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1

Necrosettlements: Urban Poor's Rehousing and Death-Worlds in Mumbai

In an infinitely exclusionary megacity-Mumbai, the developmental turn of the postcolonial state has been widely welcomed by the academia. A spectacle of inclusive urban development, towards a just future, through institutional reworking, state-market-civil society synergy and participatory resettlement and offered formal housing, and ensuing possibilities of civic, economic and political rights against brutal slum clearance and uncompensated eviction have engendered much celebrated academic theorizations on 'invisible' urban's poor's rights, entitlements and citizenship through phenomenal 'deepening of democracy', 'civic governmentality' and 'graduated urban citizenship'. These narratives, however, conceal the unintended, yet inherent, inter-institutional tacit agreements, official manipulation, engrained violence in the institutionalization processes, unleased marginalities and resulted substandard living circumstances for the urban poor. Could an inquiry into inherent logics and processes guide us towards a new framework arising from the postcolonial urban?

The case in focus is Main pipeline in Mumbai which is one of the biggest, also contested, urban infrastructure securitization project. For the security and safety of pipeline, more than 15,000 urban poor have been evicted and resettled following a public interest litigation by a civil society organization, intervention by the High Court and administered by the municipal authority. The paper tends to enquire: Firstly, what kinds of juridical-administrative logics and institutional narratives fostered by the urban institutions essentialize clearance of legal settlement branded as illegal and dangerous encroachers? Secondly, how does the exceptional redevelopment regime, through its planning, policies and politics conceptualize and legitimize the creation of life-threatening (re)housing situations as a technique of management of displaced urban population? Thirdly, in what ways the architectural, spatial, environmental components of resettlement manifest and engender everyday subjectivities of survival (and death)? And finally, what is the scope for mobilization and utilization of the political, civic, juridico-legal institutions in resisting or negotiating an(y) alternative.

This paper is based on a six-month ethnographic engagement with affected urban poor of Mumbai's pipeline project displaced from seven administrative wards and twenty locations and rehoused in a resettlement township, located in peripheral industrial zone unfit for human inhabitation. It also includes an analysis of more than 500 pages of institutional documents and reports from courts and other law enforcing agencies and parastatal organizations. The study aims to argue that the redevelopment regime acts as an exceptional site of the postcolonial state's sovereign power and the resettlement process exposes the resettled urban poor to violence, marginalities, vulnerabilities and death. In doing so, it would offer a re-reading of the State of Exception, Necropolitics and Necrocapitalism in its material ramification as housing – *as necrosettlements* – for the poor in the urban spaces.

Keywords: Necrosettlement, Necroeconomics, Necropolitics, State of Exception, Slum Resettlement in Mumbai.