

## Contested negotiations and transformations of life-worlds. Conflicts over Redevelopment of Mumbai's Chawls

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Many of Mumbai's neighborhoods are dominated by the Chawl, an architectural form seen as an epitome of the industrial past of the city and working-class lifestyles and sociability. Chawls are densely populated rental-housing units with shared toilet facilities, which have been built during the colonial era. They are associated with a closely knit residential community, based on exchange, solidarity and a family-like relationship, but also with a lack of hygiene and privacy, as well as deteriorating structures. In the wake of market liberalisation in India, the government decided to permit private investors to redevelop the Chawls into high-rise buildings with apartments that have modern amenities. This would turn these neighborhoods into glamorous districts, that would resemble downtowns of many other global cities and thus foster the new image of Mumbai as a modern metropolis.

However, these plans are steeped in controversy and Redevelopment processes are characterised by long term negotiations between multiple stakeholders. During negotiations about Chawl-Redevelopment, access to reliable information is crucial for Chawl-residents, but many factors restrict this access. Tenants, advocates, activists, journalists and builders are engaged in various activities of networking through which informations are processed, suppressed or transformed. Different levels of literacy and knowledge about laws and regulations are responsible for the making of power hierarchies that distinguish different stakeholders into actors with more or less agency. This often results in rifts between different factions of Chawl-residents that can lead to violent encounters and delay Redevelopment-projects for many years.

Furthermore, Chawl-Redevelopment leads to a profound transformation of life-worlds. The legal framework of Chawl-Redevelopment grants Chawl-residents the right to be rehoused on the same site free of cost, while extra apartments in the new high rise building are sold to new owners at market rates, for a profit. Consequently, after Redevelopment two quite distinct social groups – a globally networking elite and the former Chawl-residents – would be housed next to each other. Various technologies of gating are employed to divide new and old resident's complexes from each other and the surrounding environment, changing the experience of and engagement with the spaces of the neighborhood. In many respects, these developments parallel other processes of gating in Indian cities, but also diverge from these due to the specific framework of Chawl-Redevelopment. Moreover, Redevelopment causes clashes between different aesthetic orders and ideals of the 'proper' organisation of urban space. Many elements of Chawls cannot easily be translated into the new form of the 'modern' high-rise building. Different patterns of use of space found in Chawls are

discouraged in new developments that are designed to favour middle-class lifestyles. Certain sensorial experiences get excluded from new buildings, while others are welcomed. In this way, Chawl-Redevelopment is part of a sensorial and aesthetic re-mapping of the city that is informed by a combination of class- and caste-based, as well as religious values.

I worked with a Tenant's Federation that provides information and legal guidance to tenants from all over Mumbai. During a 14-months field study, I collected my data through participant observation of the Federation's regular meetings and informal Interviews with clients. Over time, I developed closer relations to certain clients and undertook field trips to their Chawls, where I participated in different meetings and functions and did more structured Interviews with residents, activists and housing committee members. I supplemented these sets of data with an analysis of government reports, official correspondences and legal documents related to the single cases.