

In Focus

Materialities of Governance: Sovereignties in the Making

Mathew A Varghese, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla

Muslim League in the Electoral Politics of Kerala

And the Changing Trends

Murfad TP, CPS, JNU

1.

MATERIALITIES OF GOVERNANCE

*Mathew A Varghese*¹

Introduction

The chapter is a theoretical enquiry on the contemporary materialisation of new state spaces, where there are visible transformations in the social contracts made with populations. These spaces often appear in contexts of intense, but short term planning and urgent interventions in geographies of places, with futuristic frames of ‘good governance’. Thus, there will be spatio-temporal enquiries into, what actually happens to state, what are the specificities of exceptional procedures, the idea of urgency, virtuality, future and good governance. The enquiry, of course has the broader backdrop of modern post-colonial developmentalist frames that underwent shifts in the contracts with populations.

Spaces of State can refer to any realm, where contractual relationship with the state manifests. It could be anything from welfare interventions, urban plans, midday meals in public schools or the different levels of public policy frameworks that has implications for legislations. The newness indicated is about the contemporary points of reference. In the broader context of the post nineties neoliberal reforms mediated by the state to the specific and more immediate moves like the abolition of planning commission, there is surely a shift in the developmental and sovereign effects. The short term plans, urgencies, and futuristic references gain traction in this context as well as in the way contracts with people takes effect in specific materialisations and indeed gets often visualised as ‘emergences’.

A dialectical engagement with situations as paradigmatic ensemble, intends to throw perspectives on how policies and procedures of the state gain life. The dialectics between the phenomenological/experiential levels in its everyday impacts/internalisations and structural imaginations become important. Policies and plans in their abstract states that they often work as rituals of truth and school people as subjects

¹ Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla Email: matzwordz@gmail.com

or prevalent order. Foucaults (2006: 131-144) idea of governmentality becomes significant in points of transition like that from more government to less government and more governance in contemporary India.

In the 1980s 'governance' started to be used in the context of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), of the World Bank. This also involves logic of order that invest all responsibility to efficient management of state in favour of capitalist markets. Any shortcoming in efficiency is equivalent to crisis. The collectivistic resonance of post-colonial development increasingly became a governance issue that completely withdraws from redistributive functions. Indices of goodness become abstract ideas like that of GDP figures or ahistorical notions of corruption. In their post 2000 definitions, corruption divests itself of all systemic faults and reduces the idea to individual instances.

Urbanization in its contemporary manifestations in Kerala, is mediated by neo liberal forms of globalization. A leading motif 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 globalizations 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 characterizes the phenomenon.

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 is meant by exception at different points. Historically, what is indicated, 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). In its contemporary deployment exception has to undergo a theoretical re-elaboration. Giorgio 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 management 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 (Foucault 1991.).

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 (Eapen 1994). Historically too, the share of non-agriculture has been much higher in Kerala. Nearly a century back, this is almost one third of the male workforce vis-a-vis one fourth for the whole nation. 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 figure². This corporate economic growth under this regime of exceptions is currently presented as proof of general welfare. The tendency has even exaggerated during the bout of recession of 2008, during which the state actually bailed out many private ventures, while the rhetoric of private efficiency ironically reached a high pitch.

The 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 Commissioner³, 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,'

² Nearly 16 lakh crore (lakh is 100000 and crore in 10 million)

³ Development Commissioner is the nodal officer for Special Economic Zones and help in resolution of problem, if any, faced by the units or developer. The commissioner heads each zone and is the head of the Unit Approval Committee.

contemporary forms of urbanisation seem to be structured by the norms of such exceptions.

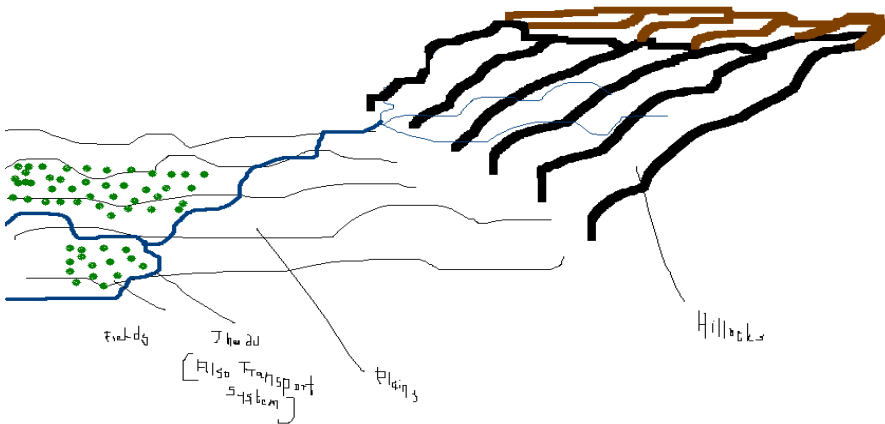
The contemporary 'Smart City guidelines', envisaged by the central government (2015) as well as comprehensive and total urban plans like AMRUT makes governance ever more comprehensive. Channels of capital emerge through State Annual Action Plans. With unprecedented centralization of power, comprehensive conditionalities evolve. Smart Cities Mission and AMRUT were approved for 500 cities. This is with outlays of Rs. 480 billion (~7.1 billion \$) and Rs. 500 billion (~7.4 billion \$), respectively. Individual federated entities (state governments) carry unprecedented responsibilities. The delegation of control and responsibilities, ironically through channels of decentralization, brings subjects closer to taking responsibilities for what happens. Good governance seeks more power through provisions like conditionalities (for funding, in order to be selected as Smart Cities, of freehold rights, of single windows, of fast-track clearances, or exceptions). The logic is that, they generate growth, employment and GDP what are all 'good', the obverse being stagnation, economic activity being the prime feature of goodness when it comes to governance post 2000 (Kuldova and Varghese 2017).

The urban reform provisions (e.g. JNNURM / AMRUT- 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 nonintervention 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 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.

Exceptional Spaces for Virtual Production

The transformation of individual places in contemporary times unravel and elaborate 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 (central Kerala) that are public/state owned, unionized, 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.



[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 migrant⁴. Labour accidents that are quite 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. Kakkanad region in Ernakulam district, 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 place⁵.

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.

⁴ Increasingly from North Indian states like Orissa, Bihar, West Bengal or arguably migrants from Bangladesh

⁵ 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 race⁶. 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 belabored and sophisticated process as in China where such a zone can come only as a one-nation-two-systems 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 liberalization only made things perfect doing away with

⁶ Lecture at Union Christian College in the town of Aluva, Feb 18 2010

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 even a special cell of Customs to serve the specific needs of the Kochi SEZ), lend positive and futuristic orientation. Unlike the EPZs that specialized 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 processing⁷, the rest can be non processing township like spaces. The 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

⁷For more clauses and provisions refer to www.csez.com or http://www.sezindiainvest.com/Areas_specification_for_SEZ.htm

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 pressurized 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 amendments⁸. The Panchayati Raj institutions that are responsible for decentralised power arrangements in India or the Decentralised Initiatives in Kerala⁹ 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'¹⁰. The discourse of such zones of exception is juxtaposed against earlier models of bureaucratized development, and with urgency in the race for the future.

In its evolution into a zone of exception, Kakkannad 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 of an old bazaar depends a lot on local

⁸ 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.

⁹ Initiated by the Left Governments.

¹⁰ Word used by Development Commissioner in the talk referred to in footnote.

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 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.

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 centered 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. Giorgio 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, 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)¹¹. 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 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 governance. 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 institutions like clubs, libraries, or political formations through the interactions of natives with those who migrated as workers in the early

¹¹ 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.

industrial spaces,¹² etc. demonstrate a mode of spatio temporal mediation that had been less disruptive. The modern linear everyday à la Lefebvre, that entails capitalist 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 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 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 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

¹²A 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.

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.

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 Deleuze (1992), 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.

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.

State in effect has become more significant as an enforcer of protocols and codes which gets surveilled and ensured on behalf of private capital. A flexible sounding futuristic discourse as well as promises of security, when internalised by subjects, enters into a matrix of expectations about the state. These virtual expectations are teleological in rationale and materialise as real impacts. Rhetorics on corruption, in its individuated and system-conservative versions (a system only has faults within – so corporate states are fine, visible bribes are an issue), and the follow up procedures like the recent demonetization drives, even with adverse effects, reinforces and expands the provisions of the neoliberal state. The violence, performative or expressive features of economic and political processes are that which often catches attention. But neoliberalism is not about the events like violence or expressive phenomenon like corruption. It happens on

the 'normal' days of free movement of capital and the modulation of people to suit the process of state mediated financial globalisation. It happens in the transfers of debts to populations on large scales, reduction of taxes for the rich and the bail-outs of corporates. It happens apropos Foucault, in the political consideration of the economy as an instrument of government and with everyday effects on how population and space are variously constituted as political problems. So the point is not elimination of corruption, for if corruption has to be eliminated, one needs to start working on the system that takes from the most and provides for the select in the forms of exemptions, stock market investments, privatisations and bail-outs. Rather state interventions, even with no effect for welfare, expand the sovereign presence albeit in a new version. Through a reduction of systemic issues into tangible and reductive formats, the state proceeds with cosmetic procedures like currency elimination without announcements and undeclared financial emergencies. Even while having extensive impacts on the everyday life, the procedures institute an anti-political machinery (Fergusson, 2010), that envisions populations as subjects of good governance and surveillance.

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