

SLUM REHABILITATION VIS-A-VIS UTILITARIANISM: AN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

The threat of urbanisation has directly affected the environment and caused its deterioration in numerable ways. There are many socio-economic problems prevailing in the urban world such as unemployment, housing shortages, etc. In addition to this, there are several environmental problems that have shown up in the urban regions which need to be addressed within the coming future. One big problem that has come up in the recent time is the problem of slum-dwellers in the urban world. There is no doubt in the assertion that slums are a consequence of the vast economic gap between the rich and the poor. Slums, the direct consequence of urban poor lifestyle, have been occupying space in the urban areas. This space that these slums occupy is not only a means of production but has also proven to be a means of control, domination and power.¹ Slums not only point out towards the existing urban housing mismanagement faced by the megacities but it also brings to light the tragedies of the slum dwellers who rely on this living.

Of the various aspects which are discussed when the slum crisis is debated, the one aspect which often goes neglected is the environmental aspect to the whole slum dilemma faced by the urban areas. From the tragedies of the slum-dwellers to the dilemma of the state in rehabilitating the slum-dwellers, the perspective of environmental cost incurred by both the state as well as its subject is often overlooked in this fight between slum-dwellers and state actors.

The crisis faced by the urban sphere has gained attention from innumerable scholars, donors, multilateral agencies as well as decision makers around the world.² Efforts have been made to

¹ Lefebvre, 1991, p. 26.

² RAPID URBAN SECTOR PROFILING FOR SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES (RUSPS) IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR URBAN PLANNING IN ONDO STATE, NIGERIA ; Johnson Bade

come up with solutions and policies to manage the slum dilemma of the urban world. Removal of Slums is the ultimate goal of every state actor since there are many demerits attached with the slum lifestyle. Other than the mere deterioration of the urban look which a city has, the slums have problems such as no sanitation facilities, unhealthy environment to reside and lack of other state-provided services. Thus, the goal of removal of slums is not for the benefit of the state but is for benefitting the subjects and enabling them with an access to safe environment to live in with adequate and secure supplies of water, electricity, sanitation, etc.

The utilitarian approach talks about the simple principle of 'the greater good'. When this principle of 'the greater good' is discussed, the outcome which follows is that for the betterment of the larger portion of the society, the happiness of a smaller portion needs to be sacrificed. In the context of the slum dwellers, the slum housing of the urban poor need to be removed and they should be rehabilitated into other housing schemes such as apartments. The utility herein is that the enormous portion of land which the slums are occupying can be replaced with apartments being constructed over a portion of that land and the rest of the land could be used for other developmental purposes.

Urban regions in the developing nations have been confronting unique and more complex difficulties as the increasing rate of urbanization affect the urban areas. The current techniques and procedures have been tested to see if it is working and if yes, then to what extent. Be that as it may, endeavours must be made to adjust and receive the method to deal with urban planning if the goal of utilitarian city planning is to be accomplished. With this paper, the author seeks to bring forward the environmental perspective to the tragedy of slums in urban areas. This paper is aimed at thoroughly studying the environmental repercussions of the slum housing with a utilitarian approach. It will further be debated that slum rehabilitation is not debated in support of the state tactics but rather out of genuine concern for the environment around us.

THE SLUM TRAGEDY

In India, the slum communities are people who reside under the circumstances of extreme poverty and lack access to basic amenities required to lead a minimal standard lifestyle.³ Slums are defined as the “*buildings and areas that are environmentally and structurally deficient. A result of multiple deprivations such as; illegal land tenure, deficient environment and inadequate shelter and are the result of the gap between the demand and the legal and formal supply in the housing market.*”⁴

The tragedy of the urban poor is not a recent realisation. Yet, only in the recent past has this tragedy of slum dwellers gained the immense attention from government as well as other non-governmental organisations aiming to work for the betterment of slum dwellers. Just like other developing nations such as Brazil, Bangladesh, etc., India is also facing a severe problem of environmental degradation. It is currently the second-most populated country in the world because of the increased rate of birth prevailing in the nation.⁵ This large population has created immense pressure on the environment around them for sustenance.

The ever increasing population in the urban areas has led to creation of urban slums as a housing option in the cities. These slums have resulted in causing extreme pressures on the environment where they are created by contaminating the water bodies around, causing deforestation by occupying land which could otherwise be covered with green patch of the environment and also creating an unhealthy atmosphere to live in. This indirectly adds to the trouble which the slum dwellers face. Since they are exposed to polluted means of living, their health is at a greater risk than any of the other sections of the society. Considering their socio-economic conditions, health hazards and such vulnerability might entangle them in a vicious cycle of poverty and depraved lifestyle.

³ A Systematic Evaluation of Environmental Discrimination with Regard to Sustainability Initiatives in India How Community Based Natural Resource Management Theory Could Offer a Practical Solution to Promoting Equitable Access to Sustainability; Jonah M. Williams; Consilience, No. 16 (2016), pp. 64-73 Published by: Columbia University Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26188774>

⁴ Chauhan, A. (1996) Learning from Slums IN PETER, S. J., GRABNER (Ed.) Minimal space – minimal housing. Austria, The Technische Universitaet Graz, Austria

⁵ A Systematic Evaluation of Environmental Discrimination with Regard to Sustainability Initiatives in India How Community Based Natural Resource Management Theory Could Offer a Practical Solution to Promoting Equitable Access to Sustainability; Jonah M. Williams; Consilience, No. 16 (2016), pp. 64-73 Published by: Columbia University Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26188774>

Let us study the Slum tragedy in Mumbai, city of India to learn about the existing situation. We aim to learn the severity of problems faced by the state and its subjects.

MUMBAI

When we look at the city of Mumbai from an aerial view, we see that major part of the city is occupied with slums. It has been reported that 6% of the land in Mumbai is covered by slum pockets, but, they inhabitate around 60% of the population of Mumbai.⁶ This directly points towards the huge economic gap prevailing within different sections of the society. The reason for such high number of slum dwellers is not just the high birth rate but also the high rate at which migrants are moving to the city of Mumbai from the other parts of India.

The slums started developing around half century back and the construction of ports and harbours can be considered to be a reason for the increase in slum area.⁷ It is often asserted that the gap which was created in 1960s of supplying only 17,600 houses out of the demanded 46,000 houses and in 1970s of supplying only 20,600 houses out of the demanded 60,000 has ignited the growth of slum area.⁸ The current situation is such that 55% of the population has been residing in 2,500 slums or more in various parts of Mumbai.⁹

The land which the Mumbai slums are based upon includes 50% of private land, 25% of government land and 20% of municipal land.¹⁰ The remaining 5% of the land belongs to the central government as well as Housing Board land.¹¹ As per studies, there are 12 million families in Mumbai which are eligible for being rehabilitated from the Slums. The cost that the state will have to incur for such rehabilitation could be easily made out to be pretty high.

⁶ CBC (2007) Slum Cities: A Shifting World. CBC.CA. (see <http://www.cbc.ca/correspondent/060507.html>, accessed on 05/01/2009).

⁷ SHETH, A.Z., VELAGA, N.R. and PRICE, A.D.F., 2009. Slum rehabilitation in the context of urban sustainability: a case study of Mumbai, India. IN: Proceedings of SUE-MoT: 2nd International Conference on Whole Life Urban Sustainability and its Assessment, 22-24th April, Loughborough, UK.

⁸ Shetty P., Gupte R., Patil R., Parikh A., Sabnis N., Menezes B., (2007) Housing typologies in Mumbai Mumbai, Collective Research Initiative trust

⁹ O'hare, G., Abbott, D. & Barke, M. (1998) A review of slum housing policies in Mumbai. Cities, 15, 269-283.

¹⁰ Dalvi (1997) The Slums of Bombay. Mumbai Pages (see <http://theory.tifr.res.in/bombay/history/slums.html>, accessed on 05/01/2009)

¹¹ Dalvi (1997) The Slums of Bombay. Mumbai Pages (see <http://theory.tifr.res.in/bombay/history/slums.html>, accessed on 05/01/2009)

ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT TO SLUMS

A detailed study on the Slums Pockets includes several aspects to it. The Environmental aspect is one such aspect which needs to be studied in detail for the purpose of this paper by the author. Environment can be defined as “all those elements which in their complex inter-relationships form the framework, setting and living conditions for mankind, by their very existence or by virtue of their impact.”¹² On the other hand, any sort of alteration in the environment can be termed as pollution.¹³

Many people hold the opinion that the slum pockets result in environmental pollution since they are an environmental nuisance. The lifestyles of urban poor who are the inhabitants of the slums have added to the environmental nuisance in the urban area. On top of the pollution caused by the industries functioning in the urban regions, the vehicles running on petrol, diesel and other polluting activities, slums add on to the pollution of the urban life. Also, they lack an aesthetic aspect which makes them even more unwelcoming in the urban scenario.

The existence of slum pockets in the urban setup has led to the degradation of the surrounding environment in a number of ways.

The lack of proper Sanitation facilities has made slums a breeding ground for several serious diseases which could pose serious health hazards to the slum dwellers.

The garbage and waste of the slum area are not properly treated and left to amount in the surroundings.

The garbage from the slums and the drainage from slums collects on the periphery of the slums pockets thereby inducing a low-quality and unhealthy environment for the slums.¹⁴

¹² EEC OJ C 115, May 1976, p 2.

¹³ A L Springer, Towards a meaningful concept of pollution in international law, *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, Vol 26 1977, p 531 et seq (hereinafter Springer 1977). See also C Redgwell, Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage, *Quantifying Environmental Harm, Marine Policy*, March 1992, p 90 et seq, discussing pollution as damage.

¹⁴ SHETH, A.Z., VELAGA, N.R. and PRICE, A.D.F., 2009. Slum rehabilitation in the context of urban sustainability: a case study of Mumbai, India. IN: *Proceedings of SUE-MoT: 2nd International Conference on Whole Life Urban Sustainability and its Assessment*, 22-24th April, Loughborough, UK.

The water bodies, if any, near the slum pockets become contaminated due to constant usage by the slum-dwellers and are ultimately contaminated to such an extent that they become non-usable.

The inhuman environmental surroundings of the slums could lead to lack of proper sleep. The lack of proper sleep amplifies health diseases like psychological distress, cardiovascular disease, sedentary lifestyle and having a poor diet. These health problems are typical of the slum environment.¹⁵

The slums also induce an environment which induce health problems in people form all walks of life.

Observing the few of ways listed above in which slums cause harm to the Environment around it, it can be concluded that the existence of slums is rationally undesirable not only from the third party's perspective but also from the perspective of the slum-dwellers. The inhabitation of the slums in continuity by the slum dwellers display that the slum dwellers are stuck in a vicious cycle which is originated by themselves only. The slum dwellers only are the creator of the problem of which they are eventually victims too. It can be obdserved that the slum setup not only results in the deterioration of the lifestyle of the slum dwellers but also the environment surrounding it by polluting the air, water, soil as well as flora and fauna around.

¹⁵ Sleep, Slums and Shelter: Impact of a Slum-housing Upgrading Program DANIEL P. CARDINALI 1,2,* GUIDO SIMONELLI 1 SOLANGE RODRÍGUEZ ESPÍNOLA³ AGUSTÍN SALVIA^{2,3} DANIEL PÉREZ-CHADA⁴ DANIEL E. VIGO¹, Bread and Brain, Education and Poverty Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Scripta Varia 125, Vatican City 2014

SLUM REHABILITATION AND URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

Whenever the rehabilitation of the slum dwellers is discussed, the immediate thought which follows is the thought of urban sustainability. The very roots of the idea of taking steps and making policies for the rehabilitation of the slum dwellers emerge from the idea of urban sustainability. Thus, before proceeding with the idea of slum rehabilitation for the betterment of the people exposed to the slum life, it is important that the concept of urban sustainability is clear.

URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

Urban sustainability can be defined as “*Improving the quality of life in a city, including ecological, cultural, political, institutional, social and economic components without leaving a burden on the future generations.*”¹⁶ Following this understanding of urban sustainability, it is quite evident that slums do not fall within the desired sustainable urban environment. Rather, it is believed that the slums must be removed because of the aesthetic nuisance and the environmental nuisance that they cause.

On the other hand, the Sustainable Urban Development Association has successfully defined Unsustainable Urban Development to be an urban sprawl.¹⁷ It defines sprawl as a “*low density suburban development, usually consisting of subdivisions of detached and semi detached, single family houses, and scattered low density commercial/industrial uses.*”¹⁸ If not cured for a long duration of time, then the unsustainable urban development can cause harm to the health of the urban dwellers.¹⁹

SLUM REHABILITATION

Slum Rehabilitation is the concept of rehabilitating the slum dwellers from the slums to a place of inhabitation where there is sustainable environment and access to safe & secure basic

¹⁶URBAN21 (2000) Sustainable cities Urban21. Berlin, Germany, Regional Environmental Centre (see <http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/Sustainablecities/>, accessed on 19/01/2009)

¹⁷ SHETH, A.Z., VELAGA, N.R. and PRICE, A.D.F., 2009. Slum rehabilitation in the context of urban sustainability: a case study of Mumbai, India. IN: Proceedings of SUE-MoT: 2nd International Conference on Whole Life Urban Sustainability and its Assessment, 22-24th April, Loughborough, UK.

¹⁸ SHETH, A.Z., VELAGA, N.R. and PRICE, A.D.F., 2009. Slum rehabilitation in the context of urban sustainability: a case study of Mumbai, India. IN: Proceedings of SUE-MoT: 2nd International Conference on Whole Life Urban Sustainability and its Assessment, 22-24th April, Loughborough, UK.

¹⁹ Huang, S.-L., Wong, J.-H. & Chen, T.-C. (1998) A framework of indicator system for measuring Taipei's urban sustainability. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 42, 15-27.

amenities of life. The slums pockets are considered to be a major flaw in the current urban scenario which is looked upon as something that needs to be eradicated. Many urban decision-makers and scholars are of the opinion that slums are a sort of contagious disease which needs to be eradicated before they spread more. In light of this, a lot many efforts have been made to eradicate the slum pockets out of the urban scenario.

The first formal effort that was made to improvise the slum pockets of the urban region was made in the early times of 20th century. This effort was made after the plague epidemic took place in 1866. The City Improvement Trust was formed to rehabilitate the crowded inhabitation areas and slums on 9 December 1898 in Mumbai.²⁰ Currently, Maharashtra can be considered to be the only state in India which is vigorously working towards solving the issue of Slum Pockets. Maharashtra has constantly been the only state which has made efforts to address the issue of Slum Rehabilitation. The Maharashtra State government has come up with 'Slum Rehabilitation Authority' (SRA). SRA is an autonomous and entirely IT-based state-of-the-art which will be implementing the various schemes of resettlement, improvement of slum pockets and rehabilitation in Mumbai. A lot of money has been invested by the authorities in these schemes and projects. It is not only the government of State which is sponsoring these schemes but also the Central government and other organisation. The collective efforts on the behalf of the state are evident in attaining urban sustainability in Mumbai. In order to keep an updated approach towards this boiling issue of slum rehabilitation, the government has conducted numerable changes in the regulations for improvising the condition of the slum pockets.

No matter how many efforts have been made to remove the slums from the picture and no matter how many policies or schemes have been launched by the state for the slum rehabilitation, the slum pockets never cease existing. It has been reported that even after an incremental change in the lifestyle of the slum dwellers, the slums continue to exist and are also growing at a rapid rate. Yet, it cannot be said entirely that the efforts and the policies or the schemes of the state

²⁰ Dalvi (1997) The Slums of Bombay. Mumbai Pages (see <http://theory.tifr.res.in/bombay/history/slums.html>, accessed on 05/01/2009)

have gone in vain because a large section of the people have benefitted from the schemes and policies run by the state in light of the slum rehabilitation.²¹

UTILITARIAN APPROACH TO SLUM REHABILITATION

Utilitarianism can be considered to be a pragmatic philosophy which advocates seeking of the greatest happiness for the greatest number.²² In the context of Slum Rehabilitation, the utilitarian approach holds great significance from the point of view of the third parties viz. the state, the supporters of urban sustainability, the urban dwellers, etc. and also from the point of view of the slum-dwellers themselves. When we advocate for the greater happiness of the greater number of people in light of slum rehabilitation, the slum dwellers are also included herein. Under the utilitarian approach to slum rehabilitation, it is argued that slum rehabilitation needs to be done effectively and with a fast-forward approach.

Keeping into consideration the happiness of all the interested parties, the slum pockets should be demolished and the slum dwellers should be rehabilitated to better places of habitation with basic facilities. The huge land cover which the slum pockets occupy could then be used wisely and allocated for construction of apartment buildings. The vertical apartment buildings which we aim to be constructed in the place of the land cover of slum pockets will leave behind a lot of land cover which can then be put to other use by the state. The remaining land could later be put to use for growing a green patch maybe or maybe used for other purposes like construction of schools, hospitals, for these low-income families that will be occupying the vertical apartment buildings.

CONCLUSION

The economic development and the urban development of a country go very much hand-in-hand. This development would be in vain if it is taking place ignoring a large chunk of the society which is that of the slum-dwellers. There needs to be effective implementation of the schemes and policies which aim at improving the household quality of life as well as the global quality of life. New policies need to be introduced which aim at providing economically

²¹ SPARC (2003) Regulatory guidelines for urban upgradation the case of Mumbai. Mumbai, Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centre

²² Displacement and the Law Author(s): Usha Ramanathan Source: Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 31, No. 24 (Jun. 15, 1996), pp. 1486-1491.

poor families better housing facilities. These policies must be action-oriented, sustainable and, at the same time, forward thinking.

From this paper, the author concludes that even though the slums have been in existence since a long time now, yet, their existence begins to bother a large section of the people now. Now, when the idea of urban sustainability is the only way to have a safe and healthy environment surrounding, the existence of slum pockets in the vicinity has begun to exasperate the urban inhabitants because of a direct threat posed to their health. The author concludes with the opinion that for the planning of urban sustainability to thrive, the planning of the city needs to be done with a more fundamental approach.²³

It is concluded that the slums should be replaced with retrofit apartment buildings which are having decentralised infrastructure. These buildings are to be made keeping in mind the basic amenities which is required to sustain a minimal and dignified human lifestyle. The construction of vertical apartment buildings in the place of slum pockets would ensure many benefits. The land occupied by the apartment building would be much less as compared to the land occupied by the slum pockets. In addition to that, a safe and secure environment would be ensured to the people living in these apartments. Further, to solve the future issues of before they arise, these buildings must be well equipped with the solar energy panel and anaerobic digestion sanitation for self-reliance. The dependence of these buildings could be based on resource recovery technologies so that the future maintenance and cost is also reduced.

²³ SHETH, A.Z., VELAGA, N.R. and PRICE, A.D.F., 2009. Slum rehabilitation in the context of urban sustainability: a case study of Mumbai, India. IN: Proceedings of SUE-MoT: 2nd International Conference on Whole Life Urban Sustainability and its Assessment, 22-24th April, Loughborough, UK.