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Inequalities in India's Global City

Mumbai is one of India's largest cities as well as a center for global commerce. The city has transformed itself from a former British colonial city into a thriving Global City at the heart of international trade and finance. Mumbai does not solely rely on its port to remain relevant in the competitive 21st century global market. The metropolitan area has extended its global reach, becoming a hub for numerous multinational finance and telecommunications firms. Though the influx of international capital and increased global connectivity has brought prosperity to numerous city residents, many poor residents do not eagerly welcome this change. The effects of globalization have reshaped the physical and economic structure of the city while also creating greater inequalities between extremely poor residents, the wealthy and rising middle class. The effects of a globalized Mumbai have especially affected the physical and cultural makeup of the slum of Dharavi.

During British rule over Mumbai, new rural migrants and the city's poorest residents lived in slums of Dharavi on the outskirts of the city. As the city rapidly grew, wealthier neighborhoods encompassed the slum while two essential rail lines traversing the city cut through the slum. Dharavi is a central hub for new rural migrants and holds a large majority of the city's informal economy. This informal economy employs almost a million residents and annually yields \$665 million USD. (Loayza, 1997) Throughout the majority of the 20th century, this informal district was the largest slum in Mumbai, the largest slum in Asia, and one of the largest slums in the world. Even though Dharavi houses around 90,000 families or approximately million residents, slums in the suburbs of Mumbai have grown incredibly fast and contain similar if not larger populations than

this central slum. Of Mumbai's 12.4 million residents, 54 percent of them live in the city's large slums. (Zerach, 2007) As Mumbai grew in global relevance, Dharavi has been broken apart by real estate developers to create high-rise developments on this valuable land. Real estate investors are eager to develop parts of the 600-acre slum in the heart of Mumbai. By 2007, 168 acres of Dharavi were redeveloped for formal housing, leaving only 432 acres of the slum with informal housing. Rural workers and displaced Dharavi residents have moved to newer slums on the outskirts of the city that surround suburban rail lines. New suburban slums dwellings are hastily built with much less accessibility to health services and public sanitation compared to residences in Dharavi. Even though houses in Dharavi are self-built, they have been able to maintain structural integrity while hundreds of homes in suburban slums, like Vikhroli, were damaged or entirely destroyed during the monsoon season of 2005. (Srinivasan, 2005)

Mumbai is a developing city with socioeconomic extremes. Before the BJP came to power, the wealthy lived relatively close to and commuted through extremely impoverished areas. Hindus and Muslims intermingled relatively peacefully in the slums of Mumbai before 1995. The shift of power towards an extremely Hindu-nationalist city government negatively reshaped the slums of Mumbai. Since the BJP led-city government came to power in 1995, the city's attitude towards this inner city slum has become much more abrasive and actively abusive. Lack of affordable transportation into central Mumbai for the poor has led to even greater socio-economic tensions among classes. Housing policies and the overall disregard for order in the central slum has increasingly alienated the Muslim minority. Local BJP officials in Dharavi have repeatedly neglected to seek justice for Muslim businesses and homes that have been vandalized or attacked by Hindi gangs. Muslims sections of Dharavi have been targeted over Hindu communities for redevelopment plans, displacing thousands of residents with little if any compensation. A once religiously heterogeneous area has become further homogenous as more and more Muslims are

evicted from their homes to make way for luxury office towers. Though Dharavi has become more homogenous, it is still more diverse than suburban slums that have a greater tendency for religious and ethnic segregation. Lack of affordable transportation into central Mumbai for the poor has led to even greater socio-economic tensions among classes.

The nature of Mumbai's competitive real estate markets make land prices extremely high. Mumbai has been able to change from a city relying heavily on its large scale-manufacturing sector to a postindustrial city greatly connected to global finance and trade. Dharavi is very close to Mumbai's new financial district of Bandra Kurla, making its redevelopment very attractive and real estate prices so expensive. Small plots of land in this slum have sold for upwards of 8 million rupees to multinational real estate corporations. The city government does not have the financial capital to compete in Mumbai's competitive real estate market. Government-owned slum relocation areas are places that lack any commercial profit for real estate developers. One of the newest and fastest growing slums surround the railway tracks traveling into the city. As parts of Dharavi were demolished for redevelopment in the early 1990's, thousands of slum dwellers were left homeless and turned to the government to intercede. The city only gave property rights and compensation to Dharavi residents that registered to vote before 1976, forcing thousands to move mainly to the slums surrounding the suburban railway without any assistance from the government.

The Slum Redevelopment Scheme (SRS) was launched in 1991 by a private corporation to mitigate the societal impacts redevelopment had in Dharavi. Though this program had plans to provide temporary housing, it greatly mishandled resettling the large population of displaced Dharavi residents into proper housing. Private builders were more focused on producing profits off their real estate investments than ensuring a successful transfer of marginalized residents to other housing. The SRS only provided a small percentage of the displaced population with temporary, 225-square foot apartments in the surrounding area which were promised to each displaced family.

Similarly to the resettling of Southwest D.C., many residents took a small monetary compensation and moved to separate sections of the city. Of the places that have redeveloped in Dharavi, only a small percentage of the original population has returned.

In 2007, the city created a \$2 billion USD redevelopment plan for Dharavi that divides the slums into 85 neighborhoods that international companies bid for the right to develop. Though redevelopment guidelines ensure some housing or monetary provisions for people forced to move, residents must have proof of residency. This prerequisite allows private developers and city officials to reduce the number of residents receiving aid for their displacement. The goal for these international firms is to maximize the space for high and middle class development and minimize the space and costs of accommodating Dharavi's original residents and businesses. (Arputham, 2007) Development firms preference building high-rise apartment blocks because lesser provisions have to be provided per resident. There are numerous international firms working on separate large-scale urban renewal projects, creating a lack of uniformity regarding amenities in low-income housing. As opposed to the development schemes in the 1990's, there is much greater input from Dharavi residents on where displaced persons will be housed. Though working with local slum organizations is seen as costly and time consuming, this partnership has created sustainable and viable solutions while mitigating social unrest from evicted residents.

The slums of Dharavi have become a central part of Mumbai's economic community. The informal economy is a major employer for thousands of slum residents. It is estimated that the slums hold 5,000 small businesses and an additional 15,000 single room textile and pottery factories. Locally produced goods are sold throughout the city and generate hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue. (Patel, 2002) As large scale manufacturing plants and textile mills were converted to high-rise apartments and offices in the central city, these industries dwarfed into small factories that retreated into Dharavi's informal sector. Residents of this slum also provide basic but

vital services for middle and upper class residents by working as construction laborers, sanitation workers, maids and street vendors. Almost every industry in Mumbai has some linkage with enterprises in Dharavi. Resident's small businesses are also destroyed when they are evicted from their housing, which indirectly affects the entirety of Mumbai's economy.

Though the majority of Dharavi residents are uneducated and often illiterate, there have been political organizations created to represent the population when dealing with the redevelopment process. The National Slum Dweller Federation (NSDF) was set up in the 1970's to advocate for greater amenities while preventing the demolition of slums without consent or fair notice. In 2001, the Indian Railway needed to demolish 15,000 houses along their rail lines and an additional 5,000 households surrounding the stations in order to increase rail capacity during peak hours. (Patel, 2002) During the first phase of the project, the Mumbai Transit Authority demolished 2,000 slum dwellings without warning in a section of Dharavi that blocked a proposed route between Mumbai and "New Mumbai." The planned city of "New Mumbai" lies due west of Mumbai housing several multinational firms, upper class communities and attempts to alleviate the stress of Mumbai's overextended basic infrastructure, railway system and airport. (Ananthakrishnan, 1998) The NSDF was able to mobilize thousands of members to block rail transit throughout the city, practically shutting down the entire transit system. This mobilization shocked the rail system and showed the political power that Dharavi dwellers held within in the city. The NSDF successfully negotiated with the Indian Railway to access land and temporary housing for displaced railway slum dwellers so the Indian Railway could expand operations.

The NSDF helped successfully resettle 60,000 people out of Dharavi and other slums without police brutality or much social unrest because of the initiatives set in place providing housing for displaced residents. (Patel, 2002) The National Slum Dweller Federation has exposed the lack of public sanitation, clean water and healthcare clinics throughout Mumbai's slums.

Similarly to inequalities to water, access to healthcare is very spatial and varies greatly along socio-economic, caste and religious lines. Dismal sanitation measures and extremely high population densities in Dharavi and other slums create a source of communicable diseases including malaria, dysentery and cholera that spread throughout entire the city. Dharavi has some communities with access to health clinics and communal toilets while other sections have residents that receive little if any medical attention and must publically defecate on the street. The NSDF has called on the city government to build more public toilets and expand sewage lines into the slums to curb the amount of preventative diseases that kill thousands of disenfranchised slum dwellers annually. The last major program the NSDF implemented was accurately registering residents of Dharavi and providing them with proof of residency so marginalized peoples will not be taken advantage by development firms and local government officials.

Investors in Mumbai look to massive development schemes to reinvent the city as a globalized metropolis that focuses on financial services and attracts international business through prestige projects. These new development schemes have drastically reshaped the city but also create numerous negative externalities. Mumbai is already a city with incredibly high population density, making space extremely limited and valued. Aside from displacing marginalized slum dwellers, these mega-development projects add to the overall strain of existing services, transportation systems and basic infrastructure. The rise of business campuses and residential high rises accompanied by the influx of new residents to the city has greatly taxed the already overly utilized water supply and worsened the cities overall public sanitation network. The British water supply infrastructure was built for a city with less than a million residents during the 19th century and its capacity was rapidly outpaced by the city's population growth. As the city grew, the outdated system quickly became inaccessible for communities far from the central business district and government land. Slums that were built on municipal land are provided with basic services while

slums on private land are not entitled to any amenities. Though the city government greatly increased accessibility to potable water in the 1970's, the current supply model has not been able to remove spatial and social inequalities. Only 5 percent of the population in Dharavi has individual water connections, while 49 percent rely on hand pumps or other communal water connections. (Zerah, 2007) Corrupt local officials align with private water companies in Dharavi and other suburban slums to form price-fixing cartels that wield total control over the local populations water supply. The promise of better water and sanitation conditions are vulnerable to expanding power of organized crime in slums and the political manipulation against Muslim communities by local BJP officials.

The inequalities in accessibility to water creates a multilayer city with wealthy and middle class sections that have continuous access to cheap water and public sanitation networks juxtaposed against communities that lack access to any clean water and little if any public sanitation networks. The city cannot undertake large-scale replacement or repairs of major waterlines because there are no alternative water distribution systems that would mitigate an extensive disruption to the city's water supply. The overextension and illegal extraction of water from the aquifer has led to many irreversible problems for all of Mumbai. The system suffers from periodic contaminations due to corroded piping that allows dirty water, toxins like arsenic, or hard minerals to flow throughout the water system. (Gandy, 2006) The dilapidation of water systems reflects an overall problem of crumbling infrastructure in the city. Even though a few areas of Dharavi have already been converted into high-rise developments, these areas still have little if any access to the city's water supply. This inaccessibility forces the developers to illegally pump water from the aquifer, intensifying shortages of clean water in the community. Mumbai's overall demand for water from its main water source, Vihar Lake, has dramatically altered the surrounding area's landscape. Rural farming communities have seen their water supplies dry up as rivers are diverted to meet the needs

of new urban developments. This scarcity of water in rural areas creates massive waves of migration into the city, creating a self-reinforcing effect that continues the cycle of water scarcity in the rural areas.

The slums of Dharavi are a vital part of the cultural and economic makeup of Mumbai. As a global city, Mumbai has become a much more multilayered society, with an upper and middle class that are drastically changing the cityscape at the expense of the extremely poor. Though the redevelopment processes in Mumbai's largest slum have been much more successful than previous redevelopment schemes, there are still numerous flaws that marginalize the slum population. Equal access to quality healthcare, proper sanitation and clean water are attributes of a Global City which Mumbai has not yet thoroughly achieved and impeded the development of the city. Dharavi residents have shown their political nonviolent power and have been able to make a difference in the redevelopment process. The way Dharavi is redeveloped will influence the way the city deals with informal housing in the future.

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