

Neoliberal Governmentality and Social Policymaking: Current State of Informal Workers

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This presentation will engage with the transformation in the policy and practices under the influence of neoliberalism. Drawing upon the contemporary context of select policy formulation–labour legislation in India over the last one decade, the presentation will highlight the influence of neoliberal governmentality in the making of policy for informal workers. The theoretical formulation of governmentality explicated by Michel Foucault has been influential in analysing how neoliberal governance transfers responsibility to the individual for their welfare and well-being and how the withdrawal of the state from welfare has been presented in the name of care and welfare of the population. The presentation is drawn upon my own existing and ongoing research work, mainly conceptual with insights on specific policies and the way it is put in practice. The presentation locates welfare policies for the informal workers in this conundrum of neoliberal governmentality, as it has direct implications for the constituency of welfare and policymaking. The presentation is divided into four sections: followed by an introduction, the second section provides brief details of the ‘theoretical framework and approach’. The third section considers the uneasy relationship between neoliberalism, governmentality and welfare policies. The section engages with neoliberalism and governmentality vis-à-vis labour legislation. The presentation will position the discussion with specific reference to unorganised sector workers in the cities. Hence, the fourth section introduces the case of how policy changes vis-à-vis informal sector workers have been introduced through neoliberal governmentality. This is based both on policy analysis. Through an analysis of the performativity of neoliberalism and operational strategies of governmentality, the fifth section's conclusion’ highlights the challenges for informal workers amid neoliberal governmentality.

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