

The spatial articulation of neoliberal urbanization in Kerala, India

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Abstract

In Kerala, the rate of urbanization is far above the growth rate in the threshold population. Neoliberal urbanization as a “spatial fix” to the internal crisis of capitalism created a false consciousness among investors (individual capitalists) that investing in the built environment is the most profitable and safest. Studies at a micro spatial scale, such as an urban area, reveal that fixing of internal crisis (over-accumulation of surplus capital) of capital in the form of spatial expansion of urban centres through absorption of surplus capital only offers a temporary solution to the problem. The unprofitability, closure of numerous retail stores and high unoccupancy of built structures in urban centres of Kerala is a testimonial to crises that arose due to unregulated urban spatial expansion. However, unregulated spatial expansion of small urban areas far above the threshold population driven by the false consciousness of profit may ultimately result in declining of urban centres. Therefore, a critical engagement of the drivers of drastic spatial manifestation of surplus capital in the form of urban expansion in Kerala is crucial. The purpose of the proposed study is not to understand the geographical reorientation of space by neoliberal urbanization but to understand the neoliberal urban process in Kerala from a geographical perspective. It helps to understand the spatial articulation of neoliberal urbanisation and the political economy playing behind the spatial articulation and the fissures, flaws, and success of the neoliberal urban landscapes. Such a perspective may help in contributing to the production of more just and sustainable urban built environments.

Keywords : Urbanization, Urban bubble, Neoliberalism, Spatial fix