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Placing Poverty in Context: A Case Study

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The "poverty-in-context" approach to understanding poverty is shaped by the needs and priorities of a particular context, and it can be used as the basis for identifying pro-poor projects in local strategies such as City Development Plans. A key argument for the introduction of the City Development Plans initiative (2007–2012) in India was to move away from national conceptions of and responses to poverty and to instead focus on engaging with local understandings of poverty. Through a case study of the City Development Plan initiative in Trivandrum, the capital city of the Kerala state in southern India, we argue that an understanding of poverty at the local level did not accommodate contextual needs and priorities; consequently, we develop a poverty-in-context approach based on semi-structured qualitative interviews with various stakeholders in the case study area. The article concludes by suggesting how in the future a poverty-in-context approach might be used to shape pro-poor policy in general and preparation of City Development Plans in particular.

KEY WORDS: poverty-in-context, local self-help, pro-poor policy, India, Kerala, City Development Plans, Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission

Introduction

One of the central aims of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) initiative introduced by India's central government for the period 2007–2012 was to improve the lives of the urban poor. Such a focus over a six-year period was seen as necessary because although Indian cities account for around 55 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), over a quarter of this urban population struggles to obtain minimum nutritional levels for sustenance and lives in substandard housing, resulting in what Tipple and Speak (2009, p. 1) refer to as the "rapid urbanization of poverty."

This article examines one of the key purposes of the JNNURM-financed City Development Plan (CDP), "the integrated development of slums through projects for providing shelter, basic services, and other related civic amenities to the urban poor" (Government of India, 2005, p. 6). It explores how the CDP initiative might offer the possibility of developing an understanding of poverty that is shaped by the needs and priorities of its context. A key argument for the introduction of the

CDP was to move away from national conceptions of and responses to poverty and to instead focus on engaging with local understandings of poverty. This seemed to suggest parallels with a "poverty-in-context" approach, where an understanding of poverty is shaped by the needs and priorities of a particular context and could be used as the basis for identifying pro-poor projects in local strategies such as CDPs.

However, following reports on the use of ambiguous stakeholder involvement to identify pro-poor projects in CDPs in the state of Kerala, there were concerns about whether a poverty-in-context approach was ever adopted or even clearly understood. For instance, the JNNURM initiative sets out guidelines that require local authorities to carry out stakeholder participation before projects are identified in the CDP. A few studies have been carried out in the state of Kerala in southern India (where fieldwork for this research was carried out) to understand how stakeholder participation has been carried out prior to identification of projects. For instance, research conducted by the Administrative Staff College of India (2008) in the city of Cochin in the Kerala state reveals the following:

> The CDP (City Development Plan), as per Guidelines of JNNURM, should be formulated through a consultative process involving the key stakeholders and members of civil society.…[The] process of formulating the CDP (Cochin) presented is very succinct and too general and there was no description of how CDP was prepared.… [T]he CDP also states that recently "several meetings with experts and stakeholders were held to finalize the City Development Plan formulation" It is not clear as to how recently the consultations were held and with whom.…[F]rom the description it appears that there were no consultations. (p. 4)

There appeared to be a lack of clear understanding of how to engage with different conceptions of poverty and responses to poverty from the point of view of different stakeholders. Also, there was no clear idea of how many representatives from poor communities were involved and whether the CDP projects were identified and passed along to the representatives of the poor communities and taken back to the communities for consultation. In response to these issues, we set out to examine how a poverty-in-context approach might be developed that reflects the needs and priorities of the case study area and whether the preparation of a CDP has the potential to accommodate such an approach. The remainder of the article is organized as follows. The methodology for collecting and analyzing data is first set out. This is followed by a brief discussion on how poverty is defined and measured in general and also in India. Contemporary approaches to poverty alleviation in India are examined in how they relate to a poverty-in-context approach. This is then followed by a brief discussion on the case study and what needs to be done to accommodate a poverty-in-context approach within the case study area. Key findings from the study then follow. The article concludes by proposing how a poverty-in-context approach might be used to develop CDPs in the future.

Methodology

Drawing on the gaps identified in the literature and current approaches to pro-poor policy in India, the primary research question is presented.

How might a locally informed, place-based understanding of poverty be developed to complement the preparation of City Development Plans in India?

The nature of the research question requires (i) that descriptions of poverty be understood from the ground up, as the literature has offered a limited understanding, and (ii) that the range of factors shaping an understanding of poverty be revealed. The purpose of such "how" and "why" research questions in this study is not merely to present descriptions but also to seek explanations of why things have happened in a particular way. In answering "how" and "why" questions, Yin (2008) discusses the use of different strategies, including case study and historical examination. However, since this research is focused on investigating "contemporary events," a historical examination as an isolated strategy is not particularly helpful. It is in this regard that the case study approach becomes a useful strategy in answering our research question, particularly because (i) contemporary events can be investigated by both carrying out in-depth interviews with actors involved in the phenomenon as well as by collecting secondary information, (ii) such a strategy acknowledges a lack of control of the different factors shaping the phenomenon being studied, and (iii) there are possibilities within the case study strategy to include techniques used by a historian, such as the use of secondary documents to provide insight into the sociopolitical characteristics of the context.

In response, the preparation of CDPs in the city of Trivandrum in the Kerala state was taken up as the case study. Both primary and secondary data were collected in Kerala in 2011.[1] Primary data collection involved carrying out in-depth, semi-structured, qualitative interviews with 11 representatives with knowledge and/or experience of formulating and/or implementing the JNNURM scheme in Trivandrum, and with nine representatives who were beneficiaries of the JNNURM scheme in the study area (see Table 1). Semi-structured interviewing was adopted in this research as it "has some degree of predetermined order but still ensures flexibility in the way issues are addressed by the informant" (Dunn, 2000, p. 52).

Drawing on work by Ritchie, Spencer, and O'Connor (2003), a two-state analytical approach will be employed where (i) we identify themes and indices to develop a *poverty-in-context* framework and (ii) we identify criteria for well-being from the interviews and draw on them to develop a *pathways to well-being matrix* at the neighborhood level.

Literature Review

Contemporary Approaches to Poverty Alleviation

Since the eighteenth century, there have been various attempts to understand poverty (Himmelfarb, 1984; Townsend, 1993; Woolf, 1986). Generally, an individual

Table 1. Semi-Structured Interviews With the Following Were Carried Out in June–July 2011

Category	Respondent
CATEGORY A	Respondent A1—General category
Members from disadvantaged communities (9)	Respondent A2—General category
	Respondent A3—General category
	Respondent A4—General category
	Respondent A5—Labour migrant
	Respondent A6—Labour migrant
	Respondent A7—Living in slums that are being upgraded
	Respondent A8—Living in slums that are being upgraded
	Respondent A9—Living in slums that are being upgraded
CATEGORY B	Respondent B1—Town Planning Department, Municipal Corporation
Members working in local government (4)	Respondent B2—Engineering Department, Municipal Corporation
	Respondent B3—Environmental Department, Municipal Corporation
	Respondent B4—Environmental Department, Municipal Corporation
CATEGORY C	Respondent C1—Town Planning Department
Members working in Kerala state government (5)	Respondent C2—Kerala State Urban Development Project
	Respondent C3—Kudumbashree Poverty Eradication Mission
	Respondent C4—Kudumbashree Poverty Eradication Mission
	Respondent C5—Malayalam Mission
CATEGORY DMembers working in Indian central government (1)	Respondent D1—National Sample Survey Organization
CATEGORY E Members involved in implementation of poverty alleviation under JNNURM (1)	Respondent E1—COSTFORD Construction group

is living in poverty when he or she lacks the means for self-sustenance; in modern times, this translates into the deprivation of an income-generating activity. More recently, other attributes of deprivation that reinforce a person's identity as "poor" have been drawn into development discourse: education, health, and human and civil rights (Hulme & Shepherd, 2003). In this regard, poverty could be viewed as a trap that those born into cannot escape. The neoliberal approach views poverty as a temporary state afflicting individuals that will disappear when they make informed choices in a free market society, such as focusing on an income-generating activity (Dini & Lippit, 2009). Many have questioned this model of "individual, economic self-determination," and whether it enables individuals to escape the poverty trap (Bowles, Durlauf, & Hoff, 2006).

However, in offering an explanation for the origins and persistence of poverty, there seems to be a lack of consensus. On one hand, it is argued that poverty has always existed as a local issue only to emerge as a global issue around the 1500s as a result of globalization (Beaudoin, 2007). It is also argued that the transition of society from a feudal to a capitalist mode of production has resulted in poverty. In this regard, a distinction is made between inequality and poverty, where the former exists in both forms of societies, but the latter is prevalent only in a capitalist society (Novak, 1988).

Amidst competing arguments on the origins of poverty, however, conceptions of poverty have been broadly and consistently premised on the ideas of subsistence, basic needs, and relative deprivation of individuals and groups. Mostly based on the work of nutritionists, poverty defined by subsistence was seen as affecting those families whose incomes were not "sufficient enough to obtain the minimum necessities for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency" (Rowntree, 1901, p. 86; Townsend, 1993). For instance, the needs of the poor were measured in terms of quantities of food, such as bread, bread flour, or the cash equivalent. In essence, this approach advocated that individuals and families ought to be supported with the minimum income or quantity of food that would maintain physical efficiency. The basic needs approach, conceived as an "enlargement of the subsistence concept" (Townsend, 1993, p. 32), argued that individuals and families should be supported with not only minimum amounts of food or equivalent cash, but also other requirements for private and family consumption, such as shelter, clothing, and certain minimum essential services provided by and for the community, such as safe drinking water, sanitation, public transport, and health (International Labour Office, 1976; Townsend, 1993). In the United Kingdom, the Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey of Britain measured poverty using three different indicators: lacking socially perceived necessities, being subjectively poor, and having a relatively low income (Bradshaw & Finch, 2003). However, the notion of poverty as lacking subsistence and/or basic needs has, over time, been influenced by the concept of relative deprivation, where poverty is considered to vary across different contexts and where particular material and social deprivations need to be observed, described, and measured (Townsend, 1993).

These debates on defining and measuring poverty have considerably shaped policy interventions, particularly in the Indian context, which we argue can be grouped under a person-based (or family-based) or area-based (or geographically based) approach.

Person-Based Approach to Poverty

> A household is poor if the sum total of income earning assets which it commands, including land, capital and labour cannot provide an income above the poverty line.… [I]nadequate ownership of income earning assets is not however the whole story. The poorest households also suffer from a problem of "lack of access" which compounds problems arising from insufficient ownership of physical and human assets. (Ahluwalia, 1990, p. 2).

Two central government actors, the Planning Commission under the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Rural Development, set out the broad framework through which poverty is measured in India. The Planning Commission provides estimates for the number of people in both urban and rural areas living below the poverty line at both the national and state (or regional) levels. The most recent poverty line (based on per capita monthly expenditure) drawing on the recom-

mendations of the Tendulkar Committee (2010) is Rs.446.68 (£6 or $9 approx.) in rural areas and Rs.578.80 (£7.70 or $11.5 approx.) in urban areas in 2004–2005. In Kerala, the equivalent figures are Rs.537.31 (£7.1 or $10.7 approx.) and Rs.584.70 (£7.8 or $11.7), respectively (Planning Commission, 2011). Persons whose monthly expenditure falls below the above-mentioned figures are considered poor. This estimate is based on a sample survey of consumer expenditure carried out by the National Sample Survey Organisation every five years. The Ministry of Rural Development, on the other hand, carries out a census of all rural households in the country; the first census was carried out in 1992, followed by one in 1997 and another in 2002. Those identified as poor are referred to as "BPL" (below poverty line) households, and they would benefit from a range of schemes funded by this ministry, such as the Indira Awaz Yojna (Rural Housing Scheme).

State and local governments and other central government departments can use these measures of poverty provided by the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Rural Development. For instance, the Public Distribution System, a system whereby essential commodities are supplied to the public at subsidized prices, is jointly managed by central and state governments, where the former, through the Food Corporation of India, has the responsibility for the procurement, storage, and allocation of food grains to state governments, and the latter is responsible for the identification of families below the poverty line.

Area-Based Approach to Poverty

Area-based approaches to poverty may be categorized into strategies for rural and urban areas. In the case of rural areas, for example: (i) redistribution of land, notably through land reforms or, in other cases, improvement of the productivity of land (e.g., to increase the yield per hectare or to reduce the labor input per hectare) available to the poor through technological innovations (i.e., better drainage, application of higher-yielding crops, fertilizers); and (ii) government strategies that seek to directly address what the poor lack in terms of ownership of land and capital and access to credit and employment opportunities. These include wage employment and self-employment programs that are largely universal in nature (i.e., not exclusively for predetermined target groups). The Jawahar Rozgar Yojna (JRY) and Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) are examples of wage employment and self-employment programs in India (Ahluwalia, 1990; Bhagvati, 1988). Similarly, there are specific area-based approaches for urban areas. The Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY) was initiated in 1997 with the aim of providing opportunities to the urban poor. It had two components: (i) the Urban Self-Employment Programme, where assistance was given to the urban poor to set up self-employment ventures along with easy access to specialized credit (i.e., without collateral security); and (ii) the Urban Wage Employment Programme, where the urban poor within the jurisdiction of the urban local government would be given opportunities to work on the creation of public assets such as roads and housing developments (Planning Commission, 2001).

More recently for urban areas, the JNNURM was introduced in 2005 with an estimated budget of rupees 100,000 crore[2] during a period of seven years, with the central government committed to contribute[3] rupees 66,000 crore (Government of India, 2012). The JNNURM funding aims to improve infrastructure provisions in cities and to provide better services for the urban poor. An agency of state government coordinates and monitors the implementation of JNNURM projects funded across different cities in that state. Some officials from this agency also work in local governments to provide technical support in identifying and implementing the JNNURM projects. The JNNURM consists of two components—the Urban Infrastructure Program and Basic Services for the Urban Poor. The Basic Services for the Urban Poor component of the JNNURM scheme is 80 percent centrally funded, 10 percent by the state government, and the remaining 10 percent by the local government.

Developing a "Poverty-in-Context" Approach

In the previous section, we looked at two broad approaches to conceptualizing/engaging with poverty in India. Each of these can make significant contributions to understanding poverty. For instance, a person-based approach provides an estimate of poverty measure that can be translated into providing adequate safety nets for vulnerable individuals by different agencies of the government. The use of "below poverty line" households is an example, where the government basically says, "we think you are poor; this is why and this is what you should be entitled to." On the other hand, an area-based approach sets out a framework to provide opportunities for capital accumulation/production for particular groups, depending on whether they are in urban or rural areas. Wage employment schemes are based on such an approach, where the government argues that "we think you are poor, and based on where you live, this is how we could support you so that you do not remain poor."

Each of these approaches presupposes that units of conceptualization are similar across the country; that is, a below poverty line household in one part of India is similar to others in a different part of the country, or that particular area-based approaches for urban areas have the same framework for implementation as in other urban areas. But we argue that although each of these approaches makes significant contributions to understanding and engaging with poverty, neither seems to consider the role of context in how poverty might be conceptualized. In other words, it is our contention that one below poverty line household is potentially different from another, and that area-based approaches in one location would be shaped by factors that are not necessarily the same in another. Thus, there emerges a need to set out a framework, or what we refer to as a "poverty-in-context" approach, that has the potential to capture characteristics of vulnerable people living in different areas.

From previous discussions, it appears that each person-based and area-based approach to poverty does not consider a poverty-in-context dimension (see Table 2) or what Moore, Choudhary, and Singh (1998) refer to as understanding poverty from the point of view of both the poor and non-poor. There also remains

Table 2. Conceptualizing the Poverty-in-Context Approach

	Person-Based Approach	Area-Based Approach	Poverty-in-Context Approach
Overall focus	To provide an estimate of poverty measure that can be translated into providing adequate safety nets by different agencies of the government	To provide opportunities for capital accumulation and production for particular groups of individuals in urban/rural areas	To value the role of the poor individual(s) in constructing notions of ill-/well-being To facilitate the possibility for "social mobility" by moving away from a static notion of the "poor" To support the development of mental maps/role of place from the point of view of the poor, and to consider geographical pathways that might be seen as a path to well-being by poor individuals
Tools/strategies/ programs	For example, definition of below poverty line households	For example, wage employment schemes	For example, preparation of a community-led "pathways to well-being" matrix
Philosophy underpinning the approach	We (the experts) think you are poor, and this is how you should be supported to engage with poverty	We (the experts) think you are poor as a result of being in a particular location, and this is what you could do not to remain so	We (the poor) understand dimensions of our ill-being, and these are the pathways we think we want to tread to escape poverty

a need to acknowledge the existence of deep differences (Watson, 2003) in how "empowerment, oppression, and exclusion" (Fincher & Jacobs, 1998) are shaped by differences in priorities and contingent circumstances of an individual group (e.g., ethnicity, gender, class, race). In contrast, experts who tend to generalize the contextual dimension of poverty shape existing approaches to poverty in India; that is, individuals of certain characteristics in one area are assumed to experience/understand poverty with those with similar characteristics in another area. In the next section, the case study is introduced. The CDP initiative is briefly discussed, and the possibility for adopting a poverty-in-context approach within its preparation is explored.

Case Study

One of the key features of the central government–led initiative JNNURM is to empower local authorities to "tackle local problems effectively" through the preparation of a CDP. The aim of a CDP is "to identify and plan the future economic growth of the city and to reduce urban poverty" (Trivandrum Municipal Corporation, 2006, p. ii). A Detailed Project Report is also prepared that identifies a range of projects (e.g., slum redevelopment) to realize the aims of the CDP. In addition to preparing a CDP and an accompanying Detailed Project Report, local authorities also use the JNNURM funding for the following: (i) training and capacity building and community participation, and (ii) grants for project implementation.

The Indian central government identified a range of cities across the country and set them the task of preparing CDPs, placing them under three categories: (i) Category A, cities with a population over 10 million (seven cities were identified within this category); (ii) Category B, cities with a population over one million (28 cities were identified within this category); and (iii) Category C, cities with a population less than one million (28 cities were identified within this category). The case study this article investigates is a Category C city, Trivandrum (with a population of 835,228 as per Census 2011 and an area of 141.74 km^2), one of the local authorities that is in receipt of JNNURM funding. Trivandrum is the capital of Kerala, one of the southern states in India. Also, as per guidelines of the JNNURM initiative, central government funding accounts for 80 percent of the total costs, and the Trivandrum Municipal Corporation (local authority) and Kerala state government (regional authority) contribute 10 percent each.

The CDP preparation typically consists of four key phases, two of which fall within area-based and person-based approaches to poverty. The following discusses how the CDP was prepared in the case study area, Trivandrum. In Phase 1, experts[4] in Trivandrum Municipal Corporation (local authority) and the Kerala state government identify poor neighborhoods in Trivandrum where projects for JNNURM funding are to be identified. New/previous surveys of areas are carried out, and criteria for inclusion/exclusion, such as level of public services, quality of built environment, and percentage of the population living below poverty, are employed. In Phase 2, for the particular neighborhoods identified in

Phase 1, experts identify a range of projects. A Detailed Project Report is then compiled that lists projects in various neighborhoods in Trivandrum city. In Phase 3, a list of beneficiaries in identified neighborhoods is drawn up based on criteria such as living below poverty line and is authorized by local councilors. In the final phase, the local authority submits the CDP along with the Detailed Project Report and list of beneficiaries to the central government for securing funding for projects. Once approved, implementation of projects commences in selected neighborhoods.

It appears that currently only area-based and person-based approaches are used. These may not effectively capture needs and priorities in poor neighborhoods in Trivandrum city. Williams, Thampi, Narayana, Nandigama, and Bhattacharaya (2011) point out that contemporary conceptualization of poverty in Kerala does not reflect context-based priorities but rather is derived from national frameworks. This then raises questions of what the components of a place-based understanding of poverty might be. It is in this regard that we argue that the CDPs (see Figure 1) as part of the JNNURM initiative adopt a poverty-in-context approach. The preparation of a community-led project-identification process through a pathways to well-being matrix or poverty mapping can be made part of the preparation of CDPs. We particularly focus on the development of a poverty-in-context framework and pathways to well-being matrix. These draw on an approach that records the perceptions of poverty from the point of view of the poor (Moore et al., 1998). But one should avoid the pitfalls of reductionism, for instance, in saying that this is how the poor in a particular area view themselves and/or understand poverty. In addition, it is important to see how and whether the poor see poverty as an expression embedded across geographies, and that an escape from the poverty cycle has as much to do with income/material well-being as it does with physical translocation from existing sites of deprivation to improved living environments.

This is where the preparation of CDPs has an important role in translating the conceptions of well-being of disadvantaged communities into "aspirational spaces." Reproduction of inequality occurs at particular sites, and there emerges a question of whether the concept of a poverty-focused CDP has the potential to address this. Therefore, it becomes necessary to understand key themes and indices that would define a poverty-in-context approach and how such an approach can be applied to the preparation of a CDP. The following section outlines the methodological approach.

Poverty-in-Context Framework

The poverty-in-context framework this article advances has two parts: first, the question of engaging with local/contextual perceptions and views of what poverty might be and what some of its key dimensions are; and second, to appreciate what key actors in the local area/context (including poor people) believe the CDP should be doing and what the basis of its project identification should be.

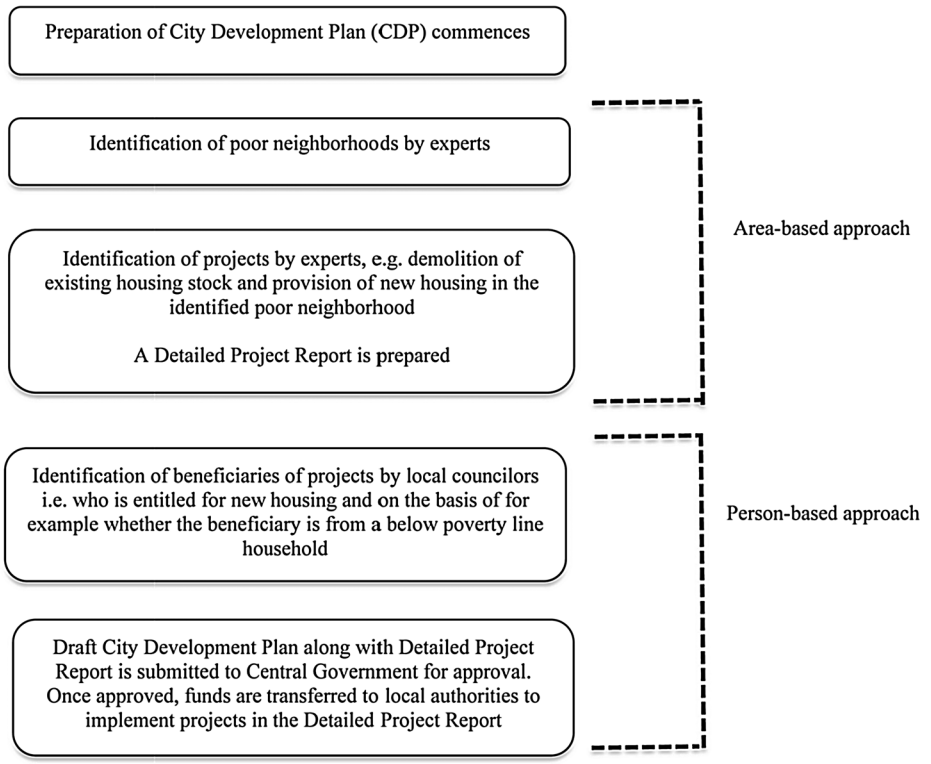

Figure 1. Various Stages in Implementation of Projects for the Poor Through the Preparation of City Development Plans.

With regard to perceptions of poverty, an identification of themes and indices within themes was carried out from interview transcripts. The following illustration shows key themes of a poverty-in-context approach. The poverty-in-context approach can be seen as grounded in four interrelated themes (see Figure 2): (i) personal details; (ii) life history and circumstances; (iii) perception of poverty; (iv) knowledge, awareness, and support. The first two themes build on the person-based approach to poverty discussed earlier in this article. However, the themes from the interviews have a distinct focus in that they place emphasis on characterizing the individual in context rather than decontextualizing the individual (which typical person-based approaches do). Similarly, the last two themes derive from an area-based approach to poverty that was set out previously in the article. Again, the emphasis is different and is on the relationship between individuals in particular places and not merely a categorization of areas such as urban and rural that assumes individuals in such areas have similar characteristics. Indices within these four core themes are further elaborated:

1. Personal Details (1.1 Demographic/partnership status, 1.2 Details of accommodation, 1.3 Economic activity, 1.4 Health, 1.5 Other)

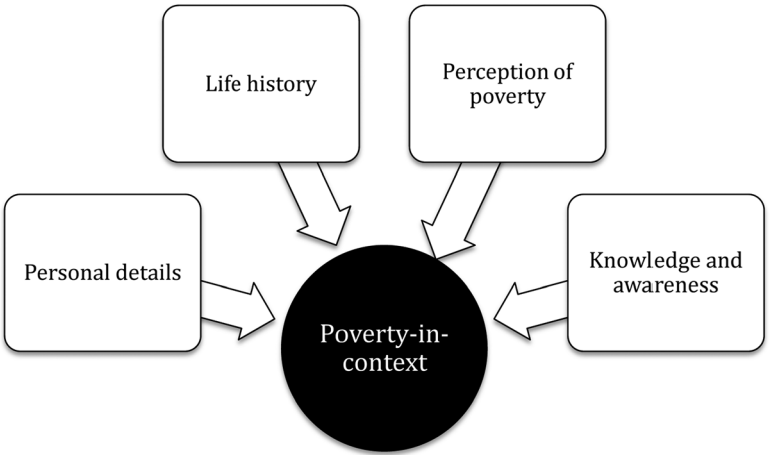

Figure 2. Key Themes Within a Poverty-in-Context Approach.

2. Life History and Circumstances (2.1 Experiences of effects of poverty in childhood, 2.2 Ethnic, religious, caste, gender and migrant identity and poverty, 2.3 Presence of effective relationships (family, networks, friends), 2.4 Coping strategies, 2.5 Others)
3. Perception of Poverty (3.1 Key measures for defining poverty, 3.2 Comparing one's life with others, 3.3 Charting out pathways to well-being, 3.4 Other issues)
4. Knowledge, Awareness, and Support (4.1 Knowledge of poverty alleviation programmes, 4.2 Awareness of the role and responsibilities of various levels of govt., 4.3 Support from NGOs and the private sector, 4.4 Gatekeepers and access to benefits from poverty policies, 4.5 Political nature of BPL (Below Poverty Line) card)

Since in this article we focus on demonstrating how an in-context approach that reflects local needs and priorities might be used to conceptualize poverty, responses within the theme "perception of poverty" are used to illustrate two interesting findings. First, that person-based and area-based approaches are still used in talking about poverty (see Table 3), for instance, in how income (person-based) or level of infrastructure provision (area-based) is considered an important indicator of well-being. Equally, the second finding points to a conceptualization of poverty shaped by the particular context (see Table 4). Such a conceptualization was underpinned by a range of elements, such as associating poverty with labor migrants. Thus, it can be said that the poverty-in-context framework provides a basis for understanding the various themes and indices with which poverty is conceptualized in a particular context. Using such themes and indices that reflect contextual realities along with person-based and area-based approaches will provide a richer understanding of poverty.

Table 3. Themes and Indices Drawn From Interview Transcripts Reveal Elements of Contemporary Area-Based and Person-Based Approaches

Theme	Indices	Approaches to Understanding Poverty	Excerpts From Interview Transcripts (Respondent)
Perception of poverty	Measures for defining poverty	Person-based approach	1.1 "A person on low-income is poor." (A1)
		1.1 Income	1.1 "Somebody without income (is poor); he/she may have a home and facilities but enough for spending on needs." (A2)
		1.2 Basic needs	
		1.3 Enumeration	
		Area-based approach	
		1.4 Level of infrastructure	
			1.1, 1.2 "Anybody who does not have food, or money to buy food is poor. If you have land and are not living in a rented house, then you are not poor." (A5)
			1.1, 1.2 "Before we talk about poverty, you must appreciate the nature of society in Kerala. Kerala's standard of living is very high. Basically, it is a consumption society. Manual laborers can charge you about Rupees five hundred a day. Rice is coming from other states. The price of rice in Kerala is about Rupees 33 per kilo while just across the border, the price is Rupees 11 per kilo. Similarly, for tomatoes, the price in Kerala is about Rupees 30 per kilo, while in Tamil Nadu, it is about Rupees 4 per kilo. Given such prices of commodities, I would say, if there is no earning member in the household, that family is poor." (B4)
			1.3, 1.4 "The Municipal Corporation carries out a survey of slums and identifies clusters for investments. Criteria for slum identification are based on national standards." (B1)

Table 4. Themes and Indices Drawn From Interview Transcripts Reveal Elements of a Poverty-in-Context Approach

Theme	Indices	Approaches to Understanding Poverty	Excerpts From Interview Transcripts (Respondent)
Perception of poverty	Measures for defining poverty	Poverty-in-context approach	2.1 "A poor is not what you would visually perceive as being poor." (A2)
		2.1 Image of poor	2.2 "I can only say a person is poor if I get to know the person in some detail." (A3)
		2.2 Qualitative	2.1, 2.2 "In Kerala, homeless population is less and probably people in particular sectors like agriculture might lack the ability to get one square meal. But in general, nobody in Kerala would say 'I am poor.' Although the case, they will not acknowledge they are poor." (C1)
		2.3 Gender	2.1, 2.3 "Sadly, appearances are used to judge whether a person is poor. For example, the dressing put on by people. Sometimes I need to talk to a person, and only then can I understand whether a person is poor or not. So, I always take care when dressing up otherwise I can be viewed as poor. And then people won't respect me. This is particularly challenging for women." (A4)
		2.4 Safety and security	2.3, 2.4 "I need to have a decent house. With so many people currently to a room, what further humiliation do you want a poor person to suffer" (A8)
		2.5 Alcoholism	2.4 "We are now living in a new flat since the last 2 months…this is more than enough and I and my children feel safe. The government is also planning a new play area. By making the area better, we will have fewer problems such as gang-related crimes." (A7)
		2.6 Labor migrants	2.5 "Poverty is intricately related to alcoholism and we don't know yet what to do with alcoholism." (A9)
		2.7 Social dimension	2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.7 "Alcoholism is a major cause of poverty. For instance, when the father and his friends drink alcohol at home, daughter and mother have to stay out of the house. At that point, the women are poor although according to the BPL (below poverty line) survey, they might be a home where there are members who are earning over the poverty threshold and that they have at least one square meal. So there is, what I would say, a prevalence of a social aspect of poverty. This social aspect of poverty is unique to Kerala and is in line with your phrase, 'place based understanding of poverty.'" (C1)
		2.8 Poor in Kerala	2.6 "Look at the migrants. They might look poor but they are earning well. They are ready to do any type of work—for instance, ironing clothes, they will charge Rupees 5 per shirt and Rupees 15 per Sari. They are getting work because the native population are charging too much." (B4)
		2.9 Religion	2.6, 2.8 "One of the most important reasons I am here in Kerala, apart from the better pay, is that there is no harassment here in the state. In other parts of India, the police and troublemakers who demand payments frequently trouble us. Also, health concerns are taken care of by our employer. (A5)

(*Continued*)

Theme	Indices	Approaches to Understanding Poverty	Excerpts From Interview Transcripts (Respondent)
		2.10 Status	2.7 "Now increasingly, questions are raised as to whether somebody with a mobile phone or a motorcycle should be classified as BPL (below poverty line). Politicians are very clear that there is not to be death from starvation—either it should be from old age or from alcohol consumption. Thus, what it means to be poor is culturally bounded, not isolated notions as in other parts of India." (C1) 2.8 "The manner in which people in the BPL (below poverty line) list in Kerala are identified needs to be updated. In fact, BPL card holders are not really BPL. But what does seem to work is the Ashraya list for destitutes, and who get support from the government. Thus, I would say that the true poor in Kerala are around 30,000." (B4) 2.1, 2.6, 2.8 "Other than migrant laborers, nobody is poor in Kerala. Maybe you are looking for poverty in the wrong place—Bihar and Orissa is where you would find poverty. I mean poverty is here about the need for housing improvements. But it is not the people who are poor. Maybe in some specific areas like certain coastal areas and areas around railway yards, you will find some instances of this but other than that people are generally well off." (C2) 2.1, 2.2, 2.7, 2.8 "Perception of income can be misleading for example, a person with 50 coconut trees is affected with seasonal variations. But people within the unorganized sector, there is no fixed income. Temperature may indicate fever, but it is not necessarily the cause. Multi-facets of poverty need to be considered. Poverty as a social disease, social aspect is there, the educational aspect is there…giving 100 days of employment will cure only employment but not poverty…the poor need access to a range of facilities, not just income…they need state action, community action and individual action." (C4) 2.2, 2.7, 2.8 "Understanding that poverty is multi-dimensional and that different levels of poverty need different responses. This would mean developing a range of deprivation indices such as poor housing conditions, widow in the family, nobody earning in the household, poor health, presence of disabled member etc. And then mapping it on to different gradations of poor, that is, very poor, slightly better, not-so-poor, and also in terms of how many of the criteria in the poverty index do these individuals match, that is, 9 out of 9, or 7 out of 9 etc. Overall, the key to addressing is to be able to manage effectively the access to resources—who deserves what and when" (C4) 2.1, 2.2, 2.7, 2.8 "The overall focus of Kudumbashree (poverty eradication mission of state government of Kerala) was to develop multiple dimensions of poverty and to provide

(*Continued*)

Theme	Indices	Approaches to Understanding Poverty	Excerpts From Interview Transcripts (Respondent)
			opportunities based on the 'symptom' of poverty. Whether a person is a not-so-poor or worse-off poor, will determine the type of opportunities that will be provided under Kudumbashree. For example, a Rupees 40,000 loan for a better off poor, if provided can help him/her to set up a chicken farm and by running such a farm, he/she will be able to repay Rupees 400 per month. So, we thought that there should be different grades of poverty—from the not-so-poor to the very poor. For instance, the not-so-poor, loans are provided by the state, while for the very poor, free houses are provided by the state. This approach to tackling poverty was rolled out across the state in 2002-03. So I would say that the core philosophy of Kudumbashree is 'to give the poor the confidence to change' and 'to prevent the inter-generational transmission of poverty.' Understanding that poverty is multi-dimensional and that different levels of poverty need different responses. This would mean developing a range of deprivation indices such as poor housing conditions, widow in the family, nobody earning in the household, poor health, presence of disabled member etc. And then mapping it on to different gradations of poor, that is, very poor, slightly better, not-so-poor, and also in terms of how many of the criteria in the poverty index do these individuals match, that is, 9 out of 9, or 7 out of 9 etc. Overall, the key to addressing is to be able to manage effectively the access to resources—who deserves what and when." (C4)
			2.8 "There are no poor in Kerala. Yes, the quality of houses needs improving. But there are so many facilities here in Kerala. In other parts of India, people are really poor, for instance, they don't even have a latrine." (A9)
			2.8 "I think, poverty in Kerala is very unique. In fact, it is questionable whether people are really poor. This is especially when you compare slums in Delhi. Here ownership of resources is very high, for instance, television, refrigerators and mobile phones have high usage in the slums in Kerala. I think overall, slum improvement is needed, for instance through better housing quality but people don't need facilities." (B1)
			2.9 "There has been a historical bias towards the Hindu poor—particularly due to the injustices of the caste system. This resulted in mass conversions from Christianity prior to 1947. However, after India became independent in 1947, and due to redefinition of poverty, those Hindus who did not re-convert from Christianity did not enjoy the benefits of being poor, for instance they did not receive any stipend for school and college education including additional support for library facilities. I know about this because I come from the Scheduled Caste community. Some

(*Continued*)

Theme	Indices	Approaches to Understanding Poverty	Excerpts From Interview Transcripts (Respondent)
			of my family members had converted to Christianity before 1947 but refused to reconvert after 1947. As a result, they are and remain poor. My family on the other hand, had not converted prior to 1947. I therefore got the benefits of being in the SC community (i.e., stipend and support for education, and more recently, promotion in my public sector job). Thus, I think poverty alleviation is about getting opportunities particularly from the government. The difficulty is in not knowing how to get those chances or also in how to utilize the chances when you are offered one. Some of my colleagues (from the SC community) were (and still are) reluctant to stipends for education or the range of support that was being offered to students from lower castes. They did not want to be exposed, or shown as being poor. This is the same thing when you have to produce caste certificates for job interviews—many people are reluctant. Again, these are the problems of social aspect of poverty." (C1)
			"I don't think we are poor anymore. We get respect because we live in a decent house even if your neighbors are not in a proper house." (A7)

Pathways to Well-Being Matrix

However, a description of poverty in a particular context using themes and indices is only one part of the framework. The second part is to explore what can be done about poverty and how to translate this richer understanding into a tool that could be used in community forums. Key criteria for well-being are first drawn up from the transcripts from the point of view of each of the respondents. These are then mapped onto a matrix that not only captures the different criteria but also indicates pathways to well-being, that is, in how the poor think their intended state of well-being might be achieved.

The illustration in Table 5 suggests two broad pathways: (i) aspirational spaces and (ii) aspirational lifestyles. In the former, an intended state of well-being is only seen as possible if a physical relocation takes place or, in other words, if spatial mobility occurs. In the latter, socioeconomic mobility is seen as the key determinant for achieving an intended state of mobility. Each of these preferences has important consequences for the nature of projects identified in particular neighborhoods. For instance, those preferring an "aspirational pathway" might be looking for projects that would help them move into another part of the city. For others, remaining in the same location might be important.

Discussion

The preparation of CDPs was rolled out as an ambitious project by the Government of India (as part of the JNNURM initiative) to improve the quality of urban infrastructure and to provide due safety nets for the urban poor struggling with employment opportunities and inadequate housing and services. One of the

Table 5. Development of a Pathways to Well-Being Matrix: Aspirational Spaces, Aspirational Lifestyles

Respondent	House	Job	Migrant	Caste	Education	Health	Political Connections	Happiness	Aspirational Spaces	Aspirational Lifestyles
A1										
A2										
A3										
A4										
A5										
A6										
A7										
A8										
A9										
B1										
B2										
B3										
B4										
C1										
C2										
C3										
C4										
C5										
D1										
E1										

tasks was to improve urban areas by allowing local authorities to engage with poverty in context. With regard to this task, local authorities, with support from their respective state governments, would identify projects for which funding would be sought from the central government under the CDP/JNNURM scheme.

An area of general concern was how these urban projects would be identified. In particular, it was not clear how poverty was understood or situated in relation to the needs and priorities of the local area. In response, we engaged with various stakeholders in the case study area to develop a poverty-in-context approach. The resulting poverty-in-context framework produced (i) a rich, descriptive understanding of poverty through a range of themes and indices and (ii) a pathways to well-being matrix that sets out the basis for translating ideas into action. Thus, the question of how best to use these findings in the preparation of future CDPs in Trivandrum (or other cities across India) emerges. We propose a revised approach to the preparation of CDPs (Figure 3). There would be a range of phases, where the first phase would be underpinned by an area-based approach, the next two by a poverty-in-context approach, and the last by a person-based approach.

Following the preparation of CDPs, experts identify poor neighborhoods in Phase 1 (this is an area of future inquiry, where one can consider how a poverty-in-context approach might be used in this phase as well). In Phase 2, key themes and indices underpinning a poverty-in-context approach are first identified based on the methodology presented in this article. Following this, a pathways to well-being matrix is developed for the particular poor neighborhood. Experts now identify projects based on this matrix and prepare Detailed Project Reports. In the next phase, a list of beneficiaries is drawn in these neighborhoods by virtue of attendance/participation in community forums and is ratified by local councilors. In the final phase, following approval by the central government of the CDP and the Detailed Project Reports, projects are implemented in select neighborhoods.

Conclusion

This article contributed to an understanding of how a poverty-in-context approach might be used as a basis for identifying pro-poor projects while preparing CDPs. In particular, the findings in this article shed new light by arguing that a poverty-in-context approach can be effectively developed by drawing on two elements: (i) a poverty-in-context framework that appreciates unique characteristics of poverty in a place beyond the conventional area-based and person-based approaches and (ii) a pathways to well-being matrix that links the understanding of poverty developed using the poverty-in-context framework with aspirations for well-being of poor populations.

In so doing, we addressed the core question of how elements of a place-based understanding of poverty might be developed. Recording perceptions of poverty from the point of view of the poor in a particular location (Moore et al., 1998) is clearly significant, but the question of how this might lead to the development of a place-based understanding of poverty is what this article addressed. It is

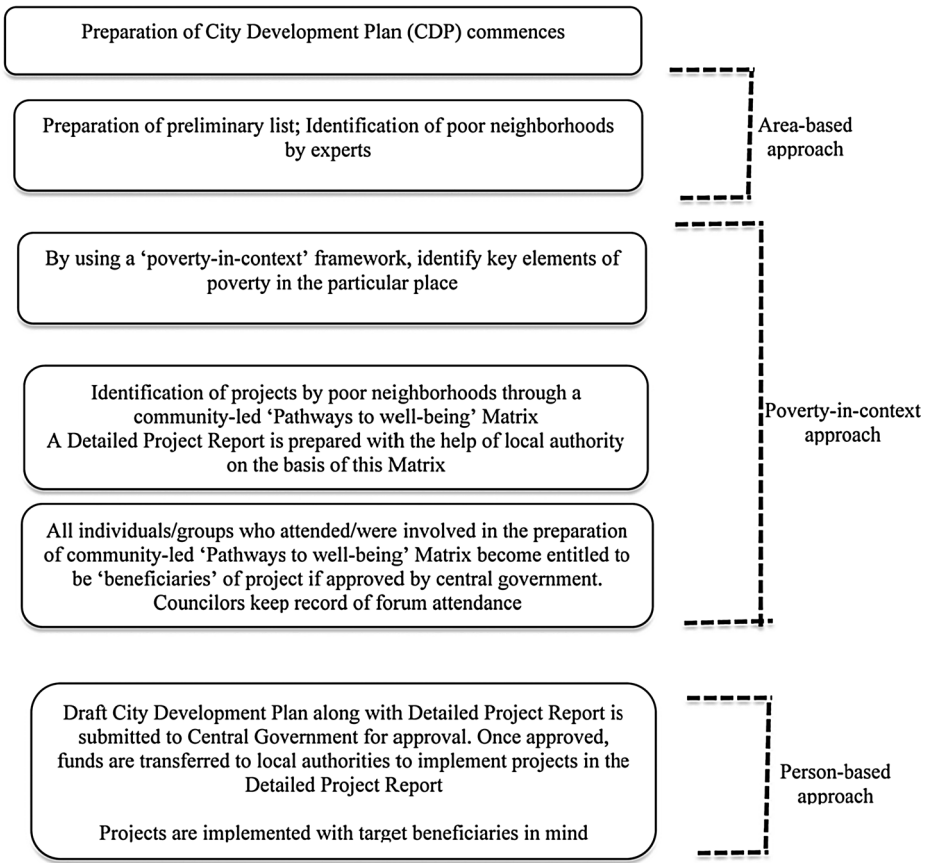

Figure 3. Using Poverty-in-Context Approach for Preparing CDPs in the Future.

important to understand the poor's view on poverty, such as how and whether the poor see poverty as an expression embedded across geographies, and to understand that an escape from the poverty cycle has to do with income/material well-being and the physical translocation from existing sites of deprivation to improved living environments. The former can be addressed through a range of interventions, including employment generation schemes or housing up-gradation projects; however, the latter is more challenging, as the interventions need to engage with the reproduction of inequality that occurs at particular sites within human settlements. This is where the preparation of CDPs, required as part of the JNNURM scheme, has a potentially important role in translating the conceptions of well-being of disadvantaged communities into actual spaces where the aspirations of the poor can be realized.

However, further work needs to be done. For instance, what might be the best way to bring together pathways to well-being matrices prepared in different neighborhoods? Who might be responsible for integrating these elements? Furthermore, is integration possible, or even desirable? Having said that, the

poverty-in-context approach this article developed is no doubt an important starting point and clearly throws light on an alternative to existing person-based and area-based approaches to poverty alleviation in the Indian context.

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Notes

1. Data collection was carried out as part of British Academy–funded project Ref. SG10153, titled "The possibility of local communities shaping an understanding of poverty? Experiences from the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission for improving the lives of urban poor in India" in May–July 2011.
2. One crore Rupees = 100 lakh rupees = 10,000,000 rupees = £133,333.33 = $200,000 (assuming an exchange rate of 1£ = rupees 75 = $1.50).
3. 66,000 crore rupees = 66,000 × £133,333.33 = £8,799 million = £8.8 billion (over a seven-year period). So, an annual estimate of central government contribution = £8.8/7 = £1.2 billion = $1.8 billion.
4. This includes professionals from the engineering, architecture, town planning, and environment departments in the local authority; officials from both municipal and state administration; and other experts from relevant state and central government departments.

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