivity to any mutually encompassing idea of well being.

The relatively egalitarian distribution of wealth gives rise to a substantial population of potential consumers. Consumption after 1990s in these places involves a necessary destruction of meaning (Poster 1988) or an evisceration of the past. The concern has come to be part of an alternative identity or reality apropos Benjamin (2002) or even getting into a situation that lacks any singular truth. A reality that is yet to take shape ironically offers immense flexibilities. Thus, as with Sasi one can plan shopping complexes for future or remodel houses to host the future tenants. The agencies and personhoods (Campbell 2004) generated need not be stable, but only life forms with fragmented rationalisations. Instead of people embodying values, it is as if values are exteriorized and embodied in the social relations between things. People no more believe in the value of the earlier social investments, but the things believe for them. As Marx observed, value as such is immaterial but hides its relationality in the fetishism of commodities. Thus phenomena like consumption are never 'merely

superstructural' but important pointers to the inseparability between life and non life, material and mental etc. that probably reach unforeseen configurations in the context of contemporary social transactions which simultaneously demonstrate unprecedented fluidity, monumental accumulations, as well as 'accumulations by dispossession' (Harvey 2003).

Significant involvements in 'fantastic' pursuits and investments in expectations/hopes elaborate the aspirational environment that makes all investments on the future. Contemporary forms of desire manifest, as mentioned before in a de-materialised milieu where only the magical can explain material wealth. The corporate multibillionaire who appears on the world list of billionaires might have a prosaic story propagated by movies and media. This does not explain the phenomenal wealth they possess and display. Neither are more local expressions of wealth adequately explained. In a facilitative milieu for fluid capital, boundaries and barriers become defunct. Such milieus attain normality in urban spaces that structure distinct normative orders that suspend earlier ways and experiment with new ones. Forms of conspicuous consumption become a generator of identities (Friedman 1994), and is the inevitable by-product of heightened sense of disjuncture with and disorders within the familiar. They are the necessary illusions of the liquidation of placedness in new spatial coordinates. There is a globalisation of desire and a need to conform to market mediated order and better life, without which one becomes highly insecure in an imagined order. Desires that fly off the tangent are natural reflections both of what appear to be the material order (magical) as well as the simultaneous fragmentation of social life that augments idealist reactions or expectations (Hetata 2004), exaggerated even more by the sense of insecurity.

It will be clearly shortsighted to make claims that identities in the making are transient and fragmentary and lack form. If networks become defunct and localised social capital dissolves in a neo liberal state order; new spatial markers, practices of consumption and experiences of mobility are also getting rooted. And they get rooted in a historical context that is radically new and contemporary. During the phase,

unlike earlier ones constituted as heterarchies or as spaces of exemptions, people in the new-found designations (often with old facades) and experiences of mobility, mediated by practices of consumption are ever more encompassed in 'regimes of living'. As the next chapter argues, they replicate and rationalise the state's neoliberal predicament as radically new normative formations.

7. Mutually Reinforcing Forms of Life

The present chapter takes on from the previous one and explains how certain radically new normative social contexts take form in the milieu of a changing state order. The contemporary situation is one in which a changing state, ecological transformations, economic pressures and forms of violence enter into characteristic discourses and are resonated in the new social forms in the field. The magnitude and contingency of the crisis, whether it is the 'everyday' threats of violence, or burgeoning environmental damage/pollution or economic uncertainties, depend much on the substitution of the real by the hyperreal (Baudrillard 1995). The discourses between masses and media, as will be argued, create this hyperreal everyday life, of simulations that become the new real and get presented as the everyday. What is essentially involved is the blurring of boundaries between the 'real' and the 'imagined' and a cumulative replacement of the real world by simulations of violence which in effect manufacture the experience of 'violence from quotation teams'.[278] Since the active insertion of state into centrist neoliberal policies, the capacity to control such crisis is seemingly reduced. In the urban contexts studied, new solutions are often proposed. The representations of the phenomenon, as one would see, take precedence over the real phenomenon itself and work into unique devolutions with the solutions proposed or what lies outside.

What forms a contingent backdrop is the idea of state which has had a life of its own and has been premised on notions of equality in the sense of opportunities, starting with the local levels. The mediation of leftist movements and primarily agrarian struggles informed an experience that does not logically fit into a citizen government dichotomy (Asad 2004)[279]. Thus, the idea of welfare is not an impersonal one; it has been generated in the everyday situations that amalgamated ideas (leftist-

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[278] Treated in detail later in the chapter

[279] The enabling principle of equality in the western type of liberal democracies is the treatment of citizens with absolute indifference (Asad 2004)

redistributive) with local contexts. So it also becomes important how such personalised ideas of welfare reconfigure in the context of pressures of a corporate nation state (Kapferer 2005) that seldom offers space for exemptions.

The generative logic of some of the contemporary forms of social organisation is that of the need for inevitable solutions to some of the impending social problems. These problems often started to take on unavoidable proportions shortly after the neo liberal reforms became the rooted central policy. As mentioned in some of the earlier chapters, people incorporated themselves in characteristic formats in the new processes as these devolved within the social specificities, and doing so added logic to the predicament of state. But they also confronted unprecedented worries in dimensions they had never experienced before. I focus on one of these problems specific to the field. Often the ordering of the state, as well as those of the people on the ground gets mutually reinforced in generating solutions to such problems, the very forms of which are also 'contemporary'.

7.1 The Responsible Residents

At the scene of an Onam Fairground were numerous small shops (all were temporary tents) run by people who come from the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu. Some of them had been coming here for the past two decades and leave the scene when the season gets over. But this time there a change could be observed in the profile of customers. There were of course people who have been visiting the fairground for many years. But they were far outnumbered by Hindi speaking migrant labourers[280]. A small hotel nearby served hot *paratha* (a popular bread made out of fibre-free wheat flour), tea and dishes that approximated north Indian culinary practices and was frequented by these migrants who worked at the construction sites around. Those

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[280] Migrants from other states constitute as much as 1.3 per cent of Kerala's population, according to Census 2001

who served food were from Darjeeling and Nepal. It was relatively rare to find people from Darjeeling amongst the fast increasing migrant population. The one who served tea said that he came from 'a beautiful and green place', unlike those from Bihar and Orissa. He had to go first to Delhi in search of work. But there he only got a pittance and could not bear the climate in the meager facilities made available. Then he came to know of Kerala and the opportunity in a restaurant that has been employing people from Darjeeling and Assam[281]. The majority, from Bihar, Orissa and Bengal[282], are construction workers and take more informal routes to arrive. The supervisor[283] at a certain construction site might have contacts from early work. These labourers would be asked to bring in a few more and in exchange get a commission. The labourers come as part of the deluge that descends at the railway stations on a daily basis[284]. The construction activities keep the flow on.

The labourers live with many others in a place called Marampally. They pay two hundred rupees a month as rent for a common minimum living space, which they say is much better than what they would get in other metropolitan work sites. The daily wage is more than double they get in Bengal and could generate 'savings' (local bank branches are at times animated by the staff trying to explain to these migrants in their

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[281] According to the owner of the hotel people from these places were more trustworthy and were often accompanied by their families, in addition to the savings he could make of lower wages.

[282] Many who said they were from Calcutta, but on further conversations were understood to be from Bangladesh and were possibly refugees who once crossed borders into West Bengal.

[283] Many of the supervisors in turn were Tamilians who themselves were labourers at public work sites some years back and who hence built up easier rapport with regions and became middle men along with the Malayalis when Hindi speakers started t arrive.

[284] On certain days the floor space of the platforms in the Aluva and Ernakulam town railway stations, the entry points into central Kerala, will be packed with such migrants with the swell of pan (tobacco that could be chewed) in the air

language how money could be transferred). Low wages and lack of opportunities in their native villages were the primary factors that pushed migrants out of their villages. Drought, water scarcity, as well as massive depletion of resources in places like Orissa ever since the privatizations of sectors like mining (Singh 2010/ Das 2010 and 2005) have compounded the crisis. Most of these workers spend their off-work time at the many junctions and crowd the nearby towns on Sundays[285]. During fairs like the present one, they come together and in very large numbers.

Box: 5

Migrants from North

(Source: 'Invisible people' Frontline, Volume 28 - Issue 01: Jan. 01-14, 2011

By R. Krishnakumar)

At the State Bank of India branch near the Raj Bhavan in Thiruvananthapuram, "a horde of people speaking strange dialects" descend every day. They include construction workers, casual labourers, road workers, semi-skilled carpenters, masons, plumbers, electricians and, of late, occasionally, agricultural workers. Then they wait, on the steps leading to the bank, at the parking yard and on the road.

According to the Branch Manager the bank has to open additional cash counters to meet the demand. "There are usually 300 to 400 such customers on a day, a varying but steady stream. They come from various worksites in the city to send their weekly savings home – in West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Assam and other north-eastern parts of India. The money is deposited in a relative's or friend's account so that it can be withdrawn without delay," he says.

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[285] To the extent that every second person you meet speaks Hindi

A retired engineer says that his house was remodelled recently and the majority of the workers whom the contractor brought were migrants from Bihar or from somewhere there. According to him unlike their counterparts in Kerala, they are willing to do any work, their labour is relatively cheap, they work long hours and they seem to be a decent lot.

At a town called Perumbavoor, there are over 175 plywood factories in and around the town that give "direct employment" to over 15,000 migrant labourers, traders say. Others claim there are many more. "You will be at a loss at the local market on Sundays if you do not speak Hindi or Bengali. There is a theatre in Perumbavoor that screens only Oriya movies. Even the advertisements are in the Oriya language. For many of the local residents, they are an uncomfortable presence in the town's shopping centres on Saturdays and Sundays. You find them with newly bought household goods and gifts on every train that goes to north-eastern India. There are shops and restaurants catering almost exclusively to the migrants. Many small restaurants display the menu in several languages," a local resident, told Frontline.

The industrial belt in Palakkad district, and the jewellery sweatshops of Thrissur district, and the agricultural tracts in Wayanad and Idukki have all for long employed non-Kerala labourers on a large scale. There are an estimated 40,000 or so gold jewellery makers in Thrissur and a major chunk of them are highly skilled workers from the northern States.

Immigration of casual labour had been from the neighbouring States of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka until recently. A recent newspaper report, quoting the Kerala AIDS Control Society's 'Migrant Suraksha Project', said that there were 35,000 migrant labourers in the

northern city of Kozhikode alone, while only 1,246 had registered their names with the State Labour Department.

"They came with the construction boom, with the big-time builders and mega IT, airport, road, rail and port projects and the plywood factories. They found out that wages were high, working conditions were much better than at home or elsewhere and there was nobody to do those jobs, surprisingly in a State with the largest number of (educated) unemployed. They are not a militant lot but are hard working and are willing to work anywhere," the State Labour Commissioner, told Frontline.

"Once they found the money good, they brought others – brothers, friends, cousins and sons; still more began to come on their own. Now they are bringing their families and are finding work all over Kerala. This is a new trend, leading to another danger – the re-introduction of child labour in the State. Migrant labourers are now increasingly seeking work in suburban regions and in rural areas where there is an acute shortage of farm labour," he said.

On May 1, 2010, Kerala became the first State in India to institute a welfare scheme for migrant labourers. "The Migrant Labourers' Welfare Scheme, 2010" provides every migrant labourer who joins the scheme paying an annual fee of Rs.30 (about half a Euro), among other things, Rs.25,000 as health-care assistance, Rs.25,000 as terminal benefit if he has worked in Kerala for a minimum period, up to Rs.3,000 every year as education allowance for their children, Rs.50,000 as compensation to the next of kin if the labourer dies in an accident, Rs.10,000 in case of natural death and up to Rs.15,000 for transporting the body to their hometown, in case of death in Kerala.

However, the Labour Department's efforts to enrol members have so far not been very successful. "Enrolment is voluntary. But hardly a few come forward to register on their own. Many do not have even a single document to prove their identity. The principal employers (such as big construction companies) are required to register themselves [their employees], and contractors who employ more than 20 labourers are required to get a licence. But each labourer may work under different contractors or the contractors may employ just 19 of them so as to escape the provisions of the law. For the State labour officials, language is the biggest barrier in getting through to these labourers," CEO of the welfare scheme told Frontline.

"If you want to understand the magnitude and complexity of the situation you need only to wait at the nearest railway station for the next train to or from these States," Labour Commissioner said. "They are a nomadic lot, do not stay in one place, and many go back home during the harvest season every year. They may or may not return to Kerala. Or, when they do, they may bring others with them or decide to seek employment in a different district or location altogether. Earlier, contractors used to bring them to Kerala. Now they are also coming on their own, in large numbers. How will the government agencies, with their meagre resources and manpower, keep track of them?"

A conversation at the same hotel was precisely on the migrants. The locals who were part of this conversation appreciated '*vikasanam*' (referring, in the present case, to all the developmental activities around) and said that none of this would have been possible without the private investments and the migrants who do not pose many of the 'union problems'. Accordingly, it is the trade union activities that have often hindered 'progress'. The migrants unlike the locals will work more for less. But then, they compound some of the new worries and also bring in more. There were

questions related to public health, sanitation, and water supply. There have been several reports of overstrained public health care systems since large migrations[286]. Communicable diseases as well as those that were once eradicated often take root in the unhygienic living spaces of migrant labour and also due to the increasing amount of consumer waste piling up in every nook and cranny. The phenomenon of migration, despite the state measures targeted at providing welfare, has added on to the perception of the incapacity of the state.

Besides, the large influx of migrants, according to the police and media, could become a security threat, considering their obscure backgrounds and flexibility of motion. The city police themselves were planning an 'awareness campaign'. Further, it was revealed that the migrants were dealing in counterfeit currency. The arrest of a suspected Maoist activist nearby while trying to deal in counterfeit currency made news recently and it was revealed that the group to which he belonged travelled extensively across the country under the guise of labourers coming from outside. Quoting the city police commissioner one said that it was hard to detect these groups. Many print currencies in neighbouring Bangladesh and get this across to India and spread it in towns and cities through the media of migrant labour. One only needs to turn on the news channels and this becomes evident.

Several of these locals were referring to the activities of 'residents' associations' to address many such issues as well as the different forms of violence that have been on the rise. I followed the advice of one of them and located a member on one of the many residents' associations. Most of these associations were simply formed along an existing road or smaller lanes with arbitrary points of divisions or existing geographical separations and followed no other criteria of division (like that of class or community). This association was named *Ponnonam*. In this particular place where

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[286] Sivan, V.T. 2008. 'Anyasamsthana Tozhilaalikalil Rogangal Padarunnu' (in Mal). *Deshabhimani*.

there was a temple related to the Onam myth[287] there were others with names like *Thiruvonam* or *Maveli* (as well as other unrelated names). The person said that he himself was in several of the committees that organise the cultural programmes, as a representative of his residents' association.

A year ago there was a demand from a council of Residents' Associations that urged the government to recognize residents' associations as basic elements of the democratic system and endow them with statutory powers. There have been many independent demands and roles assumed mostly as proclamations and also as symbolic actions by such bodies. The state has also incorporated them in the rhetoric. The police and residents' associations have also on occasions come on joint platforms of community policing stressing the need for security and police reforms[288]. Apex bodies that are constituted very often feature as players in many of the urban issues. Residents' Associations are very often projected as functioning in the same way as the 'traditional' neighborhood alliances that had been the norm in all these places.

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[287] The present temple is dedicated to Vamana, an avatar of the god Vishnu, who descended from the heavens in order to address the challenge posed to the rule of gods by an earthly ruler, Mahabali. According to the myth the 'otherwise just' ruler was allowed to visit his land and people, after he was deposed (it other versions he was deposed from the heavenly abode that was supposed to have been wrested away from the gods. In Kerala the king has been the ruler of the land and his rule symbolised a just order. Onam is the return of the beloved ruler). The present temple also has several Buddhist as well as Jainist associations and so does the myth of Onam (Valath/Narayanan, Aju. 2005. Keralathile Buddhamata Parambaryam Naattarivukaliloode (in Malayalam). DC Current: Kottayam) which is also about annual meetings at a significant point along major trade routes. At present there is another shrine next to the older one dedicated to Mahabali himself.

[288]   http://janamythirikochicitypolice.blogspot.com/2010/06/janamaitri-unique-success-story.html

In one of the monthly meetings[289] the participants were supposedly starting to draw up a plan for an umbrella association of smaller associations along a road that stretched two kilometers. Some presented the idea as an extension of '*koottu kudumbam*' (joint family). This was a way out of the lack of sociality. Residents' Associations have to be registered with the municipality. The state, they say, encourages this. The present meeting conceived an umbrella organ that can forward demands and become one functioning organ comprising thirteen closely knit associations. The region already has more than thirty associations and the number is growing. One of the elected representatives from the local body assured all the help possible. He tried to draw up an image of a network stretching all the way from international forums, through the nation state and state bodies to associations, families and individuals. But another speaker imagined the chain the other way around with the associations as the primary bodies. He drew a picture of a corrupt or non-functioning state with which responsibilities cannot be entrusted. In a summing up speech the municipal councilor said that the point is not to create an alternative to elected bodies but to put up complementary structures that can jointly address some of the contemporary woes. Later during an election campaign the active participation of residents' associations in the developmental activities in the town was praised extensively by the outgoing councilor and mentioned that the municipal council would definitely take up practical solutions suggested by residents' associations.

Almost all agreed that problems like sanitation and need for security assumed dimensions that the existing systems can no more address. Thus it was the need of the hour to have alternative forums and to revive the old networks, despite the fact that the associations were flexible formations that could be formed across any space and accommodate anyone, unlike the 'traditional' neighborhood formations that were constituted over time with a certain amount of economic interdependence.

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[289] There is no overarching stipulation for regular meeting. In this case meetings have taken place on monthly basis

7.2 From *Keerikkadan Jose* to *Quotation Teams*: The Threats of Elusive Criminals

The problem of security from the migrant labourer forms part of a building narrative of the new forms of violence that find an everyday life in almost all the places studied. An interesting transformation has taken place over the last decade to the basic constituents of violence, both the perpetrator as well as the act. The references here are to acts that are inevitably criminal before the legal apparatus, and to visible forms of violence involving physical use of force.

Thus Rowdies or KD[290]s (with localised existence, and as words appropriated in Malayalam language) were once the personifications of the aforesaid forms of violence. There were also the 'goondas' (hired thugs) of persisting feudal powers who colluded with the police to suppress leftist movements and initiatives. The rowdies and KDs were inevitably known faces from a certain locality with a well known case history and varying degrees of power and links with the legal apparatus. More often they made their presence felt in the public spaces, at the junctions or the markets, some of the basic spatial constituents of the political public sphere in Kerala. This type of figure is best represented by Keerikkadan Jose, the villain from the widely popular movie *Kireedam*[291] that came out in 1989. Though Jose is not the hero, because of his portrayal, he made a big impact. The rough figure of the actor has ever since gained him the screen name for 'real' amongst many.

There are certain aspects to the way Jose relates to people. Thus the central characters (the hero and his family) happen to arrive at a certain place where the market is 'ruled' informally by Jose. He became the KD after killing the earlier figure in 'broad daylight' and in the public space with everyone watching. Jose never got punished thanks to his networks and relationships. His family, *Keerikkadan*, is well known

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[290] Known Depredator- a term used by the Indian Police to classify criminals

[291] Malayalam Movie directed by Sibi Malayil and written by A. K. Lohithadas

amongst the locals and at a certain point a policeman describes them as '*taravadikalaa…*' (This roughly means from respected and good family). Jose has firm roots in the local village, relates to people from the locality, and is basically a man of the local market, who extends his dominion from there[292].

But much unlike the rowdy of the Jose type the present one is not from the locality. Nor does he have any link with the local market or a family. He could appear from nowhere, perpetrate the crime and move about freely without any identity, save that of a member of a certain '*quotation team*'. They are more difficult to locate and the scale of crime increases with the severance of local ties as the perpetrator neither knows the employer nor the attacked and he need not even know the reason for act.

The *Quotation Teams* are called so because, the crucial aspect that makes such gangs distinct from other forms of 'goonda' violence, are the personalised services that they offer on specified price. Thus quotations can be taken from many such groups and the best quote could be 'employed'. The employer need not directly involve with the gang members and can operate via middle men. The gang members too are never keen on who the employer is or on whom the act has to be perpetrated. The gangs float freely and move about freely in social life.

There have been groups in Kochi involved in smuggling goods from ships docked in the outer seas into the mainland. The origins of violent gangs in Kochi are often attributed to such groups who deftly found their way around policing and smuggled gold, and foreign made consumables evading taxation and such forms of state stamps. There have been codes of conduct within such groups especially with respect to loyalty and secrecy. Fishermen who were pushed out of their livelihoods as well as those who became jobless after the decline of earlier markets and bazaars have been

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[292] In the sequel that came in 1993, Jose, who gets murdered at the market place by the hero, becomes a 'figure with some genuinity afterall…'

incorporated in such groups. Most of these activities though were concentrated in and around the coasts and lakesides. There have also been parallel groups who found a vocation in looting the anchored boats and also involved themselves with theft and robbery, which proliferated mostly during the time when Kochi completely ceased to be the urban centre and became a heritage and tourist zone. There were groups who lent service to tourists in the form of illegal drug supply. There have been many movies released during the time with the central theme of smuggling and with a spatial focus on coasts.

But criminal precedents like this did not logically entail the quotation gangs as often portrayed by the police or media, though there are obvious links with unemployment and poverty. The quotation gangs, proliferated out of the conducive fields laid open by state policies that promoted new banking, financial speculation, as well as speculation over land. The gangs, unlike the smugglers and thieves were neither spatially confined nor on opposite poles with business or politics. In fact they are more enmeshed with the everyday business and financial circuits.

This does not mean that these gangs 'appeared' out of nowhere. They have been preceded by those who are eulogized sometimes as 'collection agents' by financial institutions, especially those based on new banking that got established since the nineteen nineties. Credit system has established itself as the new way of life, but not necessarily against the rooted practice of 'savings' in Kerala. Easy loans and burgeoning consumerist life style translate to investments in automobiles or living spaces of different types. All this also happens in a context when secure jobs as well as existing support systems offered by the state are receding. The state in Kerala has become a buffer between a radically changed state in India and the kind of social welfare that got maintained often against the general trend.

People are often caught between the pressures of contemporary living and the lack of support from a system that at present is getting fast incorporated as becoming most evident from the context of contemporary urban reforms or zones of exception. They

continuously try to live up to the social symbols that they have been invested with while incurring severe strains in the process.

For instance an agricultural family of five with a monthly income of 4000 rupees with almost the same monthly expenses and with more than half this for food with no social security system, with tiled roof and radio, with no means to support hospitalization of any kind and with female members to be married off (the dowries have increased several fold) will not constitute itself as a Below Poverty Line (BPL) family as per national statistics. In Kerala such a family confronts immense social strains, and the political processes that once gave rise to many such families can no more be operationalised through the state. Policies of the state like welfare pensions, or maintenance of public sector in fields like water and electricity cannot address the newer forms of disparities and social strains.

In a monetized and ever more monetizing order, in turn controlled by processes more alien, lack of savings, security, burgeoning speculation in pricing, non availability of goods, social gauging based on consumption, privatization of services etc. create un precedented situations. Earlier forms of associations with agricultural labour, lesser monetary benefits in such forms of labour as well as from farming alienate more from these fields, and ironically worsen the situation as people turn more into net consumers.

The youngsters who eventually enter quotation teams too come from social predicaments that push them outside the normative moral fields. They come from different community and class backgrounds as well as social conditions, though large majorities, according to the police records, come from the more depraved scenes. Thus there are the ones in Mattancherry or Vypeen, where earlier occupations of commerce or fishing are either unavailable or more importantly, have become 'inadequate' for contemporary life. But once they are into such gangs there is a wholly new set of codes and ethical protocols that guide them. It is like a sphere that exists outside the 'normal' parameters with other sets of relations, mediated by

gymnasiums, small entrepreneurs, local financiers, and bigger establishments. But from outside it asserts a new order of normalcy.

Despite their points of origin and actual acts of violence, they also gain a new life in the ways they are portrayed and received in public life through the media. News and Cinema become extremely important here. Quotation violence with all its graphical details and revelations of networks are presented every day. Such news is disjunctive from others on economic growth, festival galas, or advertisements. They are isolate events that become separate stories, each reinforcing needs of security. But at the same time these become normalized with their own sets of reasons and ethical debate. In a movie there are often several good quotation members who seem to have a 'point' against bad ones. Hagiographies of individuals from such media events circulate in everyday talk and attain a hyperreal life. But the hyperreal structures the real in the sense that violence in itself attains a state of normalcy and at the same time drives people towards new orders of living, put forward by the state.

Activities of quotation teams gained prominence especially after some of the widely reported incidents of violence[293]. Thus there was one that involved alleged disputes between two financier groups in which one of them was attacked and killed in a 'mock accident' by a quotation team. There was another one that was even more talked about. This involved the murder of a young industrialist by a quotation team. What makes it more unique is the fact that the industrialist himself was travelling with two prominent members of such a team while getting attacked. The first incident, following the serialized presentations, with personal histories and code names of 'team' members, also became the subject of a movie. The latter, after being utilized for settling political scores, among other forms of speculations and serializations, is also becoming the subject of a movie.

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[293] *Mathrubhoom*i and *Malayala Manorama* news from 2008 April to 2009 August as well as presentations in Television channels like *Asianet* during the same period.

Post 1990s, with the burgeoning of the construction sector and automobile market in Ernakulam, new financial institutions have also been established to provide 'easier loans' that cater to the contemporary consumerist needs. In places that are becoming globally connected and locally disconnected at the same time, consumerist practices get maintained by the continuous need to generate new forms of social capital as earlier networks stand liquidated. But consumers are often unaware of the terms and conditions of these new doors of entry.

The goondas come in the guise of 'collection agents' to get the monthly installments and go to different stretches of blackmailing as well as use of force. There are networks of health clubs and gymnasiums that have links with such activities and they keep getting young recruits, mostly from depraved places, where youth often perceive these as channels of social mobility. For instance there are movements up the ladder from being goondas for local lenders to those with formal tags like 'Collection agents' in new financial settings. In many ways the birth of an indebted population has assured the persistence of a field of violence ever since the nineties with its own scales of growth and logic of growth. But speculations of the points of origin as well as the reasons like depravation notwithstanding, the quotation teams have hence attained a hyperreal life that transcends places as well as explanations.

The new criminal enters the everyday life of people replete with movies[294] and other forms of media. Thus unlike an early *goonda* like Keerikkadan Jose with a definite local identity and existence, the quotation teams of *Black* or *Chota Mumbai*[295] can appear anywhere and there could be a good and bad *goonda* in the whole spectrum (The good one very often is the hero himself, who eventually has certain protocols

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[294] It is also interesting that what goes o non screen as quotation activities is replicated in effect, off the screen in the activities of ever increasing film based groups (Macta, Fefka etc.) and fan associations (which were never popular in Kerala) in targeting any form of dissent.

[295] 2004 and 2007 Malayalam Movies

that give him an identity that is qualitatively distinct in the everyday of quotation work). Acts of violence often get dissolved in the little self sustaining stories in each movie. So do the presentations and serializations of violence in newspapers. In their transformation from agents of public sphere (Jeffrey 2000) newspapers have severed all ties with the meddlesome crowd and become stages for everyday spectacles. The privatized television channels have made their impact with live shows every single minute, later to be recycled in the next day's newspapers. Each and every act of violence is a story in itself which gets enacted with all the statistical and graphical ingredients as well as the social and spatial referencing. Aspects of violence become part of a holistic portrayal of urban life.

Crime and violence based programmes are galore in the popular television channels:

They have time slots for such programmes and much of the contemporary forms of violence assume full life in such programmes. The FIR in Asianet, according to the producers focus on some of the infamous crime stories and intends to alert viewers to the possible threats within Kerala. They say that even if some of the events might shock the viewers it is the duty to bring things to people's attention and keep them alert. Kuttapatram in Manorama News focuses on topics which have been kept hidden, but later will become the main event. Their intention is to change the authority and the society by bringing these up from the dark into discussion. The events are also increasingly getting cross referenced between movies and 'news channels'. There is inevitably one scene per movie in which the news media appear as the authentic voice of the present. Through their much advertised mannerisms and styles of presentation these are shown as the voices of truth and responsibility. Representations of the city often set the backdrop of many such movies [Smart City(2006), Minnaminnikoottam(2008), Ritu(2009), Traffic(2011), Robin Hood(2009), The Metro(2011) etc. being some of them] and Kochi gets presented as the 'city to be' as conveyed by real estate advertisements, urban projects, and the the consumer market. There are essential ingredients in every plot, like images of a balanced consumerist everyday, the presentations of new living (like in high rises) as mundane, emphasis on corporate jobs that youngsters get into and the positive

imageries used to convey these (the name tags and badges they wear, the brands they use, the clean corporate office spaces they work in as against the mess of state offices), presentation of law and politics as total wreck, evaluations of old against new (e.g. one movie for instance has scenes from the start to end poking fun at an earlier model of automobile used at a less urban place. It also alerts one to the dangers of not having a cell phone), and the naturalisation of new landmarks that envisage urban spatiality (the malls, the cafes, and corporate spaces becoming ready references often against the depiction of most violent occurrences in older versions of markets, junctions, streets, or workspaces).

Everyday life is presented as replete with potential violence that is out of control. People internalize the idea and often seek forms of security which they want to keep separate from the state. Ideas to form residents' associations, for instance, come up because many think that some of the early forms of social capital have been lost and there is a need to revive some of them. But instead of reviving historically rooted networks that have got broken when people incorporate themselves in fragmenting orders of neoliberal forms of production[296], micro groups are generated in places and with exclusive interests. Even while assuming local names or names from 'archives' or traditional names (*Thiruvonam, Kadambra* etc…in the field), they operate in spite of the locality, they are alternative forums that seek to address the ills of politics and the state. In effect they replicate the very forms of quotation teams.

The 'quotation teams', as mentioned before, have assumed a life of their own despite the genealogies. They can no more be located, and they no more pertain to the more familiar 'collection agents' which has some importance in tracing the connections to neoliberal reforms in banking. The teams are composed of young men with different backgrounds who assume a separate code of conduct within the team they belong to. They are well armed and are known to have differing sets of 'links' with agencies of

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[296] As explained in the earlier chapter

the state and judiciary. Their field of action resonate the flow of capital despite the boundaries of places.

One can even hear people quipping in the streets, "don't mess with me…or else I will quote you". 'Quotation teams', through such everyday wit and media portrayals have made violence as well the need for security normal or banal. On another level the news making incidents like the *Kanichikulangara* murders that followed frictions between two private financiers or the murder of the businessman, Paul Muthoot[297] (in 2009) generate narratives that are flexible, non locatable and thus capable of being used for and against any interest[298]. The media as well as the opposition political party in this case used the incident, to try and tarnish the image of some of the ruling party members.

Means of security are being devised in response to such social evils with the participation of groups like the residents' associations that are being encouraged by the state. Thus there is a policing scheme that operates with the support of residents' associations much like the neighbourhood watch in the 'ecologies of fear' (Davis 1999). Members of such associations are trained in counter attack methods. The patrol teams get cooperation from the police. A police official monitors the progress

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[297] Paul, a member of the family heading the Rs. 20, 0000-million Muthoot Group in Kerala, was stabbed to death while travelling in his car. One of the accused, Omprakash, was repeatedly portrayed in several news shows. Thus he was known for fashionable lifestyles and was into modeling business and like many contemporary youngsters, was trying to get into business school for an Master of Business Administration (MBA). His wedding was attended by many from the higher echelons of society. Paul, himself is said to have travelled with members of a quotation team whose identities and rationale were obscure and has been involved in certain criminal cases in Delhi. He, himself has been an obscure figure from the family in Kerala, until the murder.

[298] *Kanichukulangarayil CBI* is a 2008 Malayalam movie made on the former and a movie on the latter incident is being planned

of a patrol team. There are also schemes to coordinate registered private security operations. Such measures, many say, address the insufficiencies of the system to track and tackle the new forms of crime as well as criminals.

But Quotation teams, as will be subsequently argued, get constituted in a liminal social situation, which in fact reflects the general social scene or the predicament of the state. Though in their operations they seem to transcend the existing order, they are also products of a system that reinforces a new ordering more along corporate globalisation. In their working together with newly constituted life forms like residents' associations they reinforce societies of control and new forms of state in urban situations. They are neither *gemeinschaftist* in their operations, nor *gesselschaftist*. On the contrary, they invoke a completely new set of norms and codes of conduct. They are not confined in space and time to where they operate, but get constituted in the hyperreal spaces generated by media and public spaces in their mutuality.

Box: 6

The General Context of Violence:

Contemporary forms of violence that seemingly emanate from nowhere and then vanish into thin space at first seem to pose a major challenge to the established order, in that they are highly mobile and evanescent. But the fact is that the 'established order' as represented by the state in its everyday processes itself is fast transforming and assuming the structures of corporate capital as exemplified in urban contexts. The new forms of violence then become overt and vocal representations of the changing state and its increasing implications in finance capital. The perpetrators of violence belong to a hyperreal order that provides experiences that are more 'intense and involving' that the banal everyday

(Baudrillard 1988, America, Verso). The experiences are more real than real and in the context of an overwhelming array of media and information, it becomes difficult to chart any causal attribute.

As Baudrillard says "an over-proximity of all things, a foul promiscuity of all things which beleaguer and penetrate... meeting with no resistance, and no halo...the schizophrenic is open to everything and lives in the most extreme confusion" (1988: 27). Our subject of violence is perpetually insecure, though still not entirely disinct as to 'about what'. She/he is ever more in close proximity to instantaneous images and information, in an 'overexposed and transparent world'. Without causality and material rootedness violence becomes bereft of the social situations, or class character that helped one to situate the phenomenon in the cultural or social milieu.

Violence is constituted and constitutive of the overlap of spatiality and the heterotropy of life in contemporary urbanising situations (heterotropy in the sense of being a space which is hyperreal and presents contemporary relationships as if in a mirror which is both real and unreal). Seeds of violence are sowed in the context of new demands and expectations also in the context of the break in historical contracts with the state regarding welfare and the more loud portrayals of breakdowns like that of 'corruption'. In such situations microcosms of individuated-welfare take root.

There have been several types of internal adaptations that facilitate the flexible accumulation of capital that contemporary urban forms represent. This for the field is best exemplified in the near to total domination of real estate based activities. The

poorer sections of the population did not become entrepreneurial by choice. On the contrary, they were compelled to turn entrepreneurial, adopting more informal kinds of labour like brokerage or predominantly activities related to the real estate in order to survive.

The increasing competition for survival and changing evaluations of symbolic capital coupled with the fact that places increasingly have become spaces vulnerable to occupations and invasions, create serious socio-spatial stresses. Symbolic capital attests the taste and distinction of the owner according to Bourdieu. But through the realms of taste and culture symbolic capital conceals the real basis of economic distinctions. The functioning of the contemporary order that perpetuates and proliferates the need for such symbolic distinctions remains hidden. The need for symbolic capital as such is not what is new or contemporary when one thinks about forms of violence. Rather, the incorporation of sections of population who, hitherto could 'afford' to get excluded, into forms of necessities and priorities symbolised by urban forms since the nineties make these contemporary.

The processes of community construction that were once available have ceased to function leaving people with no space or alternatives to dominant forms of symbolic capital. The increasing class polarisations that accompany flexible forms of accumulation in a neoliberal order (that takes resources, land, or job security away from people in exchange of a wide range of consumables and credit) create unprecedented social tensions. The breakdown of localised mutual aid mechanism,

political forums, resource bases, and reciprocal relations in the locality based on power; threaten many with social anomie and devaluation. How the new order becomes a matter of design and manufacture societies of aspirations and biopolitical situations, as Veena Das (2004/ 1995) talks about depends on the particular and historical relationships with state. The urban situations serve the neo liberal global system by being spaces of exception, key sites for testing techniques for managing populations (and hence biopolitical).

The standard supply of personnel involved in violent activities like those of quotation gangs come in such a social situation and through schooling in perpetration of violent acts against the least known as part of the politically powerful/influential. All this happens more when politics itself has severed links with the public sphere and become free floating orders. Couple this with ever intensifying perception of poverty and fears of being left out, and one gets ready recruits as collection agents, quotation members etc. for whom rightness and wrong-ness become individuated evaluations with no social bearing in the context of state becoming a facilitator and the public sphere becoming defunct as an encompassing order.

Social Backgrounds that are either severely deprived or those with underclassed backdrops in an Agriculture based system.

Those who deem the state as it exists to be a wreak and believes that there is a need to create individuated moralities that are infinitely flexible and remunerative in touch times.

Those who, while being part of youth organisations, have engaged themselves in forms of violence against political rivals, but who, bareft of the political rationale, continue to resort to forms of violence as well as the familiar networks for other types of enforcements.

Those from regions that have been witness to gross transformations like the islands around Kochi where a bazaar based economy or another one based on fishing has ceased and where there has been a backdrop of such activities that transcended state regulations, like port or sea based smuggling and bootlegging.

All of these factors converge, albeit with their different social and spatial backdrops as well as rationales, in a situation in which unprecedented promises of wealth inhere as with real estate, new generation banking, or corporate free rein in a facilitative state.

Very often growing under the benevolent gaze and tacit/ implicit support from law enforcers in exchange of the enviable shares in burgeoning remunerations. Also in a context when law itself become impositions more on behalf of corporate/private interests and goes against basic rights like right to assemble or protest.

Growing further through decentralised, fluid, but hierarchical order, like, for instance; the development of a political thug bareft of such moorings into a collection agent for a local financier and then doing the same kind of job for an established corporate financial organ or getting implied in the several power brokerages connected to real estate operations that are on a steady rise (there are such allied operations like sand mining which can only operate with tacit approval and symbiotic relationships with state.

The hyperreal existense of violence, creates endless succession of images with differential moral equations (as life histories of quotation members, movies, advertisements etc.) as well as newer rationales for privatised security or greater role of neoliberal capital (for several 'vikasanams'); all of which weaves a mutually enforcing order with new forms of violence in the context of depleting welfarist expectations.

7.3 Parallel Processes: Decentralisation of 'Responsibilities'

The first national committee reports[299] towards decentralized governance were severely opposed by left formations in Kerala. According to the notes of dissent the provisions for centralised planning were to be done away with and the centre, individual states, and local bodies (Panchayats) should have equal powers in terms of planning. In fact these were decentralisation recommendations that empower local structures as against the structures that persisted with the productive system that catered to 'colonial requirements' in the independent nation state. But such recommendations have been sidelined ever since the suspension of the elected left formation. In 1967 there were further recommendations and pressures from the state in the form of a revised version. But before any law could be passed the then government had to leave office. The amendments to constitution that were behind *Panchayati raj* acts[300] were also opposed because of the persistence of a bureaucratic apparatus that sought to trickle down to the local bodies. Any further dissent[301] got subsumed in the fast neoliberalising order that made the federal system ever more centralised. The nation state, since the nineties, has been perfecting a radically new form that caters to neoliberal forms of production. The state is becoming ever more important and ever more absolute.

The neoliberal state is held captive (Monbiot 2000) by the corporate structures that have been empowered through the latter half of 1900s (TATAs, Birlas, Reliance as well as the persisting feudal orders) and parallel power structures of oligarchic proportions (Kapferer 2005) become significant in contemporary re-orderings. Take the case of the steady inflation that has wreaked havoc in everyday lives across

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[299] Panchayati Raj (1978) and the committee reports (Balbanthrai Metha and Ashok Metha committee reports-Most of the 132 recommendations were opposed)

[300] 64 and 65 during Rajiv Gandhi and 74 and 75 during Narasimha Rao

[301] in 1986 and 1996 when the left was in office

places. The decision to give private trade greater role in the markets for essentials as well as allowing futures trading in essential commodities has only worsened the situation, with the government unwilling to control speculation that favours the market (Chandrasekhar 2010). Further, there have been moves to favour Petroleum marketing giants like Reliance in India, with heavy cascading effects on populations. Hundred percent foreign direct investments get allowed in sectors like mining. The powerful apparatus of the state often features on behalf of corporate interests to suppress any form of dissent in contexts of massive evacuations and resource depletions (Ramakrishnan 2010/ Roy 1999). Things have reached even a point where a corporate friendly judgment absolved the multinational Union Carbide and its American chief[302] of all charges leveled against them after an accident at the plant claiming thousands of lives and continuing to pose health hazards to thousands around.

In the Indian context, oligarchic formations had embedded themselves in mass movements like the Independence struggles, which often provided them with a forum to oppose competing interests. In places where grass roots movements and radical reforms have not checked the 'Independence movement' (especially in the North), such formations have often inherited power in the shape of states or metropolitan business centers (like Bombay- where they have been central in crushing Trade unionism in the most violent ways). But continuing challenges from agrarian revolts and struggles for land reforms that took different identities in distinct social contexts as well as concerted challenges from leftist movements (Kerala/Bengal) pressed through compromises in the form of policies that have kept certain controls in the shape of state intervention. [In Gujarat, agrarian struggles were seldom led by the working class/ in Punjab community formations like Akali Dal became representative; there were community and caste formations in other states like Uttar

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[302] Bhopal: Trivializing the Tragedy. Anand Teltumbde. 24 June, 2010. Countercurrents.org/Justice denied. Ajoy Ashirwas Mahaprashasta and V.Venkatesan. Frontline. Volume 27 - Issue 13 :: Jun. 19-Jul. 02, 2010

Pradesh (UP)] The socialist planning post independence or later drives towards nationalization (70s) could be read as certain pronounced instances. As Geeta Kapur says (1998), a social democratic and communist alternative was inscribed within mainstream nationalism. It is true that these were never a halt to the corporate-oligarchic involvement in the running of states with political parallels like the enduring power and symbolic significance of the Gandhi family (Ali 1985) through the Congress. Since the nineties there has been a process whereby the state in India has become ever more captive to such oligarchic structures that make a re-emergence in the face of structural reforms favouring privatization and public disinvestment.

A centralising federal order enmeshed with financial and big business interests (Patnaik 2006) has taken effect. The People's Plan Campaign that took root in Kerala during the decades since the Panchayati Raj Acts, was the result of three-decade-long[303], continuous and widespread voluntary activity. This mainly involved the initiative to devolve 35% of the state development budget from centralised bureaucracy to local governments. But the decentralisation process became subject to prescriptions of agencies like the World Bank ever since the Modernising Government Programme (MGP) by the congress ministry took effect. The programme in essence made the post 1990s decentralisation complementary to the globalisation process.

Unlike the rest of the Indian states there has been an active momentum towards decentralised governance in Kerala since its formation, especially under the political initiatives of left governments. The devolution of plan processes and funds to the local bodies has been pronounced and the local governments in Kerala have to some extent attained the capacity for 'participatory development'. But how such state

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[303] Working Paper written in 1971 by Dr. K.N. Raj (titled "Planning from Below")/

 Local Democracy and Development: Peoples Campaign for Decentralised Planning in Kerala (Isaac/Franke 2002)

initiatives get re-articulated in the context of urban reconfigurations (which also envisage forms of decentralization albeit with a different --possibly corporate–trajectory) has to be understood. The official rhetoric,[304] that Kerala provides the right opportunity for such reforms, needs to be read alongside the predicament of a welfarist state in the neoliberal context. The present phase is less a continuation of trajectory and more a conversion of historically constituted human capital into a radically new paradigm. The situation possibly offers a unique biopolitical paradigm in which the state rearticulates forms of ordering on aspects of life.

The existing state institutions are getting increasingly accused of being too remote from the daily realities of people's lives and there are renewed moves towards decentralisation from the centre (Bardhan 1997). The Committee on Decentralisation of Powers recommends, "In order to strengthening Gram Sabhas it may be necessary to constitute support structures through community organizations like Neighbourhood Groups. Government should actively promote constitution of such group and this group should be given an autonomous area of functioning."[305] Social capital becomes something to be nurtured. It refers more to the skills and qualities that are to be developed in civic relationships, more along the lines in which Putnam defined this in an American context (1993), as dispute settlement mechanisms (Schafft and Brown 2000) or as routes to development (Galasso and Ravallion 2001). Systemic models of social capital are to be realised in places where existing historical networks that complemented individual state systems have got defunct in a neoliberal regime. In such a context, even when put forward as 'traditional solutions' to impending

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[304] "… it is clear that the classical principles of devolution of functionaries, powers and funds to Local Governments have been fully followed in Kerala- and ONLY IN KERALA. Thus the state has gone a long way in realizing the core objectives of JNNURM, that of transforming the 74th Amendment into a replicable and sustainable model- with critical lessons for all states and cities in decentralization reforms". (From a JNNURM document)

[305] C D P Final report Vol. I, 1997

problems, they become radically new ways to operationalise contemporary forms of order.

The social capital of the neighbourhood groups envisages a new phase. These are groups transcending class or politics. More than anything else these become forums for empowering people to participate in planning and governance. Those formations encouraged by the centre since the nineties have become complementary to forums like residents' associations. Especially when it comes to matters like urban development, the new normative groups find increased representation in the decision making process[306]. The institution of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) has been a major feature of urban reforms proposed. Hence the earlier formats must give way all across Kerala. The ULBs have to look for alternative sources of financing infrastructural needs. There is a reassertion of the language of decentralisation. ULBs have to resort to capital markets and mobilize funds through different kinds of bonds as well as methods like pooled Financing (Vaidya 2009). Flagship projects like Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), with which states like Kerala need to mediate for any form of working capital, encourage such tracks. Support will be based on the satisfaction of parameters set by rating agencies.[307] Rating agencies are co-births of the globalised movement of finance and credit. As Giselle Datz (2004:304) writes, a "serious implication of rating agencies' influence on international capital markets today is not only to be found in their influencing of

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[306] Government of Kerala Local Self Government Department Kerala Sustainable Urban Development Project

Final Report Vol II- City Report Trissur, May 2005

[307] CARE, FITCH, ICRA, CRISIL are some of them. Ahmedabad municipal council in Gujarat for instance was rated first by such agencies off late. This during a time when, Gujarat became a hot bed of communal violence as well as ethnic cleansing- Much of the official rhetoric praised this state for inviting investments- (see 'Social Scene in Gujarat'- Frontline)

private investors, but in their influencing of developing countries' governments, which tie policy making to the quasi veto power of ratings." The emerging effects of such agencies signify the participative functioning of transnational private agencies along with the state in designing forms of governance and marketisation (Sylla 2002/Sinclair 2005). Procedures of risk reduction and market facilitation like this often go along with new designs of private public partnership in surveillance and security of urban milieus elsewhere (Datz 2004/Tobar and Sanchez 2006). The latter aspect may be yet to take visible root in Kochi, at least to the extent in these other places (ibid.).

The urban local bodies in Kerala accessing JNNURM must complete a total of 22 reforms, some mandatory and some optional, during the seven year period (2005-2012). The mandatory and optional reforms of state and ULBs under JNNURM include decentralisation of urban governance and empowerment of local bodies (as agencies for the new mode of organization and development) and their incorporation into new urban agglomerations (whereby people from places with definite identities become components in a singular process), introduction of improved accounting and revenue systems, reform of rent control acts as well as services to the poor (in the form of rehabilitation of designated slum dwellers and making more land available for forms of investments). Impediments to investments like lack of exit opportunities for private investors, inadequate public private participation (PPP) in decision making processes and existence of clauses like land ceiling (introduced during the land reforms in Kerala) have to be done away with. Further there needs to be full responsiveness to market conditions.[308] In effect decentralisation in the context of contemporary urban reforms is also about creating alternative platforms that transcend pressures from the political public sphere, as well as transfer different forms of risks (like market induced ones) more to people in their new formations. The self help groups like the neighbourhood groups are imagined as collectives based on

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[308] jnnurm.nic.in/nurmudweb/MoA/Kochhi_MoA.pdf/ (Vaidya 2009)

social premises of moral responsibility. In the case of places that are incorporated in urban agglomerations at present the responsibility will be to carry out reforms.

The welfare system was espoused by people not in its absolute terms but as a possibility to attain equality in any social situation. In the post nineties situations much more has been added to these expectations, when the state could not even maintain the earlier paradigm. Nevertheless it often becomes necessary to keep the rhetoric on, as political power is supplementary to such assurances. So while left formations try to save public institutions and try to 'protect' the early welfare regime, coupling this with the rhetoric of reforms as the least evil, others bank exclusively on "master signifiers" within the language of reform and moral failures of the left. There is always a 'virtual hardcore' (Zizek 2010), whether that be 'maintenance of welfare' or '*vikasanam*' around which symbolizations fluctuate. But variations in degree become significant in a situation which is neither corporate nor welfare, but unique dénouements of ongoing engagement between people in places who confront unprecedented problems in new morphologies. The variations within the virtual hardcore, in fact is the reflection and result of the fact that the making of the state has never been a singular process and that the divergent trends within places have kept alive the energizing and enabling claims of political orders rooted in mutually encompassing ideas of welfare.

7.4 <u>Unique Denouements in a Liminal State:</u>

The state for Foucault (1976) was constituted in modernity through the inclusion of man's natural life into mechanisms and classifications of power and hence through biopower. As Das and Poole (2004) observe, "the ways 'managed' populations work with strategies of control to claim citizenship is deeply informed by specific experiences of the state". Populations may exist as entities to be administered in the state imaginary but the inhabitants are not inert objects and acquire life in different ways and in accordance with the specific experiences in the state. The state that was co-extensive with the public sphere as well as constituted itself on the margins of a

corporatizing federal order, never acquired the format of the Hobbesian order like in the northern parts of India. Or, in practice, it effectively created a buffer between such an order and the local situations. But in a neoliberal context the space of exemption gets lost and local lives get ever more incorporated in the wider project. This takes life less through exclusions (though there are overt, visible and violent processes like displacements) and more as inclusions in individuated orders. These orders gain their rationale out of impending problems/crisis/threats but offer no solution because it is part of the problem itself.

The state has been informed by a political public sphere replete with trade unions, co-operative societies, community formations, as well as cultural and political organisations. The state and the political processes have been imperative to the formation of social capital (Heller 2000) unlike other parts of India where the state co-existed with unchallenged feudal entities and corporate formations. Unlike much of the rest of India, the state has prevailed in almost all aspects of life in its welfarist role (not as classic welfare state with the public realm dissolved[309] but in its potential to offer equality, with a public sphere that is co-extensive with politics and state) and more as a mediatory apparatus between people and the powerful processes from the center. It has often been constituted along the margins of dominant processes like corporate industrialisation or privatization especially with the mediation of the left.

Elsewhere in India forms of 'inclusive exclusions' and absolute exclusions have been more standard as in the case of the slums in Bombay (Mehta 2004; Anand 2007; Patel/Thorner 1997) or remote villages in Orissa. Here people seldom come across 'a state'. This kind of exclusions becomes anti-systemic in many such places in contemporary global contexts when the state suddenly appears at the doors as an

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[309] (Arendt, *The Human Condition*)/ …and with a propensity to turn into a system of housekeeping at the expense of public participation (Habermas, 'The Political Public Sphere and the Transformation of the Liberal Constitutional State into a Social-Welfare State', in The Structural Transformation, pp. 222-235).

'intruder' (clearing of slums/building of mines). As Sudeep Chakravarthy puts it, "The point is if you don't govern an area, it is not yours"[310] and in such places people enter into antagonistic relationships with the state. Often they get violently suppressed[311]. Mass migrations since nineties from states like Bihar, Orissa, or Uttar Pradesh can only be understood as part of contemporary forms of intrusions into once marginal spaces.

The governmentality apparatus has never been absolute because the state constituted itself on the margins on the Indian state, in its mediatory role, until the neo liberal phase. This often got into an entrenched situation with alternating interventions from the left. In the nineties individual states had to re-position along the neoliberal trajectory with differences only in degrees. From an arbitrator the state in essence became a participator in the new process and started to initiate different forms of governance. The effects are unlike the more drastic and violent fall where state has been an alien presence all through (Roy 1999/ Chatterjee 2004/ Das 2005/ 2010 on Orissa/ On *Balasore* Missile project) and where whole new sets of life forms were produced along the 'margins' to contend with, who often challenged the state's jurisdiction(Das/Poole 2004).

In unique socio political contexts the residents' associations that resonate in the new forms of sociality/security put forward by the state, despite politics and class interests, become reservoirs of exclusionary tendencies in the face of threats like those from the quotation teams. Micro groups like the residents' associations cater to contemporary forms of individuations whereby "populations are made complicit in their own domination and engage themselves in making choices that they have little opportunity to avoid" (Kapferer 2005:17). Besides, in the urban contexts, becoming participants in the new processes and solutions to threats also becomes a way of

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[310] Sudeep Chakravarthy. Red Sun. New Delhi. Penguin 2009. P. 112

[311] Frontline 2010 Issues/Roy 2010: *Gandhi, but with guns.* http://www.guardian.co.uk

gaining legitimacy (Ranganathan 2009) in the city/future to be. The ideological incorporation of state as the public sphere has been near total. This gets re-configured in contexts when agents of the political public sphere are perceived to have failed in responding to imminent threats (social or ecological) and are assumed to be complicit in new forms of violence. People bereft of the mutually encompassing public sphere become incorporated, disconnected, and fragmented. While seemingly getting dissociated from the political channels that they have been used to, they concomitantly generate a distinct 'urban politics'.

This is despite the fact that violence appearing in the form of quotation teams precisely replicates the forms capital has assumed in the conducive regimes of urban reforms and encompassment of decentralised orders into regimes of responsibility constituted by groups like the residents' associations. The prevalence of un-locatable quotation teams as well as insecurities brought in by labour migrations is not because of failed states but because of the taking into effect of "new ordering practices" (ibid.) post neo liberal reforms (as intrusions of state in the North or facilitative urban regimes). But in contexts with no social enclaves along the lines of those in Africa or North India in recent history, exclusionary groups never become antagonistic forces against the state but replicate new state forms that are less encompassing and more 'self serving'. Cynical evaluations of politics and party rhetoric get facilitated by a hyperreal world in which issues are generated and get settled. There is a near total incorporation of people in the contemporary forms of ordering more in their espousal of drives towards a future as put forth by reforms. Such espousals take form through participation in processes like '*vikasanam*' that seldom have definite connotations and attain life as master signifiers against a 'past' that has to be made dysfunctional. The kind of mutuality with the hyperreal world of violence, invests ideas like *vikasanam* and alternative forums like residents' associations with a truth value. They appear as solution very often against the cartography of what is 'otherwise' viz. a dysfunctional state as it has been known. The kind of violence associated with the quotation teams co-emerges with a secure world, but conceals the fact that the latter

is no more secure and is representative of the contemporary socio-political ordering as put forth by corporate state in urban contexts.

Unlike elsewhere, micro groups do not always get sealed off from overtones from 'this past'. Many such groups often get blamed for having political overtones[312]. This is true not meely in the case of the residents' associations, but also with every other new group on the rise. Politics as it has been understood is often reverted and invested in, especially in the face of contingent situations where 'solutions' seldom materialise. The activity of a quotation team is flexible and is despite the local networks. The piling waste and pollution from waste dumps that do not follow rural urban binaries are byproducts of consumerist practices that get seldom addressed by self serving micro groups. Micro groups can at best become forums of exclusionary interests, participants to reforms or forums that generate ever more reasons from burgeoning 'lacks of solutions'. People revert to old ways because the idea of welfare has always been vested within the continuous realm of the public sphere where politics has always been the personalised channel of mediation between the state and the people.

This happens here because the state maintains a profile of 'least worst evil' while getting incorporated in the neoliberal processes. In providing support for public infrastructure[313] when pressures for privatization keep mounting, in protecting its cooperatives (Patnaik 2009), or in providing welfare to the migrant labourers (either

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[312] The Ernakulam District Residents' Associations Apex Council (EDRAAC) recently got split over such allegations. The new organisation called Residents' Apex Council of Ernakulam (RACE) blamed the former for "systematic effort during the past two-and-a-half years to politicise the residents' association movement". They added that "we stand for an apolitical body to represent the residents' associations," (from the news report in *The Hindu*).

[313] The Hindu 2008-2009, Deshabhimani

in rhetoric or practice) the state maintains a space of exemption. In contingent situations, the state still remains the entity to be engaged with. The idea is that the state remains an apparatus that could be related to even when it assumes the format of a biopolitical state that engages with new regimes of living like residents' associations. This happens in the liminal phase people are in, between the politicised space of exemption and the incorporated space of exception. In the liminal phase people add logic to the state by asking to get included and thereby get excluded from an early personalised welfarist regime with the encompassing logic of the public sphere. In doing so they, in effect, relegate politics also to a liminal zone which means that it could be blamed for whatever goes wrong and could be approached when the new groups seldom work in complementary systems of individuation of responsibilities and flexibility in the embedded problems.

The liminal state in essence is an interstructural situation (Turner 1967). What involves often is a transition between states, a transition from a relatively fixed or stable condition. In the present case it is the condition of groups that constitute themselves in the transition of welfarist state into neoliberal forms. What involves is a change from an encompassing order as part of the political public sphere into fragmented entities, but not necessarily involving total severance of all ties. In contingent situations like that of imminent violence or impending disorders (social or ecological) the new groups in formation seldom offer solutions but rather regenerate such situations in hyperreal spaces and engage in cynical overtures. This is because the new forms themselves are often part of the same social situation that produces such violence and disorders. When flexible quotation teams get produced on the one hand, mutually exclusive formations like residents' associations are generated on the other. There have always been certain 'customary norms' (ibid.) of being in any such contingent situation. Resort to political and state processes as it has been familiar is one of them. The familiar modes get embedded in contemporary forms and mediums and very often invite criticisms for the same (as with frequent allegations of certain associations as being influenced by politics). Regimes of biopower often take form in liminal situations and in the hyperreal realms of impending problems. When these get

out of hand the receding structure is blamed (as well as the agents like politics…Like in 'The problem is too much politics…that is why nothing happens'). Contemporary state forms gain logic of sustenance from such self serving regimes. But as mentioned before, the familiar also becomes the final resort of hope. In the 'betwixt and between' (ibid.) state there is a substitution of mutually encompassing agencies by prevalence of flexibility on the one hand and exclusive spaces of responsibilities on the other.

States have been known to respond to the kind of disorders and criminalisation in the urban context, with complicated zoning techniques and novel modes of policing (Caldiera 2000/Cameron and Doling 1994/Le Gales and Parkinson 1993) that work with forms of organisations like the residents' groups. The building of trust between residents' groups and police that goes by the name of community policing is also seen in the present context as in the case of Police—Residents' Associations Initiative in District Ernakulam (PRIDE). In the case of Ernakulam the social impact of elusive forms of violence associated with quotation teams, in addition to generating grievances against a state form that has been associated with the politicised public sphere, also contributes to the strengthening of new forms of organisation and control mechanisms. The forces of violence that reinforce new forms of capital, and seemingly transcend the state, in fact help to strengthen new forms of order that may be taking shape in the urban contexts.

Places where people confront 'urban reforms' at present, have been the focus of this study. Here incorporation of new normative forms of living like the residents' associations becomes total unless the normal run of affairs is not interrupted during contingent contexts. Even if interrupted, the fault will never be on the system *per se* as the system in this case is buffered out by a state order that is neither here nor there. On the contrary the fault is always with what went wrong 'within' the system (reforms are fine, but for the violence/ consumption is all well and good but for the pollution) and needs to be morally rectified by an order that has been familiar. Thus

they undergo forms of inclusive exclusion[314] and thereby add logic to the changing state. The logic never makes them antagonistic to the contemporary processes and as Zizek puts it "the predominant narrative" enables them "to continue to dream"[315]. Elsewhere people continue to mediate through all the familiar agencies of the public sphere in order to transact with the state. There the state remains co-terminus with the public sphere and the new social groups nurtured by the state (*ayal koottams* or *kudumbasree*) get incorporated in the larger political process. Allegations from

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[314] This is not to underplay differences within such places. For example the contemporary scene in Vypeen, within the same district, in certain respects is similar to the Brazilian case Caldiera (2000) talks about in which the inclusions in the state system towards the nineties entailed exclusions in forms like slum life. Vypeen has been among the few places in the state which has had successive waves of movements for incorporation, but has been systematically 'neglected' as marginal and remote until the neoliberal phase of development. But the present forms of inclusion do not necessarily entail reduction to slum life as in Brazil. In the case of Vypeen ever since the taking effect of urban processes around port based special economic zones there has been a scattering of people. The once active political public sphere gets fragmented and earlier networks get broken. Some, like families in fishing communities lose livelihood. Their resource bases are irreversibly altered. Parts of the entry points are cordoned off and their living spaces are flooded as part of ecological fallouts from heavy construction activities. Some get incorporated in the new processes: as employees, temporary labourers, or in informal mediatory roles (brokers, agents). Some sell off all they have and migrate to alien places where they start life as outsiders. Where forms of state exclusion have been greater people were left with lesser degrees of mobility than elsewhere. This gets compounded in places like the densely populated island of Vypeen where people were much more dependent of the resource bases that gets severely affected during the urban processes initiated there. But even then, instead of a consolidation against the 'intrusive processes' there are more demands for inclusion.

[315] 'Use Your Illusions'. London Review of Books. 14 November 2008

different political camps are only proofs for enduring dependencies on the medium of politics and especially that of the leftist type, in order to transact with the state[316].

When previous modes of relating and understanding phenomena get defunct, other techniques of living take root, as the urban situations suggest. As with the mutually reinforcing forms of residents' groups and new forms of threats, the articulations are yet to become formalised and are still circumspect. The new ways of understanding impending social problems and crisis have not yet taken on stable modalities as with the historic development of the political public sphere. In the absence of forums for mutual consensus formation, what follows are disparate pools of opinion formation with no common link. This is akin to mass individualisations (Virilio 2005). Virilio of course refers to a context in which he sees the nation states as withdrawing and getting replaced by metropolitan points, a revival of 'city state' like formations and the mediation of people in a process that parallels such fractalisation and fragmentation. In the contemporary global situation what becomes common across places, despite different reasons for urgencies for security, are the exigencies of the coming of a different order (gangs in Latin America, lack of security in USA, paramilitary in other places; all are instances of perceived chaos, that reinforce the urgencies). Urban resident groups refract precisely such tendencies and in the face of hyperreal violence there is a mass-ification but as individuals who are out of social loops that have been operational.

What we see as Collier and Lakoff observe (2008) is a profusion of plans, schemas, techniques, and organisational initiatives that respond to new threats. The threats as

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[316] The enduring space of conflict which is a feature of the liminal state in Kerala is best represented by the central characters in the movie *Loudspeaker*, in which a character from a rural place gets into an interaction with one who lives in a residential complex. What ensues are conflicts in practices between a man of the state and one who rather keeps off the everyday of state with micro logical ethics.

well as the countermeasures reinforce each other in a hyperreal realm that has become the new reality. The suggestion is of a new reality that is taking effect and the need for solution which cannot come from the channels that have been there. There is a need for radical alternatives. But the irony is that the alternatives are themselves shaped by the same structural transformations that transform modes of violence as well as their representation. The urban spaces become an exceptional terrain geared towards the future that is replete with the inarticulateness and invisibility of contemporary life.

Conclusion

No sooner than the state enters into a deal with project promoters after interim stalemates, or no sooner than a governmental change favouring the corporates takes place, the media begins announcing 'construction wagons'[317] back into Kakkanad. There are immediate inevitables for the places around to be 'charmed in', 'seamed into', 'embraced', or 'swept along' by the being called 'city' that has been invested with anthropomorphic qualities. Everything from earlier institutions, industries, historical locations, and natural phenomena, become the pastiche anatomy of this growing/replicable/ implantable urban entity.

In the post liberalization context, the nation state in India entered its post developmental phase as well. This does not mean that the state has become less important. But it means that the state has become important in a different way. This essentially means that the market and state have become dependent in different terms. The developmental state with policies predominantly oriented towards regulation of national economies has in effect started to transform into an apparatus for managing global economy in cooperation with other states and corporations spread across transnationally.

Policies have reframed the state in terms of neo liberal capital. According to one official directive the "successful promotion of private participation in infrastructure requires a well designed framework of policies in which investors have the assurance that standards of services will be maintained and concession will be transparently awarded [directing] the Central government to work towards evolving such a framework, which could be adopted by the states"[318]. Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) not only give more and more representation to private interests in policy making, but become statutory impositions on individual states if they are not to be

[317] Property Plus, The Hindu, April 30 2011.

[318] The National Development Council (NDC), May 20, 2006

penalized in the new order of governance. The eleventh five year plan made a major transition along the lines. Out of the central and state sector investments, a major part has to go into creation of an environment that is attractive to investors. There is a return of comprador orders like the ones that sustained the 'colonial system'. The agencies are less evident and have attained flexible access across states. The corporates, who have been sustained post-independence, have become independent of some of the erstwhile controls. They have even begun to modulate state processes along the lines of oligarchic corporate-state formations.

Corporate operation in the state at present has specificities like the control they exercise through agents within the state structures as discussed in the case of Dubai based corporate interventions. But whether the state is entrenched in the process, and if so, the ways in which this is happening needs to be understood. The transatlantic single market controlled and run by corporate chief executives that Monbiot writes about does have parallels in the control that corporate bodies in Dubai have gained and built upon through the expatriate population. But the contemporary manifestations/transformations of the state cannot be understood only by placing the state in a generalized corporate present or in a post economic liberalization paradigm of transforming state hegemonies with centralizing and fragmenting social tendencies.

States of exception have begun to set the dominant paradigm in the neo liberal Indian situation and the state has responded to the new market order as well as to basic political distinctions within, through a strategy of 'graduated sovereignty', whereby different segments of populations get subjected to different forms of governmentality/exclusions. Anthropology becomes important in illuminating the ways the contemporary forms of order get translated into specific cultural logics. In the present case the historical channels whereby social orders got constituted become determinative. Attributing modes of power and domination to preset paradigms or points of origin like 'colonial-post colonial' or 'West', misses out on the dynamics of social and material transformation as configured in particular social geographic

locations. The post independent state has not been a mimesis of a Western standard. The 'alternate' (not in the problematic usage as a binary to something 'general' and 'true') often gets presented as community narratives that have challenged and posed problems to modern national projects in India.

Much of such work gets based on the assumption that modernity, rationality, or capitalism, have certain universal forms which trace a western episteme against which only 'alternate' solidarities (based on tribe, caste, clans etc.) could get placed. It is also part of a more profound issue that needs a reoriented interpretation of history that does not reduce the concrete processes that inform modernity, rationality, or capitalism to a 'compact' and preconceived West. Arif Dirlik (1994) rightly observes that the narrative of capitalism is no longer the narrative of European history and that non European societies have their claims. An analysis in this vein risks reduction to preset paradigms that invest too much into 'the West' and 'the Rest' type of dichotomies. Significantly, they also risk missing out the enabling/facilitative conditions for 'colonial' orders[319]. The state models too are not inert and carry diffusions from elsewhere. They have been products of continuing negotiations with impositions of power, and at present, transact with a distinct phase.

Other approaches, as indicated, often take the contemporary problems altogether outside the paradigm of state and often take an essentially top down approach. It cannot be assumed that structures mediated by states have become defunct in the contemporary mobilities of capital. They fail to link any observation with how concrete situations that articulate contemporary state processes, as well as capital, generate new social forms and permanent states of exception that draw their logic from distinct orders of living. Neoliberalism has developed into an extremely malleable technology that instead of limiting scope of governance becomes instituted

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[319] Bayly, C.A. 1983. Rulers Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770-1870. Oxford India Paperbacks: New Delhi.

practices in urban situations and creates exceptions to business as usual by characteristic embeddings.

Tensions and contradictions under different guises are inherent to urban processes whereby people are subject to rapid social and economic transformations as is the case of Kakkanad. This is because urbanisation as it happens is most representative of an absolutist ordering of state processes as well as their networking across the world. In such a situation pre-existing relationships and embedded social capital became ever more pertinent for new networks to inform globalizing spaces in distinct local settings.

Historically people have been subjects of different modes of ordering throughout the west coast: pre-state constellations, colonially mediated state orders, modern developmental state and the neoliberal state. The heterarchic urban constellations that networked urban nodes to mercantile systems and overland routes gave way to bureaucratised princely states during colonial period. Existing linkages and socio-spatial constitution of people in places fed a lot into newer power assemblages and got transformed. Nodes like Fort Kochi gained prominence during the period as entrepots for colonial transactions. The bureaucratic consolidation does not appear much before the twentieth century and coincides more with the engagements with the British towards the 1900s. None of the preceding urban forms in Kerala entail massive migration to select regions or aggrandisement of metropolitan centers. Instead there have always been evenly spaced small towns. But the current patterns of urbanisation offer immense flexibility and the possibility for a 'city' to appear anywhere at any moment, as demonstrated by 'smart cities'. From the anthropological point of view this is about reconfiguration of life as well as geographies.

A form neither rural nor urban is in the making. There is intensified interaction between every point of any rural-urban continuum[320] by the gearing of all apparatuses towards a system of accumulation that is hierarchical in its neoliberal manifestation. This ensures the incorporation of people in places as flexible life forms with designated roles in the production of a new ordering. Many of them live in spectacular times of financial scandals with mind boggling proportions,[321] billionaires with ever more control over public resources,[322] and juridification of religion.[323] In such situations pursuits for elusive wealth, or expectations and hopes of big money become sane reactions to an insane existence.[324] In these techniques, with their characteristic interweaving of 'what has been' into 'what is to be', evasive logics for the present take effect. The tendencies leap out of bounds when there is no mediating effect of state, to ward off magical effects and disparities. There is presently unprecedented pressure to conform to an emergent global capitalist order. This is starkest in zones of neoliberal urbanisation where people are fast short circuited to novel circuits of capital and visible signs of wealth and well being; that take root as the institution of the virtual as well as the exceptional.

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[320] Gregory Guldin, *What's a Peasant to Do? Village Becoming Town in Southern China*, Boulder, 2001.

[321] '"Corruption" The curse on Indian Growth' by Nilendu Mukherjee (Countercurrents)

[322] 'Kolla Sarkkar Othaashayode' (In Malayalam), (D, Sreejith, June 4 2011 Dillipost.in)- (Reproduced from April 2010 series in Mathrubhoomi)

[323] 'Ayodhya verdict: Indian holy site 'to be divided'' (30 September 2010, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-11441890)/'Ayodhya verdict yet another blow to secularism: Sahmat' (October 3 2010, The Hindu)

[324] Laing, R.D. 1960. The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

The mutually reinforcing forms of violence and ways of living rooted in security and surveillance is about crucial transformations in sovereignty following the broader neoliberal orderings. Violence has often acquired transcending properties in the face of conformist pressures apropos Clastres (2010) -- but not so in the present case. Here there is no society against state, only instances of violent acts that assert and concretise demands for organising and ordering life. Complex organisational modes and institutional embeddedness may be gathered in the case of gangs who call themselves 'companies' in Bombay[325]. The structures on display or the narratives that get woven out are more hyperreal. In places where the public sphere has ceased to function as a crucial mediating force between people and the state, the urban space starts organising lives along the lines of corporate orderings that pitch ways of living against a violent outside that in turn demands remedial strategies. This gives rise to micro groups of control and issue based networks that in effect reinforce corporate urban vision.

The concern has been also about spaces of exception/exclusion that have been carved away in the contemporary urban discourse. Such spaces gain their sustaining logic in demands for incorporation in new discourses of development. Such incorporations though, disrupt rooted associations in places and realign people to a global capital mediated by flexible urban orders. The contemporary techniques of governing life, politics of subjections or subject making are neither mere responses to processes emanating elsewhere like the northern neoliberal order entailing in responses in south nor limited to any singular typology of a neoliberal form. But they do go along with serious accumulations of capital through dispossession (much like neoliberal processes elsewhere). What become more significant are specific situations where processes may be observed to transact through assemblages that cannot be reduced to

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[325] Mehta, Suketu. 2004. Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found. Vintage. Within the structure of such gangs there is minute specialization of labour. There is a whole network of feeders that grow alongside the activities of gangs: in charge of weapons supply, food, court deals, prisons, festivities etc.

any singular global form. Rather, these are the often expressed techniques of life that stand in a dependent as well as contingent relationship to larger issues/problematisations/disruptions, and are effervescent and offer matrices from which contemporary orders emerge.

There has been a tendency in anthropology to oppose globalisation and state forms, not concentrating enough on the new state formations and emergent global orders. This is a requirement in order to understand new forms of control that operate through contemporary reconfigurations of social life in places where a political public sphere has been a mediating factor in everyday life. There are distinct patterns in which control/ ordering takes effect in social contracts characteristic to the place. Contemporary urban denouements as with renewals as well as designation of economic zones become spaces of exception for corporate profit making through incorporation. Here the aforesaid modes of control take shape through new ways of being in places and new ways of transactions with the way things have been.

The work comes out of the immediate situations of rapid scale urban processes, decentralizations, public-private partnerships, questions over designation of special economic zones, and creation of new urban neighbourhoods. It draws on the regional socio-political peculiarities in order to make the contemporary versions of urban processes legible. While it is inevitable that state processes everywhere maintain certain parallels, the distinctions are what determine how imagined communities take shape. Thus here the distinct trajectory of class movements and reformist tendencies need to be focused. The implication of such a distinction in the generation of a political public sphere has shaped the way the state has been imagined. Coupled with the historical particularities with respect to urban processes like the absence of metropolis or relatively decentralised and heterarchic structuration, people in places have maintained distinctions as well as expectations through political deliberations.

As gathered from distinct field situations or roles assumed in urban contexts, there is a display of severance of social tendencies from continuities and certitudes. At

present, through characteristic modes of incorporations and supportive logics, they carve out regimes of living that have implications for a changing order of the state in Kerala. Urban renewals and developmental zones display best the new incursions in ordering that resonate global corporate demands. The relatively egalitarian social structure and welfarist expectations bring in characteristic demands upon an overstrained state in direct proportion to unprecedented forms of disparities created as necessary needs for capital in the context of the liquidation of existing ones. The existing repositories of capital are often used and expended in the consolidation of contemporary order. The lacks and exclusions manifest as newer demands on the state, both for maintenance of a welfarist order as well as espousal of a global urban discourse.

To move away from the formal frames like the state into the everyday realities, entails the attempt to understand the way things actually get done. This involves the way people navigate the new realms set into motion with the discourse of urban renewals, *vikasanam*, or new living. People imbibe such discourses and transact with the contemporary, even in situations that involve forms of exclusion like loss of the current means or place of living, in terms of distinct demands for inclusion. Certain patterns emerge in the demands for inclusion operating across groups. These patterns are marked by contradictory elements.   There is the desire for exclusive living away from "the mess out there," concern for right compensation, anxiety for inclusion in the process of *vikasanam*, finding space in the new regimes of living, strains in the existing formats of legality, etc.   The concept of the liminoid condition (Turner 1967), a theoretical extension of the state of liminality, conceptualises the contemporary urban predicament. Turner borrows the idea of limen from Van Gennep's tripartite processual structure of rites of passages . He uses it to enquire into what happens in the marginal state of rituals. The state that a person is in during the liminal condition is one which is neither here nor there, neither this nor that, they are in Turner's words "betwixt and between". This is a state of paradox in which the former status is deconstructed so that they may emerge in a new status and with new logic for states of being. The types of exclusion and the characteristic ways of

demanding incorporation and getting incorporated often devolve in liminoid forms of the present.

The emergent forms of sovereignty or forms of ordering enter into discussion with the domains of current global economy in the configurations of empire[326] which require us to accept that there is an inverse relationship between the degree of globalisation and the importance of the nation state. But what becomes evident from the everyday affairs of state, at least in the Indian context, is that it is becoming ever more important and entrenched in its interventionist role. The territorial state has become an inevitable component in the organisation of life against the flow of transnational capital. Unlike Hardt and Negri's suggestion, sovereign power is seldom transferred away from the state. The centre has arrogated unprecedented forms of power and in the process has transformed itself as ultimate manager. Thus while capital assumes global proportions, sovereignty enters into an absolute/authoritarian phase. In the new phase capital as embodied in new social formats, detaches itself from rules and regulations and becomes its own regulator. This creates novel (bio) political situations.

The nation state is ceasing to be the developmental apparatus. It has been constituted as a 'neutral' agency that assumes system management functions. The coercive power and purely economic logic of capital gets mediated by the state process. Depending on the historical constitution of state in parts of India, there are variations in the way hybrid forms get rooted and generate unprecedented facets of life. What holds true apropos Hardt and Negri, invoking Gilles Deleuze, is that the society of control that characterises the contemporary global order is organised in a much more distributed way through the brains and bodies of citizens. This is what allows for innovative combinations of regulatory regimes of living. This is how the logic of exception becomes total and encompassing.

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[326] Hardt, M., and A. Negri, 2000, Empire, Cambridge,Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Hegemony according to Gramsci is the additional power that dominant groups enjoy because of the capacity vested with them to remain in the leadership role. This capacity is because of the widely held perception that the action emanating from such a dominant structure is in the general interests. Power in the system becomes an exercise of rule by consent, precisely because of perceived social contracts and credibility. Whenever such credibility dissolves and contracts get broken (or even when they have never existed) hegemony transforms to direct domination (where hegemony has never existed, domination anyway remains the norm). The continuing social investments in the state and its welfarist assurances are a function of the hegemony generated out of social contracts mediated by reforms and leftist redistributions. The same cannot be the case with post developmental scenes in some of the more northern Indian states mentioned before where global capital gets rooted very often through overt violence representative of outright domination. Urban scenes at present can also be argued out as scenes where the hegemonic state becomes optimal through characteristic orders of regulating life and demands for inclusion.

Sovereignty has become a mix of disciplinary, regulatory, and pastoral technologies according to the 'populations' in question. In the broader Indian context a "graduated" form of sovereignty is put into a practice that re-orders the political space in such a way that corporations get direct control over the political conditions of citizens, and disciplinary mechanisms get invoked in the erstwhile excluded zones that now confront an absolute state. Where an egalitarian welfarist regime, legitimated through a politicised public sphere has been the norm, forms of self-managements that seek incorporation become the contemporary biopolitical rule. Some of the contemporary forms of social life in effect become what Spivak (2000) calls secessionist cultures that sever links with existing societies and often constitute themselves as alien formations. But as per Spivak, to neglect the special relationship to the existing state processes is to ignore the grounded dynamic that incorporates such flexible and exclusive groups in the generative order.

In places that have been transformed into spaces of futuristic growth, people transact within a discourse of desire and hope, and are subjects less of long lasting mutual encompassments and more of disconnected, competing and interchangeable tendencies of life. Urban processes offer the best tropes for understanding such processes, as there could always be comparative paradigms through history, each case reflecting the respective assemblage. The contemporary typology inaugurates a break with some of the continuities that resulted from a resource bound placedness with which larger processes had to reciprocate. But in its globalised present placedness often entails a discourse of flexible spatiality based on the virtual and the exceptional that has rendered the idea of city as an endlessly replicable and transposable phenomenon.

Places convey the social meanings as well as the existential significance in relation to the material/ non material worlds and are the repositories of accumulated associations. The sense of bounded-ness, belonging, or situatedness/placedness are immediate associations. Space on the other hand, and with respect to place, becomes the abstract and contrasting coordinate through which people move freely and with which a sense of the new or future is often associated. The contemporary urban milieu immediately conveys a replacement or overlay of space. These are the necessary consequences of the several disembeddings like the severance of long standing networks, or the removal of all the erstwhile resource-bound local associations with places.

Accumulated capital gets disarticulated from the earlier domains and becomes rearticulated in the social order in the making. It cannot be said that there is a total annihilation of places in the process; Kakkanad, Pallikkara, or Kizhakkambalam, continue into the present but without the placedness that once marked them out. The familial networks, political engagements, or the mediation of local churches, have consequences only when they arbitrate the disembeddings and rearticulation of people as bodies in the urban spatial order. Consequently there is a heightened sense of mobility and control with no mooring to any mutual and long term social

investments. This leaves many with no project other than the one that entails individualised instruments for production of personal identities through commodity consumption or the formation of temporary networks based on specific issues. The urban spatial ordering rationalises the emergent global paradigm informed by heterogeneous networks, fluid spatial coordinates, and a form of state which may be betwixt and between.

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