Chapter 2
REGION AND SPACE

'Region' is a core perspective and methodology of geography, which has conventionally developed the study of the relationships between nature and society. The knowledge creation of geography has been exceptionally impacted by imperialism and capitalism. The mid 20th century marked major transitions in the understanding of space and regions. Critiques on conception of space only in a physical sense, and on neglect of the social in theorising the spatial were important turning points. New theorising brought the spatial and the social as simultaneous and interlinked processes. The turning point in geographic theorising was deeply influenced by Marxism, and evolved through insights from feminism and from processes of racial marginalisations. Social theories and spatial theories together wove a new theoretical fabric, but the separate enquiries on class, caste and patriarchy in social science that too often fail to build inter-linkages amongst them, has crept in to the new theories of space as well. The most important theoretical framework proposed in the thesis is that in the framework of 'region', ecological relations of production as well as class, caste and patriarchy can be examined together in their interrelations. The chapter examines theories, contextualises region formations in Kerala, and evolves a framework for the conception of Kuttanad as region.

Introduction
'Region' does not hold the same connotation in all contexts. Most popularly, it implies a cultural entity described by factors like language, for instance Bundelkhand, Baghelkhand. It could, in other cases, imply a social identity of tribes or of ethnicity, for instance, Gorkhaland, Gondwana, Bodoland. Region could mean an administrative demarcation, like a district or province. Geographers had conventionally given significance to region as a conceptual tool, most notably in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, of examining the interlinkages within a spatial entity. The ways in which regions were demarcated and the sort of interlinkages studied changed with the changes in perspectives on the discipline, which in turn were shaped by politics, production processes, science and technology, the relationships with nature and so on. The chapter briefly examines some of the transitions in geographic
knowledge, to be able to theoretically contextualise region for the present thesis. Contextualisation as a process, closely followed in the writing of the chapter, is important in several ways. Firstly the ways in which the paradigm shifts in geography have changed the perspective of region as a conceptual tool. Secondly, it is important to examine the importance of socio-political contexts in shaping knowledge creation on regions and space. Thirdly, in a study like Kuttanad taken up by the thesis, how do we contextualise a neocolonial, neoliberal and 'third world' situation like India and its multiple regional formations? Neoliberalism is theoretically examined in the contexts of agriculture and tourism. How do these processes impact labour, and women and dalits within it? Fourthly and lastly, the framework also calls for contextualisation of Kerala and its region formations within which Kuttanad is located. Through these exercises, the chapter seeks to cull out a theoretical framework for studying Kuttanad.

**Impacts of European Capitalism and Imperialism on Geographical Thought**

The profusion of studies on regions that emerged in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century was most notably those of the French school of geographers, led by Vidal de Blache. One of the interesting turns that they took was of focussing on human-nature relation to demarcate region as a spatial entity, and also to facilitate narrations of the region, for example, 'wheat-grape growing regions', instead of river valleys or administrative units. But the dynamics of urbanisation that was becoming dominant in Europe brought in major challenges to such rural-based studies because radical changes took place in spatial infrastructure and economic relations after the industrial revolution. Blache in the later part of his life suggested the need to study the interplay between a region and the city centre, which dominates it, rather than the interplay of natural and cultural elements (Hussain 2001: 206).

These were the times when capitalism was overhauling feudalism in Europe. Cities were becoming the new active centres of commerce, capital, production and power. As science and technology was growing as the fulcrum of industrial production, its rationalisations impacted all branches of knowledge. These were also impacted by the imperial thrusts that were well developed by European nations by setting up colonies in various parts of the world. The shape taken by geography was deeply impacted not only by navigations and map-making, but also by the perspectives, content and rationalisations that emerged from imperialism and European capitalism. Some important developments that took place in geography in the 20th century were: (1) the abandon of regions as a narrative conceptual tool (2) encyclopedic
Abandon of Narrative Traditions of Regions

Anuchin (1960), in his examination of the historical transitions in geographical knowledge, notes that even before Aristotle, geographic knowledge was bifurcated in to studying the earth as a whole and in studying individual countries, areas and localities. The latter, comprising the regional studies, was closely tied to history, and dealt with countries and peoples. He observes that it was in regional geography that geographical method probably finds its fullest expression.

In the 19th century, European Renaissance sought reason and evidence as significant paths to truth, a world view which impacted all disciplines and academics. In geography, the descriptive practice of ‘regions’ of the 19th and early 20th centuries was abandoned on two grounds: its non-quantifying methodology and its inability to be able to move from the particular to the general:

“This denial of the objective and actual existence of regions,” N. N. Baranskiy rightly notes, "deals a very grave blow to the entire regional concept and reduces it almost to naught." (Anuchin 1960: 141)

The developments emerging by mid-20th century were:

... a pragmatic bent in which quantitative methods were borrowed and applied under what was assumed to be a positivist philosophy rather than a rigorously derived logical positivism or a deductive-nomological mode of explanation. Between the late 1950s and late 1960s regional descriptive and spatial-theoretical geographers coexisted uneasily, with sharply demarcated groups of followers, the young (spatial-scientific) Turks and the old (regional-descriptive) guard (Peet 1998: 27)

Regions as Topographic Entities

Narrative traditions gave way to systematic and encyclopedic documentations of topographic regions. From Graves's (1996) review of 50 years of British geography text books, we can trace the growth of a commercial interest in documentation of colonial territories. This, as a strongly developed trend is also recorded by Edney (1997) and Raj (2006) in the contexts of mapping of colonial India. Meticulous and exhaustive examples of encyclopedic documents of the Indian subcontinent are seen in Pithawala (1942), Spate (1954) and Singh (1971), where region is demarcated on the basis of the physical-natural layout of the land. Human-nature relations, social patterns, or the productive forces/processes do not reflect in such framework. A regional classification of the Indian subcontinent was done by Baker and Stamp
in the 1920s and towards the end of the next decade Pithawala, K.S. Ahmad and O.H.K. Spate added to the effort (Singh 1971).

Singh (1971) took a conscious theoretical stand against the previous traditions of regional geography which according to him failed to set standard definition or objective criteria to delineate regions: ‘Systematic geography, in contrast, is worthy of objective analysis’ (1971: 26). All the same, it is important to note that both Singh (1971); and Spate and Learmonth (1967) voiced limitations of regions being understood through a single criteria. The authors demarcated a hierarchy of regions and each was described topographically and through human activities. But there was an underlying tension in the bringing together of the physical and the human, for instance Spate (1954) writes in the preface to the book ‘I am aware that a good deal of this book is ‘not geography’. One could of course defend this, without undue difficulty, by a discussion of the true content of geography, or could shelter behind the indubitable fact that in Asia, where so much of life is ruled by ancient concepts no human geography could be intelligible without much presentation of purely social factors’ (emphasis mine). So even as 'human' became part of the documentation, the 'social' was definitely out of the proposition.

**Geographic Determinism**

Geography's distancing from the social was also prominently exercised through the concept of 'geographic determinism'. The analysis of concrete social phenomena was attributed to the direct influence of the natural environment. This simplistic connection between the environment (topography, climate) and the human is called the 'geographical' or the 'environmental determinism'. The environment is understood to determine human actions and attitudes. The connections made between extreme cold climates and dull-headedness of people; between warm equatorial climates and laziness; and between the mid-latitudes and human intelligence were Euro-centric postulations. These, along with social Darwinism, helped in the rationalisations of imperialism\(^1\). Geographic determinism failed to see the basic characters of the differences between nature and society, and did not engage with the role played by the social and the human agencies.

\(^1\) ‘Hegel... affirmed that the old world, is a consummate dichotomy [sic] divided into three parts, of which one part, Africa, is a lode metal, a lunar element rigid from the intense heat, where man succumbs within himself: it is a mute spirit without consciousness. Another part, Asia, is a bacchanalian cometary frenzy, an environment violently born of itself, a formless work, without any hope of mastering its own environment. Finally, the third part, Europe, makes up the consciousness, the rational part of the earth, the equilibrium of its streams, valleys and mountains — and its center is Germany. The parts of the world are thus distributed not at random, not for the sake of convenience, but represent substantial differences' (Anuchin 1960: 93).
Anuchin (1960) notes that geographic determinism was a widespread concept in the transition from the ancient to the feudal society, but there was a growing trend to link the happenings in society to the divine and the godly powers. This trend denied the material essence of nature and of human society. The growing theological dogma was critiqued in the background of the French revolution, and attempts were made to link with geographic environment for the explanation of social phenomena. Anuchin notes, that even as we critique geographic determinism today, it had played a progressive role in the opposition to feudalism in the context of the French revolution.

**Emergence of Spatial Science**

As the spatial concern of geography moved from the narrative traditions focusing on rural areas to quantitative methods of studying urban centres, where industries were located, it assumed the label of spatial science. The costs of moving commodities, people or information between places, became a key variable, termed the “friction of distance”. Haggett and Chorley (1967), amongst others practised such spatial analysis in geography. In Haggett (1983) much importance is attached to the factor of distance as he emphasises “synthesis” in geography. The intensity of functions decreases as one moves away from the centre. This concept of “distance-decay” is largely an adaptation of Newton’s law of gravity. It utilised the logic of Newtonian Physics to study the urban spatial pattern of the centre and the periphery. In the Newtonian sense of space, co-ordinates and locations were of prime importance. These studies were concerned with spatial configurations that could be most beneficial for capital/commerce. Spatial science did not consider the spatial dynamics of social exclusion, of poverty and of slums in the city. Gore (1984) refers to this trend as “spatial separatism” implying the separation of space from social processes.

**Critiques of Human Geography in the 2nd Half of the 20th Century**

In the 2nd half of the 20th century, two major critiques emerged on the practices of human geography: (1) limiting space to the physical, and (2) the non-engagments with the social in interpreting geography. These critiques grew to build a ground for theorising 'spatial' and 'social' together as the crux of geography.

**Non-Engagement with the 'Social'**

Anuchin (1960) notes that many geographers arrived at the conclusion that the natural environment influences society, but social life itself is depicted as a harmonious, classless unity. The trend was of the passive adaptation of humans to nature and on nature's influence on humans. Two notable exceptions to such trends were Reclus (1830-1905) and Kropotkin
(1842- 1921). The former regarded humans as toilers who change the face of the earth\(^2\), this paved way to examine the process of labour. Like Anuchin (1980), Stoddart (1986) also, in the writing of the history of geography, brings forth the importance of Reclus, who knew that the important problems in the relationship of man and land were not to do with the enumeration of people or resources, but with the social structures by which the resources were utilised and distributed, not simply in space, but through society. Reclus emphasised what unites humans, and not what divides them. Similarly, Kropotkin emphasised the cooperation of species and not their competition. He opposed the concept of the 'survival of the fittest' used by social scientists in what is called social Darwinism. These geographers sought to work beyond the bounds of absurdity formed through nationalist and racial prejudice. Stoddart (1986) observes that our histories of geography relegate both men to footnotes\(^3\). Geography's emergent frameworks focussed on locations of resources and investments, and utilised social Darwinism to rationalise the expansion of European imperialism, stating it as part of a natural process of stronger forces acting upon the weaker\(^4\).

**Limiting 'Space' to a Physical Entity**

The perception of space is mostly like the metaphor of a theatre, in which different characteristics of culture, topography, social identity/ conflicts happen. This is the Kantian sense of space, that has been dominant in disciplines in general. Massey (1985) critiques this trend on the basis that spatial form is part of the social structure:

> Can we have social theories without spatial content or delimitation? Can we vividly conjure with processes, structures, generative mechanisms or what have you, as though they occur on the head of a pin? In what sense is spatial form constitutive of social relations? If the spatial is not autonomous from the social, can the social be theorised autonomously from its spatial form, requirements and implications? (Massey 1985: 12)

Scholars critiqued the overwhelming dominance of the temporal in social science and the underestimation or negligence of the spatial (Soja 1989). Geography was critiqued for looking at spatial outcomes only as an effect of spatial causes. Lefebvre (1991) notes that social science initially took 'relationship' as the object of study, but there were no inquiries on where a relationship resides when it is not actualised in a highly determined situation. How

\(^2\) Vidal de LaBlache (1848-1918), as well as German, Russian, and other anthropogeographers, regarded humans only as inhabitants of the earth.

\(^3\) 'Yet merely to read...these two gentle anarchists is to be vividly reminded not only of the aridity of much that passed for research as the new geography became established, but of the permanence of the human problem which Kropotkin and Reclus attacked so passionately and so optimistically a century ago' (Stoddart 1986: 141)

\(^4\) most notably Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904)
does it await its moment? In what state does it exist until an action of some kind makes it effective? (Lefebvre 1991: 401). Even as it is granted that a social relationship cannot exist without an underpinning, he points out that we still have to ask how the underpinning happens. He notes that the material substrata pointed out by historians and sociologists does not sufficiently supply an answer and that social relations have no real existence except in and through space. Their underpinning is spatial. In each particular case, the connection between the underpinning and the relations it supports calls for analysis.

Gregory (1978) observed that spatial structures and social structures need to be theorised with each other. Gregory (1978) argues for a “doubly human geography”:

In the sense that it recognises that its concepts are specifically human constructions, rooted in specific social formations and capable of – demanding of – continual examination and criticism; and human in the sense that it restores human beings to their own worlds and enables them to take part in the collective transformation of their own human geographies (Gregory 1978: 172).

Theorising Space and Society

One of the earliest theorising on space and society is that of Anuchin (1960) who examined relations between ecology and society through the production process. He notes that any concrete science deals not only with the origin and development of its object of study but also with its spatial situation. Hence there cannot be a science of location. A science with the purpose of studying only spatial forms and relations can exist solely in the realm of abstract thought (Anuchin 1960: 111-112). He emphasised the inter linkages of the social and the spatial that was made possible through the dialectical method put forward by Hegel, and this could challenge the positivist view of geography. The dialectical proposition on analysis and synthesis was developed by Marx and Engels, and was of much significance for geography.

Anuchin distinguishes between the 'landscape envelope' as a whole and that part of it in which direct interaction occurs between human society and the rest of nature, which is called the 'geographic environment'. The geographic environment implies the immediate environment of social development. It has been altered and supplemented by the results of human labour, their products and structures:

There is no gap between society and nature. The relationship between nature and society is a relationship within a whole, within a dialectical unity that does not exclude but, on the contrary, implies internal qualitative differences. In changing nature, man changes himself (Anuchin 1960:150)

He makes a distinction between social science that studies society by itself, as a whole, and geography that studies society's interactions with the rest of nature as internal laws of the
development of the geographic environment. He further clarifies that the geographic environment is a broader concept than that of productive forces. At the very basic level, the life of people is the interaction between society and nature. Even as this interaction is governed by social laws (production relations), its concreteness can be comprehended only through the laws of nature. Soil, climate and so forth have undergone social influence over a considerable portion of the earth's landscape envelope, and none of them, can be understood in terms of pure natural science, isolated from the social sciences, since it is impossible to understand an effect while ignoring the causes. Soil fertility is not only a natural-science concept but also a socio-economic one.

**Spatio-Social Impacts in Capitalism**

It was only in the 1970s that radical changes emerged in geography of the Anglo-American parts of the world, and this was deeply influenced by Marxism. Urban centres were analysed as spatial and social manifestations of capitalist development through 'Radical geography'. Feminism, and racial implications on space saw further reshaping of spatial understandings. New inquiries on urban processes like 'Social justice and the city' by Harvey (1973) and The urban question: a Marxist approach' by Castells (1979) took social and political questions as core concerns. Herod (2001: 3) points out how the Marxist geographers sought to relate the geography of poverty, urbanisation, industrial employment, and so forth more directly to the inner workings of capitalism. Space as an analytical category abandoned the Kantian sense of the container projected by the mind as an organisational framework for objects and events (Peet 1998: 299) and the Newtonian conception of absolute space, 'constituting a universal receptacle in which objects are located- space as a frame of reference or co-ordinate system' (Smith 1984 via Peet 1998).

**Mode of Production**

Each mode of production (MOP) has its own particular space. Lefebvre's (1991) thesis observes that the shift from one mode to another entails the creation of a new space, and this space is planned and organised. The importance and nuances of space can be understood only when we perceive production and the production process as two inseparable aspects. Lefebvre critiques the conventions of treating them as two separate ideas.

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5 Radical geography saw a prominent mouthpiece through the journal called 'Antipode', established by Richard Peet and others in 1969, that has been offering radical geographical analysis based on Marxist, feminist, anarchist, socialist, queer and green perspectives. Even as the 1970s saw a changed approach to the spatio-social interconnections in geography, it took another decade for the development of a more mature dialectical relationship between space and society, what was called as 'socio-spatial dialectic' by Edward Soja (1980).
According to him, the notion of 'abstract space' is specifically a capitalist outcome. This is the space of accumulation—of all wealth and resources, knowledge, technology, money, precious objects, and works of art and symbols. It is a space of power which conceals the real, political power of the state. This space is defined not only by the smashing of naturalness and the establishment of commercial centres, but also by a lack of transparency in the happenings of society. This space operates positively vis-a-vis technology and applied sciences, which are bound to power, but operates negatively vis-a-vis the historical spheres that actually underpin it. He describes 'absolute space' as the product of the concrete bonds such as soil, language and so forth. This space was initially made up of fragments of nature located at sites chosen for their intrinsic qualities like river or spring, but they ended up by being stripped of their natural characteristics and uniqueness. It survived as the bedrock of historical space and the basis of 'representational space', which implies the religious, magical, political and symbolic arena.

**Social Divisions of Labour and Labour Resistance**

Lefebvre (1991) identifies every mode of production as having not only its own space, but also spatial practices. Social space contains and assigns appropriate places to social relations of reproduction and of production. In pre-capitalist mode of production/ societies, these two levels together constituted social reproduction. But with the advent of capitalism and neocapitalism, three levels need to be taken in to count: biological reproduction (the family), reproduction of labour power (the working class); and reproduction of social relations of production. The social relations of production imply division of labour and its organisation in the form of hierarchical social functions.

Social relations of production give rise to nuanced patterns at regional levels. Massey (1995: 65-120) illustrates how capital has used geographic conditions of unorganised labour, desperate levels of unemployed labour and socially prevalent sexual bifurcation of labour, to maximise its profits. Where spatial situations have created resistance from labour, it has chalked out better situations of social justice. Thus space is not a passive recipient or a stage, but as an integral and active condition that impacts the socio-spatial processes.

Herod (2001) notes that until recently scholars had frequently turned only to the decision making processes of capitalists to understand the geography of capitalism. A host of social, economic, technological, and political developments, through globalisation, tear down the spatial relationships upon which the certainties of the past were based. Herod concludes that workers must build new organisations and reinvigorate old ones in ways appropriate for the new geographies of capitalism.
Region as Territorial Complex

The 'territorial complex' as the idea of region, put forward by Anuchin (1960: 205), seeks to give descriptions of the natural and social conditions that evolved over a certain period on a given territory:

Geographers study nature, population, and economy not by themselves (other sciences are concerned with this) but only as the major complexes of the geographic environment, as parts of a whole. Geography investigates the earth's landscape envelope in the process of its development, as expressed in specific territorial complexes. Thus, the task of the geographical sciences includes bringing out spatial differences that give rise to the formation of territorial complexes (Anuchin 1960: 199).

The principle of territoriality (location) expresses not the essence of the subject matter, but the specific methodological approach to its study. When it is taken as the subject matter, it leads to a certain 'fix' of the territorial, that Das (2002: 21) describes as: 'All studies start off with a pregiven region, without offering any analytical justification as to whether and how the same became the result of a process'. Anuchin (1960) notes that just as overestimation of natural conditions in society is problematic as in geographical determinism, its underestimation is also problematic. The unity of geography's subject matter, in combination with the geographical method, gives way to an autonomous integrated geographical research.

Regional approach is different, though intimately inter-related with the processes of political economy, with natural-physical demarcations and with economic regions. Regions are differentiated by special boundaries that cannot be understood through political economy alone, which therefore cannot be its theoretical basis. Under a uniform MOP the productive relationships studied by political economy do not have substantial territorial differences, since the common MOP evens them out to a very considerable degree. Moreover, Anuchin (1960) emphasises that it would be wrong to view local studies as some ancillary, subsidiary division of regional studies. Apart from the MOP, the development of territorial complex is shaped by:

(a) the geographic environment, which exerts an especially strong influence on the growth rate of productive forces and on their specific specialization

(b) specific characteristics in the process of historical development

(c) external factors, that is, influences exerted on a country's productive forces by other countries.

Anuchin (1960) further notes that the productive forces and production relations are inseparable and cannot exist without each other. This reciprocal tie between productive
forces and production relations is the key to why a common MOP is not able to eliminate differences in production relations completely, although it minimizes them. Therefore, even under an identical MOP, there are differences between countries and regions in production relations as well.

The 'layering' of Spatial Processes

Massey (1984) also articulated that the differences of places as being based on spatially differentiated patterns of production. This gives rise to geographical variations in social structures and class relations. But these formations are continuously restructured and therefore they bear the marks of economic structures that had evolved as products of long and varied histories. Massey's articulations gave way to the development of a number of studies on localities, especially in the context of industrial restructuring in the western world. Massey's emphasis was on regions being the outcomes of a succession of spatial processes, expressed through a metaphor of sedimentation or layering:

Different economic activities and forms of social organization have come and gone, established their dominance, lingered on, and later died away. Viewed more analytically, and concentrating for the moment on the economic, the structure of local economies can be seen as a product of the combination of “layers”, of the successive imposition over the years of new rounds of investment, new forms of activity...each related to a wider setting. Spatial structures of different kinds can be viewed historically (and even schematically) as emerging in a succession in which each is superimposed upon, and combined with, the effects of spatial structures which came before. (Massey 1984: 117-118)

Peet (2004: 180) notes that for Massey the local particularities become the central foci in geographical thinking, as a way of understanding how local areas fit in to wider schemes of capitalist production. The layers of history sedimented over time contain cultural, political and ideological strata, each with its own local specificity. Each layer brings new economic bases of social organisation, new structural capacities, and a new position in a broader geographical division of labour.

Lived Lives and Experiences

The importance of studying lived lives and experiences are emphasised by several geographers. Harvey (1995) notes that the novel form of writing allows the representations of daily lives, not handled easily by academic writings. Pred (1985) looks at reproduction of social and cultural forms, the formation of biographies and the transformation of nature, operating through underlying micro and macro power relations. Lefebvre (1991) examines the 'lived space' as the space directly lived through its associated images and symbols. Herod (2001) calls attention to the geographic contexts in which workers live their lives, their
geographic rootedness and spatial sensibilities, which can lead different groups of workers to adopt different strategies and to pursue different agendas at different times in different places.

There is always a tension between spatial specificity, and its relationship with the general and the abstract. This challenge is explored by Raymond Williams through his novels. Harvey (1995) in analysing the novels, notes that one of the reasons for choosing the novel form of writing, is the ability to emphasise the ways in which personal and particular choices made under given conditions are the very essence of historical-geographical change. Moreover the closure that we often feel compelled to make in research, can more easily remain perpetually open for reflection in the novel form. Harvey notes that the history of the Black mountains, by Williams is a story of wave after wave of migratory influences and colonisation that situate its history in a matrix of spatiality, constituted by the flows and movements pulsing across Europe and beyond. This is similar to the layering process articulated by Massey (1984). Williams had used the phrase “militant particularism” to incorporate “place” more directly into socialist theorising. The unique character of working class self organisation has been that ideas forged from solidarities in one place get generalised and universalised as a working model of a new form of society that will benefit all of humanity. In the move from tangible solidarities to a more abstract sense of concepts, it loses some things, for instance, language changes from 'our community/ people' to the proletariat and the working class. Harvey concludes that theoretical practice must be constructed as a dialectic of the militant particularism of lived lives on the one hand, and the struggle to achieve sufficient critical distance and detachment on the other. He emphasises the need to return theory to the world of political practices across a variegated and hierarchically situated geographical space of social and ecological variations.

Herod (2001) tries to show how moulding the geography of capitalism is a key aspect of class struggle. He notes that by 1990, geography went through yet another phase of change, a third group of Marxist and critical theory-based geographers began to examine how not just capital, but also labour shapes the geography of capitalism. He argues that geography plays a role in structuring workers’ lives, and that workers and their organisations may play important roles in shaping landscapes as part of their social self reproduction. Pred (1985) and Lefebvre (1991) are discussed in the proceeding pages.

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6 The first group of Marxists was those who tried to explain geography through quantifications and models in space. The second group was those who tried to bring space and society together into an analytical frame. Critiquing the second trend as having paid attention only to capital as a mover of spatial change, the third group emphasised the important role played by labour in changing geographies.
Environmental Discourses

An important aspect emerging from the new theorisations on space and society is the understanding of space as utilised by capital to override its crisis. For instance, Harvey (1996) notes that the sustenance of nature was until recently not a concern for capital, until it emerged as a crisis for capitalist production itself. This has given way to the development of environment discourse by capital. Beck (in Bridge 1992) examines how the discourse on environment is portrayed by differing interests, each explicating a different concern on environmental risk. Nature gets redefined as stocks of resource, which is to be managed, and in the process the concerns and discourse are trapped within the capitalist frame. Sustainable development becomes a question of efficiently managing environmental stocks and flows. This, he says, is a project for which capital is not only eminently suited, but which it alone can undertake.

Harvey (1996) critiques such discourses for treating nature and society as two homogeneous entities as ‘choosing not to discuss politics behind human-nature relations’. A deeper analytical framework on this issue had been worked out by Anuchin (1960) through the concepts of ‘geographic’ and ‘social’ divisions of labour, which is discussed below.

Geographic and Social Divisions of Labour

Anuchin (1960) notes in a classless society, the geographic divisions of labour, are materialized forms of the interaction between human society and the rest of nature. He notes that the interaction between society and nature always bears a pronounced geographic character: it will vary from country to country and region to region since it depends on the geographic environment, which cannot be uniform over the entire surface of our planet. Hunting, fishing, cultivation and so on are examples of geographic division of labour.

The social division of labour arose historically under certain conditions of the class-oriented society. Because of their distinction, but at the same time their intertwining in class society, the two basic forms of division of labour need to be differentiated as (1) the form generated by the class stratification of society; and (2) the form generated by the interaction between human society and nature. Under the domination of class-oriented social relations, these two forms can coincide, with the dominant form being the social division of labour.

Interlinkages of Geographic Divisions of Labour

As examined in Chapter 1, Kuttanad as a region had developed several geographic divisions of labour. It had evolved several branches of production like fishing, duck-rearing, mussel
gathering, coconut plantations, toddy tapping, and paddy cultivation. Transportation through water had given way to skilled boat makers. Specially designed boats that swiftly plied the waters were used for warfare. All these indicate the socio-geographic development of society in an ecological setting of abundant waters that gave way to minute geographic divisions of labour.

The relationships among different geographic divisions of labour can be mutual and complementary. This becomes a natural outcome in situations in which everyone living in a region requires the various produces from the different relationships with nature. The diversities of food, and other specific requirements based on the lifestyles developed in the region are important requirements evolved through geographic divisions of labour. Except in the case of tribal/classless societies, the geographic divisions of labour operate through hierarchical relationships within a region:

In all forms of society there is one specific kind of production which predominates over the rest, where relations thus assign rank and influence to the others. It is a general illumination that bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity. It is a particular ether which determines the specific gravity of every being which has materialised within it (Marx 1857-61/1973: 47).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, land reclamation from Vembanad Lake materialised on large scale through the incentives of the Travancore state. This becomes a crucial underpinning that shows us why a specific branch of production became regionally predominant even when that was not an ecologically 'easy' option to be operated in Kuttanad. The contexts of this domination was based on production requirements in the state, which in itself was enhanced through colonial impacts (discussed in Chapter 4); and the socio-economic stratifications of society. These developments that had linkages within and outside the region evolved the primacy of one geographical division of labour, paddy cultivation, over all the others in Kuttanad.

**Interlinkages of Social Division of Labour (Class, Caste and Patriarchy)**

As space and society became theorised in geography, it brought together two important processes, that is of ecology/space and of society. Social theories and spatial theories wove a new fabric that got rid of Massey's (1985) critique of 'everything happening on the head of a pin' in social science. But the separate enquiries on class, caste and patriarchy in Social Science that too often fail to build interlinkages amongst them, has crept in to the new theories of space as well. This point is being raised here because the concept of region actually holds the potential to study the interlinkages of various socio-economic and ecological processes within a single theoretical frame. Within the Marxist perception of understanding regions as the outcome of the relationships of production that simultaneously
change nature and society, we have the scope of looking in to multiple nuances that are specific to a region. In the Indian contexts, this can be utilised as a framework to examine the interlinkages of class, caste and patriarchy at concrete and specific spatio-social situations.

One of the rare studies that reflect a similar concern and is also based on rural transition is Pred’s (1985) ‘Enclosures and social change in Skane’ in Sweden. It traces the historical-geographical materialism of Skane, and the spatial-social changes in the region from the mid 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century. The spatial configuration of highly elongated fields of Skane had impacted the daily rounds of activities of the peasant households. Large amount of time was taken up by women and young boys, especially in bringing food to the fields. All landed peasants were members of the village council, which functioned on the basis of co-operation required on several matters of farm activities and the usage of common lands. The church acted as a centre from which clergymen read out announcements from the state authorities.

By 1803, enclosure decree came in to operation that reordered the villages through land redistribution, and construction of new houses, fence and roads. In the new spatial ordering, the distances between the fields and homes decreased considerably, the role of the village councils diminished, the landed peasants started to develop new social power relations like not eating together with their hired help, women spending more time around the homes than in the fields, new power relations between urban merchants and landed peasants and so forth. By the end of 19th century landed peasants became involved in cash cropping and market-related practices. He concludes that any place is an ongoing process of reproduction of social and cultural forms, the formation of biographies and the transformation of nature, operating through underlying micro and macro power relations.

What makes certain processes to take shape in particular ways is a matter of geography, that is in turn a process of ecological, social, economic and cultural interconnections, which Anuchin (1960) had emphasised as not possible to be emerging the same way in any two regions.

**Knowledge Creation Differing with Socio-Geographic Contexts**

In the socialist world, as represented by the Soviet Union, the studies on regions had survived much more than were the case with the capitalist world, represented by Europe and America. Region was considered to be of importance in the planning processes for the socialist nation. Anuchin’s (1960) writings amply bring out this point, as he critiques stereotyped management of agriculture that does not take in to account the specificities of regions. We
can also find the aspirations of a communist society being deeply linked to both ecological and social welfare:

Communist society will have its own interactions between forms of social division of labor. But they will not be of an antagonistic character; the effect of social relations on man's relations with nature will be fundamentally different from the effect in a class-oriented society. The geographic environment will cease to be disfigured, and geographic resources will cease to be plundered in the interest of profits. Social influence on nature will be directed toward its utilization but at the same time toward its conservation and transformation in the interests of mankind (Anuchin 1960: 220)

The 1960s marked distinctly different contexts in geography's development in different parts of the world. Most notably, Anuchin's book, 'Theoretical problems in geography' marked a critical historical study of geography. At that time, the European and American geographers were developing spatial science which focussed on locational factors favourable for commerce in cities. Harvey stands out in the quantification phase of geography, for having attempted to link theory to explanations in geography. But around a decade later, he was pioneering a sharp turn in the discipline's trajectory in the western world by seeking people-oriented geography based on Marxist theory. Like Anuchin, he also emphasised historical-geographical materialism as the methodology for geography.

A major difference is that whereas Soviet geography, as voiced by Anuchin, is confident in the placing of geography as the interrelation between nature and society, and hence the inability to place it either in social science or in natural science, the other geographers mentioned above place geography firmly in social science. They attempt to integrate the understandings of space in to social science and of society in to geography. Moreover, as the socialist world was focussing on planning of regions and their understanding as territorial complexes, Radical Geography critiqued the socio-spatial processes of capitalism.

In contextualising India, we cannot categorise it clearly as socialist or capitalist, but underline the neocolonial and neoliberal contexts in which India is socio-politically located. Das (2001) emphasises the unsuitability of given theories of development for a country like India. He problematises the lack of contextualisation of particular situations existing in different countries. He notes that the studies of Marxist geographers are concerned about regional problems within advanced capitalist and postmodern societies, which have limitations in being applied uncritically on situations of the developing world. At the same time the rise of engagements with neolocalism in recent times, shows a distancing from revolutionary theory, which is problematic. He concludes that concerned scholars need to contribute to strategies, which will have a strong grounding in the many geographies within the developing nation. The importance of such geographies is neglected, for instance, in countries like India that uncritically rely on the modern sector that shifted its emphasis from aerial to sectoral
planning. This, he points out, involves the problem of shifting scales from a macro level to a micro level, without reference to the social, cultural and political distinctiveness between regions.

The trajectory of Radical Geography has overwhelmingly focussed on the urban dynamics as the spatial concentration of the capitalist processes. There are very few studies on the rural dynamics of capital and land relations in rural areas and the socio-spatial struggles of the peasantry.

Region formations in India have immense variety, and it is important to understand their socio-economic and ecological contexts, dynamics and potentials. Even as we can see a vast range of regions in India from tribal to semi-feudal to capitalist, and even as it is evident that the European- American situations of mature capitalism is not what these regions represent, the overarching impact of capital relations extending spatial and social changes on all these regions, is very evident. Through neoliberalism, the situation is changing at a fast pace, increasingly captured by the processes of what Harvey terms as 'accumulation by dispossession' and Levien (2015) as 'regimes of dispossession', as well as by processes of resistance by people. Nilsen (2010) study of dispossession in Narmada valley through development projects, and Banerjee-Guha's (2002; 2010) writings on urban restructuring, illustrate the point.

**Neoliberalism and Regions**

Prior to 1980s, in most parts of the world the state had been playing a regulatory role between capital and labour. The 'welfare state' could be pressured to increase wages and also to subsidise crucial sectors like agricultural inputs, education and health. But these situations were changing:

The Bretton Woods system set up to regulate international trade and finance was finally abandoned in favour of floating exchange rates in 1973...but it was now exhausted and some alternative was obviously needed to restart the processes of capital accumulation...the world stumbled towards liberalism ...with the construction of the so-called 'Washington Consensus' (Harvey 2006: 148).

International institutions like the World Bank and World Trade Organisation (WTO) played significant roles in bringing about a reordering of global production and resource extraction:

The external recommendations on economic policy making supplied to developing countries is neoliberal and these are tied to binding conditionality. Even if policy makers disagree with the recommendations they are bound to implement them if they wish their country to receive debt relief or continue receiving concessional lending, or even grant- based technical assistance (Mc Kinley 2004: 2).
NL makes fast inroads into the shaping of nature by capital. Hence new rationalisations are created to make the changes acceptable to society at large. So there are new ideas that intrude into the thought processes. ‘...a conceptual apparatus has to be constructed that appeals almost naturally to our institutions and instincts, to our values and our desires, as well as to the possibilities that seem to inhere in the social world we inhabit’ (Harvey 2006: 146). NL has paved way for a distinctive environmental narrative, ‘it is part of a broader trend towards a material and ideological transformation of capital... ’ (Bridge 1992: 227)

In the understandings of regions in the present thesis, ecological relations of production as well as class, caste and patriarchy can be examined together at concrete levels of regions. This is the most important theoretical framework that is proposed in the thesis. Hence theoretical understandings on NL are examined at two levels: (1) how does NL impact the geographical division of labour such as agriculture and tourism? (2) how does NL impact the social divisions of labour governed by class, caste and patriarchy?

**Neoliberalism and Geographic Divisions of Labour**

NL not only attempts to restructure crucial sectors of national economies like agriculture and services, but also impact the internal (of nations) relationships of capital and labour. Subsidies and other support systems that shaped the 'welfare state', and which were often ensured through labour assertions, stand to be eliminated in NL and to be reordered for capital. As noted by Mitchell (1999: 461-2) the state now subsidises financiers instead of factories, cement kilns instead of bakeries and speculators instead of schools. The subsidised funds are channeled into the hands of a relatively small and ever powerful and prosperous financiers and entrepreneurs.

In the context of Kuttanad, two prominent geographic divisions of labour, agriculture and tourism are examined:

(1) NL and agriculture - Bhalla and Singh (2009: 43), in examining economic liberalisation and Indian agriculture, note that ‘The post reform period 1990-93 to 2003-6 is characterised by a serious retrogression both in the matter of levels and growth rates of yield and output in most states and regions...’. The authors observe that there are different reasons for slow down of growth of yields and output in different regions. However the decline in public investment in irrigation and water management and in scientific research has adversely affected the profitability of farmers in all parts of India.

Patnaik (1996; 2012) examines how the Bretton Woods Institutions and WTO make a thrust for free trade which has reordered trade and agriculture across the world. The developed
world are to produce food grains and the developing world to produce such crops as are required for the consumption of the developed world. The lifestyles of the latter are heavily shaped on consumption of the tropical world (the "third" world) like spices, coffee, tea, cotton and tropical fruits:

In the last two decades dozens of countries in the global south have been successfully pressurised by the Bretton Woods institutions to dismantle their grain procurement and distribution system, on the argument that they could always purchase grain from the main global suppliers (Patnaik 2012: 11-12)

Not only has liberalisation thus dislodged the food sufficiency in cereals that had been attained by India in the 1980s and 1990s, it has also minimised the security of farmers that was enhanced through government subsidies on agricultural inputs and the security extended through minimum prices, but has also brought in catastrophic effects on cash crop farmers as was seen through farmer suicides in large numbers.

(2) NL and Tourism - A spurt in international tourism developed through ‘General Agreement on Trade in Services’ signed by India, amongst a large number of countries, in 1995. Tourism needs to be seen in the background of the patterns of commodification in NL that distinguishes it from that of the liberal phase of capitalism. Peck and Tickell (2002) observe that neoliberalism began with the 'rolling back' of the welfare state, and ultimately advanced to the 'rolling out' of new types of states and governance. The neoliberal states are to facilitate the transformation of previously untradable things and ideas in to commodities and these commodities include things like natural resources and labour. It is of utmost importance here to note that these two aspects, natural resources and labour, are the most crucial relationships of capitalist production; and they are the two aspects that also bring forth the greatest contradictions to capitalist relationship.

Tourism operates through the reorientation of space in the name of environment protection, for instance the enclavisation of space through 'National Parks'; which has resulted in social costs like the displacement of people living in the region. Moreover, tourism has, in some cases, based itself on creations of distorted values, as in the case of 'slum tourism' where the deprivations emerging from capitalist relations, that manifest in the form of urban slums, become a tourist commodity to be sold. Such tours are definitely new trends, the twist of which owes to the manipulations of capital; as the crisis itself is turned into commodities for profit-making (Klien 2007) and the job of doing this is taken over by the transnational class, they work to resolve the types of crisis that Marx and environmental Marxists believe to be inherent to global capitalism (Sklair 2001). The transitions from liberalism to NL are accompanied by the continuation of accretion practices through what Marx called 'primitive accumulation' during the rise of capitalism:
Under conditions of neoliberalism, conservation is increasingly turning out as a powerful force for continued primitive accumulation, further cementing the idea that nature can only be 'saved' through and by capitalism (Burcher 2009: 5).

Harvey (2010) notes that these practices include the commodification and privatisation of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; the conversion of various forms of property rights into exclusively private property; suppression of rights to the commons; commodification of labour power and suppression of indigenous forms of production and consumption; colonial, neocolonial and imperial processes of appropriation of assets; monetisation of exchange taxation particularly of land; slave trade; and usury.

Negi and Aurebach (2009) point out the importance of making distinctions in examining the advanced capitalist regions of the world and the not-so-advanced ones:

The transformations associated with primitive accumulation may be of a historical nature in the advanced capitalist world, but they are contemporarily relevant in the global south. It is important to recognise however, that the historical-geographical development of capitalism itself alters the conditions in which primitive accumulation subsequently takes place. The historical correlation between capitalism and development (and modernity) as exemplified by the west finds widespread purchase in the global south. It should then be no surprise that primitive accumulation, as the supposed necessary step to capitalism continues to be regarded as the means to development (Negi and Aurebach 2009: 102)

Burcher (2009) notes that the tourism market is seen as the best way to marry conservation, development and private sector profits. At the same time, the commodification of cultural forms, histories and intellectual creativity entails wholesale dispossessions through tourism (Harvey 2010).

**Neoliberalism and the Social Divisions of Labour**

NL is interpreted as an accelerated domination of capital, and as a process of rejuvenation of class power in society (Harvey 2006; Moyo and Yeros 2011). Harvey (2010: 31) elaborates that what exactly is meant by class is somewhat shadowy, NL has helped to entail its redefinition. He notes that if NL has been a vehicle for the restoration of class power, then we should be able to identify the class forces behind it and those that have benefitted from it. But this is difficult to do when 'class' is not a stable social configuration. In some cases 'traditional' strata have managed to hold consistent power, often organised through family and kinship. In other instances NL has been accompanied by a reconfiguration of what constitutes an upper class.

Perhaps the above mentioned analysis holds the key to why in the analysis of caste and patriarchy in NL, some scholars note increased marginalisations in NL, but others see opportunities to challenge it. Jal (2014) notes that caste-based pre-capitalist social formations are a dire need for global capital accumulation. Gathade (2013) also notes similar trends that
capitalism in India has only taken advantage of caste formations. Teltumbde (2001) critiques globalisation being pivoted on the promise of development and its “trickle down” to the subaltern sections of the society. The glitter created by the free markets misleads one into believing that the benefits of globalisation reached the weak and poor of the society. On the contrary, Prasad and Kamble (2013) believe that by being part of capitalism, it can be pushed to the advantage of the dalits. Dalit India Chamber of Commerce and Industries (DICCI) under which dalit entrepreneurs have gathered, points to the lack of political practices of analysing the interconnections of caste and class.

Radcliffe (2006; 2011) observes that gender is gaining new policy- and public- visibility, but this is also the times when NL and global restructuring processes have entrenched gendered differences and impoverishments in different parts of the world. Resurreccion and Elmhirst (2008) note that across the Asian region, the ever more incorporation into the global economy favours domestic and global market expansion rather than a social welfare agenda. They are inflected with gender discourses that set in motion differentiated and unjust life opportunities and exclusions. At the same time, sustainable development policy initiatives work through and produce particular framings of gender and gendered power relations. Wilson (2008) notes that NL has brought in feminisation of agricultural labourers in India, implying an increase in employment through a process of casualisation and informalisation of labour, that has increased the insecurity of both women and men labourers. Indira Devi (2012), amongst others note the detrimental impacts of NL in Kerala on women in agriculture. But scholars like Erturk (2009) note that even as globalisation holds new risks for women, they also offer new opportunities for taming globalisation and patriarchy. This is seen to happen through the unprecedented entry of women in to paid employment with global restructuring.

Jal (2014: 47) notes 'class is basically inherited class status, or simply frozen classes, that are reified and hypostatised and based on segregation...' Something similar can be observed about the simultaneous operations of class-caste and patriarchy. The overlaps, entrenchment and mutual strengthening of the social divisions of labour need to be examined, which has important implications for social and political struggles.

**Region Formations in India**

By 1990s much water had flown down the bridge of geography. Human geography evolved as 'Social' and 'Radical' Geography where spatial relations were being understood in conjunction with social theories. Ahmad's (1999) work on Social Geography gave a fresh breath to approach to regions in India. He traces the origins of region formations and examines a series
of processes through which successive groups occupied river valleys of the subcontinent, and the earlier occupants were pushed to the uplands. Taking from Subbarao, he writes that river valleys were ‘penetrated and exploited by large scale agricultural communities, driving the older and static people in a more primitive economy into the forested mountains, where they have survived to this day.’ (1999: 79). He further notes that the main river basins of the country with a rainfall between 20 and 40 inches which can sustain large scale agricultural communities have been colonised. He proposed a spatial typology of regions as (1) areas of attraction, or perennial nuclear regions (2) areas of isolation: and (3) areas of relative isolation lying in between. These three regions have been occupied by the agrarian, the tribal and the pastoral societies respectively.

Ahmad (1999) examines India from the evidences of microliths that points to the transition from Palaeolithic hunters and food gatherers to an agricultural- based economy and to the emergence of republics and monarchies. Comparing the colonial era in the subcontinent with the previous spatio-political and economic processes, he observes that ‘...the British territorial expansion started from the coastal areas thus giving the littoral region an importance unprecedented in Indian history’ (ibid: 107). With the emerging significance of port cities, the earlier regions of importance became their hinterlands, restructuring region formations through colonial rule.

**Region Formations in Kerala**

Kerala is usually demarcated into two regions: Malabar and Travancore- Cochin. This demarcation derives from the context of colonial history. Travancore and Cochin were princely ruled states whereas Malabar was part of the Madras presidency directly ruled by the British. These historical contexts shaped differing implications such as of land relations: the former was much better placed as compared to the latter which suffered repressive systems of land tenure under the British. But if we look at the origins of region formation in Kerala, using Ahmad's framework, we can trace the historic lands of settled cultivation along river valleys. Rajeevan (1999) observes that the plough agricultural village system developed in Kerala in a region stretching from Kollam in the south up to Putupattanam in the north. The present day Kasargod district in the north and the regions south of Kollam as well as Wayanad and Palakkad were not part of this. The coastal reclamations and the network of back waters from Kayamkulam to Kozhikode where majority of the population in Kerala live at present had not been formed then. Besides, large parts of the area suggested above consisted of dense monsoon forests. The group of plough agricultural villages was formed in this well defined region much after the formation of similar villages in Tamil Nadu or Karnataka and was formed only as late as seventh century A.D (Rajeevan, 1999).
Plough agriculture that spread from the Gangetic plain is the harbinger of a new mode of production which restructured the social organisation. Even as the process spread across the subcontinent, regional variations were very marked. These can be understood largely as the differing outcomes of interpenetration by the new system on differing primitive societies. It is the process of accommodation and resistance that geographic continuity of old forms and changes in tune with the new forms can be traced as giving way to regional formations. Rajeevan notes that the pre- Aryan phase of Kerala was essentially one of South Indian primitive life. The feudal structure was introduced in Kerala as elsewhere in India through the plough agricultural system and as in other parts of India, the feudal structure developed in Kerala under the Hindu Brahmin religion (Rajeevan 1999: 4).

Gurullal (2010) observes that being a non-cultivating groups by themselves, the brahmins had to depend upon the familial labour of neighbouring clans. One of the major processes in the social formation was the emergence of non-kin labour in the agrarian sector. The process of social formation in Kerala was linked to this process of interaction:

It was the making of paddy fields that turned out to be crucial in the process. It was a long process involving transformation of clans into hereditary occupation groups of artisans and craftsmen, and subsequently into engogamous castes (Gurukkal 2010: 70)

On either sides of the river valley-zone, running north to south lay the zones of historically marginalized societies- the tribes of Sahyadiris and the fishing communities of the coasts. Hence what emerge are three historical regions: (1) central region of agricultural surplus production (2) Region of highlands of the east where tribal societies have taken shelter and where later in history capitalist production developed through plantation cultivation: and (3) coastal region in the west occupied by subsistence fishing communities and where capitalist production in fishing have developed.

The tribal societies who had historically and geographically been alienated from the plains reside in the Sahyadris (Western Ghats) and the Wayanad plateau. But by the second half of 19th century Europeans developed plantation cultivation and the region was linked to the world market. When the British left India, the plantations were taken over by Indian corporate houses. Tribal communities experienced land alienation as forests were cleared for plantations and ‘...violently detached from their communal property, formed a major source of labour supply for the early plantations’ (Raman 2002: 10). The processes of their alienation which have continuities to contemporary times have accelerated their struggles for land and livelihood.

In the coasts of Kerala, the traditional fishing communities are also more or less egalitarian in social structures. The relationships in production here differ from issues like land ownership
and labour relations in agriculture. Their subsistence production was based on the sea. By 1960s non-operating entrepreneurs who owned the means of production entered the scene of marine fish production. And a complex set of impacts emerged with the restructuring of fisheries on the lines of capital, drastically altering the livelihoods of traditional fishing communities. Struggles on fishing rights, sustainability and ecology emerge from this region.

Kuttanad as Region

According to Rajeevan (1999), the reclaimed lands of Vembanad Lake in South-Central Kerala, were built on to the zone of settled cultivation much later in history. This area called Kuttanad had been developed through reclamation that was started around the 1830s: ‘they are among the few operations of their kind anywhere to be undertaken largely by relatively small cultivators with slender resources...accomplished with local materials, with little use of modern technology and machines...intensive use of locally available human labour’ (Tharamangalam 1981: 25). From the 1880s the government of Travancore participated in and encouraged the process of reclamations and this continued here well into 1940s.

Thus within the central zone of cultivation, we can find variations in micro experiences of social and geographic histories. Kuttanad is taken up for detailed study, the rationale being the scope of understanding a specific region within the central zone of surplus production. It opens up scope for examining contexts that are specifically evolved within a broad categorization of the central zone.

Conclusion

From the scholarships on space and society, some aspects that can provide a theoretical basis for the study of Kuttanad as region have been elaborated in the chapter. It is derived that a region gets developed through spatio-temporal processes on which multiple human-nature relationships of production, like agriculture, fishing and so on develop specific relationships of co-existence, complementarity and hierarchy amongst them. At the same time, the production relations develop social hierarchies through class, caste and patriarchy. The logic of capital shapes these relations in particular ways in particular places. NL that accelerates capital’s reach across the globe, has region-specific implications because of the ways in which the geographic and social divisions of labour are impacted on and resisted/reshaped by both capital and labour. NL's relation with agriculture, tourism and other sectors, and with class, caste and patriarchy have been studied by social scientists. But sufficient attention is not paid to the ways in which the geographic and social divisions of labour impact each other, are taken advantage of by capital, or not sufficiently recognised by the struggles of people. The theoretical basis for studying Kuttanad is based on the recognition that the geographic and social divisions of labour need to be examined in their inter-relationships at
the concrete level of the region. In the region formations of Kerala, Kuttanad represents a micro specification within the agricultural midland zone. Its history as a territorial complex is much more recent than that of the larger agricultural region of Kerala.

How can Kuttanad be studied to capture the composite picture of the processes of region formation as a continuous process? How can the contemporary neoliberal processes of changes in agricultural practice, and the expansion of tourism in Kuttanad be examined? How do these intertwine with the social structure and practices of class-caste and patriarchy? How can the above-mentioned aspects be linked to the spatial layerings that have been historically making the region? What methodology, method and sources of data can be utilised? These questions would be examined in the proceeding chapter.