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Reconfiguring the ‘political’ (from) beyond the West: globalization, governmentality and Malaysia’s Multimedia Super Corridor

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ABSTRACT

Michel Foucault's analyses of governmental rationalities have given rise to studies extending understandings of 'the political'. While important existing contributions to the governmentality literature have unsettled conventional territorializations of government, these have, until recently, focused largely on 'advanced liberal' societies in the West. Recent geographical and anthropological research in Latin America and Southeast Asia, however, has given prominence to differentiated zones of government within and across national territories in an era of globalization. The anthropologist Aihwa Ong, for example, has diagnosed emergent relations between population, territory and government – forms of governmentality which she has termed 'post-developmental' – in Malaysia. In this paper, I examine one such post-developmental zone. The Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) – and especially the 'intelligent city' (Cyberjaya) which is at the centre of this high-tech territory – is examined as a zone in which a specific mix of governmental agencies and spatial strategies is oriented to the shaping of would-be 'intelligent' global citizens. The super-privileged MSC zone exemplifies broader processes of governmental fragmentation and reterritorialization beyond the mostly Western contexts where governmentality studies have proliferated to date.

KEYWORDS

Governmentality, globalization, Malaysia, Multimedia Super Corridor

INTRODUCTION

While Michel Foucault's analyses of governmental rationalities have given rise to studies extending understandings of 'the political', the conventional geographical boundaries of this domain have largely remained intact. On the one hand, work drawing upon Foucault's (1991) essay, *Governmentality*, has highlighted the diverse groups and forces which seek to regulate the lives of individuals and the conditions within national territories (e.g. Rose and Miller, 1992). The government of a nation-state thus includes, but also extends beyond, those agencies conventionally known as *the* government (Miller and Rose, 1990). By attending to governmental agencies which are only loosely associated with the executives and bureaucracies, such work has effected a radical decentring of the state from political analysis. On the other hand, one might question the extent to which these analyses have effected a similarly critical reworking of *geographies* of the political. While pointing to the diversity of 'political' authorities and strategies, as far as most work on governmentality is concerned, these have largely been understood as always-already spatialized at the level of *national* population and society. According to Barry Hindess (2000, p. 119; emphasis added), '...this treatment of the government of populations as occurring largely *within* states represents a serious limitation, both of Foucault's own studies of government and of the more general governmentality school which has taken up and developed many of his ideas in this area'. In this paper I seek to contribute to work addressing this limitation by considering alternative spatialities of government.

The paper consists of three main sections. In the first, I critically examine existing contributions to the governmentality literature which point to alternative spatializations of government. I focus in particular on the work of the sociologist Nikolas Rose whose analysis of 'advanced liberal' countries has fore-grounded reconfigurations of 'the social' as a unified territory of government in an era of globalization. While such work is important in unsettling often taken-for-granted conceptions of the social as *the* territorialization of government, I suggest that it is only because of social scientists' overwhelming focus on 'modern', advanced liberal societies of the West that such a spatialization of the political could ever have been considered settled in the first place. In

the second section of the paper, I thus turn to work which considers the significance of globalization or transnationalism for territories and territorializations of government beyond the mostly English speaking contexts where governmentality studies have proliferated. I examine studies in Latin America and Southeast Asia which consider emergent relations between population, territory and government – forms of governmentality which the anthropologist Aihwa Ong has termed ‘post-developmental’. In the third and main section of the paper, I look in detail at one post-developmental zone in Malaysia. The Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) – and especially the ‘intelligent city’ which is at the centre of this high-tech territory – is examined as a zone in which a specific mix of governmental agencies and spatial strategies is oriented to the shaping of suitably intelligent trans-national citizens.

UNSETTLING THE SOCIAL: ALTERNATIVE TERRITORIES OF GOVERNMENT

In the mid-1990s, research on governmentality began to diagnose territorializations of political thought and action that were not mapped onto geographically discrete societies. Nikolas Rose, for example, argued that ‘the social’ (and national society) was ‘no longer a key zone, target and objective of strategies of government’ (Rose, 1996, p. 328). Central to Rose’s argument is the rise of ‘community’ as a new territory for the administration of individual and collective existence. The growth of programmes which operated through the instrumentalization of personal allegiances and active responsibilities Rose terms ‘government through community’ (ibid, p. 332). He distinguishes between so-called ‘geographic’ and ‘non-geographic’ communities, both of which are of interest for critical geographical perspectives on ‘the political’. What Rose understands as geographic communities are those defined in terms of ‘the co-ordinates of a micro-locale’ (ibid, p. 333). Supposedly ‘non-geographic’ communities – those such as the ‘gay community’ or the ‘disabled community’ – do not necessarily have a bounded spatial referent, but they suggest non-bounded, networked spatialities which also depart from conventional notions of the ‘social’. What these observations on the rise of ‘community’ suggested was that the space of government was no longer ‘contained’

within or spatialized at the level of the conventional borders of ‘political geography’. In short: “‘the social’ may be giving way to ‘the community’ as a new territory for the administration of individual and collective existence...” (ibid, p. 331).

Rose resists any over-generalized substitutional account whereby ‘the community’ is simply replacing ‘the social’: ‘the spatialization and territorialization of political thought does not proceed in such linear sequences’ (Rose, 1996, p. 353). The social is said to have long existed ‘within, across, in tension with other spatializations: blood and territory; race and religion; town, region and nation’ (ibid, p. 329). More importantly, Rose recognizes that the apparent self-evidence of the social belies its historical inventedness. If the social ‘became a kind of “a priori” of political thought’ (ibid: 329), this was in part because of the role of social sciences in ‘stabilizing’ the reality of such a domain. As Barry Hindess has pointed out, this includes much work on governmentality itself. The apparent eighteenth century ‘discovery’ of society which was crucial to Foucault’s conception of government was dependent upon the prior assignment of populations to territorial nation-states – itself an important governmental practice (see Hindess, 2000). It is, Hindess argues, in part the division of labour separating those concerning themselves with relations *between* nation-states from those studying relations *within* them – a division that has further normalized a view of the world as a series of self-contained political unities – that accounts for why subsequent work in governmentality has largely accepted ‘the social’ as a political unity across and within which government is territorialized.

Economic globalization appears to have been crucial to releasing the grip of ‘the social’ on the governmental imagination. It is the languages and processes of globalization that led governmentality scholars to consider alternative territorializations of government. If, as Rose suggests, ‘the formation of the notion of a national economy was a key condition for the separation out of a distinct social domain’ (Rose, 1996, p. 337), the globalization and transnationalization of economic relations are associated with alternative territorializations of political thought and action:

Irrespective of the accuracy with which these trends are identified and portrayed, the economic problems of government are being re-thought in terms of a revised

image of economic space and the means by which it can be acted upon. It appears that, while national governments still have to manage a national population, the economic well-being of the nation and of its population can no longer be easily mapped onto one another and governed according to principles of mutual maximization. Government of the social in the name of the national economy gives way to government of particular zones – regions, towns, sectors, communities – in the interests of economic circuits which flow between regions and across national boundaries (Rose, 1996, p. 339).

Thus, where once society was ‘imagined as a single space, territorialised across a nation’, globalized economic events and imaginings are associated with the emergence of ‘a range of rationalities and techniques that seek to govern without governing society...’ (Rose, 1996, p. 328).

While Rose’s globalization-inspired observations on alternative territorializations of government are clearly insightful, I suggest that they have a significant limitation as regards the geographical-specificity of those societies/states which have been taken to define ‘conventional’, pre-globalization units of political analysis. Following Foucault’s concern with liberalism in Europe, the governmentality literature – and, indeed, geographies of the political more broadly – have largely focused on advanced liberal nation-states of the ‘West’, and the English-speaking world in particular (see Rose, 1999). Yet it is arguably only from such small sample of countries that ‘the social’ could have been imagined as a coherent plane of government lately reconfigured through forces and languages of globalization. In much of the rest of the world, historical absence of control over segments of population and territory has meant that the social was never so taken-for-granted, even prior to currently transformative conceptions of globalization. This includes: regions where alternative spatializations of human affiliation – both geographic and non-geographic in Rose’s (1996) terms – have impeded political action across a unified national domain; and nation-states where efforts to assign populations to political territories have been fraught or failed governmental practices. In addition, as Hindess (2000) has pointed out, the apparent absence of powerful outside interference which sustained notions of society as a self-contained political unity has not been a

feature of many nation-states beyond the modern 'centre'. In this sense, to argue that the demise of the social is attributable to recent processes and languages of globalization is to reproduce the Eurocentrism of Foucault's own spatialization of modernity. If Foucault relegated the non-west to the 'margins and footnotes' of his account of the political history of Europe (see Mitchell, 2000), the supposed novelty of the governmentality literature's efforts to reconfigure political geographies is premised on ignoring issues of governmentality beyond the advanced liberal, English-speaking world.

I contend that it is important to consider reconfigurations of the political beyond recent experiences of globalization in the West. On the one hand, this means carrying out governmental analysis in contexts outside the English-speaking world that has been central to existing governmentality studies. On the other hand, however, this does not imply a simple extension of insights on political reworkings from the 'centre' of social science analysis to 'other' regions of the world (see also Robinson, 2003). Rather, I suggest that it is precisely those regions which have long defied easy conceptions of the social as an a priori for political thought (even before an apparently new era of globalization) that should be afforded centrality in theoretical and conceptual reworking. This is not to suggest that globalization itself is somehow unimportant, but rather that those regions often marginal to social science theorization – which of course means most of the world in terms of both population and territory – are privileged positions for furthering critical (re)conceptions of geographies of the political in an era of globalization. In the next section of the paper, I examine work on transnational reconfigurations of government in Latin America and Southeast Asia.

GLOBAL RE-FRAGMENTATION BEYOND THE 'WEST'

In many regions beyond which fragmentation of the social has been identified in the governmentality literature, globalization is perhaps best understood in terms of the re-fragmentation of national territories and populations. Hindess, among others, has noted the governmental implications of intrusions by 'outside' forces in nominally independent states in sub-Saharan Africa, Central and South America and other parts of the world

during the Cold War: ‘Even had they wished to do so, states that were victims of such intrusions have had limited opportunities at best to develop and to maintain effective systems of administration within the territories and populations under their nominal control’ (Hindess, 2000, p. 132). Following expanded globalization of capital since the 1970s, and particularly since the end of the Cold War, opportunities for such countries to develop what Foucault considered to be modern arts of government at the nation-state scale have been further undermined in economic terms. The rise to prominence of transnational agencies and corporations as part of a recognizable global economy may be considered to pose a particular threat to already weak and vulnerable nation-states beyond the West.

It is by now well recognized that the rise of global-scale economic actors and agencies –from transnational corporations (TNCs) to supranational financial institutions – raise profound questions about state sovereignty, particularly for already ‘weak’ states (see for example, Sassen, 1998). In her work on the rise of ‘global governmentality’ in Ecuador, geographer Victoria Lawson argues that ‘there has been a shift of economic governance away from a territorially defined Ecuadorian state and into the unbundled spaces and institutions of globalization (such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Corporacion Andina de Fomento (CAF) and the Paris Club)’ (Lawson, 2002, p. 236). This shift to ‘unbundled’ global spaces implies a reduction in power and sovereignty of the nation-state: ‘state sovereignty over economic and social policy has been steadily eroded and Ecuador is in a vulnerable position within global networks of corporate and financial power’ (Lawson, 2002, p. 239). Lawson shows how such powerful global networks have ‘reached inside’ the national territory impacting upon the lives and spatial imaginaries of many of its poorer citizens. The internal migrants that she studies have effectively been handed over to supranational entities as a cheap and flexible global workforce. These sections of the national population have effectively been (dis)placed beyond the limits of state territoriality and the security and rights that this space is conventionally understood to confer.

It is work outside geography that has more directly addressed the spatial dimensions of such global reworkings of state power. Anthropologist Aihwa Ong, for

example, has considered increasing spatial as well as social differentiation in the governmental strategies of the state and other authorities in East and Southeast Asia. On the one hand, Ong's conception of the 'postdevelopmental state' refers to an increasingly 'unequal biopolitical investment in different categories of the population' (Ong, 1999, p. 26). Individuals and groups may be subjected to different regimes of value on account of their gender, ethnicity and/or human capital and skills. The middle classes are increasingly subjected to non-repressive modes of cultural government to realize themselves in ways that will foster faster development; meanwhile, similar to the situation in Ecuador considered above, 'weaker and less desirable groups are given over to the regulation of supranational entities' (ibid, p. 217). There thus emerges a system of 'graduated sovereignty' which sees 'the population' divided into 'different mixes of disciplinary, caring and punitive technologies' (ibid.). On the other hand, such postdevelopmental shifts between governmentality and sovereignty suggest a further fragmentation of the nation-state as a space of government. There is a clear geographical dimension to Ong's conception of graduated sovereignty: 'Different production sites often become institutional domains that vary in their mix of legal protections, controls and disciplinary regimes' (ibid, p. 215). Thinking geographically about postdevelopmental strategies means considering the reworking of state power in terms of the emergence of new territories of government.

Ong considers the case of Malaysia to illustrate the existence of 'zones' of graduated sovereignty within or (as in the case of regional economic growth triangles) across the conventional political boundaries of the nation-state (see also Sparke et al., 2004). Apart from the growth triangle, five zones identified by Ong include: (1) the low wage manufacturing sector; (2) the illegal labour market; (3) the refugee camp; (4) the aboriginal periphery; and (5) the cybercorridor (Ong, 1999, p. 218). The second and third of these generalized zones concern non-citizens who have themselves been differentially incorporated into national development: illegal foreign workers contributed to rapid national development in the 1990s particularly on construction sites; though after the economic crisis, many of them ended up in detention camps alongside would-be refugees¹ fleeing persecution in neighbouring ASEAN states (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2004). The remaining three zones identified by Ong, however, clearly demonstrate how

nominally social citizens are differentially assigned to, and governed through, specific spaces. In the case of manufacturing workers – not unlike the conditions elaborated by Lawson in Ecuador – this includes industrial sites where ‘disciplinary mechanisms permit but limit the activities of trade unions, and policemen are quickly mobilized whenever workers engage in strikes’ (Ong, 1999, p. 218). For Malaysia’s diverse indigenous peoples – known in peninsular Malaysia as Orang Asli – differentiated government has meant resettlement to increasingly environmentally and economically marginal territories under the ‘protection’ of the former colonial Department of Aboriginal Affairs (see Bunnell and Nah, 2004; Nicholas, 2004). In contrast, the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), a high-tech zone extending southwards from the national capital Kuala Lumpur, is intended as a special area for the nurturing of would-be intelligent citizens (Bunnell, 2004a).

The MSC provides a distinct contrast to the other zones identified by Ong – and, indeed, from issues considered by work on globalization and governmentality in the non-West more broadly – in that it is a political space of ‘superior privileges’ (Ong, 1999, p. 219). According to Ong, the laws, policies and practices specially assigned to this privileged zone are oriented towards ‘a new kind of Malay subject who will be fully at home in a multimedia world’ (ibid, p. 219). Whatever the accuracy of this ethnically-specific diagnosis – it may be argued that the development of MSC in fact challenges the Malay-centred national policy of affirmative action (see Bunnell, 2002a) – the government of would-be intelligent citizens is clearly a far cry from conditions facing the poor internal migrants who formed the focus of Lawson’s study. In what follows, I look in detail at the governmentality of this ‘cybercorridor’ zone in Malaysia. This is not to suggest that the implications of global governmentality for marginal(ized) citizens are somehow unimportant, nor that such global marginalization is absent in Malaysia or elsewhere in Southeast Asia – the other zones identified by Ong are testament to this (see also Ong, 2000). However, elaboration on the Multimedia Super Corridor as a territory of government is intended to offer a distinctly different example of how states beyond the West are reconfiguring relations between territory and population in an era of globalization.

GOVERNING (THROUGH) INTELLIGENT CITIES

Social and spatial differentiation has been a feature of Malaysia since its inception as an independent nation-state. Malaysia is divided geo-physically between eleven peninsular states and two further states on the island of Borneo; and the 'plural' or 'ethnically-divided' Malaysian population is conventionally understood as comprised of distinct socio-political communities, the main ones being 'Malays', 'Chinese' and 'Indian'. In addition, given that the first (and largest) of these communities has been understood as occupying a 'special political position' on account of claims to territorial indigeneity, putatively 'national' development has singled out Malays and other so-called *bumiputera* (indigenous 'sons of the soil') for affirmative action, particularly after the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971 (Malaysia, 1971). However, the NEP itself was ostensibly oriented to a 'restructuring' of society such that colonially-constructed identifications of race and economic function would be eliminated. To the extent that the British colonial division of labour had promoted a generalized spatial divide between Chinese urban versus Malay rural inhabitation, governmental strategies undertaken by the Malay-dominated state to close the wealth gap with the other communities were intertwined with efforts to reduce national urban/rural and regional development disparities: social restructuring was thus an important motivation for strategies to homogenize spatial development throughout the national territory. The third of the state's national five year plan periods (beginning in 1976) afforded particular prominence to efforts to spread industrial and urban development more evenly across national space (Malaysia, 1976). Postcolonial development has thus imagined and worked across a singular political space even as it addressed legacies of colonial division which were themselves re-fragmented by postcolonial policies.

MSC may be understood in terms of a history of 'external' economic orientation that has also problematized any attempt to territorialize political action within a self-contained nation-state. At Independence in 1957, the postcolonial state inherited an economy that was predominantly foreign-owned and dominated by the export of primary commodities for overseas markets. Subsequent attempts to generate growth for NEP

socio-spatial restructuring aims led to the extension of Export Oriented Industrialization (EOI) including the formation of Export Processing Zones (EPZs). These provided spaces of exemption from a range of national development regulations allowing the expansion of a cheap, docile, feminized manufacturing workforce. The women factory workers that Aihwa Ong and others studied from the 1980s (Ong, 1987; Jamilah, 1994) form part of what are now understood as the 'zone' of low wage manufacturing work in Malaysia's global shift to economic liberalization. To the extent that MSC is also a space of exception, the project may be understood as forming part of this shift. Established in 1996 in a 750 square kilometre zone stretching from Kuala Lumpur to a new international airport then under construction some 50 kilometres south in Sepang, MSC comprised an elaborate Bill of Guarantees offering global investors 'that are developers or heavy users of multimedia/information technology products and services' (Multimedia Development Corporation, 1996a, p. 12): a 'world class' physical and information infrastructure; unrestricted employment of local and foreign knowledge workers; exemption from local ownership requirements; the freedom to source capital globally for MSC infrastructure; financial incentives including an Investment Tax Allowance and no duties on the importation of multimedia equipment; leading regional intellectual property and 'cyberlaws'; no internet censorship; and globally competitive telecommunications tariffs. The I.T. or 'high-tech' emphasis of the 'MSC Package' appeared to be its primary distinguishing feature as compared to earlier EPZs.

To what extent is MSC then simply a mega-EPZ with a 'high-tech' spin? I suggest two reasons why this characterization does not do justice to the governmental implications of the project. The first concerns an understanding of MSC as part of a broader rescaling of state power to the nation's main urban region in marked contrast to an earlier orientation to 'balanced' regional development (Bunnell, 2002b). It is by now commonplace to argue that under contemporary processes of globalization capital is being 're-scaled' (Swyngedouw, 1996) not only to the level of supranational organizations, but also to sub-national levels such as cities and urban regions (Scott, 1998; Brenner, 2000). MSC's location as part of the main national metropolitan region – what is now officially referred to as Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan Area (KLMA) (see Bunnell et al., 2002) – may thus be read as part of a familiar story in which nation-states

have abandoned aspirations of ‘homogenizing spatial practices on a national scale’ (Brenner, 1998, p. 476). While the concentration of key ‘global’ infrastructure – including megaprojects such as the Kuala Lumpur City Centre which features what was for a time the world’s tallest building and the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport as well as MSC – may be said to contradict long-held state regional development goals working across the national territory imagined as a unified political plane, such scale jumping does *not* equate to a reduction in state power (Bunnell, 2002b). As Neil Brenner (1999, p. 53) has argued: ‘States continue to operate as essential sites of territorialization for social, political, and economic relations, even if the political geography of this territorialization process no longer converges predominantly or exclusively upon any single, self-enclosed geographical scale’. Nonetheless, the re-scaling of state power of which MSC forms part – to promote and regulate industrial restructuring within the main urban region – does mark a significant governmental shift from the earlier dispersal of EPZs.

A second reason why MSC should be distinguished from the ‘low wage sector’ concerns the qualitatively different mode of government intended for this ‘privileged’ zone. The development of EPZs exemplifies a mode of government in which manufacturing workers were disciplined and policed as cheap labour (Ong, 1987, 1999). Yet MSC forms part of state attempts to move away from a reliance on low-end manufacturing towards more high skill activities demanding different kinds of global subjects. There was a growing sense from the late 1980s that Malaysia had reached a ‘ceiling position within a labour-intensive phase’ and must therefore move to a ‘higher technological niche’ particularly in view of growing competition from regional rivals with more abundant supplies of cheap labour (Rasiah, 1995, p. 90). A new kind of worker was considered necessary to effect this transition. In Malaysia, as elsewhere, global economic conditions of rapid change and technological obsolescence appeared to necessitate citizen-subjects who were enterprising, entrepreneurial, creative and, above all perhaps, innovative (see du Gay, 1996). In marked contrast to the governmental conditions characterizing the low wage sector, this was to be achieved through the guarantee of certain ‘freedoms’, personal as well as in terms of corporate activity. Certainly, such ‘freedoms’ – such as the ‘free’ circulation of information in the Internet –

were intended as a locational inducement for global information-industries. Yet, unlike EPZs, the attraction and operation of transnational companies was not necessarily an end in itself. Rather, in MSC, understood governmentally, the presence of ‘world class’ companies formed part of attempts to foster an environment conducive for innovation and creativity.

There is certainly a danger here of accepting at face value marketing discourse that demands critical interrogation. However, I maintain that, understood governmentally – that is, in terms of the aims of MSC development and the means of achieving them – MSC was qualitatively different from earlier EPZ initiatives. This is not to suggest that the MSC project was somehow free from wider tensions of national politics and political economy. On the contrary, the guarantee of no internet censorship, for example, sat uneasily alongside a government notably sensitive to channels of political dissent (not to mention a population led to believe in the corrupting threat of ‘western’ society and ‘culture’) (Abbott, 2001). It is worth emphasizing, therefore, that the social as well as economic liberalism associated with MSC was not considered a political aim in itself – indeed, Prime Minister Mahathir talked of ‘containing’ such trends within the 50 x 15 km confines of the corridor (see Bunnell, 2004a) – but rather as a necessary step for ‘success’ in an emergent global information society and economy. It is in terms of such tensions that I suggest MSC’s relation to *bumiputera* policy be understood. As I have noted, for Aihwa Ong, MSC was ‘planned for a largely Malay entrepreneurial elite’ (Ong, 1999, p. 219). While there may indeed be evidence for such an assertion *in practice*, it would not appear to be in keeping with the governmental aims of MSC: the project was at least intended as an exemplary post-NEP space demonstrating mutual benefits to be derived from an end to affirmative action and the emergence of a multicultural, transnational Malaysian economy (Bunnell, 2002a). The words of Mitchell Dean are apposite here:

government is not the totalistic implementation of the programme derived from a rationality, but an operation that is more clearly thought in terms of tactics and strategies of power, of specific, conflictual, and changing aims, ideals and objectives, and varying degrees of success and failure, with a range of

consequences situated across the spectrum between the intentional and the unintentional. (Dean, 1994, p. 187)

Nonetheless, I acknowledge that differentiating between rationalities of government and their implementation is a fraught one.

In seeking to diagnose rationalities of government underlying MSC, I turn to consideration of plans for the development of Cyberjaya, the ‘intelligent city’ at the heart of the corridor. Two interrelated overarching issues are worthy of note. One concerns the private sector-led development of the city. Cyberview Sdn Bhd, the consortium which both owned and led the development of Cyberjaya’s 2,855 hectare Flagship Development Zone was comprised of some of Malaysia’s biggest corporations² as well as state agencies.³ The composition of the Cyberview Consortium epitomizes the emergence of a Malaysian political economy dominated by politically-linked corporations (Gomez and Jomo, 1997). A second issue concerns the middle class market for the consortium’s ‘intelligent’ products. Rapid economic growth from the late 1980s in particular fostered the proliferation of a multiethnic, urban-based middle class in Malaysia (as well as in neighbouring countries). In this context, inclusion in emergent segments of society and space has become increasingly differentiated by purchasing power. This is not just a matter of economic inclusion, but about participating in modes of (self-)government based on lifestyle choice through practices of consumption. ‘Intelligent investment’ (as one advertisement put it) in a ‘dot.com property’ in Cyberjaya is thus not just about buying real estate – though it definitely is partly that – but also about investing in oneself and one’s family through buying into a lifestyle appropriate for an immanent information age. In what follows, I consider four dimensions of the governmentality of Cyberjaya.

1. Biological urban geographies: the creative possibilities of mixing with the right crowd

It is scarcely surprising that attempts to produce innovative, creative, global subjects were urban-based. A range of work attempting to capture the essence of localized clusters of economic activity characterized by high intensity interactions involving both tangible and

intangible (e.g. tacit knowledge and know-how, conventions) elements has been concerned with specifically urban regions (Bunnell and Coe, 2001). Some researchers have focused on the city itself as a key site for innovative processes. Crevoisier (1999, p. 70), for example, suggests that cities generate interaction and learning sites where ‘the resources required in innovation processes develop and come into contact with each other’. More often, however, the importance of cities is understood as part of a broader ‘resurgence’ of regional economies (Storper, 1997). MSC may be understood as one in a long line of attempts to divine the secrets of exemplary innovative urban regions, most notably Silicon Valley. Cyberjaya planners visited a number of putatively innovative urban environments: not only Silicon Valley, but also Sophia Antipolis in France, Bangalore in India and the Technopolis projects in Japan. MSC’s *Bill of Guarantees* alluded to above reads like a check-list of desirable elements for technopole formation (see Castells and Hall, 1994), hardly surprising given the role of corporate and management I.T. elites on the project’s International Advisory Panel (Bunnell, 2004a). Cyberjaya planners were clearly convinced by international lessons on the importance of creating an environment of interactive conduct. The city included, for example, plans for ‘incubators’ for small firms to be housed together (Multimedia Development Corporation, 1997) as one way in which people could be brought together to generate the sought-after local ‘buzz’ (Hong, 1997a, p. 16).

Yet it is important to specify that the interaction sought for in Cyberjaya involved bringing together the ‘right kind’ of people (cf. Osborne and Rose, 1999 on efforts to mobilize very ‘ungovernable’ spontaneity of the city as a resource). MSC governmentality might be understood in terms of what Nikolas Rose has referred to elsewhere as ‘biological geographies’ (see Rose, 1999, p. 38). If Southern California was *the* exemplary intelligent space on account of its ‘technical virtuosity and economic dynamism’ (Winner, 1992, p. 32), then its inhabitants – what Nigel Thrift has termed *Homo Silicon Valleycus* (Thrift, 2000, p. 688) – were imaginatively placed at a global evolutionary apex. Each ‘world class’ company awarded ‘MSC status’ meant the arrival of suitably world class people from Silicon Valley and other ‘advanced’ high-tech locales. It was this breed that was targeted for attraction to Malaysia’s Klang Valley, and to Cyberjaya in particular, to interact and mix with would-be intelligent Malaysians. The

recognition that many Malaysians were already living and working in intelligent environments overseas – including Silicon Valley – fomented attempts to woo these people back as part of a more general ‘brain gain’ (Ministry of Finance Malaysia, 2002). To the extent that many such ‘talented Malaysians’ were presumably non-Malays who had been unable to realize their talent in *bumiputera*-first Malaysia – the K-economy Masterplan prepared by the Kuala Lumpur-based Institute of Strategic and International Studies specifically noted that more than half of the IT workers in predominantly Chinese Singapore are Malaysian nationals (ibid; see also Hing, 2000) – MSC was understood to necessitate a global reworking of, or exception from, ethnic-based modes of government at the national scale. The extent to which such rationalizations have been or will be translated into policy and practice is, of course, a moot point. Yet the creation of an environment ‘conducive to creativity’ in MSC, and Cyberjaya in particular, clearly prescribed the urban co-presence of the most ‘intelligent’ subjects irrespective of their ethnicity (Bunnell, 2004b).

2. Transnational urban networks: facilitating intelligent interaction beyond the local

The environment of interactivity that is understood to make for innovative practices and subjectivities in MSC is not locally-bounded. Rather, MSC – and Cyberjaya in particular – was founded on a conception of the importance of extra-local, transnational interconnection. The aim of Cyberjaya was not merely to replicate supposedly innovative urban environments from around the globe, in other words, but also to connect up to global constellations of innovative activity. The city was understood as ‘intelligent’ not so much due to the information infrastructure or even human capital that it contained, therefore, but because these facilitated access to innovation networks at a distance. This, of course, meant the possibility of connecting with regional innovation systems elsewhere but it also implied, more specifically, mobilizing existing transnational linkages including Malaysians overseas (Ministry of Finance Malaysia, 2002). Plans for Cyberjaya thus recognized that neither transaction-intensive linkages nor trust-based relations considered crucial for innovative activity are necessarily confined to localities (see also Coe and Bunnell, 2003). Such relations are to be nurtured and sustained not only by electronic

technologies – MSC’s 2.5-10 gigabit digital optical fibre backbone making Cyberjaya an environment of total connectivity – but also by human mobility through transport networks. In both ‘real’ and informational terms, therefore, Cyberjaya was conceptualized as a circulatory site (cf. Amin, 2002).

If provision of transport and communications infrastructure to allow firms to capitalize on global networks is hardly novel to MSC, the extra-firm implications of such strategies differ markedly from prior (and, indeed, as far as other zones are concerned, ongoing) modes of economic government in Malaysia. While the low-wage manufacturing sector has idealized the docile, disciplined even submissive (if ‘flexible’) semi-skilled, young woman worker, the intelligent subject is one actively involved in lifelong (re)education. Appropriate conduct, in other words, was not reducible to adeptness in the use of existing ‘Information Age tools and technology’ (Multimedia Development Corporation, 1996b, p. 15). Rather it was individual and collective commitment to on-going learning and knowledge acquisition which would allow upgrading and adaptation in a period of rapid economic innovation and obsolescence. It was in this context that Prime Minister Mahathir could promote the ‘free flow’ of information as essential for a place where ‘creativity and innovation can thrive’ (cited in Ramlan et al, 1997, p. 1). Certainly, the guarantee of no Internet censorship in MSC served to make the project seem more ‘information-friendly’ than neighbouring, high-tech rival Singapore in the eyes of global business (Hiebert et al, 1997). Yet beyond the firm, an environment of total connectivity was also understood as a means of allowing would-be intelligent workers to (re)educate and ‘upgrade’ themselves globally. Cyberjaya was intended as a local site for global interaction.

3. Smart families: Nurturing (self-)regulation across the generations

Official plans for MSC imagined a range of learning sites through which appropriate global conduct would be nurtured. These included formal educational contexts for a new generation of smart kids. So-called Smart Schools would, according the Minister of Education, ‘create a new generation of Malaysians – Malaysians who are more creative and innovative in their thinking, adept with new technologies, and able to manage the

information explosion’ (cited in Ministry of Education, 1997). However, this new generation – as distinct from low-skilled manufacturing workers – was expected to continue (self-)learning ‘beyond the classroom’. If, as alluded to above, this meant (re)educating oneself in relation to a world of wired knowledge, children in particular had to be taught to interact with free flowing information in appropriate ways also beyond the classroom. According to (then) Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, ‘the strongest “firewall” is the one which is built by oneself and family based on a system of values and religion (cited in Hong, 1997b, p. 5). It is parents’ responsibility to give their kids access to a global education and habits of self-education that they can take forward in their own innovative life projects. The family was thus imagined and promoted as the key domain for (self-)regulating global conduct across the generations.

Children feature prominently in a range of marketing literature and images for developments in Cyberjaya. This might conventionally be considered to be matter of market profiling rather than global government. Yet I suggest that the two are very much intertwined. To the extent that the sights of idealized intelligent lifestyles – in glossy developers’ brochures, on signboards along the highways of KLMA’s global interconnection, in newspapers – translate into the desires and consumer practices of suitably affluent, middle class parents, marketing literature itself performs something in the nurturing of intelligent, global families. One advertisement for ‘Smart Homes’ in Cyberia – one of the private sector-led residential developments in Cyberjaya – shows a young girl typing on a computer at a desk which also includes a globe. She has the world at her fingertips. The adjacent caption reads:

I live ahead of time
I have the best resources around me
There’s no limit to what I can do
One day I will change the world
I live in Cyberia, at Cyberjaya. (Cyberia, 2002)

Buying a Smart Home thus becomes a way of enabling children to realize themselves in suitably intelligent ways. The desired governmental outcomes of such a ‘smart’

environments bear no resemblance to those characterizing Ong's manufacturing zone. Rather than the docile factory worker who knows her place, a new generation of smart kids knows no limits; and unlike young factory workers whose contracts are not renewed if they wish to start families, smart families in Cyberjaya invest in their children to be able to continually adapt themselves for a life of change.

4. Appropriate leisure environments: a garden city for knowledge workers

A prominent component of Cyberjaya planner's attempts to provide the best resources for smart families is easy access to 'natural' environment. The *Landscape Master Plan for Cyberjaya* allocated, 'in excess of 40% of the entire Cyberjaya project to greenery and open space' (Department of Town and Country Planning, 1997, p. 31). One important motivation for this, of course, was simply that sylvan landscapes would be attractive to 'world class' companies and aspiring middle class property owners. Yet city plans also understand such landscapes as playing an important governmental role, particularly in the context of cerebral, knowledge work:

In such an environment, where so much of a person's experience will be cerebral and based on conceptual rather than physical frameworks, an instinctive desire to have tangible experiences of physical reality, particularly nature, will arise. To relax from the mental strains of work and daily living, people will need the peaceful physical environment of natural surroundings and quiet outdoor spaces (Department of Town and Country Planning, 1997, p. 107)

Conceptions of social health arising from experience of natural surroundings which has long been evident in city plans, most famously Ebenezer Howard's 'Garden Cities' (Hall, 1988), are thus afforded a specifically information economy importance. Yet Cyberjaya plans also foregrounded less peaceful uses of outdoor spaces. Hiking, picnicking and nature study were listed as examples of a suitably 'landscape interactive lifestyle'. Cerebral knowledge workers – and their families – were thus induced to realize themselves environmentally through active use of green space.

Finally, the prominence given to leisure in plans for the city, as well as in marketing material, is itself worthy of further examination. Again, there are clearly differences here in relation to the government of conduct in the low-wage manufacturing zone. The phenomenon of young women moving out of their *kampungs* ('villages') to work in factories in EPZs fomented moral panic in Malaysia (Jamilah, 1994). 'Free' time became a site of disciplinary regulation since political and religious authorities feared that women liberated from *kampung* space and values could not be trusted to use it appropriately. In Cyberjaya, in contrast, the middle classes are encouraged to make full use of leisure time as a counterbalance to a life of competitive, cerebral work. Yet in MSC, like the manufacturing zone, the government of leisure times and spaces were responding to moral conceptions of problematic conduct. In particular, MSC planners were mindful of the social conditions associated with economically-exemplary spaces – in particular, the high incidence of family breakdown which forms part of the 'dark side of the chip' in Southern California (Siegal and Markoff, 1985). The promotion of time and space for outdoor family leisure thus encompassed various strands of governmental objectives. Unlike the low-wage zone, cybercorridor planners targeted the non-work conduct of would-be intelligent subjects as a key element in their individual and collective global success.

CONCLUSION

I have considered Malaysia's MSC as a distinct territorialization of government. The 50 km corridor is a political space exempted from 'national' economic and 'social' regulation. This is not to suggest, however, that MSC somehow stands entirely 'free' from contesting conceptions of development 'in the national interest': the realization of such a space is dependent on electoral legitimacy at the national scale; and the economic and social liberalization associated with this privileged space sits in tension with existing and alternative conceptions of appropriate government. I have considered plans for the 'intelligent city' at the core of MSC as a way of diagnosing the governmental rationalities of the diverse public and private sector authorities involved in the development of the

‘privileged’ supercorridor zone. I have pointed to a series of governmental goals making known an ideal(ized) intelligent subject and the environmental means of nurturing and realizing her/himself (and familial others). Imagined Cyberjaya residents are ‘free’ from developmentalist etatization, provided with a ‘global’ environment to continuously conduct themselves in innovative and ‘intelligent’ ways. It is important to remember, however, that Cyberjaya does not represent *‘the’* respatialization of ‘the political’ in ‘postdevelopmental’ Malaysia, but is rather one of a series of ‘zones’ (Ong, 1999) emerging from a (re)fragmentation of the postcolonial, developmentalist state. Thus, while existing work in political geography has considered how state power is being re-scaled to key metropolitan areas, MSC is also understood in terms of a wider differentiation of forms of government – including the role of the state – each associated with specific zones. One important avenue for future research is to consider how these different zones interconnect and overlap. In the case of MSC, this might include: the often ‘illegal’ foreign workers and even would-be refugees who have constructed high-tech city spaces such as Cyberjaya; the low-wage women workers who clean intelligent spaces; the men contracted to guard smart middle class homes and workplaces; and the armies of low-paid casual workers who trim and maintain the sylvan landscapes of the intelligent garden city. While MSC is to be differentiated from other zones – often involving much less-privileged, poorer segments of society and even non-citizen others – they interconnect both intellectually and, in some cases materially, in ways which are beyond the scope of this paper.

A key way in which this paper has sought to extend existing governmentality studies is through consideration of respatialization of ‘the political’ beyond the West. On the one hand, we have suggested that sites outside the English speaking contexts in which a globalizing ‘death of the social’ (Rose, 1996) has been diagnosed should not be treated as merely case studies which exemplify trends in/from the ‘centre’. There may, indeed, be lessons for Anglo-centred social science from regions in which ‘the social’, even before currently fashionable conceptions of globalization, was never fully formed or taken for granted. On the other hand, we recognize a danger here of ourselves imagining and marking new distinctions between discrete governmental regions of the world. According to Nikolas Rose, Foucault’s work on governmentality ‘implied that one could

identify specific political rationalisations emerging in precise sites and at specific historical moments' (Rose, 1999, p. 24). It would therefore appear to be important to consider 'contextual variability' in regimes of government. However, as we have seen from this governmental examination of Malaysia's MSC, discourses, conceptualizations and strategies of government – from the association of liberalization in various domains with 'good governance' to a belief in the salubrious effects of garden city environments – circulate across territories of the political. Contextual variability, in other words, is perhaps best understood relationally (see Bunnell, 2004a). If there are lessons (from) beyond the 'West', therefore, one has to be that the discourses and conceptualizations rationalizing emergent territorializations of government themselves defy containment within national or other 'contexts'.

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¹ The term 'would-be' refugee here signals the fact that the Malaysian state is not a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Refugees. As such, even populations fleeing to peninsular Malaysia to escape persecution the neighbouring countries – as in the case of Acehnese in Indonesia – are classified simply as 'illegal immigrants', rather than 'refugees'.

² These included Renong Bhd, Landmarks Bhd, Country Heights Holdings Bhd and Golden Hope Plantations.

³ These included the Permodalan Nasional Bhd (PNB, a government trust agency incorporated to advance the *bumiputera* share of corporate equity by purchasing and holding shares on behalf of the community) and the Selangor State Government and the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDC) a 'one-stop super shop' established to lead the management of MSC.