

THE TABOOED CITY: POWER, POLITICS, CONTESTATION IN DHARAVI SLUMS, MUMBAI*

Abstract

With accelerating urbanization around the world, the cities are witnessing unprecedented demographical and geographical growth. The urban center in this condition remains no more a static entity but becomes a ground for power struggle for coexistence and legitimization of collective identity by various groups. The common property resources in the city become a commodity of multiple claims and contestation by its residents often opposing the hegemonic power. Thus, it becomes important here to understand the right of commons in the city and their everyday struggle to assert the civic right and existence in the plural structure of the city. The legal framework of the cities which are manifestations of a bigger play of state power and convergence of rules, policies often blur out the existence of inculcating the informal quarters of the city as a comprehensive whole. Thus, the fundamental question arises like "Whose City?", "Urban governance in support of whom- the privileged or the marginalized?" in the context of the capitalistic society and era of prolific globalization. Do the law and city synchronize together to sustain these vulnerable, informal residents of the city and their welfare? The paper tries to seek the relationship of state and political framework with these "excluded zones" where profit, political interest, and a constant contestation of coexistence in the city of Mumbai. The Dharavi slum in the middle of the city is a sprawling 525-acre area of legal dilemma and physical manifestation of the paradox of development, housing over one million. Dharavi's residents like most slum dwellers around the world, live in illegal housing units lacking basic amenities and suffer from social exclusion. The paper would also try to understand the scale and scalability of various neo-liberal redevelopment processes initiated by political will, largely vested in the interest of

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capitalistic gains, and focusing less on addressing the complexities and issues of the existing socio-economic conditions of these marginalized dwellers at large.

Keywords: Taboo, Power, Politics, Law, Mumbai, Slums

Résumé

L'année 2009 restera une année charnière du présent siècle, car c'est l'année où l'on a assisté, pour la première fois, à un changement majeur de la diaspora dans les centres urbains de l'Inde. Dans ce contexte, il est essentiel de comprendre les négociations sociospatiales qui se déroulent et pourraient se dérouler à l'avenir entre la ville en expansion physique et la vie quotidienne, les relations travail-vie de ces communautés invisibles au sein de la ville. La ville en pleine croissance, caractérisée par une disparité économique et une énorme polarisation des infrastructures, tient-elle compte des aspects critiques et sociaux qui sont profondément enracinés dans ces communautés prospérant dans un tissu physique vaste et en constante évolution ? La planification des villes est la manifestation d'un jeu plus vaste de règlements et de démonstrations de pouvoir qui occulte souvent l'existence de l'intégration des quartiers « exclus » de la ville dans un ensemble holistique. En conséquence, ces quartiers se développent sporadiquement dans la ville, créant un sentiment d'anarchie. Cet article analyse la relation de l'État et de l'hégémonie politique avec ces « zones exclues » où le profit, la stabilité politique et une saga constante de l'échec des propositions de régénération d'un habitat très diversifié au sein de la capitale financière de l'Inde. Le bidonville de Dharavi à Mumbai est une zone tentaculaire de 525 acres avec des toits abîmés et des conditions sanitaires délétères, abritant plus d'un million de résidents diversifiés en termes de religion et d'ethnicité ainsi qu'une large gamme d'occupations informelles qui le rendent unique. Les habitants de Dharavi, comme la plupart des habitants des bidonvilles dans le monde, vivent dans des logements illégaux dépourvus des commodités de base et souffrent d'exclusion sociale. Le présent document examine de manière critique l'échec de

l'engagement communautaire, les tentatives de mobilisation en formant des coopératives, la formation de plusieurs programmes au cours de trois décennies et les échecs de presque toutes les politiques soulevant des questions de réaménagement, comment l'évaluation des coûts et les programmes de financement étaient généralement inefficaces. L'article tentera également de comprendre l'échelle et l'extensibilité des divers processus de rénovation néo-libéraux initiés par une volonté politique, largement dévolue à l'intérêt des gains capitalistes et se concentrant moins sur les complexités et les problèmes des conditions socio-économiques existantes.

Mots-clés : Tabou, Pouvoir, Politique, Droit, Mumbai, Bidonvilles

Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.¹

INTRODUCTION

Spread over 2.4 square km; with an estimated population of twelve million people in slums and tenements, and one million on pavements and sidewalks², Dharavi is an amalgamation of neighbourhood clusters with migrants from all over India. Less than a century ago it used to be a marshy wasteland with the Koli community being the original inhabitants of this settlement. Over a period of time other micro-industrial and manufacturing units of leather, textiles, food, and

¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction* (Robert Hurley trans., 1978) 95.

² Minar Pimple & Lysa John, 'Security of Tenure: Mumbai Experience' in Alain Durant-Lasserve & Lauren Royston (eds), *Holding Their Ground: Secure Land Tenure for The Urban Poor in Developing Countries* (2002) 75, 78 tbl.4.1.

pottery mushroomed within this settlement. Like nearly all-informal settlements, Dharavi has been formed by a process of incremental housing or room-by-room accretion. This is a process of self-organization where families house themselves, first in a single room with others being added over time.

Dharavi is remarkably well located: a triangular land at the center of the port city of Mumbai, it is served by railway lines on two sides and bounded by the Mahim Creek and its mangroves on the third. The Mahim, Matunga and Sion train stations mark three corners; the arterial Western Express Highway passes along its northern border.



Figure 1. Location of Dharavi, Mumbai, India (source: Authors)

PART 1. EVOLUTION OF DHARAVI

In *pre-colonial* times; Dharavi, home to the Koli fishing community, lied on the northernmost tip of Parel Island with the Mahim Creek serving as their source of livelihood for centuries. This was then on the outskirts of the Island City. In the natural process of island reclamation, the Mahim

Creek dried up leaving the fisherfolk stranded, and the newly-surfaced marshy land offering new space for new communities to move in.

The first people to settle there did so because the land, mainly used as an informal rubbish dump, was free and unregulated. The first migrations to Bombay were from Maharashtra and nearby areas like the Konkan and Gujarat. Communities first settled in south Bombay but, as the city grew, authorities pushed them to what was then the city's edge. By the end-1800s, the potters from Saurashtra were relocated here and set up their colony (Kumbha Wada), as also the Muslim leather tanners from Tamil Nadu (because of the proximity of the abattoir in Bandra). Artisans and embroidery workers from Uttar Pradesh started the ready-made garments trade, and Tamilians set up a flourishing business, making savories and sweets. Dharavi thus became an amazing mosaic of villages and townships from all over India - different religions, languages, and entrepreneurs all surviving shoulder to shoulder. It expanded in part because of expulsion of factories and residents from the peninsular city center by the colonial government and the migration of poor rural Indians into urban Mumbai. As long as Dharavi was on the edge of the city, the authorities could ignore its existence. But as Bombay expanded northwards and its population grew with new industries, the pressure on land increased, and Dharavi was drawn into the heart of the city.

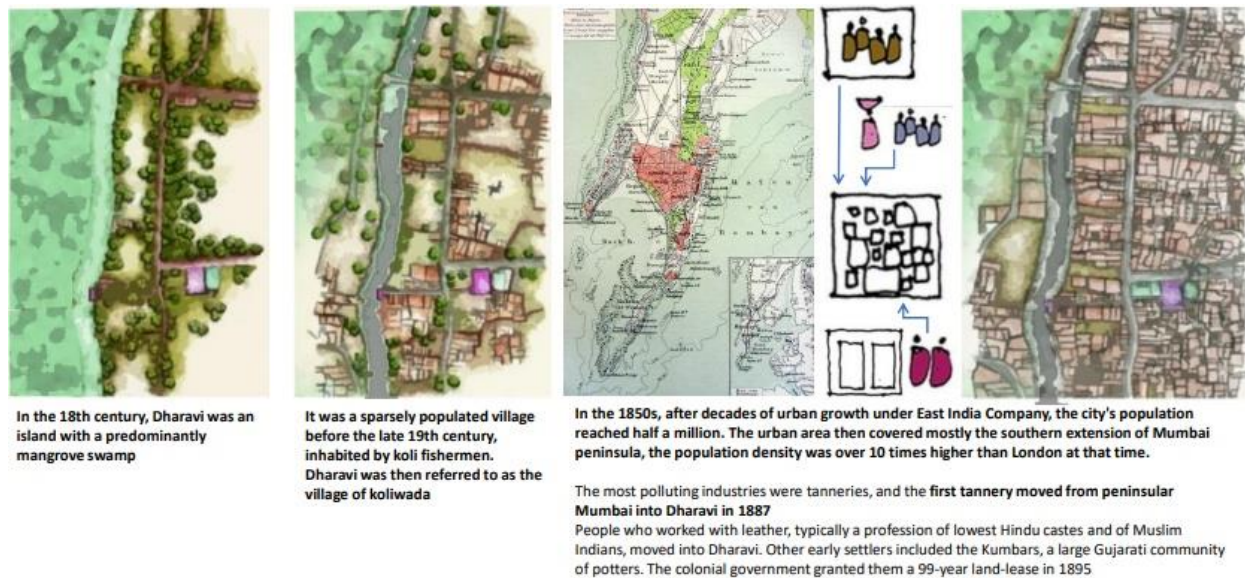


Figure 2. Evolution of Dharavi (source: Authors)

From this once marginalized, neglected area Dharavi is now strategically located between inner-city districts and Mumbai's new financial center called the Bandra–Kurla Complex, near the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport. Over decades the site has been dramatically transformed and its development consolidated, layering generations of slum dwellers in what are now 85 nagars (neighborhoods), each of which manifests a distinct and unique character, with diverse ethnic mixtures and religious narratives,³ organized in a complex labyrinth physical layout, built around multifunctional work-live dwelling forms.

This 525-acre lively mosaic is very robust coalesce of tens of thousands of small businesses and inhabitants of hundreds of thousands of different religions, social classes, languages, countries, and ethnic diversities, yet socially and culturally and economically dependent on each

³ Sheela Patel and Jockin Arputham, "An offer of partnership or a promise of conflict in Dharavi, Mumbai?" *Environment and Urbanization* (2007, Vol 19 No. 2) 506.

other. Its enterprising residents produce clothing, leather goods, food and ceramics in addition to the unique occupation which operates a unique recycling business.

A slum of ENTERPRISES:

You name it, Dharavi will produce it

A 1986 survey of Dharavi by the **National Slum Dwellers' Federation (NSDF)** counted **1,044 manufacturing units of all kinds, big and small.** A later survey by the **Society for Human and Environmental Development (SHED)** noted **1,700 units.** The actual number is likely to be larger as many smaller units, which work out of homes and lofts, are left out in the survey.

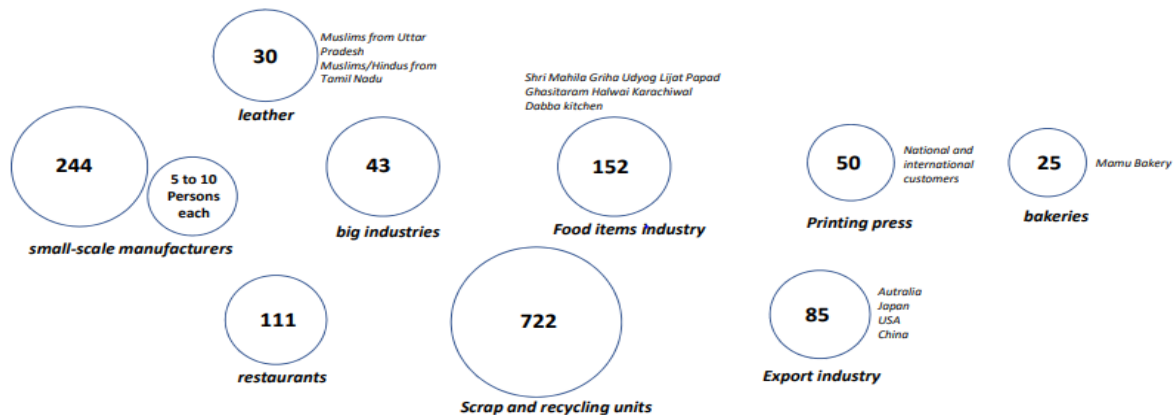


Figure 3. A Slum of enterprises (source: Authors)

Dharavi stood up from the swamp as it was. First, the house was built on stilts, and then the land was reclaimed little by little and then brick by brick. The plural landscape thus evolved spatiotemporally is evidence of the survival instincts of the poor and their resilience. Little by little these marginalized communities developed the land and grew families and neighbors flocked in envisaging for a better economic future and became a full-fledged urban village with generations working in the same craft. Official support for this phased process was announced in the 80s when the city provided its urban infrastructure and services: clean water, sewage systems, roads, and social services by the Ruling Government of the state. Current law and policy of the state have alluded towards capitalistic development and profit-making without much concern about the

holistic development of the communities residing here. The events followed at Dharavi throws light on the misalignment of law in the city with the urban regeneration in the first phase and then also iterates out the leanings from the failures of these policies and attempts of redevelopment so that it can be incorporated in other regenerations in the core of Cities of Global south which somehow is teaming up with a similar scenario.

PART 2. DHARAVI FOR THE OUTSIDERS

The general perception of Dharavi that has also become iconic images representing poor and dispossessed urban communities is that of the crowded colorful buildings with shanty roofs, open sewers, recycling workshops and alleyways teeming with smiling industrious people.

Many view slums as warehouses of “*surplus humanity*,”⁴ and slum dwellers as a “*surplus population*.”⁵ Others have characterized slum dwellers as the “*outcast proletariat*”⁶ or the “*disincorporated*,” and “*unincorporatable*” of capitalism.

The Government holds slum dwellers responsible for “pressure on civic amenities, crime, social imbalances, economic exploitation, unplanned growth, deterioration of city beautification, culture, and environmental setback to city development in a planned manner.”⁷

⁴ Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums: Urban Involution and the Informal Proletariat* (New Left Rev. 26 2004) 23.

⁵ Henry Veltmeyer, ‘Surplus Labor and Class Formation on the Latin American Periphery in Ronald H. Chilcote & Dale L. Johnson (eds), *Theories of Development: Modes of Production or Dependency?* (1983) 201, 212-13.

⁶ Mike Davis, *The Urbanization of Empire: Megacities and the Laws of Chaos* (Soc. Text, 81 Vol 22 2004) 10-12.

⁷ Nikhil Joseph and Pascal Goodman, *Detailed Project Report: Construction of Four Storied E.W.S. Housing for Slum Dwellers at Savdha Ghevra Phase III under INNURM*, Slum and JJ Department, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (January 2008).

To the State, Dharavi may be an enduring development nightmare but to financial institutions and real estate developers, a gold mine because of its prime location. This led to the proposal of redevelopment and putting Dharavi under the limelight as a privileged gateway to Mumbai's total transformation which in reality is driven by the idea of large profits, investment companies and real estate developers holding complete disregard to the current physical landscape and without the involvement or recognizing the local constructs, knowledge or interests of its residents.

PART 3. DHARAVI FOR THE INSIDERS

Dharavi is a vibrant mosaic of multiple occupations, religions, ethnicities and cultures that are intertwined within spaces socially, culturally and economically. Its enterprising residents manufacture garments, leather goods, foods and pottery, besides running a flourishing – and unique – recycling business. These spaces overlap with each other in a day-to-day cycle of existence. It is a city within a city, self-constructed of impurity, ambivalence, and in a state of constant metamorphosis. Its prime positioning in the heart of Mumbai, causes an increase in land value and the potential for its generation of capital adding to the complexities of livelihood and industry, symbolizing an *acerbic snapshot of law and illegality tangled in a brutal drama of power and resistance in the lives of slum dwellers*.⁸

It is a *complex microcosm* of practice, a symbol of a multiplicity of urbanisms (political, economic and social), a process grown out of struggle, adaptation, and resilience, inventing new

⁸ Slumdog Millionaire, Danny Boyle, Fox Searchlight (2009).

and innovative modes of living and of inhabiting. Dharavi is the symbol of informal urbanism in how the underprivileged facets of society plan, negotiate and combat a superimposed exogenous plan.

Against all odds, Dharavi has developed into a “kind of self-sufficient, self-sustaining ‘village,’ one with a “vibrant community and economy,” which “has achieved a unique informal ‘self-help’ urban development over the years, without any external aid.”⁹

PART 4. REASONS FOR LARGE AREAS OF THE CITY REMAINING INFORMAL

The British colonialist’s configuration of cities was for the *assertion of control* and the incorporation of the colony into the economies of empire.¹⁰ Hence, in colonial India, there was a spatial divide between the centers of gravity of colonial presence and the native quarters occupied by the natives who were not a part of colonial security, administrative, and commercial regimes; pushing them beyond the spatial and social margins. A policy of neglecting even minimal housing needs of native neighborhoods escalated into a *de facto* housing policy of reliance on local elites who built overcrowded, unsanitary, but highly profitable tenements.¹¹ This was how it began and continued as a result of long neglect.

Post-independence, the state institutions and developmental interventions neglected Dharavi for long periods and left them to their own devices. And when the area came under the

⁹ Prakash M. Apte, ‘Dharavi: India’s Model Slum’ (Planetizen, Sept. 29, 2008) <<http://www.planetizen.com/node/35269>>

¹⁰ Anthony D. King, *Urbanism, Colonialism, And the World Economy: Culture and Spatial Foundations of The World Urban System* (Routledge Vol 4).

¹¹ Mariam Dossal, *Imperial Designs and Indian Realities: The Planning of Bombay City 1845-1875* (1991).

radar of formal processes because of its location and thriving population, they did not know how to recognize and value the collective investments that people have made in producing and maintaining their neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the automatic reflex of official agencies was to demolish what people had painstakingly built up. Redevelopment becomes much harder when the people's incremental process has moved too far ahead for it to be reconciled with the requirements of a formal master plan. Rapid urban growth combined with diminished state capacity is the recipe for mushrooming slums in the global South.¹²

PART 5. FROM CITY OF ENTERPRISES OR (CITY OF ANARCHY) TO CITY OF POWER, POLITICS AND CONTESTATION

Dharavi is built over many decades entirely by successive waves of immigrants fleeing rural poverty, political oppression, and natural disasters. No master plan, urban design, zoning ordinance, or construction law can claim any stake in Dharavi's prosperity.¹³ Contested urbanism in this case depicts the *hegemonic and technocratic discourses* behind the top-down interventions, focusing attention on the politics of urban transformation without any meaningful participation to purposely and systematically exclude slum dwellers. Their conflict is not in form of protest or provocation, *"but rather, as micro-political practice through which the participant becomes an active agent who insists on being an actor in the force field they are facing"*¹⁴

¹² Frederick Van der Ploeg and Steven Poelhekke, *Globalization and the Rise of Mega-Cities in the Developing World* (Cambridge Journal of Regions Economy and Society 1(3) 477 2008) 490-94.

¹³ Matias Echanove and Rahul Srivastava, Taking the slum out of "Slumdog" *New York Times* (New York, 21 February 2009).

¹⁴ Jacques Ranciere, *Dissensus on Politics and Aesthetics* (Steven Corcoran ed and trans, Continuum 2010).

The special feature of Dharavi lies in the intricate connection between residence and workplace since about 80% of its population both live and work there. The proposed housing would rapidly change hands and the area would become gentrified turning into a huge housing and commercial complex but with no place for the poor. How do slum dwellers respond to their condition? What measures of resignation and resistance frame their existence? Relevant here is Gayatri Spivak's evocative question: "Can the subaltern speak?"¹⁵ well...only, if the subaltern could speak—that is, speak in a mode and manner intelligible to us—then they would not be a subaltern.¹⁶

The plucky, penniless residents ranged against the mighty and power of greedy landowners, real estate developers and politicians who are oblivious to the community values and industrious lifestyles of the residents, and instead see only an opportunity to modernize the city and make wondrous profits. With their contestation, they underscore the urgency of the task to reimagine concepts of citizenship, class, identity formation, and social change in tune with the rhythms of lived experiences of the urban poor. They are trapped in this unending cycle of the diverse agendas of government agencies, the struggles over rights to land, the bustling resilience of informal economies, and the injustices in the lack of resources and decent quality housing.

PART 6. WHOSE CITY?

Dharavi was at the center of the furor recently—with several real estate players trying to vehemently superimpose their hyper capitalistic projection on this subaltern landscape. Global

¹⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (1988) 197.

¹⁶ Ibid.

private equity firms, local property developers and the state government all view Dharavi as a privileged gateway to Mumbai's lucrative transformation from a very Eurocentric point of view. The question is: Are these hegemonic projections catalyzed by the state is somehow putting the residents at the center of development or pushing them to the periphery till they become invisible citizens to Mumbai? It is evident after three decades of envisaging policies and failures of the same that the primary aim of redeveloping Dharavi is towards the hunt for profits where the state Government is an undeclared, implicit gainer. The current plan aims to stack the exiting density of Dharavi in high-rise apartments, allocate them a meager 4 square meters of residential unit and the land freed up by clearing the existing morphology will be transformed into a modern, high-value apartment, shopping malls and all those amenities a modern city proudly boasts of. In this whole arrangement, there is not a status and economic liberty? In most of the cases the fundamental human rights like basic housing, sanitation, social infrastructure, tokenisms in planning fail to challenge the hegemonic neoliberal market forces. The right to the city in the words of David Harvey is:

The question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from that of what kind of social ties, relationship to nature, lifestyles, technologies and aesthetic values we desire. The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and

ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.¹⁷

The law of the city should certainly protect the citizens in totality with an equal distribution of amenities and ensuring the proletariats, lesser privileged citizens', proper right to the city making this segment of society legitimate in terms of their agency and claim to urban resources.

The informal and underprivileged people of society especially in the cities of the global south had shown an extreme sense of endurance, durability and resilience in claiming their territories of habitation which are constantly challenged by the neo-capitalistic aspiration of the state - the legal framework is often just the manifest of the cataclysmic desire in wiping out the plurality and create a "sterile city."

PART 7. CONTESTED URBANISM AND A HEGEMONIC MARKET LOGIC

The paradox of the law and the city has created Dharavi into a static Ghetto in the middle of the fast-evolving Mumbai. The biggest irony remains while the city with its humongous, prolific skyscrapers, plush internal spaces are dependent on these informal workers there is not much done for them and they lurk as a background shadow to those swampy planned neighborhoods. The city of Mumbai had always been an urban center that drew huge proportions of informal workforce and labor and had been consistently impending under the threat of an urban collapse due to swelling population and the city eviscerating its citizens failing to provide basic infrastructure and civic rights. With time this phenomenon became a paradox for the city. Let's

¹⁷ David Harvey, *The right to the City* (NLR 53 October 2008).

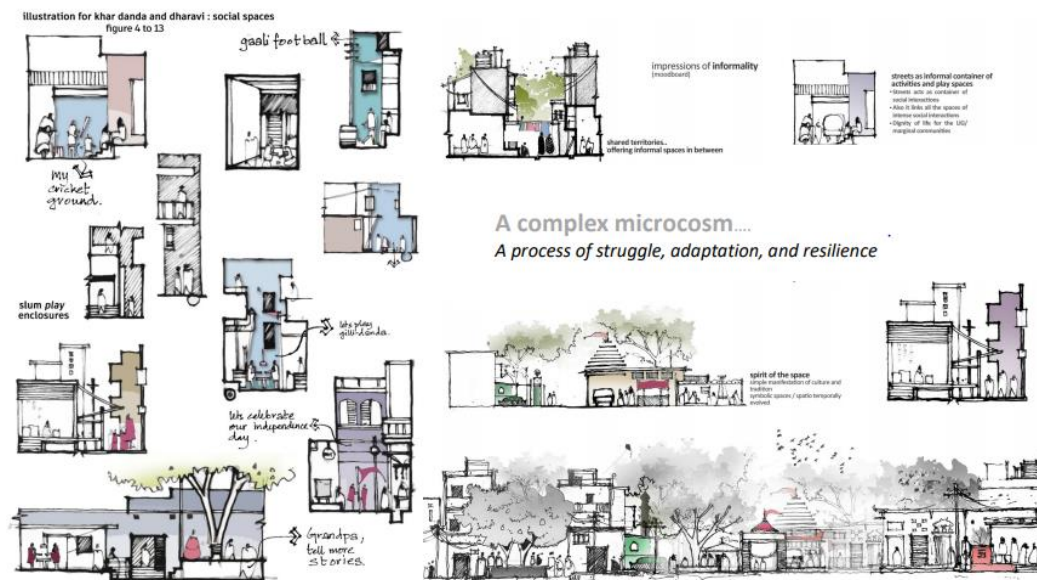
see how? From the very beginning, cities have expanded through the geographical and social agglomerations of surplus products, services, resources. Urbanization thus happened beyond gentrification at the surface is a class phenomenon since the surplus has been extricated from someone or somebody and the dispersal of the product for making gains typically lay in the hands of few people at the top of the production pyramid. Following excerpt by David Harvey:

This general situation persists under capitalism, of course; but since urbanization depends on the mobilization of a surplus product, an intimate connection emerges between the development of capitalism and urbanization. Capitalists have to produce a surplus product in order to produce surplus value; this in turn must be reinvested in order to generate more surplus value. The result of continued reinvestment is the expansion of surplus production at a compound rate—hence the logistic curves (money, output and population) attached to the history of capital accumulation, paralleled by the growth path of urbanization under capitalism.¹⁸

Thus, a politics of Capitalism is set up eventually to find a profitable market for capital surplus. The period between 1960 till 1980 saw a mass migration and diaspora shift happened at Dharavi, the supply of workforce was plenty and it plummeted the rise of the real estate industry. The surplus workforce capitalized for the construction industry primarily ensuring them very little remuneration for the service offered. The law of the

¹⁸ Ibid.

city tried to improve the condition of the informal labor in the city through some futile interventions.



In 1976, the government attempted to give slum dwellers “legitimate status”. Residents received photo identities and were required to pay a small sum of money, of which a fraction was paid to the government as land rent. This scheme allowed some of the dilapidated housing to be reconstructed, and tenants were allowed to build lofts over the existing housing structures. Water and electricity were also provided. However, the scheme ended by 1991 due to administrative difficulties that arose from a lack of accurate records of the number of residents and houses.

The World Bank funded the Slum Upgradation Programme (SUP) of 1985. Under this Programme, existing slum land was leased out to cooperative groups of slum dwellers at affordable rates, and loans were granted for environmental and housing improvements. However the conflicts over land value remained as asset distribution to families was unequal, leading to discontent among certain populations in the slum who did not receive the program’s benefits.

Following is the timeline of proposals floated by the Government; however, the law had fundamental loopholes. Although on the paper it was meant to act towards the favor of the residents of Dharavi, however it was rhetorical and flawed at the implementation level.

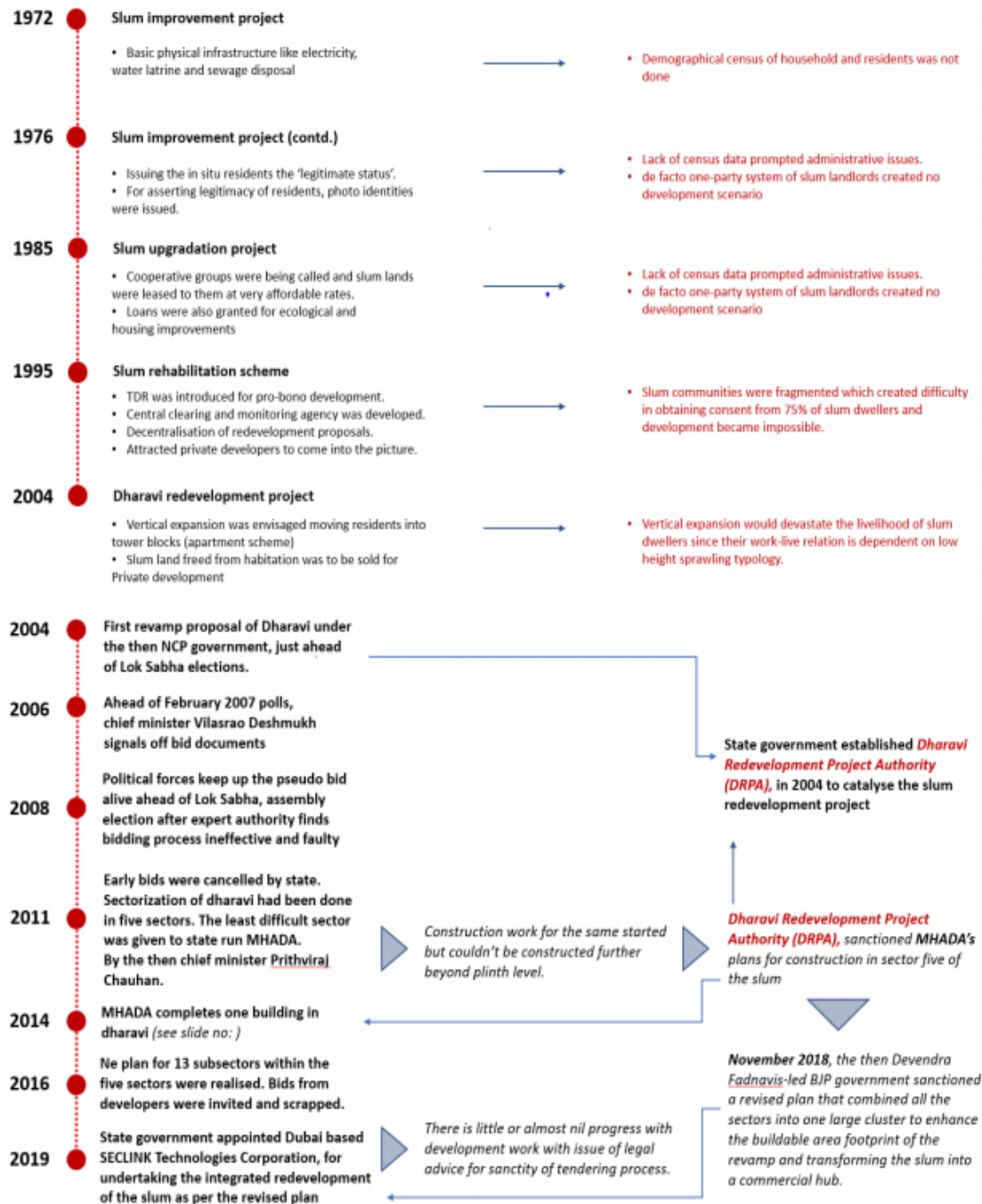


Figure 5. Inadequate affiliation of the residents creating failures of law (source: Authors)

Much of Dharavi's slum dwellers do not have adequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation, putting them at risk of water-borne diseases. Many slums are located in hazardous areas such as floodplains, increasing their sensitivity to weather conditions associated with climate change. Instead of looking at the poor plight of the slum dwellers the State Government tried capitalizing on the land in the favor of the financially privileged, politically favored, mighty land developers influential in the real estate power game both internationally and within the influential periphery of Mumbai. The builder lobby thus formed a kind of opposing force to the marginalized communities. Their simple interest was to grab the prime land and create a non-contextual, extremely profitable real estate development akin to The Bandra-Kurla Complex at proximity wiping out the informal economy and social structure of these invisible citizens. The State Government who is meant to protect the civic and fundamental rights of the people completely failed to modify its approach of treating this settlement as a special precinct teeming with local entrepreneurship and a beehive of informal economy that is crucial for the efficiency of the urban ecosystem of Mumbai and supporting the builder lobby with laws that treat Dharavi as a real estate goldmine.



Figure 6. From giant slum to urban nightmare? (source: SPAARC and KRVIA, Mumbai)

The private developers had always envisaged the urban regeneration of Dharavi as a homogenous entity, wiping out the plurality and the variety of activities, socio-cultural systems that evolved through many communities coming and residing in this part of the city. Since the land is fundamentally owned by the state government, they consistently tried to ignore the rights of the inhabitants and favored doling out higher blanket FSI (Floor space index) creating a conflict between the development process and the support of citizens towards it. The laws charted out for the development process incentivized and tried triumphing the real estate-driven approach than considering it as a public welfare project.

PART 8. REFLECTIONS AND LEARNING FROM THE FAILURE

To understand the failure of law and policies for the urban regeneration of Dharavi, the events revolving around it are dissected through the lens of three post-colonial concepts: Agency, Hegemony and Subalternity.

Agency refers to the ability to act or perform an action. In contemporary theory, it hinges on the question of whether individuals can freely and autonomously initiate action, or whether the things they do are in some sense determined by the ways in which their identity has been constructed.¹⁹

Dharavi teaches us the incredible resilience and the collective effort by the citizens to catalyze grassroot level change. Slum dwellers and their organizations were very ill-informed about urban programs. A NGO was formed, SPARC (Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers) and NSDF (National slum dwellers federation) which was formed as a cooperative system by the slum-dwellers in their working relationship focused on the question of how the Dharavi census could be harnessed to the cause of the urban poor. Initially, they had a stimulating discussion of techniques, of existing lacunae in research; pooled information about rules and regulations governing amenities meant for the poor - further highlighting present ignorance. The general state of misinformation amongst the poor and the misdirection of organizational and activist energies was brought home forcefully. They focused on the discussion with people at large to discover how communities identify themselves and also locate the locally acknowledged

¹⁹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (Routledge 2004).

leadership of the area. Finally, they met the leadership to discuss planned possibilities and suggested a partnership.

A dedicated group of local women residents organized under the folds of the *Mahila Milan*, with continued engagement on water, sanitation and other infrastructure issues. As a spin-off, they also carried out additional initiatives of savings and credit for women entrepreneurs towards purposes such as business, deaths, marriage, education, health emergencies, etc.

The most prominent feature of the project was the way it created a mission-driven, decentralized, bottom-up, the women-led organizational process of the poor for solving their housing and infrastructure needs.

Dharavi residents also use elections and political patronage circuits to sustain a precarious yet resilient existence through political mobilization to secure protection and concessions. While the voter turnout in wealthy sections of Mumbai is a mere twelve percent, from the squatters in the slum colonies, for whom the issue of who comes into power means the difference between living within four walls or on the street, it's eighty-eight percent.

With Dharavi being a multilayered slum, there was a variety of agencies involved starting from the basic unit of Dharavi residents themselves to the State Governments. Dharavi has challenged urban policy and planning confronting neoliberal mega-projects imagined upon the everyday life of its dwellers and inhabitants.

Hegemony Hegemony, initially a term referring to the dominance of one state within a confederation, is now generally understood to mean domination by consent. Fundamentally, hegemony is the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their interests are the

interests of all. Domination is thus exerted not by force, nor even necessarily by active persuasion, but by a more subtle and inclusive power over the economy, and overstate apparatuses such as education and the media, by which the ruling class's interest is presented as the common interest and thus comes to be taken for granted.²⁰

To assert their claim and to challenge the spurning attitude of the State government to improve the financial condition of the slum-dwellers, the residents over time have created a robust informal economy within the slum. Dharavi is also a hub of small industries that turn over an estimated \$50- 100 million annually. Its more than 5,000 industrial units produce textiles, pottery, and leather and provide recycling, printing, steel fabrication, and other services.

This picture of Dharavi shows a space not invested with formal legality. Rather, it is a liminal zone of regulatory vacuum, where predatory entrepreneurs, corrupt politicians, and state functionaries operate unfettered by law or public scrutiny.²¹

Subalternity Subaltern, meaning 'of inferior rank', is a term adopted by Antonio Gramsci to refer to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes. Subaltern classes may include peasants, workers and other groups denied access to 'hegemonic' power.²²

The birth of new enterprises and dominant groups: People have learned to react creatively to state indifference. Dharavi is all about ingenuity. Over 60 years ago, it started as a small village in the

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Mahmud Tayyab, *Slums, Slumdogs, and Resistance* (American University Journal of Gender Social Policy and Law 18, no. 3 (2010) 685-710.

²² Ashcroft et al (n 19).

swamp and grew without government support, becoming a multi-million-dollar economic miracle supplying Mumbai with food and exporting goods, crafts and manufactured goods to places as far away as Sweden. Dharavi is an economic achievement that the world needs to pay attention to during this global recession.

The formations that the subaltern groups produce to press their claims: to uplift and address the community issues and issues with their habitation the slum-dwellers formed several cooperative organizations. Most importantly being the National slum dwellers Federation. Other grassroots level organizations like Rajiv Indira and Suryodaya Co-operative Housing Societies with approximately 900 families directly dependent, these co-operative societies and specialized committee's individual family units contribute their voice and opinion into the project. Through a collectively pooled system of capital generation empowers the communities to negotiate with the state.

CONCLUSION

The study of Dharavi and failed attempts to redevelop the urban quarter proves the fact that unless everyday life, socio-cultural aspects and economic factors of the proletariat and the working class in the city are legitimized and taken into consideration by the state, no degree of law and city can be in conjunction with each other. Tokenism is an important process in a bottom-up approach of urban regeneration. "The question of the subject and subjectivity directly affects colonized

peoples' perceptions of their identities and their capacities to resist subject/subjectivity the conditions of their domination, their 'subjection'." ²³

In the declaration of Descartes "I think, therefore I am", the centrality of human individuality was confirmed. It is important here to uphold the legitimization of the proletariat group of the society, their collective identity and the very essence of their existence as part of the city as an important aspect in envisaging an urban regeneration by the state. The law of the state should be more humane and people-centric reflecting the aspiration of the community for seamless conjunction of the various socio-economic and cultural forces converging within a particular area, in this case, Dharavi in the context of Mumbai city.

²³ Ashcroft et al (n 19).