

Grass root mixite: some lessons learnt from Dharavi/ Mumbai

MSc. Arch. Haluk Uluşan

Istanbul Technical University, Faculty of Architecture, Taskisla, Taksim, 34437 Istanbul, Turkey e-mail: halukulusan@gmail.com

Dr. tech. Renate Bornberg

Leibniz University Hanover, Institute of Urban Design, Herrenhäuser Str. 8, 30419 Hannover, Germany

e-mail: bornberg@iras.uni-hannover.de

Abstract

Dharavi, formerly a fisher village on one of the islands today forming Mumbai-India, is currently Asia's biggest slum. However, the term slum does not apply to the zone, since it is a vibrant place of people with various backgrounds and ways of living. Residents of Dharavi also fulfil plentiful tasks, such as collecting rubbish, cleaning streets, or serving in households of the upper class people of Mumbai. Thus, Dharavi appears to be an urban mixite neighbourhood with small scaled workshops, small industries, but has also schools, temples, mosques, churches, community facilities and water tanks. This grass root neighbourhood is a tightly packed but highly efficient urban mixite where working and living are placed next to each other. This paper aims to highlight the dynamics behind the run down und "unaesthetic" façades of this unique area, and to achieve a deeper understanding of the dynamics and the hidden potentials of "urban mixite".

Keywords: mixite in informal settlements, segregation, integration, local culture

Introduction

Already for a few decades, the benefits of mixed-use developments are widely discussed, particularly in Western Europe. Both, scholars and politicians do believe that mixed use developments will bring more life to streets, will positively influence social control and with this add to a higher security of streets, and will help foster a sense of belonging (Gehl: 1987, Tibbalds: 2001). By extending opening hours, by placing private homes in city centres, or by mixing various facilities in a neighbourhood, streets are believed to be more vibrant, resulting in liveable and well accepted neighbourhoods. Thus, some city centres, particularly in Central and West Europe, were regenerated according to these principles with amazing results: cities, such as Munich, Heidelberg, Lyon, Vienna, Salzburg, Strasbourg, Cambridge, Oxford, to name only a few, have lively and well accepted public spaces, particularly city centres.

However, urban regeneration projects following mixed use development is by no means standard world wide. In many cities and towns urban design still follows the theories of urban zoning, traffic engineering and segregation of people. It is still often the main idea of a city regeneration project that people should live in outskirts, ideally in gated communities, come to work and shop via flyovers to the city centres' large shopping malls, and return back home to the outskirts without ever setting foot on the ground level

of cities. The architectural patterns follow an international style, high rise buildings, shiny glass and steel facades, completely sealed from the adjacent areas.

Such city spaces are not created for all inhabitants. Mainly upper class and middle class people can afford these amenities of the luxury environments. Lower class people are separated from this world, often they only can participate in this life as a servant, maybe as a housemaid carrying shopping bags, or as nannies or drivers of private cars. With such tendencies, not only are public spaces outside of the city centres vast and underused spaces, many cities are segregated, too: segregation processes along status, but also along ethnic groups. By favouring the privileged upper class and by neglecting the needs of all other groups in the city, contact between different groups is made impossible (Kusno:2010). Contradicting to this development, social scientist believe that each city has its own character, an own identity, created by the many individuals with various ethnic and social backgrounds (Löw:2008, Häußermann, Siebel: 2004). It is believed, that the total of citizens, with its various ethnic and social backgrounds form a so called “meta-culture” (Ipsen: 2009), a factor of growing importance in the current process of city branding. From this point of view, mixite in social and ethnic terms is necessary for each city and thus should be fostered.

For a better understanding of urban mixite in a certain geography with its distinct cultural heritage, it is important to get back to vernacular and grass root settlements. Such settlements were developed by and for people living in it. Such a perspective might be seen romantic and lead towards preserving parts of a city, often only for tourism and their perception.



Figure 1 Cityscape Singapore, Shanghai and Hong Kong (source: National Geographic)

Thus, new cityscapes in different geographies appear very similar to each other, almost impossible to distinguish one from another, lacking the input of their localities. The interchangeable architectural features have been imposed by means of mass-production, favouring construction-economy, building efficiency over the response of traditional urban pattern to the natural environment with excuses of the former ones being backwards, uncomfortable, and with the proposed latter ones being more sustainable, hygienic, ecological and ‘modern’. Neglecting the high adaptation ability of userproduced dwellings on the needs of their inhabitants, local architectural qualities and moreover their response to local culture inherited over long periods of time through the memory of the society, translates these structures being replaced with homogenized settlements, mostly with an imposed plan from outside by capital holders or global economical system.



This paper does not aim to achieve a Dharavi- assessment in particular. Dharavi, being the case study of this work with its unique heterogeneous urban functions, will rather lead the paper to lessons that can be accumulated from the spatial, social and economical organization of this grass root district. The industrial functions and the residential environment are feeding each other simultaneously, providing the social sustainability that a living environment vitally has to have. The vernacular built forms originate from a certain economical condition, demands of climate and the characteristics of the geography. Evolving over generations, they always preserve the state of motion and they react accurate to the social demands of their urban configuration. Considering the widely accepted fact that Mumbai would lack a considerable amount of services without it, Dharavi, as a case of grass root mixite, is providing this work the opportunity to monitor the multi-function peculiarities that are manifest in long time evolution of this historical informal settlement, which forged its path until today in such globalised mega-city, which's findings will unfold strategies and questions regarding today's contemporary Western planning paradigms and practices eradicating local architecture in developing countries.

Rethinking an informal settlement : Dharavi

What assigned Dharavi? It's current function and form?

Mumbai evolved from a fishermen's quarter turning into a colonial node for Portuguese, later for the British East India Company. Again later, the railway and port were a response to production increase and the growing importance of the world market. The former small marshy islands were conjoined, and nowadays form Greater Mumbai. This development has provided Mumbai its own growth opportunity as well as its own misfortune. About 60 percent of Mumbai's population lives in slums, occupying a surface of 8 percent of the land, and very few of these areas have been granted sanitation, infrastructure and land ownership (Parasuraman: 2007)

Dharavi, the small fishermen's island lies nowadays in the heart of a city, with property prices higher than in New York. Covering a surface of almost 250 hectares, the estimated population was 500.000 people in 1986, estimated by a survey and is said to be close to 1 Mio. today. It is embedded in the heart of city centre of Mumbai, bordered by Sion, Mahim and Matunga railway stations and by two massive highways. (Gupte:2010)

Dharavi, formerly a marsh-ground island, was home to Kolis, a traditional fishing community dwelling at the periphery of Mahim Creek. As the swamps parting seven islands constituting Mumbai were filled in, the biggest city of India was born. Upon the proclamation of independence in 1947, the city faced an aggressive form of growth towards northern peripheries. With this, Dharavi became a central point within the urban sphere of Mumbai in both ways, spatial but also economical. Independent enterprises started to emerge one after another, producing goods in a wide range from food to leather products. People started to move to Dharavi in the late 1800's and settled alongside an indigenous fishing village Koliwada. Potters from Gujarat, tanners from Tamil Nadu and embroidery workers from Uttar Pradesh were among those who settled down in Dharavi beginning in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the following period tanneries emerged around the area in response to the presence of a nearby abattoir.



Figure 2 Dharavi (source: National Geographic)

Attracting a significant number of Dalit, untouchables (due to the fact that they could live a better life with more freedom here than in their places of origin), Dharavi started to grow, as well as Mumbai started to sprawl its borders towards north. Becoming a modern city with appropriate infrastructure investments, housing, commercial and industrial units constituted an attraction point for migrants throughout the country.

For migrants, Dharavi, represents fertile grounds in terms of work and cheap accommodation. Mumbai wields the characteristics of a typical finance centre in developing countries, with skyrocketing real estate prices and growth form of segregated islands: local solutions on one side, modern buildings on the other. Having access to a settlement for around 4\$ a month is a bliss for people from low-caste groups, meaning that those occupying service jobs are considered as dirty workers by blue- and white-collar labour. For authorities, until recently, Dharavi was a place where illegal settlements were tolerated on their spread away from the city, away from the sight whilst constituting cheap-labour source. It still remains as a primarily low-caste dominated region of the city. But Dharavi grew with the flow of people who literally built the city in the first place.

Not just an informal settlement: a living, feeding and breeding organism

Dharavi does not only provide shelter to its inhabitants, but also a massive amount of economic opportunities by representing the city's big informal sector. One remarkable fact is that most of the dwellings have been literally "built together" of left overs from economic activities such as recycling industries, metal work, leather tanneries, woodwork and manufactured goods like shoes, luggage, jewellery. (Economist: 2005)



Figure 3 Dharavi: Commercial activities at street level (source Gupte, R. 2010)

The urban pattern and the spatial organization of Dharavi has a tight relationship with the activities of its people. Considering the inhabitants being involved in day-long economic activities and the needs of storage of raw materials, distribution and organisation of the goods as well as the climate factors (monsoons, excess heat) are translated into current architectural language of the buildings within area. The integration of this 'grey' economic activities with the partially informal means of residences makes Dharavi attractive for even world-wide famous designers, coming to the district to get their designs produced cheap and high quality.

The built form has a close relationship with the frantic activities within area. Occupations requiring day-long involvement makes the inhabitants keep their work and home close to each other. Houses with run-down, narrow facades serve partially as stores for raw materials too, as well as workshops for handcraftmanship. Facades facing the streets have mostly a shop front. In addition to single-storeyed brick houses, there are also double-storeyed steel framed buildings in the area. First floors are generally commodified and can be accessed with a ladder from outside of the house. If the house has a toilet, then it is mostly at ground floor. Houses without a toilet are supplying their water through *mori*'s, water stores, where also clothes and vessels are washed. (Gupte:2010))

Those who never have had the opportunity to see Dharavi themselves, might think that it is a backwards zone with temporary illegal structures hosting invaders with criminal backgrounds. This mainly occurs due to two reasons. The global city idea, which forces the individuals to experience the city, even their own, as tourists. Henceforth a way of perception emerges, that makes one expect everything not corresponding to the interchangeable architecture, cultural patterns imposed by massmedia, kept purged of sight within city boundaries. Second reason is the misconception of the term slum, which does not necessarily apply to Dharavi, moreover which is widely misunderstood in its general terms, even by professional researchers in their definitions.

Slum?

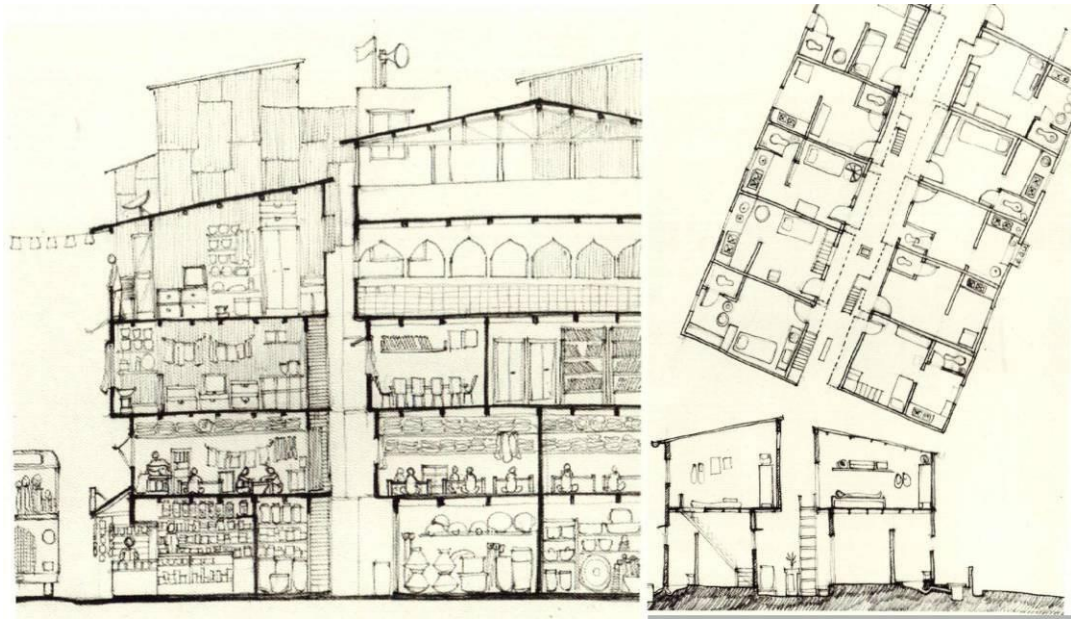


Figure 4: Section and ground floor plan of typical houses in Dharavi (Source: Gupte, R. 2010)

Slum is often a living sphere that people refer to lesser-values, social conflicts and criminals. A place that has to be avoided, and one day to be replaced. The term “slum” defines today a typology of spatial arrangement, an instance of unplanned urban pattern, a displacement in the “machine order” of the modern city. Slums reflect images from our memory of favelas in Brasil, gecekondu’s in Istanbul or dwellings of old London often seen in movies, thus representing a dirty, illegal and inhumane way of living. The term slum then naturally responds to the need of terms like *rehabilitation*, *regeneration* and *replacement* in our perception regarding the occupied district.

It might contain some amount of truth within it, that certain areas reflect the aforementioned characteristics in some cases. There are socially erupted informal settlements that are calling more danger, are more shattered and invaded with ambiguity. But it still does not necessarily change the fact that the informal settlements are ‘social structures’ and reflections of importance in terms of local culture. They refer to indigenous patterns of the origins of their inhabitants, their adaptation is high, organisation level is very much above the level of those settlements produced as an alternative by the government.

The reason that the term “slum” officially defines a settlement category is closely related to the structural disorder such enclaves adopt and this very same reason is preventing them inquiring the legal status they would need to exist without fearing to be dislocated. Dharavi is a very sophisticated urban area built of distinct neighbourhoods of diverse cultural, religious backgrounds, which are fully integrated with each other in social, economical and urban terms. The frantic economical activities roaming throughout the area are transforming the whole district into one giant factory that manufactures goods, recycles the garbage of Mumbai and generates an amount of almost 700 Million Dollars per year.

Previously ignored by authorities, Dharavi was officially recognized as a slum in 1976, when state slum policy shifted from demolition to slum upgrading. During the next decade, the government took measures against crime and brought in basic amenities such as water taps, toilets, drains and electricity. However, the slum upgrading policies never took care of the local people with their ethnic and social backgrounds. Furthermore, the small scaled industries, placed in smallest workshops in almost every house, were not any more included. By the slum upgrading projects, people were shifted around, ripping

them out of their social networks and leaving them without their workshops and thus without the chance to earn their living.

On the other hand is the grass root Dharavi with its very efficient mixite urban fabric, which is perfectly capable of merging people from contradictory backgrounds into one community, with its economic system that led to the fact that nearly everyone has a job and income. It is also important to understand, that much work is found in legal Mumbai, where all sorts of services are made for upper and middle class people. The latter also provides a network between the legal city and the informal settlement of Dharavi: Dharavi can only exist where it is and with its distinct urban fabric. Adopting the traditional typology and using it coherently with possible future improvements might be the key to a successful, sustainable planning.

Understanding Dharavi

Some of Dharavi is illegal, most of it is informal and almost all of it is user-produced, thus it is not following an urban plan (see Fig.5). The sustaining force behind it's density of almost 80.000 people /km2 is its informality. (Sudjic: 2007)

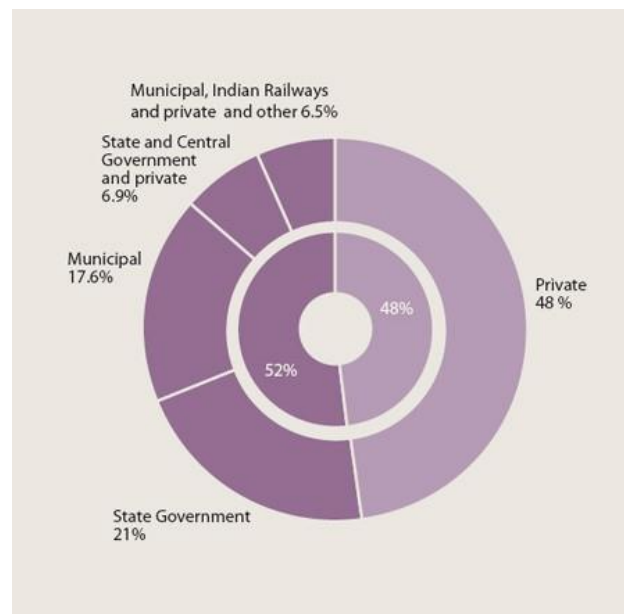


Figure 5 Mumbai's Slum Land Ownership (Source: www.urban-age.net)

In the narrow streets of Dharavi, the scenery is multi-coloured and consists of vast possibilities of different religions, diverse handicrafts and access to multi-culture. When approaching the area from Sion side, the taxi drivers leave the passenger next to Gru-Nanak School, being one of the well known references of the neighbourhood. Upon crossing the bridge over the railroad towards Dharavi, the severe contrast is obvious from the very first moment. Contrary to multi-storeyed apartments of Sion with spacious yards surrounding them, the Dharavi expresses a horizontal, dense structure. The dirty sewer water filling the canal does not prevent the inhabitants from using it as a wash basin, while the

empty gaps between the railway tracks are used to dry the washed laundry (see Fig.6)



Figure 6 Dharavi: Laundry service in Dharavi for legal citizens (source: photo courtesy of Haluk Ulasan, from field trip in February 2010)

Surveys conducted in streets with locals resulted in the reflection of a very remarkable fact that contradicting to popular belief of the Mumbai citizens, the inhabitants of Dharavi are content with living in the district, they find their rents affordable, social cohesion with their neighbours are underlined and an intention to leave the area was almost never expressed by anyone.

There is an inveterate lack of clean water supply, although some parts of Dharavi have access to public water 2-3 hours per day, that however is contaminated by sewage water due bad state of infrastructure. The population of Mumbai is marked by its social heterogeneity cutting across racial, religious, regional and linguistic lines. Each community initially had its niche in the occupational structure.

Dharavi from its spatial concept

The spatial formation of Mumbai goes back to 7 marshy islands at the West coast of India, serving as a fisher village until 16th century, ceded by Mogul's to the Portuguese during 1630's. Upon The Declarance of Independence, the port and the railways hubs triggered the expansion of the city. The discovery of offshore oil, the settlement of national and transnational finance sector in the metropolitan area, the emergence of public sector buildings and educational facilities gave an increasing pace to the sprawl of the city of its fringes. During these years Mumbai got assigned the capital city of Maharashtra, doubling its importance in terms of administration (Risbud:2003).

Occupying a long, narrow peninsula in the Arabian Sea, over population is one of the core problems in addition to the hot, humid climate and strong monsoons ramming the streets during the spring. The population of Mumbai exploded in an amount of more than 12 times during last century. The growth concentrated around the islands until 1950, but it stagnated in 1971 due to the congestion. The flow of refuges put the suburbs at Western and Eastern parts under pressure following the independence. Since 1981, Mumbai has grown into the largest district in State of Marahashtra.

The population has led to densities as high as 48,215 persons per km² in Mumbai and 16,082 per km² in suburban Mumbai (Census of India: 2001). The population kept growing in a wide spread zone in BMR and during the last 50 years it never lost its pace. Increasing economic activity kept attracting immigrants from diverse parts of the country. Greater Mumbai is estimated to host a population of 129 million people in 2011 (BMRDA: 1994).

Mumbai is one of the most colourful and vibrant economic centres. In addition to its traditional and modern manufacturing sectors, it also hosts port, government, financial, trade and service institutions in

its spatial organization. Nearly 40% of the state domestic product is provided by these activities hence the Mumbai is called ‘the commercial capital of India’ (Risbud: 2003)

In Dharavi, there are diverse housing types the urban poor are occupying. These are: *Chawls*; *Patra chawls* (legal and illegal semi-permanent structures); *Zopadpattis* (squatter housing); and *pavement dwellings*. *Chawls* are rental units constructed by entrepreneurs such as factory- and landowners in order to provide shelter for low-income workers between 1920 and 1956. These settlements contain a single room and a cooking place as well as shared wet-cells. Main target was to provide affordable shelter for single men, constituting an important share of the labour force. However once the migrants were settled down in the city, their families followed. Swiftly, the increasing population pushed the urban fabric to its limits (Dua: 1990).

Pavement inhabitants constitute the households with a predominating majority of male migrants occupying footpaths with hut-like shelters, which are located close to job activities. Their estimated number of 20.000 with early 1950 data grew to 62.000 in 1961. The majority of these inhabitants is originating from other parts of India.

Zopadpattis are the widely known squatters in the local terminology. These are the most common informal settlements of lowest social strata, being categorized as ‘slum’. In Mumbai, squatterization goes back to times even prior to The Declaration Of The Independence. The first slum census by legislative bodies was carried out by the state government in 1976 (Government of Maharashtra: 1995) and almost 1 million informal settlement units in roughly 2500 spots were counted.

The majority of informal settlement inhabitants expressed their belonging to the city rather than their places of origin and their future vision lies within Mumbai. Regardless of backwards conditions of their shelters, most of the residents find life in their current dwelling tolerable and they favor city life over their former rural life.

The inhabitants of these shanty-towns are well aware of the lack of social security today, which once was almost always manifest in traditional slum areas. Predominating majority of them seek improvements in their employment situation through finding a better job. Despite their age, gender, wealth and educational pattern almost all of them see education as the direct path to a higher social strata, thus they care for the educational background of their offspring, encouraging them to attend school, in order to make sure they secure a good future. Contradictionally however, they find their living environment not suitable for studying. (Desai: 1995)

The attitude among average slum dweller underwent vast changes as a generation was born and is grown up in these shelters. Employment profile and rate started to depend stronger on education profile but the increase on duration of stay in urban area boosts up the number of unskilled labour force occupying skill requiring positions. Remarkable numbers of formal workers are employed in surrounding environment with vast occupations varying from guards to government employees. Modern industry in these terms is offering better wages than the traditional ones.

A survey by MMRDA (MMRDA: 2002) for Mumbai Urban Transport Project executed in 16.000 households revealed the fact that 33% of the population is working, constituting a setting of 1.46 workers per household. Domestic economic activity is also common as supporting income source varying from grocery shops to many others. 9% of the buildings contain commercial entrepreneurships, 30% of the labour force is self employed, 44% of the work force is employed by private establishments, 9% by government and 17% casual. Average monthly wage is 61\$ and 40% of the households fall under the category poor. Recycling waste is one of the vastly common economic activities among informal settlement residents. Female population provides maid services for surrounding residential areas as well

as helping as head carriers in construction sites among men. Women are working for less income at same occupations as men and they are refrained from job related trainings in order to become qualified workforce. Encouraging reason for them to work on construction site is the make-shift dwellings the offered in addition to their wages by the contractor. Lack of ventilation, water supply and toilets is common for these shelters. (Shah-Vinita: 1996)

People living in these immensely over densificated zones are reflecting a dynamic, colourful canvas in terms of socio-economical and cultural pattern. Surviving adverse conditions, their adaptation abilities are represented in their dwellings.

Dharavi in evolving city-discourse

“The new city of culture and communication is, therefore, also the city of innovation in opportunities, of new trades that support the straditional ones, that revitalize them, modify them, help them to adapt to changing demands. The city of opportunities will require, with ever-increasing frequency, the application of creativity, of strategic vision, of planning, the ability to manage complex phenomena and projects in an innovative fashion.” (Carta: 2004, p.39)

The contemporary city is becoming a machine. The obvious truth that design surrounds the urban space in every production reveals the fact that the user-produced structures are results of a perfect evolution that origins not in the current globalisation stream and capitalism of neo-liberals, but emerges from triggering local factors.

The ongoing ‘de-territorialisation’, is bringing up the tendency to move away from urban centres, creating multi-nodal centres outside city, functioning as secured enclaves, industry zones, shopping centres and cultural valleys. Using the language of one style, they are pioneers of first modern then Post-Modern architectural design paradigms, thus translating into the western international style, that is to be found in any city regardless where she is. Traditional architecture is very often labelled downwards by modernism, but this discourse is neglecting the fact that traditions wield constant motion, it is under ever-lasting evolution throughout history of human beings. Modern world has replaced the agricultural world, it enforced the application of a World idea that is incomparable with former ones. This idea changes first the human and then his world. (Jeanniere: 1994) The countries that entered this phase later have been experiencing a difficult kind of transformation, “a change of change”, the modernization of what has already been modern for a while and had to be modernized more. This is a structure representing the social, cultural, economical, technological and environmental change. (Aslan: 2001)

Aestheticization of urban life

Today’s metropolis is the product of changing traditional life style and preferences. Sociologist Simmel thinks that the roots of modernity lie in urban life itself. He defines the city not with its physical borders but with its sociological aspects. For Simmel the city alone is a spatial identity itself, instead of a spatial identity with sociological consequences. Although it contains a social space within its borders, which has a base effect on social interactions in the society. (Simmel: 2003)

A city of images has no place for mixité Dharavi

Representing the show-off and image aspects of the society, the city architecture today is one of the most important approaches towards city life and culture (Appadurai: 1990). The embedding of representation and consumption within urban space and life is eliminating the traces of culture and locality in architectural products. The architecture of these places is emphasizing the demonstrative and exhibitivie aspects of consumption. User-produced settlements such as Dharavi, which specifically contain a strong

social cohesion, are marked with ‘to-be-replaced’ label, as they do not correspond to the aforementioned image.

Dharavi frustrates every kind of outside description since everything that is said can be true and false at the same time. Urban forms such as Dharavi, like every other living environment, are fuelled by their inhabitants. The transcendent planning attitude of legislative mechanisms mostly favour the global capital accumulation and city image over the well-functioning system of such habitats and result in run down renewed environments with social collapse at the end.

Most certainly, Dharavi is not the perfect place. The lack of sanitary facilities, the over crowdedness, the run down and much too small houses, hardly sheltering from sun, rain and wind, the desolate and crowded streets, can by no means called a liveable environment, particularly when looking at it with a Western approach. However, Dharavi reveals that mixité in social and economical terms is the sort of environment people create for themselves when no superior planning strategies take place. The urban fabric of Dharavi shows that shops, workshops, small industries, schools, nurseries, centres for senior citizens, and temples, mosques and churches can exist adjacent to each other.

Unfortunately, the planners of Mumbai have already adopted Shanghai as a model. Districts like Dharavi, traffic jams, insufficiency of infrastructures and the opportunities that possible future global investments would offer, are being used as excuses. (Mehta: 2004)

Explicit and trans-nationally conceptualized urban policies consist of measures of respatialization of mixed uses, eventually ending them up in homogenized zones, segregated from each other. Despite a certain ambiguity discussions on the new urbanity and city architecture refer back to older, past forms of living together. A promise of healing is always included within aforementioned interventions, and the characteristics listed above no longer refer to today’s social and physical conditions. The Swiss urban theorist Andre Corboz argues: “*Paradoxically, for what geographers have called central places, two things are now true; they are no longer places [but merely provisional ‘non-places’].*” (Corboz: 2001, p.53)

Quality of architecture and the urban fabric has to be based on integrity with cultural traditions. Cultural identity is one of the most important aspects of social life. On the one hand, cultural identity is created by the identity of the individual, the identity of the affiliated social group and the national or ethnic sense of belonging; on the other hand, it is constituted by the identity of the place: the identity of the home, the identity of the settlement, the identity of the region. (Lehner: 2010)

The city is traditionally defined as the place where people from diverse, backgrounds and occupations live together in limited space and which is characterised by a tremendous and closely interwoven coexistence and juxtaposition of rich and poor, young and old, newcomers and established inhabitants, of workplaces, homes, business and pleasure. (Häussermann: 2004) This state of mixture often calls for a perception of urbanity within the eyes of the user, however it has been in decline for some time and now is jeopardized to fade away forever. The compactness and density, characteristics of mixite, seem to belong to past now. Blame for this has been ascribed in particular to the development of individual and public transport systems, which has led to the growth of cities well beyond their municipal boundaries and into Suburbia since the end of World War I. The eradication of urban mixite within cities is leading the residential metropolitan areas to a ‘displacement’, a fracture between place and actions. The dominating urban discourses today are frequently associated with a hopeful vision of a better and healthier life, briefly with a sanitized, idealized version of the old city whereabouts. The self-developed retro style of urbanization in Dharavi might represent a good alternative to large scaled master plans applied to areas with vast diversities, just to segregate and commercialize them in favour of trans-national flows. As mentioned above, Dharavi is far from being a healthy living environment, however the well functioning layers of frantic activities and lives are worth to study and import to possible frameworks to be drawn around self-generating urban surroundings.

Conclusions

With its high level of mixite, Dharavi is representing the resistance against a plastic rapid urbanization. When the old residents are being disenfranchised through the rapid immense empowerment of private bodies, a resistance and survival is not foreseen for such unique surroundings. Ambitious plans to create sub-centres and zones, and shifting and distributing the existing layers into segregated capsules will surely have devastating social and economical consequences, but moreover it will convert Mumbai to just one city among many others that claims to be ‘global’: clean, shiny, exchangeable and without any traces of local history and society.

Häußermann defines the city both as a home and a machine, a single family and a hotel. In his city definition the anonymity and neighbourhood must be kept open for everyone, contradictions from this point of view are a virtue and contribute to urban life.(Häußermann: 2004) The co-existence of unsegregated functions and social layers under the roof of metropolitan area is a provider of balance in terms of culture, economy and demography, therefore urban life, urbanity and architecture unique to that very geography. If these are suppressed, urban culture is damaged at its core.

Architecture is evolving into the driving force behind the flow of fancy images in this sense, it is forced to invent new design languages and therefore growing increasingly distant from urbane state of construction. The reduction of responsibility due to the neglect of such disciplines are pushing planning and designing issues such as social housing projects, preserving locality and cultural references further and further away from the focal point of the publishing industry.

Cultural homogenization is ruling the new era. Next, safety and sterility are the most remarkable qualities sought after. Urban safety is becoming a commercial and political concept that embodies itself in the rhetoric of public and private bodies, thus becoming an official industry. Urban landscape is transforms into a defensive shell. Diversity and contrast on the other hand favor co-existence of functions and has a great potential as far as development is concerned (Borja: 2003). The space of everyday life is the space of games, of casual or habitual relationships with other people, of daily routines and meetings.

Nan Elin (2006) questions critically the public interventions and asks whether we should “step a side and allow the city to grow and change without a guidance”. She then answers her own question with arguing that this would allow a market to dominate the urban development, but clearly she is pointing out a framework that would allow inhabitants to generate their own environment, while abiding by the boundaries drawn according to norms of a successful mixite. India with its enormous urban forms opens a discussion about the European urban model which is rather applicable for limited, hierarchic spaces that organized themselves according to sociality.

A modern design approach has to be open to new places and new occupants and it has to respond to the process of adaptation and transformation that is needed, whether this is at the level of whole urban and extra-urban areas, or at the level of interstitial and residual spaces, or that of the connective structures of the city under development. Then the city spatial design will appear as a medium of expression for urban places and their users –city-dwellers whose identity is as much in a state of becoming as is that of the context in which they live- an identity develops from the individual and modern “I” towards a postmodern “I” under development, matching the most profound characteristic of human nature: constant evolution. (Piccinno, 2010)

City spatial design searches for a diversity of interactions between the strong and the weak and in this context it might be sometimes intimidating, as the methods can vary on a wide range. In this sense, the city landscape is much more than the visible characteristics of a territory, but it is constituted also by the interactions of tension and conflicts between human activities and the environment (Repishti,2003).

The fractured relation between places and actions can restore the meaning of space, in case of Dharavi it can be prevented from being broken through aforementioned planning attempts and city contexts.

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