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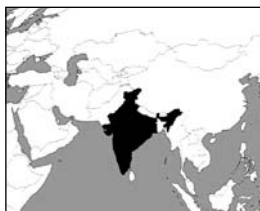
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# Getting the information base for Dharavi's redevelopment

SHEELA PATEL, JOCKIN ARPUTHAM,  
SUNDAR BURRA AND KATIA SAVCHUK

Sheela Patel, Sundar Burra and Katia Savchuk work with SPARC, the Mumbai-based NGO that has a long-established partnership with India's National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) and Mahila Milan (the network of savings groups formed by women slum and pavement dwellers).

Jockin Arputham founded the National Slum Dwellers Federation and is also president of Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI). As this paper makes clear, SPARC, Mahila Milan and NSDF are working with Dharavi residents and their organizations as they seek to ensure that the Dharavi Redevelopment Project serves the needs and priorities of Dharavi's residents. This paper and two previous papers (in the October 2007 and April 2008 issues of *Environment and Urbanization*) are in response to an invitation by the Editors to write a regular report on developments in Dharavi.

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1. Slum structures occupy around 395 acres (1.6 square kilometres). Government-owned structures, private buildings, a bus depot, a park, railway facilities, a power station and other structures comprise the rest of the area.

**ABSTRACT** This is the third in a series of papers chronicling the evolution of negotiations on plans to redevelop Dharavi, Mumbai's vast informal settlement, from the perspective of practitioners supporting Dharavi's residents in their struggle for inclusive development. This paper highlights progress that took place during 2008, including the completion of a baseline survey, constructive engagement with the government and positive amendments to the plan that emerged from this dialogue. The paper also highlights continuing challenges that residents and civil society face in working with the state to ensure that development benefits Dharavi's residents and enterprises.

**KEYWORDS** Dharavi / slum upgrading / urban redevelopment

## I. BACKGROUND

Dharavi, Mumbai's dynamic inner-city township and one of Asia's largest informal settlements, has been the focus of a multi-billion dollar government redevelopment plan since 2004. Located in the centre of Mumbai, India's financial capital and the city with the largest proportion of slum dwellers in the nation, Dharavi's 590 acres (around 2.4 square kilometres)<sup>(1)</sup> will be divided into five sectors to be developed by domestic and international firms after a competitive bidding process. Dubbed the "Opportunity of the Millennium", the Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP) envisages companies taking advantage of Dharavi's high land values by constructing high-end commercial space for sale on the open market in exchange for providing eligible slum dwellers with free flats and small commercial spaces in multi-storey buildings, and constructing needed infrastructure at no cost to the government.

Our paper in the October 2007 issue of *Environment and Urbanization* outlined the shape and deficiencies of the DRP and our challenge to the state to collectively produce a development strategy that recognizes and supports the investments, entitlements and aspirations of residents.<sup>(2)</sup> The piece also featured an open letter from Jockin Arputham, president of the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF), offering the government and interested developers a genuine partnership if they were willing to work with inhabitants – or a promise of conflict if they were not.<sup>(3)</sup> In our second paper, in April 2008, we described negotiations with the government and changes in the plans to redevelop Dharavi between April and

December 2007, which took place at least partially in response to the activism of residents, grassroots organizations and a group of Concerned Citizens for Dharavi.<sup>(4)</sup>

This is the third in a series of reports describing developments in Dharavi from the perspective of practitioners working in a civil society organization that has supported organized federations of the poor in Dharavi for the last 20 years and is committed to ensuring that redevelopment benefits and involves inhabitants. Our purpose is to document the evolution of this process as it unfolds "on the ground" and to generate global awareness of the conflicts and negotiations playing out in Dharavi between multinational corporate interests, state actors and residents of a large informal settlement over land, development and rights to city space.

The form that Dharavi's redevelopment takes has implications not only for its tens of thousands of households and businesses but also for Mumbai's future approach to slum improvement and, by extension, whether the city's development will include, or proceed at the expense of, the interests of a majority of its residents. The DRP has already been promoted as a market-driven model of slum development to other state governments in India and for export to other countries. Its ultimate shape will likely influence the nature of redevelopment strategies adopted in nations around the world, in an era in which the influx of global capital is increasing demand for high-end housing and commercial space in cities and deepening inequality. The ultimate form that development takes in Dharavi will be critical in demonstrating whether government agencies and inhabitants of informal settlements can set a precedent for negotiating a solution that benefits both slum dwellers and the city's economic development, or whether the profit potential of commercial development will push aside the shelter needs and civic rights of the urban poor.

## II. ENGAGEMENT WITH THE STATE AND CHANGES TO THE PLAN

### a. Cautious engagement and informal dialogue with the state in 2007

Since the DRP was introduced in 2004, activists from residents' associations, community-based organizations and civil society have sought to engage the authorities in dialogue to address critical deficiencies in the project and get a seat at the table. In our previous paper, we described the way in which the government, under Officer on Special Duty for Dharavi, Dr T Chandrashekhar, perceptibly shifted its position around August 2007 from complete unresponsiveness and exclusion to informal engagement.

Following a widely circulated letter from a group of Concerned Citizens for Dharavi,<sup>(5)</sup> a 15,000-strong peaceful "Black Flag Day" demonstration by Dharavi residents in June 2007,<sup>(6)</sup> and extensive international media coverage about the plan, the authorities began an informal dialogue with stakeholders, including representatives from Concerned Citizens for Dharavi and grassroots groups from the area.<sup>(7)</sup> Chandrashekhar responded to key concerns about information gaps in the project by commissioning a baseline socioeconomic survey and a transport study. Although this period saw an initiation of discussions and moves to address several key shortcomings in the planning process, dialogue remained irregular, there was no formal role for public participation and the authorities made

2. Concerns about the DRP included the following: that the scheme was oriented towards maximizing commercial exploitation at the expense of residents' access to land, housing and space for economic activity; that it contravened legal and planning standards; and that it operated without transparency, an adequate informational base or the consent and inclusion of residents.

3. Arputham, Jockin and Sheela Patel (2007), "An offer of partnership or a promise of conflict in Dharavi, Mumbai?", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 19, No 2, October, pages 501–508.

4. Arputham, Jockin and Sheela Patel (2008), "Plans for Dharavi: negotiating a reconciliation between a state-driven market redevelopment and residents' aspirations", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 20, No 1, April, pages 243–254.

5. Concerned Citizens for Dharavi (CCD) is a self-formed group of activists, professionals, academics and retired civil servants chaired by the retired Chief Secretary of Maharashtra, D M Sukthankar, who came together in 2006 to raise concerns about the DRP.

6. See reference 4, page 250.

7. Two groups that have recently joined forces to pressure the state to re-evaluate the DRP head grassroots activism from within Dharavi. The first is the Dharavi Bachao Andolan (Save Dharavi Movement), a coalition of resident associations, cooperatives and political parties that came together to oppose the DRP. The second is the Dharavi Vikas Samiti (Dharavi Development Committee), a federation that was formed in 1987, when an earlier plan to redevelop Dharavi was announced, as a result of a slum-wide enumeration undertaken by the alliance of SPARC, NSDF and Mahila Milan.

8. Of the 26 firms that submitted expressions of interest for the DRP in January 2008, 19 were shortlisted, including domestic and global real estate companies.

it clear that, while the outputs of studies and conversations would be considered, the project would fundamentally proceed as planned.<sup>(8)</sup>

## **b. Institutionalized participation and amendments to the plan in 2008**

The year 2008 has in many ways been a turning point in negotiations on Dharavi's redevelopment. Chandrashekhar submitted his resignation in March 2008 and, following a period of instability until the government accepted his resignation in July 2008, Gautam Chatterjee was appointed as a replacement in August. Chatterjee's appointment was welcome due to his experience as director of the Prime Minister's Grant Programme in the 1980s, an earlier effort to redevelop Dharavi, and as head of the Slum Rehabilitation Authority, as well as his willingness to interface with all stakeholders.

Owing to the appointment of a sympathetic DRP head, as well as sustained activism and the strategic opening of space for participation, civil society and grassroots groups have strengthened their relationship with the DRP authorities and substantially widened their scope for involvement in many stages of the planning process in the latter part of 2008. Many of the recommendations have been integrated into the official project framework and have led to specific amendments to the plan. The baseline socioeconomic survey, commissioned in September 2007 and mostly completed by December 2008,<sup>(9)</sup> will help secure residents' entitlements and serve as an invaluable tool for planning. Assuming continuity in the leadership of the DRP, there is promise that negotiations on the form and execution of the project will continue and that there will be room for public participation at many stages of the process.

## **c. Constructive engagement**

Building on the informal consultations of 2007, civil society and grassroots groups have established a more regular and formal dialogue with the DRP authorities, and this has led to greater scope for participation. Within weeks of his appointment, Gautam Chatterjee invited politicians, residents and Concerned Citizens for Dharavi to meet him and agreed to communicate regularly with each of them, thus creating much-needed transparency about the project. Many of the developments discussed later emerged from the information gathered, discussions held and reciprocal feedback shared during the two months following Chatterjee's appointment.

A major move towards more institutionalized participation was the adoption of the self-created Concerned Citizens for Dharavi as an expert advisory group to the DRP. The 11-member advisory group – which includes NGO representatives, retired senior civil servants, prominent Mumbai architects and faculty from a local architectural college – meets regularly with Chatterjee to discuss and make recommendations on all aspects of the project. The Government of Maharashtra formally sanctioned the expert committee in January 2009. The project authorities update the group on the DRP's status with transparency and regularity. Many of the advisory group's recommendations have already been adopted as formal amendments to the DRP.<sup>(10)</sup>

9. The survey process is described in further detail later in this section.

10. These amendments are discussed later.

Members of the advisory group have raised queries regarding a transport study completed by consultants, and there is continuing dialogue about the contours of the transport plan. A retired senior government planner and member of the advisory group reviewed the seven-volume bid document line by line. The DRP authorities are keen to receive input from the group on the master plans that bidders will submit in the early months of 2009. Chatterjee has also stated that he would like the group to play an advisory role at later stages of the project.

The presence of this advisory group is a crucial ingredient, as no single stakeholder in the DRP has the capacity to produce a solution alone. Residents often become roused only in reaction to a crisis. Private developers are oriented towards profit margins and do not have the experience, capacity or impetus to work with residents. The government is locked in the middle, aiming to produce a viable solution but pressured by developers and consultants, distraught by citizen dissent, hampered by lack of experience in developing solutions at such scale, and coping with party politics. A group of civil society representatives that has its ear to the ground can become a body that is better placed to articulate the common ground.

#### d. Changes to the plan

Greater participation of civil society and community-based groups in the planning process has given rise to a number of amendments to the project framework. Many of the expert advisory group's and residents' recommendations have been incorporated as official adjustments to planning standards and resettlement benefits. In October 2008, the DRP authorities adopted into the project a set of urban design guidelines suggested by the advisory group. Although these guidelines are not yet binding regulations, their inclusion is an achievement that promises to go a long way towards seeing that slum dwellers benefit from the DRP. This is a milestone particularly in the context of Mumbai, a city in which the builders' mafia regularly succeeds in getting planning regulations relaxed in order to pack low-income residents into the smallest possible spaces with minimal standards.

Perhaps the most important urban design guideline adopted was that rehabilitation structures should not exceed a height of eight storeys, or 10 in exceptional cases where the building abuts an open space measuring 25 metres or more. Under the original DRP, rehabilitation structures went as high as 20 to 30 storeys. Lower heights will increase light and ventilation, decrease maintenance costs and reduce densities – and therefore the burden on Dharavi's infrastructure. This change will also allow more people to live on lower floors, which is critical for the accommodation of aged and disabled people, the continuity of livelihoods and other quality of life indicators.<sup>(11)</sup>

Another major milestone is the new guideline that a minimum of 80 per cent of free-sale buildings constructed by developers should be for commercial use. Previously, half of free-sale buildings were to be residential, and project architects marketed the future Dharavi as a "middle-class suburb". The project also now specifies that these commercial developments should be located on the periphery of Dharavi, near existing and proposed transport nodes, and designates a preferred residential zone

11. Taller buildings produce higher maintenance costs because of the expense of raising water and operating lifts, among other factors. In addition, constructing tall buildings with little space between them creates a lack of light and ventilation, requiring households to spend more money on electricity.

in Dharavi's core. The logic behind aggregating commercial spaces near peripheral transport hubs is that this will provide better value for developers and restrict traffic increases within Dharavi. This change is also critical for preventing sky-high increases in Dharavi's density, already one of the densest areas in the world, minimizing the load on Dharavi's infrastructure and restraining processes of gentrification.

As a result of concern among the advisory group and residents that the DRP could potentially threaten livelihoods, the authorities included a guideline that a minimum of 6 per cent of the total built-up area of each rehabilitation building should be provided as a multi-purpose community space in consultation with residents, without a corresponding increase in the free-sale component. This addition is an important step towards helping rehabilitated residents sustain home-based income-generating enterprises.

Based on the advisory group's recommendations, the DRP authorities have also increased the minimum open space between rehabilitation structures from six metres to 12 metres, as roads or passages, with roads comprising a 2.5 metre-wide footpath and a seven metre-wide carriageway. They also suggest that the width of open green spaces should be at least 30 metres. These changes will improve quality of life by increasing light and ventilation, enlarging streets and pathways and expanding green open space.

Other recommendations of the advisory group that have been integrated as guidelines into the bid documents include: that no compound walls be permitted around rehabilitation units or buildings, in order to achieve optimum use of space; that green open spaces be evenly distributed around Dharavi; and that housing units for resettled families have separate toilet and bathing spaces.

In response to Dharavi residents' calls for larger rehabilitation units, in September 2008 the government announced an increase in the size of free flats to be allotted to eligible slum dwellers from 269 to 300 square feet.<sup>(12)</sup> In addition, those who currently own more than 300 square feet will be eligible for 400 square-foot homes if they pay the extra construction costs. Owners of commercial structures that are larger than 225 square feet will also have the option to pay for more space. The government has also promised to use a portion of the premiums paid by bidders to match the Rs. 20,000 per flat that developers must contribute to a corpus fund, in order to ensure enough money for building maintenance. These changes were meant to satisfy residents' persisting concerns that rehabilitation units were too small and that building maintenance would be unaffordable.

In addition to amending planning standards and improving resettlement benefits, the authorities have made a number of changes in the planning process. In response to concerns that the DRP did not adequately assess implications for land use distribution, amenities, infrastructure and traffic, authorities implemented a baseline survey and a transport study open to review by the advisory group.

Officials have also begun a process of ascertaining official land ownership in Dharavi, as the information upon which the original plan was based is approximate. The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) owns approximately 77 per cent of the land in Dharavi, with the rest held by other government and private parties. Land issues in Dharavi are complex: MCGM-owned land differs in use and occupancy arrangements,

12. The size of the rehabilitation units was originally 225 square feet (20.9 square metres), a standard affirmed in the Maharashtra-wide Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) scheme. The flat size was increased to 269 square feet (25 square metres) in July 2008, when the government of Maharashtra issued an order increasing the minimum carpet area for units under future SRA projects.



with the Corporation variously in a position of owner of land used for a public purpose, landlord or lessor. Land owned by other parties is designated for various private or public purposes (e.g. a bus depot, a power station, railway facilities). Furthermore, some areas within Dharavi are officially notified slums, while others are not, and communities possess varying types of documentation and levels of perceived or actual legitimacy. As the authorities prepare for a process of land acquisition, it is a challenge to ascertain, involve and compensate the diverse parties that have an interest in land in Dharavi in order to pool land for the project.

At the local level, in response to community activism, Chatterjee gave assurances at the end of 2008 to the residents of Koliwada – an area within Dharavi that is officially recognized as one of Mumbai’s original fishing villages – that they would be excluded from the DRP, at least for the time being. This decision followed negotiations with local representatives from Koliwada and was based on the area’s *gaothan*<sup>13</sup> status and documented claims to the land. Koliwada and Kumbharwada, a settlement of potters who migrated to Mumbai from Gujarat and were allocated land in Dharavi, have steadfastly refused to be part of the DRP and have insisted on their right to self-development. Although Koliwada allowed the survey to begin upon receipt of Chatterjee’s letter, Kumbharwada has not received similar assurances and continues to resist. The authorities continue a dialogue with these communities. The situation in Koliwada and Kumbharwada highlights the diversity of the *nagars* (neighbourhoods) within Dharavi in terms of history, culture, livelihoods, urban typologies and interests.

13. A *gaothan* is a declared “village site” within the city, subject to distinct planning regulations.

### III. THE BASELINE SOCIOECONOMIC SURVEY

#### a. Commissioning the survey

Activists have stressed the need for a baseline survey in Dharavi since the inception of the DRP. When the project was formulated, the exact population of Dharavi was unknown, the basis for projections of households eligible for resettlement was not transparent or authenticated, and families felt insecure about their entitlements because they were not enumerated. Concerned Citizens for Dharavi and others advocated that a baseline demographic-cum-socioeconomic survey – open to public scrutiny – was necessary to protect residents’ entitlements and provide data for planning.

In response to strong pressure, the DRP authorities issued a tender for the survey in September 2007, and awarded the contract to the Maharashtra Social Housing and Action League (MASHAL), a Pune-based NGO. Although SPARC and our partner, the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF), have carried out many community-led slum enumerations used in government schemes, we did not initially apply to undertake the survey out of concern that such a move would signal approval of the state’s position, which at the time showed no sign of budging, and because of an unrealistic timetable, insufficient budget and an inadequate questionnaire. However, after residents’ associations, local political groups and Chandrashekhar urged us to participate, we reached an agreement in December 2007 under which SPARC and the Dharavi Vikas Samiti – NSDF’s local constituent – would correct maps, number structures and carry out the survey, while MASHAL

would conduct GIS mapping, tagging and biometric identification. The survey collected information on demographics, income, structure use and existing amenities, among other data.

## b. The survey process

Although SPARC entered into a government-approved agreement with MASHAL to carry out the baseline survey in all of Dharavi, in fact we were only able to complete around 11,000 surveys in Sector II. For reasons it is not worth delving into here, MASHAL completed almost 50,000 surveys.<sup>(14)</sup> Since the surveyors were not attuned to the local situation, some were threatened by residents and had to be rescued by federation members.

Before beginning survey work, SPARC altered the questionnaire to make it more responsive to the ground situation and the interests of slum dwellers, after consulting stakeholders and conducting field samples. The final survey format used in all sectors included questions about home-based income-generating enterprises, social infrastructure and upper-floor residents (either extended families or "tenants") – previously missing data that was considered important for planning and protecting residents' shelters and livelihoods.<sup>(15)</sup> The questionnaire also included a receipt for respondents as a way of providing some transparency and security.

Based on the suggestions of NSDF, for the purposes of the survey Dharavi's five planning sectors were divided into clusters corresponding to existing neighbourhood and community boundaries.<sup>(16)</sup> In the area in which SPARC implemented the survey, community surveyors, who could navigate the physical and social environment of Dharavi and were familiar with community-led slum enumerations, corrected maps provided by MASHAL to correspond to actual structure layout, and then numbered the houses. Surveyors filled out questionnaires for occupants of each structure and collected supporting documentation.

Dharavi's complex physical and social landscape and its large population, as well as a number of challenges complicating the survey process, delayed completion of the survey beyond the government's initial three-month timetable. Surveyors are still collecting data from households who were not present or cooperative at the time of the initial survey. Biometric data have been gathered and photo identification has been completed for approximately 46,300 and 36,100 households, respectively, and is still underway. MASHAL is in the process of tabulating and geo-tagging the data, and proofs of residence will be submitted to the municipal corporation for verification.<sup>(17)</sup> The advisory group is advocating a transparent framework for evaluating documentation, approving entitlements and redressing grievances.

## c. Challenges in the survey process

The survey process was predictably full of stops and starts due to resistance from some residents because of genuine concerns about the plan, the opportunistic opposition of local political parties and the lack of continuity in the DRP leadership.

14. MASHAL has mapped 54,114 slum structures in Dharavi. The discrepancy in the number of structures and the number of surveys completed may be due to the fact that a single physical structure is sometimes sub-divided between occupant households, and these are counted if they have a separate entrance and cooking area. In addition, it may have been possible to survey upper-floor residents in some cases.

15. It proved impossible to collect data on upper-floor residents in practice, as ground-floor residents (typically "owners") did not allow access for fear that their entitlements would be compromised. The Alliance did not force the process out of fear that this would lead to large-scale evictions of tenants. Current guidelines only provided benefits to owner-occupiers, and "tenants" are not recognized as such.

16. There are 91 clusters designated as "slums" and five "non-slum" clusters.

17. The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai is the competent authority because this agency owns 77 per cent of the land in question. Whether or not it will review documents for households in the remaining area is under discussion.



There was deep unease about the survey among residents of many of Dharavi's *nagars* (neighbourhoods) because of the government's unwillingness to address their concerns or clarify details of eligibility and other ambiguities. Many were uncomfortable cooperating with the survey and sharing documents in this climate of insecurity. This fear was especially acute in light of the fact that for the DRP, the government abolished a clause that typically requires the consent of 70 per cent of affected households for Slum Rehabilitation Authority projects.

The survey faced further obstacles when political parties exploited genuine concerns. On 13 April 2008, an important Shiv Sena<sup>18</sup> leader declared his support for the survey before a huge crowd at a meeting in Dharavi. However, when the survey began, a local leader from the same party initiated a campaign to stop the survey. His opposition was understood to be a political manoeuvre aimed at wresting power from the ruling Congress Party coalition. Other Shiv Sena members then held a counter-rally demanding the survey. Eventually, the Shiv Sena leadership told the local party members to cooperate with the survey; however, this political grandstanding made it necessary to suspend survey work several times.

The progress of the survey was further impeded by changes in the leadership of the DRP, as described above. The period between March and July 2008, during which Chandrashekhar's resignation was pending and a temporary appointee headed the DRP while he was on leave for several months, was one of deep uncertainty. During this time, we were unable to receive formal responses to residents' concerns or to challenges in the survey process, or to continue a productive dialogue with the authorities.

SPARC was aware that the survey was not a neat mechanical exercise but, rather, a deeply political one that was not likely to fall within timelines prescribed in the government contract. Since we were working in partnership with federations of slum dwellers, the pace and nature of our work had to keep a finger on the local pulse. At times, delays in the survey process actually signalled periods of reflection and dialogue.

#### d. Benefits of the survey

The survey will produce authentic data for planning and will help residents secure entitlements. Once tabulated and made public, survey data will provide a wealth of information that can serve as a foundation for careful planning. The number of families eligible for resettlement and the number of structures in Dharavi, previously disputed figures, will be confirmed. Geo-tagged demographic, socioeconomic and structural information will be invaluable for orienting development towards the requirements of Dharavi's population. Although whether the baseline socioeconomic survey will be used officially to determine eligibility for resettlement is under discussion, being documented will provide some level of security to inhabitants.

The survey was also an important way of expanding dialogue among the authorities, Dharavi residents and their supporters. Negotiations about the questionnaire format and challenges in the survey process brought to light important points of confusion and concern in the DRP and made possible a space for dialogue on these issues. Participating in the survey provided a space for SPARC and the federation to interface between residents and the authorities on larger issues and concerns and paved the

18. The Shiv Sena is a right-wing political party supporting a Hindu nationalist and pro-Maharashtra agenda.

way for participation of civil society and residents in other aspects of the planning process.

#### IV. OTHER COLLABORATIONS

As we continue our engagement with the state, we are aiming to mitigate the element of uncertainty in this relationship by pursuing a multi-pronged strategy, including collaboration with academic and professional groups, the promotion of global awareness by facilitating visits for students, government officials and media representatives, and writing and advocacy.

We have been exploring ways in which to develop mutually beneficial and sustained partnerships with local and foreign academic and professional institutions. Two important collaborations have been our partnerships with the Royal University College of Fine Arts in Stockholm and with the Kamla Raheja Vidyavidyalaya Institute for Architecture (KRVIA) in Mumbai. As a result of several work visits to Dharavi in 2006 and 2007, Swedish students and professionals from the university produced *Dharavi: Documenting Informalities*, an interdisciplinary book on Dharavi; the book will be launched in Mumbai in 2009. The university also profiled Dharavi at Informal Cities, an exhibition and symposium held in Stockholm in September 2008. Community leaders from Dharavi spoke at the event, which brought together slum dwellers, academics, NGOs, government representatives and others from around the world.

Students from KRVIA and the Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology, Ahmedabad, documented living/working arrangements in Dharavi and presented alternatives to the proposed plan to government officials and residents after completing studio work in Dharavi in 2006. Faculty members from KRVIA are now members of the expert advisory group.

Besides our partnerships with academic and professional groups, SPARC has facilitated several dozens of visits by student groups, government delegations and journalists to Dharavi. In addition to the above institutions, we coordinated visits for student groups from Yale University, Columbia University, Harvard University and University College, London, among others. Government visitors have included a delegation of Swedish parliamentarians, the mayor of London and the governor of São Paulo, Brazil. We have given interviews and facilitated field visits for journalists from around the world. Because Dharavi's redevelopment is conditioned by global economic pressures and has global implications, we see these visits as a way of spreading global awareness of the situation in Dharavi and of generating public pressure in favour of residents' concerns.

#### V. EVALUATING PROGRESS, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Although we are encouraged by the successful dialogue with the authorities and the improvements in the plan, we are unsure about where this experimental relationship will lead.

Residents and activists continue to ask many important questions concerning the DRP:

- Will the urban design guidelines that are included in bid documents become binding regulations?

- What will happen to excluded populations, such as upper-floor residents (“tenants”), those who sleep at their workplaces or rent beds by the hour, those who arrived after the cut-off date or those who lack proper documentation? The plight of tenants is particularly severe, as it is estimated that there are up to 10,000 “tenant” households in Dharavi.<sup>(19)</sup> Currently, only ground-floor residents are entitled to benefits and it has proved practically impossible to document tenants.
- Can the current plan accommodate Dharavi’s complex economy? Can an allotment of 6 per cent multi-purpose space accommodate home-based livelihood activities? What will happen to commercial establishments with no official business licenses? Will hazardous or non-conforming industries receive alternative work sites? How will enterprises with a large ground space requirement adapt? What will happen to traditional trades such as leatherwork and pottery?
- Will the plan allow a role for communities in verifying data, deciding the location of amenities, forming cooperative housing societies and allocating units? Will they be able to contribute to decisions on the design of buildings and neighbourhoods? Will the grievance redress process be effective?
- How exactly will the transition process be handled?
- Will development lead to rapid gentrification, with rehabilitated slum dwellers being bought out under the table?

The advisory group and representatives from Dharavi will continue to raise and explore these critical issues with the DRP authorities.

We are also reflecting on the implications of our involvement in this dialogue. How can we remain accountable to our core organizational mission and constituency while employing a strategy of critical engagement with the state? How can we engage with the government without being co-opted? How can we accommodate the concerns of various strata within Dharavi when solutions will inevitably require compromise? How can we work with professionals, academic institutions and the media in a way that reinforces our primary mission of supporting the poor?

As we look forward, we must also navigate a constantly evolving and uncertain context. In the political sphere, there are impending elections at both central and state levels. The 26 November 2008 terror attacks in Mumbai have also led to changes in political leadership and in priorities. The impacts of these political transitions on the DRP or on local politics within Dharavi are unclear. It is also uncertain how long Chatterjee will remain head of the DRP. Three different officials have held the post since 2004 and transfers of officials occur frequently in India. We do not know whether a new DRP authority would continue negotiations. On the other hand, many of our recommendations have already been institutionalized in the project framework, and a shift in political focus might be a good opportunity to regroup.

At the same time, the project will have to navigate the impacts of the global financial crisis that has escalated since April 2008. The crisis has already changed the landscape in Dharavi, where the estimated cost of redevelopment has risen from Rs. 9,250 crores to Rs. 15,000 crores (from around US\$ 1.8 billion to US\$ 2.9 billion).<sup>(20)</sup> The real estate development and construction industries were the first to feel the effects of the economic downturn, and land values in Dharavi have fallen. Facing a liquidity crisis and unstable markets, it is unclear how many potential developers will

19. “Tenants” are upper-floor residents who are not related to the ground-floor occupants. Many such households have lived in Dharavi for 10–15 years. The “owner–tenant” relationship may mirror that of the formal system, with 11-month leases and rent receipts, but tenants are not protected by tenancy laws.

20. In 2004, the estimated cost of the project was around Rs. 5,600 crores (around US\$ 1.1 billion). The current estimated cost may drop because of decreasing prices for raw materials.

21. The pre-bid meeting took place on 10 October 2008. Firms will submit designs and master plans for review in the early months of 2009. This may be followed by amendments to the scheme, after which firms will submit financial bids. Five will then be selected to develop Dharavi's five sectors.

pursue the project.<sup>(21)</sup> It is also possible that the reduced economic pressure may create a more constructive climate in which to explore solutions with the government.

In Dharavi, we are negotiating a process that includes more actors, complexities and ambiguities than any other project of which we have been part. It is a challenge for us to strategize in this uncertain and constantly changing environment. The impact of political, economic and other externalities will only be apparent in retrospect; hopefully, these reports will assist future reflections. Despite persisting questions, our partners in the federation and Dharavi residents encourage us to stay in the conversation, because Dharavi will continue to remain in the eye of the development investment storm.

## REFERENCES

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