

Spatialization of Calculability, Financialization of Space: A Study of the Kolkata Port

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1. Introduction:

Located on the left bank of the river Hooghly at Latitude of 22°32'53" North and Longitude of 88°18'5" East, the Kolkata Dock System is one of the oldest dock systems in India. It is commonly described as the 'gateway to Eastern India for the rest of the world.'¹ Its vast hinterland includes West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Assam, the North Eastern States and the two landlocked neighbouring countries, namely Nepal and Bhutan. Currently it has two approaches from the Bay of Bengal: (1) the Eastern Channel (Latitude 21°54.6' North and Longitude 88°11'30 East) and (2) the Western Channel (Latitude 21°05'00.2" North and Longitude 87°50'24.8" East). Navigation to and from the port, at this moment, is only being done through the Eastern Channel, which is one of the longest navigational channels in the world. The Pilotage distance to Kolkata is 223 km, of which 148 km is river pilotage and 75 km is sea pilotage.² There are several navigation aids provided by the Kolkata Port Trust (KPT) – the port management authority in Kolkata – for safe passage of the vessels: two lighthouses on the Sagar Island and Dariapur on the right bank of Hooghly; five unmanned light vessels on the sea; automatic tide gauges maintained at Garden Reach, Diamond Harbour and Haldia for round-the-clock recording of tidal data; manual tide gauges maintained at Akra, Moynapur, Hooghly Point, Balari, Gangra and Sagar; 500 river marks, 90 lighted buoys, and 42 unit buoys; wireless VHF network for communication between approaching vessels and in-shore and off-shore KPT establishments and vessels; the electronic position fixing system 'Syledis;' and the satellite-based Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS).

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¹<http://www.kolkataporttrust.gov.in/index1.php?layout=1&lang=1&level=2&sublinkid=658&lid=572>; accessed on 11 November 2015.

²Pilotage is the act of assisting the master of a ship in navigation when entering or leaving a port or in confined water.

As one can see, even a short description of this site evokes an entangled framework of infrastructural accumulation and logistical governance. In my paper, I seek to understand this framework from two specific yet interconnected perspectives: (1) spatialization of calculability and (2) financialization of space. To proceed with my analysis, I have chosen the Kolkata (erstwhile Calcutta) Port as a site where these two perspectives collide and communicate with each other and give birth to a particular form of logistical governance. Although it could be argued as a general case in almost all the ports in the world, I shall try to illustrate how the Kolkata Port interprets and dismantles some of the elements of logistical governance as evinced through this framework. This form of governance requires negotiations with and navigations through a network of institutional apparatuses which produce the material basis of calculations and speculations that envisage the connections between infrastructure and logistics. I shall try to show that logistical governance in the Kolkata Port rests on the particularities of correspondence between institutional apparatuses like the Kolkata Port Trust (the semi-autonomous management authority which runs the port) and specific regimes of calculability and speculations.

2. Setting the Framework:

Before getting into the details of the port as a site of logistical governance, let me explain what I mean by the two terms ‘spatialization of calculability’ and ‘financialization of space.’ I am borrowing the term ‘calculability’ partly from Timothy Mitchell who, taking a clue from Georg Simmel’s writings, points to the essential correlation between the conception of modern life as governed by endless calculations and a politics of knowledge production that has ‘space’ at the core of its realization.³ Mitchell, in his account of ‘a countrywide survey of the cultivation and ownership of land’⁴ in colonial Egypt, shows how a drive to map a definite spatial order at a national scale incorporated a range of techniques of measurement, representation and calculation which together insinuated a novel governmental insight: ‘Power over persons was to be reorganized as a power over space, and persons were merely the units arrayed and enumerated within that space.’⁵ ‘The new map,’ he further explains, ‘showed not only the size of a particular landholding, but also its relation

³Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 80-119.

⁴*Ibid*, 85-86. Mitchell mentions that it was the ‘first large statistical operation the British undertook in Egypt’ (*ibid*, 86). The survey took nine years to complete, starting in 1898 and ending in 1907.

⁵*Ibid*, 90.

to all the others. The simultaneous presentation of adjoining plots produced a new kind of knowledge, the knowledge of irregularity.⁶

The spatial order that came to be associated with this knowledge was ‘relational’ not only in the sense David Harvey uses the term when he describes ‘relational space’, which is space ‘regarded...as being contained *in* objects in the sense that an object can be said to exist only insofar as it contains and represents within itself relationships to other objects.’⁷ The issue at stake here is not as much of recognizing the relational ontology of space, but to produce these relationships through a complex of calculational and representational techniques. These techniques, as Mitchell suggests, work as parts of the governmental machine to spot various ‘irregularities’ – repairing of which, then, becomes the task of the government. In this scheme, the truth of the system lies in its ability to auto-correct itself – the accuracy with which it can mend the internal lacuna – much like the market which is always trusted to return to its point of equilibrium, if allowed autonomy. This auto-corrective mechanism of the market is the model after which liberal governmentality designs itself. The market, hence, is not an antagonist to the governmental state; it is rather its *raison d’être*, its Freudian double.

This conception of ‘calculability,’ as we have noticed, is essentially linked with space, since the relational investigation and repair of irregularities are possible only within strictly defined spatial coordinates. However, if we transport the concept to a neoliberal context, we may see a different picture. Irregularity, in this case, does not imply an entirely disadvantageous situation. More often than not, neoliberal capitalism operates by cultivating unevenness in terms of flexible labour laws, exceptional fiscal reliefs, extraordinary bailouts and other forms of governmental assistance.⁸ It seems that there has been a role-reversal where the faith in the auto-corrective market is replaced by confidence in the interventionist paradigm of governance. These interventions also require demarcation of spatial coordinates, ranging from the old but still persisting division between the North and the South to designation of ‘special’ economic and financial zones in the post-colonies.

⁶*Ibid*,89-90. The main concern with ‘irregularities’ was to do with differences in tax rates in plots of similar quality. With the new map, the colonial rulers found out which plots existed next to each other and were presumably of similar quality. The anomalies in the tax rates, then, became apparent. ‘In this way the map revealed facts that were previously invisible’ (*ibid*, 90).

⁷David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Athens and London: the University of Georgia Press, 2009), 13.Emphasis in the original.

⁸For a list of American financial institutions and corporations bailed out by the USA government during the ongoing financial crisis, see <https://projects.propublica.org/bailout/list>; accessed on December 30, 2015.

Capitalism in the twenty-first century is not only a story of accumulated wealth; increasingly it is becoming a saga of informalization of the economic sphere.

Given these changes in the last two decades, we need to extend the concept of ‘calculability’ as well. Instead of defining it as a mechanism of finding and repairing irregularities, we may think of it in terms of management of uncertainties. There are various forms of uncertainties, many of which result from the hegemony of speculative capital flows and circulation of immaterial goods. In the context of the present study, however, I am more interested in another type of uncertainty which is related to the politics of space itself. Space-making as a material practice involves two types of activities under neoliberalism: zoning and de-bordering. On one hand, we witness dismantling of borders and relaxation of boundaries to ensure free movement of resources; on the other hand, there are numerous attempts at concentration of these resources within zones which are de-regulated and informalized (but not ungoverned). As it seems, both modes of space-making are subject to uncertainties that are unavoidable, and at times, indispensable. But more importantly, the struggle for command over the spaces produced thereby is delimited by the fervour with which these uncertainties are governed.

Governing uncertainties has been one of the motivations of the liberal regime of calculability as well, but that too was driven by the wish to get rid of irregularities. Conversely, the neoliberal regime of calculability champions the existence of irregularities which are space-bound and instrumental to capital formation and accumulation. This axis of spatialization of calculability is incomplete without another phenomenon: financialization of space. The real-estate boom in the last two decades has turned land into a lucrative object of accumulation. Rapid urbanization in the erstwhile developing countries has made way for speculative investments in housing and infrastructure, leading to extension of the old cities and transformation of small towns into large urban centres. Moreover, urban policies in countries like India are made adaptable to gentrification and other zoning practices. Dispossessing millions of people in the name of development and recycling the emptied plots for commercial purposes have become a regular occurrence. The accounts of financialization of space become even more relevant in the context of calculability if we recount Simmel’s hypothesis that calculations proliferate with rise in urbanization.⁹

⁹ Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 80.

What is the connection between these two phenomena and the conception of the port as a site of logistical governance? Logistics, in this framework, can be defined as the process of bringing together the regimes of space-bound calculability and financialization. The logistical politics of space adheres to various geopolitical contentions appearing in different historical contexts. Historically, the will to govern the methods of calculation and financial impetuses leads to constitution of certain semi-autonomous agencies or institutional apparatuses. These agencies share some properties with the government insofar as to channelize or disperse the assets and resources including human capital. At the same time, they are limited by the political will of the government in terms of making autonomous choices regarding public policy. This produces a series of contradictions – especially in the context of the port or the railways as public sector enterprises like they are in India – which refuse to dissolve even when there is a specific logistical system at work. The issues of logistical governance, hence, have to take account of these contradictions immersed in the dynamic relationship between the state and the market.

3. Kolkata Port Trust as an Institutional Apparatus:

Kolkata Port Trust (KPT) is one such institutional apparatus which is in charge of management of the Kolkata Port since 1870. Founded by the colonial rulers of India, it was bestowed with the responsibility of expansion and management of the Calcutta Port at Kidderpore.¹⁰ At the turn of the nineteenth century, the port in Kolkata saw a spurt in its traffic and augmentation of facilities. The export of coal, for example, rose to 8,77,895 tons in 1898-99 from a mere 4,282 tons in 1893-94. Similarly, the export of food grains also shot up to over two hundred thousand tons in the same period from only four hundred tons five years before. In 1914, at the onset of the First World War, the Kidderpore dock had 17 general cargo berths and 10 coal berths, indicating coal as the primary object of cargo movement. Another important export item from Calcutta was tea, for which separate transit sheds and warehouses were installed on the side of the river.¹¹ On the other hand, the chief import item was kerosene oil in the second half of the nineteenth century. There was a

¹⁰ Currently, KPT handles both the Kolkata Dock System (KDS) in Kolkata and the Haldia Dock Complex (HDC) in Haldia – the second port in West Bengal and 116 km away from Kolkata on the west – which was initiated in 1977. The Calcutta Port Rules (1994) specifies that the ‘docks’ under KPT include ‘Kidderpore Docks, Netaji Subhash Dock, Garden Reach Jetties, [and] Haldia Oil Jetties’ (‘Calcutta Port Rules, 1994’, Ministry of Surface Transport [Port Wing], New Delhi, *The Gazette of India*, Chapter 1, Article 12, 1995).

¹¹Animesh Ray, *Maritime India: Ports and Ships* (Delhi: Pearl Publishers, 1993), 157-58.

period of slack in cargo traffic after the Second World War and it continued till 1951. Some recovery was made during the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) because of the government's decision to import iron, steel and project cargoes. The dock facilities also expanded with purchase and replacement of cargo handling equipments, cranes, railway tracks, diesel locomotives, etc.¹² Under the same plan, one hundred and thirteen gangs of secondary cargo and coal dock labourers, including fifteen hundred temporary workers, were made permanent employees of the Port.¹³

There were also special provisions for all the ports in the country in different Five Year Plans of the Indian Government. After the depreciation of the port facilities during the Second World War, the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) put emphasis on acquisition of 'new vessels like dredger, survey vessel, dock tug, anchor vessel, light vessel and launch.'¹⁴ The Second Plan, as we have noticed earlier, also continued with this scheme of reorganizing the facilities along with introducing formalization of port labour. The most important intervention in the Third Plan (1961-66) was initiating the project of another dock at Haldia to assuage the pressure on the Calcutta Port. Another important decision was taken during this time, which was to construct a barrage in the upstream of the river Hooghly under the name of the Farakka Project for increasing the headwater supply of the river to facilitate drafting of large vessels. This decision, as many of us know, would create a lot of controversy and geopolitical tension between India and Bangladesh. The later Plans had major provisions for construction of the Haldia dock and replacement of old technologies by new ones by developing container parks, installing computerized systems, modernization of railway tracks, etc.

If we have a closer look, we shall see that these provisions are results of endless calculations and speculations about the geopolitical exclusivity of the port. Because it is a riverine port, Kolkata has a narrow and tortuous approach encumbered with numerous sand bars across the river Ganges. Thus the port has the longest pilotage distance where the vessels have to shirk the sand bars and make intricate calculations about the height of tides for easy drafting. Any detailed study of the movements of the ships will reveal enactment of a complex interface between human skills and nonhuman predicaments. What is crucial here is to understand that these nonhuman elements are not some fixed components in a deterministic matrix of logistical governance. They also move, shift identities and participate in international conflicts like the one between India and Bangladesh over

¹²*Ibid*, 160.

¹³*Ibid*.

¹⁴*Ibid*, 161.

releasing of water from the river Padma through the Farakka Barrage to help the Kolkata-bound vessels draft comfortably.

The Kolkata Port Trust, which is under the directives of the Ministry of Shipping, Government of India, has two dock facilities under its control: the Kolkata Dock System (KDS) and the Haldia Dock Complex (HDC). Apart from the Board of Trustees, which is the apex decision-making body of the KPT, there are a number of Principal Officers headed by a chairperson from the Indian Administrative Service who are in charge of the everyday activities at the port. The KDS has its own personnel responsible for financial and accounting activities, vigilance, marine engineering, hydraulic engineering, mechanical engineering, traffic, law, estate and materials (assets) management, and medical responsibilities. Similarly, the HDC has its own set of personnel in charge of marine, finance, traffic and assets management.¹⁵ Both ports under the KPT have separate marine departments which are deployed to maintain the navigational channels through dredging and other measures. The traffic department handles all cargo operations including storage, loading and unloading. The mechanical engineering department looks after the maintenance of cargo-handling equipment, vessels owned by the ports, electrical system, lock gates and locomotives. The port in Kolkata has a special research-oriented department for studying the river behaviour headed by the Chief Hydraulic Engineer.¹⁶

Apart from the officials in charge of different departments, a number of employees work at the ports on permanent and casual basis. As on 31 March 2014, the total number of employees at both Kolkata and Haldia ports is 7008, of whom 836 are Class-I and Class-II officers, 3936 are non-cargo handling Class-III and Class-IV staff, and 2237 are cargo-handling offshore and onshore workers.¹⁷ All the dock workers at the Kolkata port are covered by the Dock Workers' (Safety, Health and Welfare) Act of 1986. The workers at the Workshops are covered by the Factories Act of 1948. The responsibility of ensuring safety at work, investigating accidents, and recommending remedies to health hazards is entrusted to a 'Safety Committee' for each port which has as its members the port officials and users, representatives of the labour unions, and Inspectorate, Dock Safety.¹⁸

¹⁵Kolkata Port Trust, *Administrative Report, 2013-14*.

¹⁶Animesh Ray, *Maritime India: Ports and Ships*, 214-15.

¹⁷Kolkata Port Trust, *Administrative Report, 2013-14*, 110.

¹⁸*Ibid*, 52.

Most of the calculations regarding piloting, drafting and dredging are done by the research staff under the Chief Hydraulic Engineer. The Port at Kolkata is unique in two ways: one, as mentioned before, it has the longest pilotage distance between the sea and the port; and two, this navigational channel is abundant with sand bars created by deposit of slits in different sections of the river Hooghly. The navigational channel begins at the Sandheads in the Bay of Bengal. The first anchorage point is located on the south-west side of the Sagar Island, some 87 km north of the Sandheads. Most vessels come to Kolkata straight from the Sagar Anchorage through the Rangafala channel, moving zigzag in order to avoid the bars with the rise of tide. Leaving from Kolkata towards the sea is even a more complex affair. Any ship with a deep draft has to halt quite a few times between the port and the Sandheads depending on the height and location of tides.

‘Tide plays the most crucial role in pilotage to the Port,’ a study on the Kolkata Port argues.¹⁹ A short description of the mechanisms required to calculate and predict the movement of tides is necessary to understand the nitty-gritty of logistical operations at the port:

The rise of tide in the river varies from 4.2 m during neap tide to 6.5 m during spring tide. The bars have to be kept under constant watch to monitor the depth of water over them every day. At different crucial areas there are semaphores which show the depth over the bars at different times on rise and fall of the tide. Tidal semaphores (night) with acetylene flashing lights function at Mayapur, Hugli Point, Balari, Gangra and Sagar [all different sand bars] which indicate in white, red and green colours the rise of tide at night. Tidal semaphores (day) are maintained at Kidderpore, Rajabagan, Akra, Mayapur, Hugli Point, Balari, Gangra and Sagar. The tidal position is shown by metre arm, decimetre arm and centimetre arm and by positioning a black ball which is kept high at rising tide and lowered down at low water and falling tide.²⁰

Apart from these techniques, there are ‘lighthouses, light vessels, lighted and unlighted buoys, track marks and towers on the shores to guide the pilots.’²¹ However, the job of piloting does not only involve technological brilliance; it also needs a ‘human’ touch as recounted by a veteran pilot with enormous experience. Speaking of the changes brought about by new technologies, R. E. Mistry observes, ‘Piloting has become less lonesome now.’²² In the past, when there was no such facility as Very High Frequency (VHF) communication with the port authority or other ships, the pilot often

¹⁹ Animesh Ray, *Maritime India: Ports and Ships*, 184.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 184-85.

²¹ *Ibid*, 185.

²² R. E. Mistry, ‘Memories of Pilotage’, *Port of Calcutta: 125 Years*, ed. Satyesh C. Chakraborty (Kolkata: Calcutta Port Trust, 1995), 111,

had to take major decisions on the basis of his/her instincts and with assistance from absolutely random sources like the ‘lone bobbing flare of a *masbal* (flame-torch) of a fisherman winding his way home at night....’²³ With improvements in technology and hydraulic sciences, the unpredictability of the river has been brought under some control; but the ‘hazards’ of the Hooghly – a river famous for its ‘Bars, Bores and Bends’ – can only be mastered by individual skill and undiminished love for the water body: ‘Computers can work wonders but, for handling ships in the river Hughli [*sic*] we will still require quick judgement of a river pilot.’²⁴

This testimony is instructive in several ways. It tells us that the regime of calculability, which incorporates large scale technical operations including measurement and analysis of tidal data, software applications, durable capital like vessels and buoys, mechanical and civil engineering projects, etc., is founded on a complex relationship between human skill and nonhuman obstacles. This relationship has been at the crux of port management from the perspective of logistics, but more importantly, it contributes to a theory of logistics which is exclusive to the formation and governance of a postcolonial nation-state. In this situation, the accuracy of systemic calculations (and the associated discourses of efficiency) does not exhaust the truth potential of the system. It is interspersed with stories of individual and collective skill, nostalgic appraisal of certain institutions, and narratives of human virtue triumphing over the most obfuscating shortcomings.

This ‘surplus’ over accuracy is brilliantly summarized by the editor of a volume of essays commemorating the 125th year of the Calcutta Port Trust in 1995 as an effect of the confluence of social, natural and cultural functions.²⁵ While justifying the plan of the volume, he describes the port as ‘nothing more than an artifact’ which can be put to many uses depending on the ‘complex interplay of many social forces manifested as stakeholders.’²⁶ These stakeholders are not necessarily human; they could be social motivations like the demands of the hinterland, natural factors like the tidal flow, or cultural determinants like the organization of the Port Trust. The question of skill also makes an appearance in this description. ‘Anticipation of the motives of the society certainly calls for skill,’ the editor informs, ‘but one has to endeavour to acquire such a skill. If otherwise, the operators of this artifact (such as the Port) believes [*sic*] that it can handle the affairs as an

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*, 112.

²⁵Satyesh C. Chakraborty, ‘From the Editor’s Desk’, *Port of Calcutta: 125 Years*, ed. Satyesh C. Chakraborty (Kolkata: Calcutta Port Trust, 1995), NA.

²⁶*Ibid.*

autonomous entity, then it can only condemn itself by holding on to false promises.²⁷ This sums up the logistical framework within which the institutional apparatus of the Kolkata Port Trust has to operate: (1) it desires to *anticipate* the motives of the stakeholders; (2) it requires a set of *skills* to do so; (2) acquiring of that set of skills necessitates *interaction* with other stakeholders; (3) without this interaction, a false sense of *autonomy* will arise. Therefore, the regime of calculability (which is space-bound and directed to govern uncertainties) cannot be based on the auto-corrective mechanism of liberal governmentality emulating the model of market autonomy. On the other hand, the sociality which is presumed by the interaction between different stakeholders is grounded in a politics of space that involves a series of unrelenting calculations.

4. The Question of Land:

The politics of space in question, however, cannot evade another marker of our time – financialization of space in an urban context. Increasingly, the statements about inefficiency of the Kolkata Port are being linked with its locational disadvantage and the unutilized potential of the urban space under its control. It is often said that the Kolkata Port is dying because of difficulties in pilotage and drafting. Arvind Subramanian, the Chief Economic Advisor to the Indian Government, has recently advised the State Government of West Bengal to shut the ports in Kolkata and Haldia and use the vast tracts of land to ‘create a global knowledge hub, tying into the state’s well-known but underutilised human capital.’²⁸ However, having a look at its annual Administrative Report for the year 2013-14, one may sense an ongoing process of recuperation: currently the Kolkata Port is ranked third among all Indian major ports in terms of container traffic handling; it is ranked second in terms of growth in handling both iron ore and fertilizer and third in terms of handling the raw materials for fertilizer among all the ports in the country. Also, Kolkata is ranked first in terms of the number of vessels handled during the financial year of 2013-14 (17.1% of the total number of vessels handled in all Indian ports).²⁹ Numerous Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects are also underway including development of berth facilities at the Haldia dock, betterment of transloading facilities at the Sandheads and its vicinity for midstream handling of dry bulk cargo, and

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸http://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/last-port-of-call-115122900993_1.html; accessed on 5 January 2015.

²⁹Kolkata Port Trust, *Administrative Report, 2013-14*, 1.

development of a container terminal in Diamond Harbour. By the latest calculations, in the quarter of April-September, 2015, a massive 19.62 percent rise in cargo traffic is recorded from last year (April-September, 2014) under the Kolkata Port Trust.³⁰

One reason of this upsurge is the increasing geo-spatial importance of the Kolkata Port in South East Asia. With the realization of the New Silk Route in near future, the port in Kolkata becomes a strategic nodal point in an international trade network along with ports in the neighbouring countries like Myanmar and Bangladesh. The Government of India has also started to take notice of its geopolitical potential and, accordingly, has emphasized on its 'modernization' as a major port linking Chennai (India) with Yangon (Myanmar) and Chittagong (Bangladesh) in its latest scheme titled 'Sagarmala' to improve maritime trade.³¹ The modernization drive will focus on development of efficient coastal transport networks, promotion of port-based special economic zones (SEZ) and ancillary industries and enhancement of tourism and aestheticization opportunities. The Union Shipping Minister Nitin Gadkari has recently revealed that the total investment in this project will exceed Rs. 70000 crores.³²

One of the crucial features of the Sagarmala project is its insistence on utilizing the space in and around the docks by creating investment opportunities in land under the ownership of the port authorities like Kolkata Port Trust. KPT, being the largest owner of land in the city of Kolkata,³³ thus emerges as a hotbed of land speculation, rent extraction and financialization of space. Right now, the port authority owns different sizes of parcels of land scattered all over the city. Most of these plots are leased out for various residential and commercial purposes. It also extracts rent from the numerous warehouses it owns in Kolkata: the Strand warehouses, the Armenian Ghat Warehouse, the Canning Warehouse, the Clive Warehouse, etc. The rent income of the KPT is yet to become a major source of revenue for the port, but the annual Administrative Report (2013-14) shows a small increase in rent and premium on leased land (2.41 crores) from the previous year. However, as newspaper reports show, KPT has become quite alert to the potential of remodelling

³⁰<http://www.kolkataporttrust.gov.in/showfile.php?layout=2&lang=1&level=2&sublinkid=1821&lid=1538>; accessed on 11 November 2015.

³¹Ministry of Shipping, Government of India, 'Concept Note on Sagarmala Project: Working Paper' [<http://www.ipa.nic.in/Conceptnote.pdf>]; accessed on 11 November 2015].

³²Sagarmala project: Government to spend Rs 70,000 crore on 12 major ports, says Nitin Gadkari', *The Economic Times*, 6 October 2015 [<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/sagarmala-project-government-to-spend-rs-70000-crore-on-12-major-ports-says-nitin-gadkari/articleshow/49229434.cms>]; accessed on 11 November 2015].

³³Ray, *Maritime India: Ports and Ships*, 206.

these land parcels into more economically viable spaces of rent extraction and is trying to recalibrate the older rates and schedules. It is expecting to have a 14% increase in revenue from leasing its land in the fiscal year of 2015-16 and is considering many other options in land speculation and utilization.³⁴

The ministry of Shipping has been issuing Policy Guidelines for the use of land by the major Port Trusts since the passing of the Major Port Trusts Act, 1963. According to the Act, the lease of any immovable property including of land to private parties must not exceed thirty years without prior approval of the Central Government.³⁵ In 2012, a draft policy for land management by the major ports was proposed by the Ministry of Shipping. It was finalized in 2014 after inter-ministerial consultations and interventions by the Indian Ports Association.³⁶ The main objectives of this policy are to ensure optimization of use of land resources and transparency of land-related transactions.³⁷ However, it also states that separate policy needs to be formed for the land holdings in township areas in Kolkata and Mumbai, two of the most heavily populated urban centres in India.³⁸

Accordingly, a document regarding 'Land Use Plan/Zoning' of the estate of KPT in Kolkata (under the jurisdiction of the Kolkata Dock System) has been prepared and uploaded in the website of the Port Trust in January 2016 to invite comments and suggestions from the citizens of India.³⁹ In this scheme, the land parcels are distributed among 33 zones specifying the location, prevailing land use patterns, and recommended changes in such patterns. To give an example, Cossipore (Zone 1) which now has a concentration of residential buildings and business and educational establishments should in coming years must become a tourist hub with riverfront open spaces, plaza, recreational centres and mercantile storage options.⁴⁰ Most of these zones are recorded in the document to have similar concentration of residential and business housings. The proposed land use plans, of course, differ according to the locational specificities. Whereas Cossipore and the land adjacent to Circular Canal from Chitpur in North Kolkata to Tolly's Nullah in the South (Zone 2) are recommended for

³⁴http://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/kolkata-port-eyes-14-revenue-increase-in-land-leases-115121800605_1.html; accessed on 5 January 2015.

³⁵ <http://www.lawsonline.com/bareacts/major-port-trusts-act/Section34-major-port-trusts-act.html>

³⁶ Indian Ports Association is a 'full-fledged professional body [which] renders Consultancy services on variety of subjects related to Port Development, improvement of Operational Efficiency and various issues directly involved in the overall Port Management' (<http://ipa.nic.in/index1.cshtml?lsid=13>). It is currently headed by R. P. S. Kahlon who is also the Chairman of the Kolkata Port Trust.

³⁷ <http://www.kolkataporttrust.gov.in/showfile.php?layout=1&lang=1&level=1&sublinkid=1786&lid=1507>

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ <http://www.kolkataporttrust.gov.in/showfile.php?layout=2&lid=1572>

⁴⁰ Ibid.

landscaping, tourism activities, parks and other recreational facilities, the land close to the dock in Garden Reach (Zone 3) is suggested to be preserved for mercantile activities, extension of existing industrial establishments, storage, dry docking, boat and vessel repair, cargo handling, port related allied facilities, and jetties.⁴¹

The document also contains ‘Remarks’ from the issuing authority about each zone. Most of these remarks start with a prosaic declaration: ‘The proposed land use is largely in conformity with LUDCP [Land Use and Development Control Plan] of KMDA [Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority].’⁴² However, in few cases, we find certain interesting observations. In Chetla (Zone 22), the document has recorded existence of small workshops along with residential buildings. Noting that these workshops do not conform KMDA’s land use policy, the document opines, ‘Considering reality, the existing workshops may continue with permission of KMDA.’⁴³ Similarly, for the land between Nityadhan Mukherjee Road and Jagat Banerjee Ghat Road and the adjacent area (Zone 24), the recommendations consist of leases to assembly, storage, business and mercantile establishments, and not residential buildings, but ‘[b]ecause of high potential of the area for use as residential purpose in future, the Land Use may be reviewed after 10 years to explore whether the same may be confined to residential buildings only.’⁴⁴ The document and the remarks therein are important for two reasons: one, they indicate the Port Trust’s eagerness to financialize the land parcels under its control in accordance with the reforms suggested by the Central Government’s policy guidelines. But more crucially, it points to the negotiations that KPT has to undergo with other government agencies like KMDA in order to emerge as an important player in the urban land market. This precondition is already confirmed by the Government’s guideline which has recommended a separate policy for the urban land under KPT. The document prepared and circulated by KPT also elucidates the changing dynamics of stake-holding. Urban Development Authorities are now recognized as legitimate stakeholders in the operations of the Port Trust at the level of logistical governance. In the age of de-regulation, the ports are required to be financially self-sustaining. A major source of this self-sustenance has to be the hitherto less explored area of urban land speculation. But that too has to happen within a seemingly transparent field of public discourse. Not only the proposed land use plan by KPT has been uploaded for public review in its website, it

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

has also published a list of market rate of different zones of land along with ‘offered tender rates’ as required by the government’s policy guideline.⁴⁵ It is difficult to estimate how much of this desire to take cognizance of public scrutiny will translate into actual results, but it definitely highlights the exclusivity of logistical governance of the port as a public sector enterprise.

On the other hand, how this public is constituted and what qualifications it entails need to be explored carefully. The spatial overhaul prescribed in the document will dispossess many in the way forceful land-grabbing takes place in this country. Will they have any say in the formation of the land use policy? Most probably not. Meanwhile, the process of marking the territories and driving out the illegal squatters has started, as it is clearly evidenced in a recent squabble between KPT and a film production company which was running its business at an 80,400 square feet plot in the Hyde Road Extension even after the expiry of the lease and port authority’s denial of renewing it.⁴⁶

5. Conclusion:

The objective of the paper has been to underscore the linkages between calculations governed by spatial considerations and speculations related to space making exercises so that the material foundations of logistical governance come to the surface. What is even more interesting in this context is the fact that KPT is still a public sector enterprise with thousands of permanent staff and millions of dollars in built-in assets – a typical case in many Asian countries. The connections between various forms of calculation about the details of pilotage and drafting and modalities of financialization of space by reforms in rent structure and revaluation of land holdings cannot be addressed if we do not consider the governmental apparatuses that are in operation here. But another point needs to be considered in this context. The broader aspect of financialization encompasses a domain of calculability which tends to transcend the spatial coordinates in the first instance. In case of the port, for example, there are functions, motivations, aspirations and institutions which are not exclusively spatially organized; in fact, in tandem with the global financial order, another regime of calculability dominates the policy decisions and public discourses: the calculations that refer to revenue and expenditure of the port system, valuation and depreciation of human and non-human assets, risk assessment and insurance technologies, etc. Often these

⁴⁵ <http://www.kolkataporttrust.gov.in/showfile.php?layout=1&lid=1675>

⁴⁶ <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Venkatesh-Films-to-vacate-port-land-by-Nov-16-Calcutta-HC/articleshow/49398573.cms>; accessed on 11 November 2015.

calculations expose the contradictions between different elements in the government, between policy recommendations and ‘autonomous’ working of institutional apparatuses like the KPT. For example, when there is a strong emphasis by the policymakers on liquidation of port assets and investments in creating knowledge hubs, the port authority insists on carrying out its operations as before.

It may be argued that both positions presuppose the same calculational principles to different effects with a logical extension that the contradictions thereof are suitably appropriated in the structural paraphernalia of logistics. But is this enough to address and explain the recent spurt of interest in the Kolkata Port? Reportedly, the interest coincides with the growing recognition of its locational advantage in the proposed schemes under India’s Look East Policy whose main thrust has been to forge sustainable political and economic relationship with its neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia so that it can emerge as a worthy competitor of China as a regional power. However, inclusion of new stake holders, not only through networks with other government agencies like KMDA, but also with increasing participation of international funding agencies like the Asian Development Bank in ‘optimization’ of built-in assets for facilitating trade in South and Southeast Asia,⁴⁷ draws our attention to the interactive paradigm which contextualizes the Port’s strengths and weaknesses in a way that invokes various material and non-material elements like personal skill and historically accumulated infrastructure. As I have tried to argue in this paper, notwithstanding the incidental character of this paradigm, it also offers us a narrative of spatial governmentality where different state and non-state, human and non-human, stakeholders come together to form a logistical universe whose residents, implicated in the neoliberal regime of accumulation, continue to thrive along the zigzag estuaries, obstructive sand heads, and unpredictable tidal waves.

⁴⁷ Asian Development Bank (ADB), *Connecting South Asia and Southeast Asia* (2015); <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/159083/adbi-connecting-south-asia-southeast-asia.pdf>