Homeless in Neoliberal Cities: View from Mumbai

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Introduction

Neoliberalism in contemporary times can be characterised as a producer of extremely diverse trajectories of development and underdevelopment, and simultaneously a begetter of a changing urban order. Urbanisation, in this worldwide regime of 'disciplinary neoliberalism', is found to have been playing an even more crucial role in the absorption of surplus capital at the price of a burgeoning intensity of dispossession of the urban masses that is rejecting their right to the city in all possible forms. By the power of the above process, cities are emerging as hyper-active sites of 'creative destruction', to dismantle the old and give birth to the new, wreaking havoc on the city space and lives of the urban poor. Through innumerable urban redevelopment projects, cities are getting transformed, pushing out the poor from the domain of public space, taking the entire urban praxis to an extremely critical level.

In the West, since 1970s, and in the Global South, since 1990s, an increasing amount of money has gone into creating financial assets in cities. In recent years, this has become quite an overpowering process in Indian cities, as well. With increasing transaction of these assets, urban property prices have shot up, making the cities more and more expensive and capable of fetching higher returns from investment in land and similar assets. In the process, creation of more land and more space has become the base point of making the cities investment-friendly that again makes it an imperative that the poor are driven off, devalorised land is reconstructed from their living areas, made revalorised and profitable. The typical 'annihilation of space' (Harvey, 2008) it leads to, stands to get legalised through governmental action that seeks to cleanse the cities of those who are left behind the globalisation process.

In the above circumstances, consideration of basic necessities for the poor, such as, shelter, transport, water and sanitation, employment opportunities, etc. which since long have been a structural part of a welfare state, get de-prioritised in the urban planning agenda, skilfully armed with postmodern methodologies like 'participatory planning' or 'public forum' and terms like 'visibility' or 'transparency' as key instruments of capture and penetration (Benjamin, 2010). The contemporary cities in this way have become a highly contentious phenomenon, both within the academic discourse and the daily urban experience, taking the meaning and control of the urban space (Mitchell, 1997a), to an altogether different level, in theory and praxis, comprehension and implementation. It is important to note that behind all these debates lie the contentious issue of institutionalisation of power that provides a new way of governing the city, by instituting restrictive rights over its space, by legitimising the denial of rights of many for favouring the aggrandisement of the excessive rights of a few.

The sight of the poor and homeless in contemporary cities is no longer seen with sympathy; the uppish middle class population – earlier dwelling on progressive thoughts and carrying apology of denying justice to the poor – have not only become nonchalant enough to shun the homeless but even contribute in making strategies – legal or non-legal – to prove the latter's right over the urban space as illegal. In country after country, large, small and medium cities are getting gentrified in order to become more investment-friendly. It is a tautology to state that this necessitates a drastic overhauling of the urban space and its expansion in greater quantum for elitist consumption. Cities are becoming crucially interrelated to the process of materialising neoliberalism as an ideology (Brenner and Theodore, 2002) in the Global South.

It is interesting to know what is happening in countries like the United States, the cradle of neoliberalism. Since 1980s in the U.S. budget, allocation for public housing projects has steadily decreased. The three million economically weaker populations in cities spend more than half of their monthly income on house rent. What happens then to the urban homeless? Mitchell (1997b) states that every night their number hovers around 7,50,000 which is quite huge in terms of the total city population.

A careful look at the policy for the homeless reveals that instead of prioritising necessary provisions for shelter, a number of new laws have been introduced and old laws getting strengthened for tightening surveillance over this group. Let us look at such laws enacted in a few cities in different time periods since 1980s. In Dallas it was made illegal to sleep in the public, in San Francisco no one could make any shack in the open, in Remo city of Nevada if one was found spending more than four hours at a stretch in a park, she/he

would face arrest. In Chicago, begging was made illegal and in New York, sleeping in the train (Mitchell, 1997b).

According to Harvey (1989), all these surveillance laws are meant to destroy the organic relationship between people (especially the poor) and space. These punitive laws look at the poor as a specific socio-economic class and are used as weapons of class war against them. The need for promoting such laws is clear in the minds of the lawmakers. According to them, it is the poor who bring down the quality of life in cities and should be held responsible for the reduction of open spaces and greens. Following this view, in 1999, in Santa Ana city of California, the police were given the power to arrest the homeless without any reason, for the purpose of putting an ink stamp on their body for their homeless identity that helped the administration to drive them out from the city.

Riding the wave of such ideas, the New York mayor Rudolf Giuliani became popular among the middle and upper middle class when he enacted a number of inhuman laws against the homeless, the culmination of which was seen in a cold December night in 1991 in Tompkins Square Park when the police raided the park and brutally drove out the homeless from their shacks (Smith, 1998). In the United Kingdom, the number of homeless in the capital city of London increased by 15 per cent from 2003 to 2009. Although the government plans to stop sleeping in streets by 2012, the local council offices show extreme reluctance to assist the homeless in getting governmental assistance as it helps to keep the official number

of the homeless low. The number of homeless in cities like Toronto, Paris or Munich has magnified in recent years.

In Hong Kong, the homeless live in 'cage homes', an inhuman arrangement of iron beds tied up on all four sides with wire; one bed sits on the other and goes up to four (Banerjee-Guha, 2010b). In Tokyo, in 2001, the author found the homeless scattered in the famous Ueno Park of the metropolis, outside railway stations, on the other side of the Sumida river, living in shacks, tents and cardboard boxes. Official statistics state that the homeless in Tokyo numbers around 4000. Every year 300-400 die on the streets; during winter, the frequency of death rises. In the red light district of Kabuki-Cho, internet cafes are kept open for twenty four hours to help the homeless have a roof in the night. Since 1990s the homeless problem has attained a critical nature in Hong Kong and Tokyo and several emergency laws are being enacted to sanitise the cities. Homeless are seen in different locations inside the 'urban villages' in the modern cities of Shenzhen or Guangzhou in China (Banerjee-Guha, 2010b) too.

Waldron (1991) states that the condition of being homeless in entrepreneurial, neoliberal cities in current times is simply a matter of not having any place to call one's own. In a 'libertarian paradise' where private property and ownership is the end of all mantras, the homeless simply does not exist, in other words, need not exist.

'What is emerging – and it is not just a matter of fantasy – is a state of affairs in which a million or more citizens

have no place to perform elementary home activities like urinating, washing, sleeping, cooking, eating and standing around. People who own private places in … which they can do these things are increasingly deciding to make public spaces available only for activities other than these primal human tasks … Since the public and private are complementary, the activities performed in public are the complements of those performed in private. These complementarities work fine for those who have the benefit of both sorts of places. However, it is disastrous for those who must live their whole lives on common land … It is the most callous and tyrannical exercise of power in modern times by a (comparatively) rich and complacent majority against a minority of their less fortunate fellow human beings' (Waldron, 1991: 301-302).

India is no exception to the above rule. A major overhauling of the administrative and legislative framework of the government in the early 1990s and involvement of the IFIs (International Financial Institutions) gradually smoothened the aggressive redrafting of a pan-Indian urban planning proposal that in 2005 finally led to the formulation of the largest ever urban reforms mandate since independence. The Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) as it is popularly known has the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) or the United Kingdom's Department of International Development (DFID) as its mentors (Banerjee-Guha, 2009). It has initiated a new regime of regulation in the Indian urban sector that has cleared the ground

for rigorous implementation of neoliberal programmes (mostly state sponsored, at central and regional levels) in several cities located in different parts of the country, impacting the urban economic base, municipal finance, infrastructure, basic services, land and housing market, land use, urban form and most importantly, the shelter and livelihoods of millions of urban poor. Reproduction of urban space under this framework essentially reflects the contradictions of economic globalization at local scale (Sassen, 1999), exposing a deep structural imbalance in which modernity and post-modernity are marked with ephemerality and chaotic flux (Harvey, 1990; Banerjee-Guha, 2006). The erosion of social justice content at policy level expresses the impact of the above restructuring on political and cultural life of cities (Banerjee-Guha, 2006) that has put the concern for general welfare, labour security and protection to the poor at stake. For example, in the place of commitment to social housing, there has emerged a legal war on the poor (Mitchell, 1997b). Earlier, the way to solve the problem of urban homeless was to get involved in public housing projects, provision of basic services, organised employment opportunities, facilities of health education, etc.. Following the wave of economic globalisation, cities like Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and many others, have become more interested in wooing the real estate and builders to redevelop slums and dilapidated open spaces on a commercial basis to transform the face of the 'urban' altogether. Although the fate of the slum dwellers in such 'free' housing became known to all, the real estate sector is rewarded for such projects

through innumerable subsidies Among the slum dwellers, even if some manage to get hold of a dwelling unit after going through innumerable formalities, there is no guarantee that they will be able to continue there. Firstly, because of the insufficiency of space in the new units for carrying out their economic enterprises they are forced to look for some appropriate space elsewhere and secondly, because of the increased vulnerability of the entire area due to market pressure, they are in a constant state of insecurity that leads to a second spate of displacement. Compared to slum dwellers, conditions of the homeless is much more precarious as they do not have any chance to get access even to such housing. It is, therefore, being argued that the erstwhile public housing projects for the poor should be identified as the end of the aspect of modernism that saw the cities also as site for constructing a more inclusive society. The emerging lack of concern of the State towards accommodating the poor in the city as an integrative part essentially marks the end of an ideal in which the poor in the city were entitled to minimally decent housing and other opportunities through state intervention, to access education and experience a steady advancement in their lives (Mitchell, 2001).

Urban neoliberalism (Banerjee-Guha, 2009; 2010a), in theory and praxis, has truly marked the beginning of an era of 'heterotopia' that happens to be extremely confusing to guide for any social praxis that has its goal in social justice. Indian cities now are drastically reshaping themselves to become the core centres of investment of big capital. The urban local bodies in several cities,

as a part of the neoliberal agenda of the JNNURM, are receiving loans from commercial institutions, such as, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank or DFID for developing infrastructure that again is working against the cause of public welfare (Ramachandraiah, 2009; Pakalapati, 2010; Bhowmik, 2010). The contemporary cities are developing a structural tendency towards increasing social inequality, making the disadvantaged sections of the society more vulnerable. All redevelopment projects, be it commercial, residential or even cultural/recreational, are gigantic - of mega order, reflecting a stance of the 'global': the new office complexes, malls, exhibition centres, stadia, entertainment complexes – all have a character of a 'demonic other', that does not integrate the less affordable sections of the society as users (Banerjee-Guha, 2010b). All open spaces, slums, low income housing areas, at times, middle class areas also are getting appropriated by the above design of ushering in an era of a global 'urban' that happens to be much more complex than before. As a natural outcome, the number of urban homeless is found to have been increasing with a concomitant withdrawal of State from generating employment, providing housing and services for many. During the Commonwealth Games in 2010, according to official statistics, more than 1,00,000 families became homeless. Redevelopment following the Games, made many more homeless. Even the Delhi High Court, in one of its verdicts on slum demolitions, stated that the Government probably wanted to prove to the foreigners that Delhi did not have any homeless. The Central Government even asked all the state governments

to take back the beggars hailing from respective states, during the time of the Commonwealth Games (Anandabazar Patrika, 2010). About 60,000 children, who begged on the streets of the capital, were put in camps erected outside the city during the Event. Also, the 12 lakh labourers who were engaged in various construction projects associated with the Games had only 22,000 of them legally registered as labourers who had the eligibility for getting wages as per the

A Portrait of Urban Homelessness in India

City	Year	Number of Homeless
Delhi	2000	1,00,000
Mumbai	2003/04	32, 254
Chennai	2003	40, 533
Kolkata	2003	60, 000
Hyderabad	2003	20, 560
Pune	2004	10, 000
Lucknow	2003	10, 000
Patna	2004	13, 000

Menezes, B. A, 2010, pp 301

Minimum Wage Act; the rest, numbering to more than 11 lakhs, were labelled 'illegal' and had no access to provisions like housing or health facilities. One needs to note that this huge mass of 'illegal' homeless population was a creation of a legalised body of the government. In case of Bhopal, according to the 1991 Census, there were 4,00,000 slum dwellers. In 2001 Census, by the stroke of a pen, this number came down to 1,15,000, making almost 3,00,000 people not only homeless but 'illegal' (Singh, 2008). A careful look at the city's redevelopment exercises shows that a huge amount of slum land in Bhopal in recent times has been handed over to the real estate as per the diktat of the JNNURM, to reduce

the proportion of slum dwellers in cities to 10 per cent. Situation in Bangalore, Kolkata or Hyderabad is no different.

The 2001 Census gives a figure of homeless in the country as two million (Tulsyan, 2008). A study conducted by Action-Aid International (Singh, 2007) reported that the approximate number of the homeless in different Indian cities during 2003-04 was as follows:

In 1991, housing shortage in India was estimated at 22.9 million units; it increased to 40.8 million units in 2000. More than 90 per cent of the housing shortage was experienced primarily by the economically weaker sections (Menezes, 2010) who were relegated to extreme vulnerability without having the cushion of social security of any sort.

Homeless in Mumbai

In India 32 per cent of the population live in urban areas of whom 26 per cent live below official poverty line and 40 per cent do not have proper housing. 70 per cent of the urban employed are engaged in the informal sector. Slums occupy about 6 per cent

of land in cities like Mumbai offering shelter to nearly 60 per cent of the city's population. This means that the remaining 94 per cent of the land is used by 40 per cent of the residents. Excluding the slum dwellers and people living in impermanent tenements, the homeless in Mumbai number around 1,00,000 (Iyer, 2005). In official documents and in the psychological domain of the affluent, they are often considered as encroachers on public land with their citizenship constantly being debated in various platforms.

Although no exhaustive study exists on the homeless population in Mumbai, the few studies and surveys that have been conducted by NGOs and researchers in different parts of the city do throw light on the overall hapless situation of the homeless in this budding international financial centre of India. A sample survey carried out in recent past by the Action-Aid in six zones (subdivided into 24 wards) of the metropolis reveals that the largest concentration of the homeless is found in Zone 1 i.e. in the five (A,B,C,D,E) wards located in the southern parts of Mumbai, spreading from Colaba in the south to Kamathipura, Mumbai Central and Byculla in the north. According to this report, the intensity of the homeless population declines from the south to the north. Among the homeless, the overall number of males is more than the females, although in certain areas of the E ward (near Reay Road Station) the number of males and females match each other. In general, a typical sociological character is seen to exist among the sample households, i.e. socially deviant behaviours like drug addiction is found rampant in areas where males are larger

in number than females (Action-Aid, n.d.). The survey further reveals that 75 per cent of the sample population is in the age group of 16-45 years indicating a concentration of adult population of working age group whose contribution to the urban economy is unquestionable. The survey report is critical about the statist perspective that considers the homeless generally as beggars who have nothing but a parasitical existence in the city. The survey further reveals that 60 per cent of the homeless are illiterate that speaks of their abject poverty that acts as a serious constraint in accessing education. All these facts are substantiated by an exhaustive research undertaken by Menezes (2010) on rag pickers (who constitute a sizeable proportion of the homeless) in Mumbai. Out of his total sample population, 85 per cent of the adults are illiterate while the illiterate children constitute 91 per cent of the total. They do not have access to basic services like water, sanitation or electricity. Almost as a rule, they do not have ration cards (effectively considered as identity cards to live, work and study in Mumbai). Systematically they remain excluded from any kind of public policy that concerns the progress of the city.

The above study on the rag pickers brings out the realities of the life and work pattern of a huge section of the homeless in Mumbai. The study, based on an extensive survey involving 700 rag pickers as respondents (including 50 child rag pickers), critically analyses the socio-spatial status of the homeless in a globalising city. The survey was conducted in different parts of the metropolis from the southernmost areas of Colaba to Andheri and Vikhroli in the north and

Mankhurd in the east, covering extensive areas in eastern and western suburbs. The situation and status of the interviewed rag pickers can thus be said to form a consolidated narrative of the homeless in the city, part of which has been discussed in the following paragraphs.

Rag pickers in Mumbai are one of the most vulnerable sections of the homeless population of the city. They usually live on self-made impermanent shacks on pavements or on bare open spaces. Constantly harassed by civic authorities, municipal officials and workers, police, at times private security agents, they rarely have access to any kind of protective mechanism. It goes without saying that in an intense neoliberal scenario, with the urban planning policies becoming even more cost effective, the possibility of integrating such poor groups in the city's development programmes looks bleaker. Even though the websites of the JNNURM are flooded with information on water supply, sanitation and BUSP projects for the poor, one wonders why then the cases of evictions, demolitions and unlawful slum acquisitions for making way for mega commercial projects have reached an all-time high. In many cases these are blatantly done against the existing City Development Plan. For example, the Atria Shopping Mall at Worli has been built on a three acre municipal land which according to the existing City Development Plan, was kept reserved for housing the homeless and for a municipal primary school (obviously meant for the children of the poor). Instead of the school and the planned

1885 tenements, the land now houses the sprawling mall, violating the provision of the Plan (NAPM, 2010). Coming back to the rag pickers, while their contribution towards the waste management system of the metropolis is unquestionable, they themselves are denied any kind of clean environment in the city (Menezes, 2010).

1. Living Space: Rag pickers can only have access to informal housing which according to the 2001 Census, are poorly built impermanent structures, located in congested and unhygienic environments without any provision of infrastructure in terms of water supply, sanitation and drainage. In Mumbai, they are seen in ubiquitous locations, along railway tracks, along roads that are seldom used, inside unused storm water pipes, beside water pipelines, underneath the flyovers, on ill-drained marshlands or vacant lands (Menezes, 2010). A few are found to live in shacks made on pavements, or marshy land, e.g. near Sion Station or Mankhurd. The same story gets repeated from one city to the other. 62 per cent of the sample households in the study have a per capita living space of 30 sq. ft.

Like the homeless in other cities, a large number of the homeless in Mumbai too live in the open, under trees, in desolate corners of parks, anywhere they can (Sharma, 2000), without having any impermanent shelter made. Being forced to use the public space for their private use, they do not have a semblance of having any residential space of any sort. A large section of the urban homeless develop a nomadic nature. This is because they live under a constant threat of eviction. Rag pickers largely belong to this group.

2. Educational Status: Educational status of the rag pickers is known to be at an all time low. 91 per cent of the children of the sample rag pickers are illiterate according to Menezes (2010). The 9 per cent that have some primary (7 per cent) and secondary (2 per cent) education (up to class VIII) have some sort of a shelter however impermanent or inadequate it is. Among the adults, illiteracy is rampant, 88 per cent among males and 90 per cent among females. A large number of the children are found to work as rag pickers. Nangia and Thorat (2000) identified four major factors responsible for the low level of literacy among the rag pickers, all of which are found to be present among the sample population of Menezes. These are (a) supply-related factors incorporating distance to schools, lack of permanent settlements or language deficiency; (b) demand-related factors incorporating financial constraints, need for participating in household activity or participation in paid activity; (c) lack of interest that stems from parents' ignorance and consequent unwillingness generated towards accessing education, and (d) customary factors, such as, the prevailing psychology among the rag pickers towards education especially in case of the girl child or females (Menezes, 2010).

3. Health Status: A survey conducted among the homeless pavement dwellers in 2000 (Karn et al, 2003) reveals that this group is among the worst affected in terms of diarrhoeal diseases (more than 60 per cent of the surveyed population have suffered from it; 70 per cent of the children are affected). Diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery, other intestinal disorders, influenza, diabetes, low

blood pressure, rheumatism and rickets are widespread among the surveyed population. Gynaecological problems are common among the females. Malnutrition among the children is almost structural. The most common disease among the rag pickers, irrespective of gender and age is, however, scabies that occur due to their continuous association with garbage and filth that they often have to sort with bare hands. Children of the rag pickers are not only malnourished, they are also perennially exposed to stunted physical and mental development. In times of medical need, their only recourse are the public hospitals where they rarely visit. Majority prefer to go to local quacks, due to financial constraints as well as paucity of time. Many respondents also are found unaware of the facilities existing in municipal medical centres (Menezes, 2010).

4. Income/Employment Status: Menezes (2010) observes that lack of appropriate skills and indifferent health are the two principal factors that create a structural weakness among the rag pickers to get better jobs. On the other hand, being unorganised workers, they do not have any protection of unions or any kind of social security. Mishra (2007) states that a large number of the homeless in Mumbai do abstain from work and opines that the same is often misinterpreted as 'laziness' by the mainstream experts. The explanation that Mishra offers for their abstaining from work is (a) unavailability of regular work, or (b) incapacity of the available work to fulfil even their minimum aspirations. Hence, whenever they can save some money to pull on for a few days, they decide to quit the existing job for a better one. Once the

savings get over, they are forced again to take up a job that may have the same characteristics like the old one. In this way, they live in a vicious cycle of work and no work. In the absence of a bonafide address, they can neither open a bank account to keep their savings, however meagre, in safe custody nor can they keep the savings with themselves because of lack of safety. Thus the only option is to spend the money as quickly as possible. This acts, at times, as an additive factor to engage in deviant behavioural practices. A study on the Coimbatore labour-market (Rodger, 1993) reiterates that the marginal workers have very limited set of choices, due to their low skill level, absence of asset endowments and adverse economic power relationships.

Even after working for more than ten hours a day in an inhuman and degraded working condition (Mander, 2001), the monetary reward for a rag picker at the day's end is only between Rs 40-50 that is often spent on the entire family's needs and wants. Beyond the basic needs, they cannot dream of satisfying any higher need. Expenditure patterns of rag pickers' families show that the lion's share goes for food (about 70-100 per cent) that leaves an extremely small amount to spend on other necessities. For the same reason, expenditure on clothes becomes a matter of luxury, as also spending on children's education. In case of sickness in the family, not only the budget for the next week dips, there arises a possibility of a debt trap too. 80 per cent of the sample households are found to have never incurred any expenditure on education and 90 per cent have never spent on clothes.

Several studies (Shinoda, 2005) have, however, showed that the homeless is not at all a dependant group; they constitute a significant proportion of the informal workforce of any city. Nevertheless, almost as a rule, they remain out of the functional framework of either the Minimum Wage Act or any kind of labour security provisions. Attitude of the State towards the homeless in recent times is found quite antagonistic and biased.

Having discussed the social and economic status of the homeless, let us now take a look at the State government's official approach towards housing the urban homeless in Mumbai. In reply to a writ petition filed by the People's Union on Civil Liberties (PUCL) at the Supreme Court on the subject, Maharashtra Government in an affidavit in 2010 stated that due to scarcity of land in Mumbai, it is very difficult to construct night shelters for the homeless in the metropolis. The state, therefore, suggested that the urban local bodies should control the inflow of such population into the city as, according to the government, a large majority of the homeless are poor inmigrants. Even though the government acknowledges that the homeless are the poorest among the poor and cannot afford even any informal housing, the affidavit filed by the government only makes statements on the state initiatives for housing the slum dwellers. Although admitting clearly that the income of the homeless is not sufficient for their sustenance, the affidavit drops them from public housing programmes and

elaborately informs about the rental housing being constructed for the slum dwellers (around 5,00,000 houses) in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. One must not forget that one of the dictates of the JNNURM is to make Indian cities slum-free. Accordingly, the Maharashtra Government is keen on relocating the slum dwellers outside the city with the help of projects like Integrated Housing and Slum Development Program (IHSDP), Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY), Basic Services to Urban Poor (BUSP), etc. Even though one may doubt the effectiveness of these schemes for the target population and the modalities of their implementation, it is very clear that all these schemes are meant for the slum dwellers and not for the homeless. Several NGOs have criticised the manner in which the government has equated the homeless with the slum dwellers in the affidavit (Affidavit, Government of Maharashtra, 2010). Although the government correctly identifies the problems faced by the homeless in the city, nowhere in the document there is any mention of any policy prescription to address these problems. Rather, when the homeless population in the city are found working as construction workers, rag pickers, informal porters, garbage workers, flower market workers, workers in several other unorganised occupations, the Maharashtra government in its affidavit repeatedly mentions them as beggars, suggesting that they be accommodated in beggars' homes. One must note that under Indian law, beggars are to be treated as criminals. According to a group of NGOs, beggars' homes are also not voluntary spaces but custodial institutions that take away the fundamental right to liberty of the inmates (Collective for

Homeless Citizens, 2010). The State thus is found to have taken a perspective of surveillance with regard to the homeless than assisting them to have a minimum dignified status. Even though the National Slum Policy of India recognises the poor as an extremely important element of the urban labour force, contributing substantially to productivity and labour market competitiveness for which they deserve affordable land, house site and services from the urban local bodies, the Maharashtra Government considers the urban homeless as a negative section of the population who are unable to earn, who loiter as vagabonds around bus stations, pavements, market squares etc (Government of Maharashtra, 2010). This means that the State is openly criminalising the urban poor and spatialising urban crime with a definite bias against them.

The above state perspective on the urban poor is essentially associated with the urban transformation agenda of the neoliberal regime wherein citizens having less affordability and incapacity to remain in a competitive framework are gradually pushed out from the mainstream official agenda of city planning.

Summing Up
The process of urban transformation under neoliberalism entails repeated bouts of economic and spatial restructuring that has a distinct class dimension since it is the poor, the underprivileged and those marginalised from the political power that suffer the most from the process. Violence is seen everywhere in the process of their eviction from urban space in the form of demolition of slums, eviction of poor

tenants from dilapidated buildings or squatters from pavements. Way back in the 19th century, Haussmann tore through the old Parisian slums, using powers of expropriation in the name of civic improvement and urban renewal. Much of the working class areas of the city were deliberately taken over (Harvey, 2008) in order to cleanse areas that could throw a challenge to the prevailing political order. In 1872, Engels wrote about the process of redevelopment in depressed areas of cities that could not suit the changed circumstances. He noted that rent could not increase beyond a certain level in areas that accommodated the workers, thereby making them vulnerable to urban renewal. History of modern urban growth based on the above methodology went on repeating itself during the entire 20th century in several cities of the world that finally, since the 1980s, with the neoliberal regime getting more intense, has become more brazen, legalised and policy-based. In the 1990s, in Seoul, construction companies and developers while invading the workers' neighbourhoods, not only bulldozed the housings but all the possessions that these people had (Harvey, 2003). Such practices have now become a structural component of the contemporary urban development process in several countries including India, as well. The urban homeless in this cruel framework of modernised transformation are the most ill-fated and wretched group. They cannot have any claim on any space to call their own. They only have the public space to use for their private activities. The proliferation of anti-homeless laws and the inhuman approach of the State towards the homeless in several cities, according to Zukin (1995), are

nothing but products of negotiations, within the realm of law, to remove such people from the negotiator's table. In other words, these laws have an implicit goal of redefining the public rights so that only the housed may have access to them (Mitchell, 1997a).

The situation of the homeless in Mumbai is no different from other cities. Like their fellow folks in any other city, they too are largely left to fend for themselves. The State not only does not include them in any policy prescription of urban development, rather it plays a formidable role in their eviction and dispossession. Although the urban development plans boast of 'inclusiveness', in practice they are brazenly anti-poor and the least democratic (Banerjee-Guha, 2008). For example, the Planning Commission has recently announced that any individual, spending Rs 20 per day on her/his basic needs, cannot be termed poor and will not be eligible to receive subsidies and social benefits from the Central government that a BPL (Below Poverty Line) individual can claim. What can be more anti-poor than this?

Despite the above scenario, collective pressure is building up in several cities through initiatives of social organisations, concerned citizens and academic debates to challenge the anti-homeless stance of the State policies. It is high time that the State is pressurised to implement the inclusive aspects of the policy statements and recognise the fundamental rights of the urban homeless who essentially go to make a constructive and functionally active section of the population. A well-

known NGO, Saathi (2004), working on the urban homeless, has come out with an alternate planning mechanism for the homeless that prioritises building of (i) emergency shelters (ii) transitional housing (referrals) and (iii) permanent supported housing for the homeless. To make such alternatives work, a clear notion of social justice has to become the basis of all planning endeavours. Even though the Planning Commission of the country states that it is only a mere 26 per cent of the urban Indians (Sethi, 2011) who are actually poor and need food, shelter and social benefits from the government (the Commission's figures are based on 2004-05 price structure), several studies and surveys show that the reality is otherwise. Fainstein (2003) suggests that social justice is not always and only a product of militant movements, it needs to be asserted at an aggressively contested institutional landscape too (Banerjee-Guha, 2010), for providing a wider arena in which the subsequent struggles of the urban poor have to be fought. The need of the hour is to develop counter-institutions, to pressurise the government to reframe issues concerning the urban homeless in different terms and mobilise resources to make fulfil their minimum aims of a dignified living.

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