

## CONTEXT

Less than a century ago, Dharavi, which today is one of the largest slums in the world, was a marshy wasteland at the tip of erstwhile Parel Island – home to the *Koli* community fishing at Mahim creek since the 1600s.

Towards the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the Bombay Presidency grew rapidly, more and more land was reclaimed from the sea, drying up creeks and displacing the fishing activity. Gradually, a singular peninsula was formed of the seven islands. Dharavi's mudflats came to be an unregulated solid expanse, welcoming all castes and classes of labourers from the countryside.

Beyond the interventions of local authorities, residents took it upon themselves to improve the economy of this area. Soon, a number of micro-industrial and manufacturing units of leather, textiles and tailoring, food, pottery etc. mushroomed, metamorphosing the district into the city's alternative financial nerve, parallel to the Bombay textile mills.

With every passing decade, as Bombay's population grew, the city's boundaries were pushed further out to the north. As a result, by 1970, Dharavi was pulled into the new centre of the city - no longer perched on a faraway edge, undeniable to civic authorities.

Up to the 1960s, the general attitude was to elbow slums and shanties, the city's 'eyesores', to the periphery. Eventually, eviction evolved into the present policy of rehabilitation and resettlement – predominantly to the city's outskirts – away from business districts, transportation linkages and other amenities.

As the saga of Dharavi's redevelopment unfolded, it was evident that Mumbai was struggling with embedding the poor's rights and its existing form into the growing new fabric.

### **Prime Minister's Grant Project**

Dharavi's redevelopment is not a recent project for the city - the idea has been toyed with sporadically since 1919! In 1971, the area was first classified as a slum under the Maharashtra Slum Areas Improvement, Clearance and Redevelopment Act, enabling it to receive basic amenities. At the time, under the Prime Minister's Grant Project (PMGP), INR 100 cr (INR 1 billion) was budgeted for improving Mumbai's urban infrastructure. A third of this was set aside to redevelop Dharavi, under a unit set up within the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA), between 1986 and 1996.

The program adopted a two-pronged approach, one consisted of 'tenure legalisation' in which slum dweller co-operatives received tenements of 18 sq m (or 193 sq ft), and the other approach was 'slum reconstruction' wherein informal settlements were rebuilt as formal buildings on the same site. Both models were based on cost recovery and offered interest free loans to the beneficiaries.

However, construction delays, poor recovery of loans, resale of flats, inadequate transit accommodation etc. kept delaying the project, finally leading to its closure after the first grant's funds expired.

### **Slum Redevelopment Scheme**

Privatisation of the slum rehabilitation efforts began with the Slum Redevelopment Scheme (SRD) of 1991. This was later modified to become the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) scheme we know today.

The SRD was permissible for censused slums and for those households whose names appeared in the 1985 electoral rolls. It allowed a Floor Space Index (FSI) of up to 2.5 and offered

rehab tenements in sizes ranging from 180 sq ft to 225 sq ft. Dwellers were required to pay INR 15,000 to 18,000 per unit while the rest of the cost for redevelopment was subsidised by the 25% free sale area given to developers.

### **Slum Rehabilitation Scheme**

Thereafter, the current popular understanding of slum rehabilitation – of using FSI as a bargaining chip – took root with the launch of the Slum Rehabilitation Scheme in 1995.

This new program offered free larger tenements of 225 sq ft to the beneficiaries and also planned for the rehabilitation of pavement dwellers. It offered subsidised power and water supply for the new homes, and, to entice developers, erased the cap on profitability and FSI for the rehabilitation. The project's viability further increased with the introduction of a free saleable component in the ratio of 1:1.33 and Transferable Development Rights (TDR). Essentially, the free saleable component allowed 400 sq ft of built-up space, saleable in the open market, for every free slum rehab tenement. Meanwhile, through TDR, landowners could now transfer permissible built-up area to another site in lieu of surrendering their present plot for the project.

The scheme opened the redevelopment process to cooperative societies, public housing organisations, NGOs, and private companies, allowing them to become developers, provided 70% of affected slum dwellers approved.

However, by the year 2000, only about 60,000 tenements were built/under-construction instead of the scheduled 9,02,015 huts in 2,335 slum pockets which were to be rehabilitated within five years. In addition, the constructed houses were found to be of inferior quality and poor design, but they have left behind a legacy of land monetising tools and blinkered visions of privatised slum redevelopment.

### **Dharavi Redevelopment Plan**

In 2004, Dharavi became the focus of a redevelopment plan, envisaged by the Government of Maharashtra, in which local and international firms were invited to bid for redeveloping the five sectors into which it was arbitrarily divided. The redevelopment was to be based on the SRA model, in which Dharavi's high land values would be exploited to build flats for commercial sale that would offset costs to build free rehabilitation housing for its residents.

Under the Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP), project consultant Mukesh Mehta showcased a new ambitious plan proposing to overhaul the entire area with the focus on HIKES i.e. health, income, knowledge, environment and socio-cultural integration.

However, the project failed to find favour with most residents (and subsequently, politicians) who vociferously protested this “sophisticated land grab.” It was felt that neither the government nor project consultants had a clear idea of how many people actually lived in Dharavi or understood the complexity of its intertwined livelihood and housing typologies to be able to produce viable redevelopment alternatives. Population estimates varied widely between 350,000 to 600,000. The only official survey commissioned by the Government puts the estimates at a far lower number because of the criteria which deems only ground floor structure owners living in Dharavi prior to 1995 as eligible for rehabilitation. Estimates suggest that 80% of the area's population comprises tenants and sub-tenants, ineligible for rehabilitation. Residents of Dharavi continued to mount pressure on the government to include people in the formulation of the plan, eventually leading to the scrapping of the DRP.

This led to the creation of a Committee of Experts (CoE) in 2008 to advise the government on producing an alternative with the concurrence of the residents. The CoE provided guidance to the Kamla Raheja Vidhyanidhi Institute of

to the Kamla Raheja Vidhyanidhi Institute of Architecture & Environmental Studies (KRVI) which worked together with the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) and resident groups in Sector 4 to propose an alternative. Despite this, MHADA was issued a notification by the State Government in 2011, allowing it to redevelop Sector 5 on its own. The CoE was eventually abandoned, as was the alternative proposed by the CoE.

In the meantime, years of protests have led to the formulation of special Development Control Regulations for Dharavi. The size of rehab tenements to be built now stands at 300 sq ft. Commercial units of to 225 sq ft of space are also eligible for rehabilitation. Dharavi is entitled to an FSI of 4.

In essence, the DRP shifts the horizontal density vertically, with little thought towards the existing fabric of settlements, economy, and civic infrastructure, nearly doubling the density due to the addition of people through the free sale component.

### **Why Dharavi?**

Wedged between Mumbai's new upcoming central business district, Bandra-Kurla Complex, and the mangroves of Mahim Creek, Dharavi's 525 acres – serviced by Matunga, Mahim and Sion train stations at different ends and the Western Express Highway on its northern border – is a real estate gold mine. While most of the production here is informal, conservative estimates from 2008 suggest the area recorded a turnover of INR 1,500-2,000 cr (INR 15 to 20 billion), contributing to about 1.5% of Mumbai's GDP. Yet, in the last three decades of planning for the area, the Government has no accurate survey of Dharavi nor has it documented its diversity of people.

The current approaches continue to lack transparency and community participation. Meanwhile, Dharavi perplexes and fascinates

audiences around the world, as the life here continues to inspire art, music and film. The policies developed by Mumbai to approach its informalities, has the ability to influence the ongoing global dialogue on informal housing and the poor's right to cities.

Current densities in Dharavi are roughly about 100,000 people per sq km. The new guidelines are likely to prompt a gentrification of sorts, with unheard of densities, leading to incredible crowding of footpaths, public spaces etc., severely compromising the quality of life here. The original inhabitants are forced to relocate to outer peripheries of the city. The whole process feeds into the larger question of what constitutes a citizen's right to the city. *Should the purchasing power of a citizen determine their rights to land and services? Does it mean that a city should only serve its more affluent consumers? In such a scenario, what about its invisible backbone, the informal labour and working class that helps run the city at low costs? Is there no place within the city for them?*

Based on the above context and the renewed discussions on redevelopment plans for Dharavi, once again under a market-oriented SRA model, the Urban Design Research Institute (UDRI) felt that it was time to revisit discussions, reorient perceptions and reimagine Dharavi differently. To this end, the **Reinventing Dharavi: An International Ideas Competition** was conceived.

## Timeline

- 1737** Riwa Fort (Rehwa Fort), known as Kala Killa, built by order of Honorable Esq., President and Governor of Bombay
- 1800** Settlement of the Kolis, a fishing community
- 1880** Mass evictions from island city
- 1812** Reclaiming of swamp in area known as Dharavi
- 1930** *Kumbhars*, a community of potters, resettled on allocated land in Dharavi
- 1940-60** Mass evictions continue
- 1971** Maharashtra Slum Areas Improvement, Clearance & Redevelopment Act declares Dharavi a slum, resulting in provision of basic amenities
- 1971-74** Building of Sion-Mahim link road, 60 Feet Road and 90 Feet Road, sewer lines, water lines, transit camp to accommodate project affected people
- 1981** Development Plan of city including Dharavi prepared
- 1985** The Prime Minister's Grant Project allocates INR 100 cr (INR 1 billion) of which 1/3rd is marked to improve housing and infrastructure provision for Dharavi
- 1995** Slum Redevelopment Scheme (SRD)
- 1997** Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) was declared as planning authority for Dharavi, resulting in construction of 85 buildings in the area
- 2004** Government of Maharashtra proposes the Dharavi Redevelopment Plan (DRP)
- 2004-09** Protests against the Dharavi Redevelopment Plan
- 2007** Development Control Regulations modified by SRA for Dharavi
- 2009** Committee of Experts (CoE) set up by state government to formulate an alternative plan
- 2010** Re-Dharavi, an alternative plan, produced by SPARC (an NGO) and KRVI (an educational institute) for Sector 4
- 2012** Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority begins developing Sector 5
- 2016** Dharavi Redevelopment Project Authority invite bids for 4 out of 5 sectors of Dharavi



Area

**535** acres

People

**169,333** (1981)

**278,636** (1991)

**133,563** Mashal (2007)  
Count of ground floor structures only

**340,922** Census (2011)

**450,000** NSDF (2014)

Nagars

**85**

Turnover

INR **3,300** cr/year

