

TACTICAL CO-OPTION AND THE RIGHT TO THE NEO-LIBERAL CITY

The Alliance against the Dharavi Redevelopment Plan

Introduction

Mumbai's contemporary political economy is largely a result of two critical events: the collapse of the organised textile industry in the late 1970s and the economic liberalisation policies enacted and actively backed by the Indian State since 1991. The resultant replacement of blue-collar employment in the organised sector with jobs in informal sector has led to increased employment insecurity among the former proletariat, the numerically far greater class of workers now best described by the term 'toilers' (Pendse, 1995). The absence of organised employment has also meant an absence of organised activism amongst the former proletariat. Hence political movements in neoliberal Mumbai have been forced to make up for the lack of organised activism through the formation of unlikely partnerships – between the State, corporations and the former proletariat (Appadurai, 2002).

The main beneficiaries of liberalisation has been a section of the middle class in the city, whose growing economic clout has led to increased political power and the middle class exhibiting characteristics of a bourgeois class¹. Their growing clout has resulted in a definition of claims on urban space through a rejection of socialist policies followed before 1991 (Mahadevia, 2008) and an aspiration to be a 'world class city' that is visually and socially a reflection of their economic growth (Fernandes, 2004). Aided by local and regional governments, this aspiration has translated into a politics of exclusion of the poor from the city – one that the tactical partnerships generated by toiler political movements described by Appadurai have found hard to counter.

¹ A simplistic definition of 'bourgeois' on www.dictionary.com (accessed 11/27/2011) is 'a person whose political, economic, and social opinions are believed to be determined mainly by concern for property values and conventional respectability'

I refer to David Harvey's 2003 essay on 'The Right to the City' to frame my question for this paper – in the light of inequality, alienation and injustice in the neoliberal city, what strategies can be used to guarantee a right to the city? Appadurai identifies the tactical partnerships used to claim these rights by 'The Alliance' in Mumbai – rights that have emerged through a specific paradigm of the right to the city and forms the basis of any activism. However, when the foundational paradigm itself is challenged, can a right to the city still be successfully obtained through these tactical partnerships? Extending Appadurai's arguments and using the example of the Alliance's activism against the State's plans to redevelop the settlement at Dharavi in Mumbai, this paper attempts to identify a paradigm shift in the argument for establishing a right to the city that mirrors the tactical engagement with the State.

The Alliance and the Patron State

Dharavi, reputed to be Asia's largest slum, was established in the late 19th century at the site of an existing fishing village at the northern limits (at that time) of the city of Mumbai. The settlements that constitute the slums itself were established when the marshes that separated the seven islands forming the city of Mumbai were filled in to connect these islands. The settlement was a source of cheap housing for primarily lower caste migrants working as manual labour as well as craftsmen, potters, tanners and embroidery workers who serviced the city of Mumbai. At the same time, its then location on the periphery on relatively unimportant land, allowed the city to ignore it while taking advantage of the services its residents offered. As the city of Mumbai grew northward, this settlement consisting of poorly built structures started entering the city's geographic core and its imagination of itself. After the incorporation of some northern suburbs in 1956 within the city, Dharavi became the geographic centre of

the city, boxed in by all three railway corridors and two major expressways that brought commuters into the city.²

Beginning with the State's ignorance of the settlement at Dharavi in the first half of the 20th century, the policies enacted thereafter reflected an incremental (albeit reluctant) willingness on behalf of the State to recognise the rights of its citizens. The Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act of 1956 defined the characteristics of a slum and allowed the State to demolish slums without re-housing its residents. The Maharashtra Slum Areas (Improvement, Clearance and Redevelopment) Act of 1971 barred the State from carrying out demolitions or evictions without re-housing the residents. In 1985, a landmark judgement by the Supreme Court of India in the *Tellis v/s Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC)* case protected residents of slums from eviction by equating the right to earn a livelihood as an essential component of the right to life. This judgement ensured that if residents of slums were evicted, they had to be resettled at the same site, as any relocation elsewhere would affect their right to earn a livelihood. The Prime Minister's Grant Relief Programme (PMGP) of 1985 encouraged the formation co-operative housing societies of residents. The resultant society held joint ownership of the land on which the tenements of its members stood and the formation of a co-operative housing society ensured better access to loans.³

Through these policies, the State recognised the right of the settlement at Dharavi to the city in the following stages: through a (backhanded) recognition of their existence (Act of 1956), the recognition of their right to the city (Act of 1971), the recognition of the right to continue living

² http://www.dharavi.org/B_Introduction (accessed 11/27/2011)

³ <http://www.altlawforum.org/globalisation/research-publications/mumbai-to-shanghai-without-slums/slum-policies> (accessed 11/29/2011)

in Dharavi and the right to develop the land on which they reside (Tellis vs BMC, PMGP in 1985). The basis of the right to the city through the right to livelihood was that claim on urban land and access to urban space was guaranteed through an equal access to the city's economy.

However, the enactment of these policies did not ensure adequate protection to the residents of Dharavi or for any residents of slums in the city of Mumbai. The policies were applicable only to slums on land owned by the government. All policies protected only those residents of slums who can prove that they have continually resided in their structure from before a certain cut-off date, essentially giving the right to the city on a first-come, first-served basis to the poor. At the same time, the inability of residents to obtain documentary evidence of residence rendered them vulnerable to being evicted in any case. The policies that encourage infrastructure upgradation were selectively applied, and many of these upgrades were available for those communities within slums that mobilised themselves politically and obtained these services in exchange for voting for a particular representative. While State policy guaranteed certain rights to these residents, the provisions allowed for enough ambiguity for the State to arbitrarily select the situations in which these protections were offered. The continual revisions of the cut-off dates for regularisation of slums are one such example.

Beginning from 1971, the state government established a regularisation cut-off date for slums on public land. If residents could prove that they resided in a particular settlement before the cut-off date (through a number of documents like ration cards, photo-passes etc.) their homes would be spared from demolition and they were protected under the various acts passed by

the government. Demolitions would continue for those who could not produce the necessary documents or whose homes were built after the cut-off date. Due to uncertain methods of acquiring these documents, even residents who lived in the settlement before the cut-off date were at risk of eviction. As elections approached, the cut-off date would be revised by the incumbent to a date just after the declaration of results, and once re-election was achieved and the cut off date passed, demolitions continued. The latest revision of the cut-off date stands as January 1, 2000 (Mahadevia, 2008).

This context set up the conditions for the formation and operational methods of the Alliance. The Alliance consists of three organisations – the National Slum Dwellers' Federation (NSDF), the Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) and Mahila Milan – that work together to gain secure tenure of land, adequate and durable housing, and access to elements of urban infrastructure, notably to electricity, transport, sanitation, and allied services for the urban poor. As Arjun Appadurai (2002) explains, each organisation plays a different role in ensuring that the State is held responsible for the provision of services and protection to the poor. SPARC is a nongovernmental organisation led by a group of professionals belonging to the city's elite that is well connected politically and within the private sector. The NSDF is a federation of smaller organised groups in slums that seeks to politically mobilise slumdweller at the grassroots level. While SPARC provides the technical knowledge and uses its connections to ensure that the State's arbitrary actions are in favour of the residents of slums, NSDF uses its network of organisations to create political pressure on the State. While the two organisations work in different directions to influence policy (top-down and bottom-up respectively), there are commonalities in their strategies. For example, unlike many grassroots organisations in the slums, NSDF does not have tie-ups with any political party but seeks to negotiate and

strategically ally itself with political parties as and when its interests are matched. Similarly, SPARC's most important connections are with the multiple hierarchies of bureaucracy at the municipal and state level, who are the 'competent authorities' identified in various policies related to slums.

Appadurai also describes the working of the Alliance in the context of the modern neo-liberal state, assuming that the retreat of the State sets up the tactical, patient and transparent methodology of activism that defines the Alliance. However, I argue that the strategies employed by the Alliance rely heavily on State intervention. The strategies in negotiating with the State – through establishing contacts with the bureaucracy, enlisting the support of supportive or sympathetic bureaucrats – relies heavily on a patron-beneficiary relationship established with the State. The strategy relies on ensuring that the State's arbitrary powers favour the Alliance and through them the urban poor. For re-housing of slums, it relies heavily on negotiations with the State on the basis of the central role the co-operative housing society plays in any slum redevelopment or renewal scheme. At the same time, support is created amongst this federation of grassroots organisations by setting up a system of "words and deeds" (Appadurai, 2002) that are antithetical to the image of the bureaucratic and hierarchical State, allowing the Alliance to take the role of an intermediary that can please on behalf of the constituents of the federation with the State.

After economic liberalisation in 1992, the city of Mumbai has seen a retreat of the State from the public sphere, especially in housing and slum redevelopment. Hence even the arbitrary protection of the State is difficult to obtain. At the same time, the economic growth experienced by the middle class has generated a production and propagation of a vision of

urban development that seek to exclude the poor and working-class communities, described as the 'politics of forgetting' (Fernandes, 2004). However, this exclusion is not as passive as the word 'forgetting' suggests. It is a process where the State actively promotes and manages an imagination of a 'world class city' with the help of bourgeois citizen groups and actively attempts to keep the poor out of the city. The culmination of these two processes has drastically reduced the effect of the Alliance's strategies in bending the State's arbitrary decision making in its favour – it is an unequal fight against an entire system of socio-cultural production opposed to the Alliance's goals of protecting the right to the city for the poor.

Bourgeois Activism and the Politics of Exclusion

Attempts to exclude the poor from urban space have been observed in Mumbai from the early 1990s in different geographies of the city. Fernandes (2004) points out that the movement to 'clean up' public spaces in the 1990s was constructed around class-based discourses that aimed to not only remove the poor from urban space but also ensure that they are permanently exiled through policing systems. She provides the example of a State sponsored beautification drive at Chowpatty Beach in South Mumbai that added a jogging track with benches in an area near the beach originally occupied by a slum along with a 120 foot high watchtower with two policemen that ensured that the relocated poor did not enter the beach again. The project met with support from middle class citizen groups on the pretext of 'beautifying' the beach. Anjaria (2009) describes the arguments of bourgeois activism for urban beautification and for evicting hawkers from streets in South Mumbai, based on the middle class citizens claiming 'citizenship' for themselves as tax-paying citizens. In both essays, the claim for appropriation of urban space by the middle class is explained through the politics of exclusion of the poor from the city.

Three key arguments form the basis of this politics of exclusion – a definition of citizenship based on an economic value of the individual, the idealisation of a clean and ordered urban space and the reliance on narrow technical or legal arguments to claim space. Anjaria (2009) describes how these arguments play out during a campaign to evict hawkers from streets in South Mumbai. During a meeting between representatives of middle citizen groups, members of the hawkers union and the municipal corporation, the eviction of hawkers is justified by the citizen group representative using the line ‘We are the citizens, who are you?’, addressed to the members of the hawkers union. Here, the idea of citizenship is defined through the narrow lens of being a property owner and a ‘tax-paying resident of the city’, and through the apparent larger contribution to the economy of the city, the exclusive claim on public space is justified. The other aspect is the propagation of images that show an existing street with hawkers juxtaposed with an idealised image of a street without hawkers. The first image with the hawkers shows potholed streets, buildings in a state of disrepair, clutter on the sidewalks and humbly dressed men lingering around the hawkers’ stalls. The second idealised image of the same street not only eliminates the hawkers, but replaces the potholed street with a smooth asphalted road surface, the lingering men with well dressed people briskly walking to unknown destinations and the formerly decrepit building in an immaculate state of maintenance. The visual elements of the idealised image suggest that the direct result of the exclusion of the poor hawker from the city will convert the city to a clean and ordered ‘world-class city’. It is another matter altogether that similar encroachments on public space by the rich (such as illegal street parking or illegal additions/conversions of buildings) do not constitute a threat to the idealised city in the eyes of the middle class citizen groups (Fernandes, 2004).

While this process of exclusion was carried out in a piecemeal manner, the image of the 'world class city' and using the city of Shanghai as a visual model for Mumbai caught the imagination of the middle class as well as the Maharashtra government in the early 2000s. The image of the 'world class city' that the Maharashtra government refers to was based on 'Vision Mumbai', a report prepared in 2003 by McKinsey Consultants on behalf of Bombay First, a nongovernmental organisation led by industrialists, business leaders and upper middle class civic activists. The report envisages the development of prime urban land with spatial symbols of developed cities – towering skyscrapers, malls etc. – that the middle class and the rich aspire to. The report also stressed on the relocation of the poor away from the city, on former salt pan lands on the outskirts of the city.

The report and its recommendations were highly popular amongst the city's elite. Many middle class citizen groups such as Bombay First and the Citizen's Action Group urged the government of Maharashtra to take action on the basis of this report (Mahadevia, 2008). The imagination of the 'world class city' has been posited as the driving force behind slum demolitions of 2004-2005 (Sharma, 2005). To begin the conversion to a 'world class city', a slum demolition drive was carried out from November 2004 to February 2005 on the orders of the Chief Minister of the state of Maharashtra. Over 90,000 homes were demolished with little notice given to their residents and over 400,000 people were rendered homeless. (Weinstein and Ren, 2009) While the demolition was targeted at those homes whose residents had not settled before the then regularisation cut-off date of 1995, the speed at which the demolitions happened ensured that over a quarter of the homes demolished were regularised homes. The response of the Chief Minister of the State of Maharashtra was that these were "accidents" and that some sacrifices had to be made for the city to be a 'world class' city (Sainath, 2005).

Unlike demolitions in earlier decades that invited sympathetic responses from the middle class and the rich, this spate of demolitions was supported to a large extent by influential citizen groups of the rich and powerful. Newspaper polls suggested that the level of support for the slum demolition drive amongst the middle class was enormous – some newspapers reporting upto 84% support for the drive (Mahadevia, 2008). In addition to the denial of rights to the city for the poor, the process of the demolitions were also a larger denial of the citizenship rights of the poor – almost immediately after the demolitions, the Municipal Corporation started striking off the names of those people whose homes had been demolished from the voter rolls in the city (Mahadevia, 2008).

In spite of massive protests in the time these demolitions took place, it took a major intervention from the Central government (of the same political party as the State government) to finally halt the protests to avoid a dilution of its election message that promoted favourable policies for the 'common man' (Mahadevia, 2008). The propagation of the 'world class city' image is powerful enough to become the State's justification to deny the urban poor their rights and the Alliance's traditional strategies that rely on creating pressure on the State through a reminder of their own formulated policies do not achieve their desired effects.

Post-Liberalization Housing Policies

While the Dharavi Redevelopment Plan was formulated by the state of Maharashtra in 2007, it represents a normative framework of housing provision for the poor that originates in 1990, a year before economic liberalisation policies are formulated by the Central government.

In 1990, in the run up to elections at the State level, the Shiv Sena, a political party that formed the major opposition to the incumbent Congress government declared a policy of 'free housing' for slumdwellers through redevelopment of their homes. The resultant apartment buildings were proposed to be cross-subsidised through private development and the scheme would be incentivised by changing floor space index (FSI) regulations for slum areas to increase the density of development on the land. While the Shiv Sena lost the elections, the re-elected Congress government appropriated the foundation of this proposal to launch the Slum Redevelopment Scheme (SRD) in 1991. Under this scheme, the State's role in rehousing the urban poor was reduced to being a promoter of slum redevelopment. The onus of redevelopment was on private developers. The policy increased the allowable FSI for slum areas to maximum of 2.5 times what was allowed originally and the private developer had to re-house all the eligible resident families of the slum in apartment houses of 180-225 sq.ft. area. The private developer could use the rest of the area that the slum originally occupied for his own profit, designated as the "sale component". At the same time, each rehoused family had to pay Rs. 15,000 (about \$800 in 1991) to contribute to an estimated 23% of the cost of construction of their apartment unit (Mukhija, 2001).

This policy did not completely reject older policies formulated in the mid-1980s but built upon many aspects of it. Like under the PMGP, the co-operative housing society in the slum was the unit of intervention and the private developer had to obtain their support before proposing a slum redevelopment scheme. Also, the government retained some control over densities and living conditions in the redeveloped houses by capping profits for the developer at 25% and having a committee of bureaucrats decide the allowable FSI based on the estimate of profits.

At the same time, the construction byelaws applicable to this scheme were the same as those for any other housing construction in the city (Mukhija, 2001).

The key difference between redevelopment under the PMGP and SRD is the control over land tenure. Under the PMGP, the co-operative society of slumdwellers acquired tenure over the land they occupied and continued holding this tenure even after they redeveloped their houses. Under the SRD, the part of the land occupied by the sale component was owned by the private developer. This represents a dilution of the right to land tenure that was protected under the policies of the mid-1980s.

Owing to the real estate rates prevalent in the city at the time, slum redevelopment in many parts of the city was not just feasible but profitable. Yet, the scheme failed to attract many developers as the time involved in partnering with a co-operative society and delays by the government in determining FSI caps made redevelopment schemes unfeasible (Mukhija, 2001).

To make redevelopment attractive, the slum redevelopment policy was modified again in 1995 through the relaxation of many critical controls of the government. The profit ceiling was eliminated and a property tax holiday instituted for 10 years after completion of the project. The Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) was constituted to speed up clearances. Slums in the city were classified under three categories depending on their location in the city, and FSI caps were standardised for each of these zones. Further amendments in 1998 to the policy relaxed building construction byelaws, mainly related to setbacks and space between buildings. (Mukhija, 2001).

This policy continued the process of deregulation begun in 1991 by removing most government controls over redevelopment. The relaxation of built form guidelines to spur slum redevelopment is ironic, considering that the original justification for demolition in the 1950s was based on the density and condition of housing. However, it still relied on eligible residents of slums to approve of redevelopment through the approval of co-operative housing societies. This was used as the primary reason by developers to explain the limited impact of further deregulation.

The Dharavi Redevelopment Plan

The Dharavi Redevelopment Plan (DRP) represents a policy that collapses these two separate processes of denying access to urban space for the poor. It emerged as a key part of the 'Vision Mumbai' report, imposing an idealised imagination of a city without the poor while continuing the retreat of State supervision from slum redevelopment.

In 2004, the Government of Maharashtra State endorsed the Dharavi Redevelopment Plan (DRP) prepared by a private consultant and intended to use the plan as a model for redeveloping slums in other parts of the city and the state. Instead of the piecemeal approach towards redevelopment the PMGP had set up, the Plan looked at a comprehensive redevelopment of the entire settlement by dividing it into 5 large sectors that could be bid for by private developers. FSI caps were further increased for the benefit of obtaining a larger sale component incentive and building codes for redeveloped housing were further relaxed (Patel and Arputham, 2007). Crucially, all infrastructure within the sectors was no longer the

responsibility of the municipal authorities, but had to be built and operated by the developer as well.⁴

Unlike previous liberal policies, the DRP did not require any approval of the housing co-operative societies. In fact, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra justified this move on the claim that since the project was carried out on government owned land by the government (as a representative of the people of Dharavi), no approval of the co-operative societies were needed.⁵ At the same time, there were no surveys carried out to determine the actual number of people to be re-housed and this was to be determined by the developer who wins the bid to redevelop a particular sector. This was an indication that the redevelopment was aimed to maximise the sale component and make high profits based on the proximity of Bandra-Kurla complex which was a new central business district for the city (Patel and Arputham, 2007). The elimination of the co-operative housing societies from the decision making process also eliminated the basis of the Alliance's strategy of negotiating with the State.

At the same time, the DRP presented an idealised vision of redeveloped Dharavi. The images used as a part of any presentations on the DRP were visually an extension of the images used by various middle class citizen groups in justifying hawker eviction or urban beautification.⁶ While the plan ostensibly sought to re-house the residents of Dharavi, the images of tall buildings with glass facades set in large open spaces did not include a realistic appraisal of how the living-working typologies of the poor were incorporated into the imagery.

⁴ <http://www.sra.gov.in/htmlpages/Dharavi.htm> (accessed 11/29/2011)

⁵ <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/dharavi-makeover-deshmukh-wont-wait-for-sl/14590/> (Accessed 11/29/2011)

⁶ <http://www.ctbuh.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=NCNpcNOaLPk%3D&tabid=1421&language=en-US> (Accessed 11/29/2011)

In this context, I argue that the Alliance had to develop new strategies of activism that addressed the State's neo-liberal housing policies as much as the image of the 'world class city' propagated by it, to protect the right to the city for the urban poor. This strategy involves modifications of its negotiations with the State combined with new arguments for the right to the city. I illustrate these new strategies through the Alliance's activism against the Dharavi Redevelopment Plan.

The Alliance against the Dharavi Redevelopment Plan

The activism against the Dharavi Redevelopment Plan involved three strategies: a redefinition of the right of the poor through an understanding of land ownership and economic contribution, an alternative imagination of slum redevelopment that employed the visual tools of bourgeois activism and an attempt to re-involve the State in slum redevelopment. These strategies combined those described by Appadurai (2002) that relied on political contacts within State bureaucracy along with the claim that the poor are as much a part of the neo-liberal city as the middle class citizen groups.

The first strategy of redefinition of the right to the city is clearly seen in the arguments describing the contribution of the residents of Dharavi to the city. This is in opposition to the use of the right to livelihood obtained through the *Tellis v/s BMC* case. Patel and Arputham (2007) describe many industries that are located in the area, ranging from pottery, cutlery and tailoring. The total turnover of the area is estimated to be several million dollars, more than many special economic zones that are planned under liberal economic policies at the Central level. Savchuk, Echanove and Srivastava (2009) reinterpret the settlement as an industrial area, with homes built in areas left over from industrial structures. At the same time,

the Alliance utilised studies conducted by academic institutions that placed the production in Dharavi within a global network, notably the production of leather goods, jeans and recycling industries (KRVA, 2003). The right to live in the city is thus defined by the ability to contribute to the city's economy compared to the older definition based on *Tellis v/s BMC*, which defines the right to live in the city by the opportunity to seek livelihood and be a part of the city's economy.

The claim on land was established not only through the framework of the *Tellis v/s BMC* case, but through a historical argument described initially by Sharma (2000). Anecdotal evidence of land being 'created' from the marshes on which the poor settled was used as an important argument for original land ownership. (Patel and Arputham, 2007) Again, the claim on land is not through the denial of employment opportunity, but through a case for ancient property ownership.

Defining the right to the city through their economic contribution follows the strategy employed by middle class activism summarised earlier in this paper. The claim on the middle class understanding of citizenship through economic contribution redefines the provision of redeveloped housing for the poor as a right of the citizen instead of an entitlement, similar to how the right to public space is claimed by middle class citizen groups. The exclusion of the poor from urban space thus stands at odds with the arguments made by the State in justifying the 'Vision Mumbai'.

The second strategy was to develop an alternate imagination of urban space which includes the poor while aesthetically and visually co-opting the imaginations propagated by the idea

of the 'world class city'. This was done by incorporating redevelopment projects by students from leading architecture schools in Mumbai and Ahmedabad (Patel and Arputham, 2007). While the housing typologies in these projects were designed based on the unique living-working relationships of residents in Dharavi, the schemes themselves exhibited the clean, ordered visual language that the DRP employed (KRVIA, 2008). This was in contrast to the image that Savchuk, Echianove and Srivastava (2009) describe as the popular perception of Dharavi: '...a wasteland of tent-like temporary structures, an immense junkyard crowded with undernourished people completely disconnected from the rest of the world, surviving on charity and pulling the economy backward.' The imagery employed attempted to revise this popular perception. At the same time, it was also argued that the economic contribution to the city was under threat if typologies that did not incorporate the living-working spatial relationships were not a part of the DRP (Patel and Arputham, 2008).

Simultaneously, the Alliance engaged the Maharashtra State government in negotiations that sought to involve the State in the redevelopment process once again, a role that the State had virtually abandoned since the housing policies of the early 1990s. However, the arguments made to ensure this were based on legal and technical concerns such as concerns about density with the high proportion of sale component and infrastructure linkage to the city (Patel and Arputham, 2008) – another co-option of bourgeois activist methods.

While the arguments justifying opposition to the DRP underwent a sea change from those used earlier, the engagement with the State followed the strategy described by Appadurai (2002). Mobilised by the NSDF, grassroots organisations in Dharavi protested the elimination of approval from co-operative societies by the DRP – going as far as to threaten a blockade of

the three railway lines that surrounded Dharavi (Patel and Arputham, 2007). Simultaneously, SPARC co-ordinated a group comprising of ex-bureaucrats in the State government, influential planning professionals and sympathetic eminent citizens that argued from within the system, using their connections with colleagues and members of the bureaucracy to incrementally change the process and policies of the DRP.

The activism against the Dharavi Redevelopment Plan in its original proposed form began in 2006, when the State government declared that it would not seek consent of the residents of Dharavi while formulating the Plan. Since then, the combination of the Alliance's tactical engagement with the State along with the re-definition of its arguments for the right of the poor to the city has transformed the DRP dramatically.

These transformations have been negotiated incrementally, beginning with a government sponsored survey of the residents in Dharavi in December 2007 (Patel and Arputham, 2008), the formation of an expert committee to advise the Government on the DRP in May 2008, revisions to appoint developers through direct contracts with residents in November 2009⁷ and the decision to carry out the redevelopment through the State's housing agency in June 2010⁸.

As of May 2011, the Maharashtra State Government has assigned the task of redevelopment of one of the proposed sectors to the State's housing agency MHADA. This redevelopment is seen as a pilot project that could serve as a model for redevelopment of the entire settlement

⁷ <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/32-clusters-over-50-developers-to-choose-from/547177>

⁸ <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/dharavi-masterplan-5-sectors-7-bidders-staggered-tenders/589773/2>

and for other slums in the city and State. The proposal includes re-housing for the 9,300 families that had proved eligibility (63% of the total families who lived in this sector), along with an additional 5,000 low cost houses.⁹ At the same time, the bids called for the other four sectors have been cancelled, with the Chief Minister's stated aim being that redevelopment that does not "favour builders".¹⁰

There have been other factors playing a role in the transformation of the DRP. The global financial crisis in 2008 caused many bidders for the original plan to drop out from the process. The State of Maharashtra has seen three Chief Ministers since 2006 who have taken progressively sympathetic stands towards slums, if one considers the demolitions of 2004-2005 as a low point. Another factor has also been the appointment of a new chief for MHADA in mid-2008, who many activists from the Alliance consider "on our side".

In any case, the impact of the Alliance's activism against the DRP has seen a break in the progressive retreat of the State from control of slum redevelopment. The involvement of MHADA in the redevelopment along with the power of consent granted back to the co-operative housing societies are comparable to the policies of the 1980s under the PMGP. Another aspect of the planned redevelopment is the creation of new low cost housing stock.

This apparent volte-face of the State is not consistent though, as seen through demolitions of similar large slums in other parts of the city in 2011 using the same tactics as the demolitions of

⁹ <http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/mumbai/Mhada-has-Dharavi-revamp-on-its-mind/Article1-701722.aspx> (Accessed 11/29/2011)

¹⁰ <http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/mumbai/Mhada-gets-CM-s-nod-to-redevelop-Dharavi-sector-5/Article1-700487.aspx> (Accessed 11/29/2011)

2004-05¹¹. These demolitions were temporarily stopped through forms of activism similar to the ones seen in 2004-05, where the appeal is made to the idea of the State as patron. I argue that the reason for this inconsistency in treatment for Dharavi is the re-definition of the right to the city by the Alliance.

Conclusion

The activism employed by the Alliance over the Dharavi Redevelopment Plan can be construed as a cynical acceptance of the framework in which the neo-liberal State operates. The linking of the right to the city to the economic contribution of the poor in the city is perhaps a dangerous precedent which, looking at the slum demolitions of 2004-05, may lead to similarly-based definitions of citizenship. While the strategy is an effective counter against the exclusion of a certain section of the urban poor, the continuation of slum demolitions in other parts of Mumbai in the same time period as the Alliance's successes in Dharavi suggests that the paradigm shift in the argument is not consistently applicable across the urban poor, pointing to a flaw in the paradigm that creates a basis for a division amongst the urban poor on the lines of "usefulness".

There is a similarity though, in the Alliance's tactical nature of engaging with the State and its tactical co-option of the neo-liberal image of the city and the idea of citizenship. These tactics are revolutionary in the sense Harvey (2003) describes them: '... not total breaks, but they do turn things upside down'. Arguing for the right to the city, using the tools that have led to exclusion in the first place is a form of insurgent urbanism whose broad contours may constitute an effective strategy against the neo-liberal State.

¹¹ <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/medha-patkar-ends-fast-over-demolition-of-slums-at-golibar-108768>

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