



**Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg**

Fakultät für Geistes-, Sozial- und  
Erziehungswissenschaften

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**Magdeburg Research Group on Mumbai Slums  
Social Activism of Grassroots Organisations  
and NGOs in the Slums of Mumbai**

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# Social Activism of Grassroots Organisations and NGOs in the Slums of Mumbai

## Preface

For some time now the Institute of Sociology (ISOZ) has been involved in studying Indian social structure, living and working conditions in slums and particularly slum development and housing policy in India. It builds on a partnership with the University of Mumbai, Dpt. of Sociology (and now also with the TATA Institute of Social Science (Mumbai), Dpt. of Social Science).

Teaching on these issues involves a distinctive feature: Excellent students are invited to participate in research work (so-called students' research training programmes, in German: "Lehrforschungen"). The whole process takes a period of one to two years. We start with getting background knowledge on India (phase 0), selecting a research topic, collecting and analyzing secondary material, developing the research design, working on research methodology and finally writing a research proposal (phase 1), doing field research in cooperation with lecturers and students of our partner university (phase 2), making data analysis and finally writing a research report (phase 3). The supervisor takes the function of moderator, leading the students through the entire process, giving them feedback on their interview techniques in the field and the writing processes.

Besides scientific aims this training programme involves students getting into a very different culture, confronting them with extreme poverty in developing countries, giving them a deeper insight into the life-world and biography of slum dwellers, work of NGOs and other organisations in the field, and challenging their personalities with regard to a potential working perspective in developing countries. Even if students make their personal experience that they could never do such a job, it helps them in personal growth. But more regularly, students find a new perspective of work for their future.

In 2004/2005 a group of students made research on the life world in Mumbai slums.<sup>1</sup> Some of their findings were the strong segregation of Mumbai population in slums according to religion, place of origin, or ethnicity. They also collected a lot of information on housing policy in Mumbai. In spring 2007 a new research group was formed. 11 students started working on social activism in Mumbai slums. The group took two different topics: one subgroup worked on communalism and anti-communalist movements, the other subgroup on grassroots organisations and NGOs working in the field of housing for the poor, slum upgrading, slum relocation and rights to slum dwellers. Now the research report of the second group is available, so that their exciting and exhausting project comes to an end with this publication. Due to the number of authors involved they decided publishing under the group name "Magdeburg Research Group on Mumbai Slums". To mention the single authors (in alphabetical order): Nadine Brunsendorf, Daniela Fromm, Ina Fusko, Paula Grobbecker, Carina Scholz and Antje Wegner, and myself.

We are thankful to all our informants in the field, particularly Rahul P. Kosambi, Pramila M. Lad, Kishor More, and Sanjay Kumbhas, the Dpt. of Sociology at the University of Mumbai (Dr. Bhosale, Dr. Michael, Mr Kamble and other colleagues) as well as local students who participated in field research and often functioned as interpreters in local languages. We also thank the financing institutions DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) and Co-Financiers at the University of Magdeburg (Institute, Students' Council, Rector's Office).

Magdeburg, May 2008

Heiko Schrader

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<sup>1</sup> See Gruber, D., A. Kirschner, S. Mill, M. Schach, S. Schmekel, Hardo Seligmann 2005: Living and Working in Slums of Mumbai. Working Paper No. 36, Institute of Sociology, Univ. of Magdeburg. 47p. <http://www.uni-magdeburg.de/isoz/publikationen/download/36.pdf>

## List of Abbreviations

ACHR	Asian Coalition for Housing Rights
BJP	Bhartiya Janata Party
BMC	Bombay Municipal Corporation
BUILD	Bombay Urban Industrial League for Development
CBO	Community based organisation
CISRS	Christian Institute for Study of Religion and Society
CRH	Committee for the Right to Housing
DRC	Developments Rights Certificate
FSI	Floor Space Index
HDFC	Housing Development Finance Corporation Limited
MMRDA	Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Development Authority
MUTP	Mumbai Urban Transport Project
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
NOVIB	Nederlandse Organisatie Voor Internationale Bijstand
NSDF	National Slum Dwellers Federation
PMGP	Prime Minister's Grant Project
POWER	People's Organisation of Wadala for Equality and Rights
PROUD	People's Responsible Organisation of United Dharavi
SDI	Slum/Shack Dwellers International
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SIP	Slum Improvement Program
SPARC	Society for the Promotion of Area Resource centres
SRA	Slum Rehabilitation Authority
SRS	Slum Rehabilitation Scheme
SRS	Slum Rehabilitation Society
SRD	Slum Redevelopment Scheme
SUP	Slum Upgrading Program
TDR	Transfer of Development Rights
UN	United Nations
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements

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# 1. Introduction

Slums. Filthy and dirty places. Illegal huts and illegal people. Migrants. Underdevelopment. Overpopulation. Noise, smell, congestion, trash. A pain to eyes and nose...

If a European (and perhaps also Indian) middle-class person takes a look into the subject of “slums”, you will quickly discover how one-sided your picture of these living areas is.

Walking through Dharavi, Asia’s largest slum located in Mumbai inhabiting 500,000 to one million people, you become aware of the multitude of peculiarities the illegal and semi-legal living areas may depict. You can walk through Dharavi five times and continue to encounter yet again a new peculiar shape. You may find concrete buildings partly occupied by jewellery or hifi-shops, one to three storey family houses but also the expected shanties located between smelly moats and garbage dumps occupied by up to twenty family members.

Although we associate slum dwellers as a more or less homogeneous stratum of poor people, the living conditions in slums are highly diverse. There are very poor people without any legal rights who are easily evicted from their houses just to begin anew after each slum demolition. Too large is the fear to be permanently evicted so that they lose their access to the city; too little the trust in their own rights and power. On the contrary, there are slum inhabitants who were able to eventually establish a living place in the “better” parts of the slum and may own small businesses, and participate in local organisations. Many of them possess some legal rights and are not so easily evicted, demolished and resettled without resistance. They stand up for their rights and fight for their properties; they look for the poorest dwellers’ support who are unable to comprehend that they too have a voice that counts and must be heard in order to initiate any changes.

Land scarcity is an omnipresent urban reality despite the fact that human beings occupy less than one percent of the total land accessible on Earth. The fight for space especially in urban areas has been intense, partially due to dense urban population and the lack of habitable spaces. The struggle for space is never fair nor equal anywhere. Economic theory suggests that the market self-regulation should be enough to determine property accessibility, the point of controversy is that the demanders of space, the slum dwellers, are not part of the economic cycle, since they do not possess any purchasing power and the property prices rise with scarcity.

Anyways, Mumbai appeared and still appears to the migrant as *the* city of prospect and prosperity, of hopes and dreams. Mumbai has remained the favoured destination of numerous people who wanted to seek their fortune for nearly two centuries.<sup>2</sup> With their additive workforce the migrants created economical wealth and enriched the culture of the city. At the time of independence, Mumbai was India’s most vibrant and multicultural city. However, today over half of the city’s population lives in slums and on pavements, or is wedged out into the far peripheries. Mumbai has changed over the past century: It is no longer an industrial city, but wealth is now rather generated through trade and commerce, services, entertainment and the finance sector. This entails a transformed infrastructure and an altered white-collar workforce. This progression further marginalises the poorer, unskilled inhabitants of Mumbai whom are, for example due to the lack of education, rendered virtually impossible to enter into the high value-high returns sector.

Mumbai is one of Asia’s largest cities, in which urban space is the central arena of political imagination and intervention.<sup>3</sup> In spite of the escalating attentiveness and apprehension of the urban space dilemma in the public, basic information on housing, infrastructure, land, and environment, which is a citizen’s right, remains largely unattainable to the slum dwellers and the general public, because of bureaucratic obstructions and vested interests. The very complex structure of housing schemes and their legal regulations requires special and thorough knowledge

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<sup>2</sup> Seminar CITY OF DREAMS a symposium on the many facets of Bombay; number 528; <http://www.india-seminar.com/2003/528.htm>; August 2003; accessed 09.09.2008

<sup>3</sup> CRIT Collective Research Initiatives Trust, Mumbai; <http://crit.org.in/>; accessed 09.09.2008

in this field. Furthermore, legal uncertainty increases the possibility to individually interpret and manipulate laws to one's own advantage. This asymmetry of information seemed to have given rise to predatory classes of builders and speculators, whose lobby has privileged access to information and pressures political decisions to transform their beneficial information into "development rights" for construction.<sup>4</sup> New spatial technologies and recent legislative enactments and public interest litigation on freedom of information remain predominantly distant from the needs of the affected grass-roots communities and local decision-makers. To strengthen the slum and pavement communities' demands for secure tenure and housing rights, requirements for open and vibrant public spaces, and ecological conservation and sustainable development in the mega-city social activists deem to be indispensable.

With our research on "Identity, Housing Problems and Social Activism in Mumbai" we defined social activism as all intentional actions and initiatives aspiring social or political change with regard to the issue of land scarcity and housing, including the topics of "demolitions" of slums and squatter settlements in India. During the past decades a highly diverse NGO and grassroots organisations sector has matured in India. The ambition of our investigation was to decipher, which modes and development social activism in the field of housing problems may assume.

We solidified two research questions: First of all we wanted to investigate if social activism in slums and squatter settlements differs from each other.<sup>5</sup> We assumed that the level of social activism correlates with the living conditions, the social structures and the legal status. Especially the individual perception of the surrounding conditions of the dwellers seemed important for the research question. Subsequently we studied what categories of social activists exist in Mumbai.<sup>6</sup> The research ascertains how the various social actors work, which strategies they follow and how they succeed in different slums.

We gathered our data on the basis of expert interviews and supplemented them with secondary data material. By elaborating our interview guidelines we became methodically familiar with the topic and proceeded as competent conversation-partner. Our guidelines did not function as a compelling course of conversation, but were rather used as a checklist. It was kept amenable to extensions. An adequate guideline enabled the interviewee to focus on own priorities or to represent interrelations in structures.

What do we present in that report? To begin with, we want to familiarise the reader with the theoretical background of our research project on social activism in Mumbai's slum and squatter settlements. What follows is the discussion of our research methods employed. We will also give an update to the most recent conditions in the visited slums. Finally we will present our empirical findings before the theoretical background. In conclusion the paper highlights the discrepancies but also coherencies between theoretical anticipation and actual circumstances we came to understand during our research project on "Identity, Housing Problems and Social Activism in Mumbai".

October, 2008

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<sup>4</sup> CRIT Collective Research Initiatives Trust, Mumbai; <http://crit.org.in/>; accessed 09.09.2008

<sup>5</sup> We should already mention that slums are locations legally recognised by the administration while squatter settlements do not possess such recognition and can therefore easily be demolished.

<sup>6</sup> The term "activist" includes individuals as well as associations, organisations and movements.



## 2. Migration, Urbanisation, Primary Cities

### 2.1. The Process of Urbanisation

Over the last decades cities, both in developing and in developed countries, became the major form of human settlement. Urban population increased steadily, as the following statistical figures point out: in 1800, 50 million people worldwide were living in cities, in 1975 and 2001 they accounted for 1.5 billion and 2.8 billion respectively. Nowadays, the world's urban population is increasing by an estimated 280,000 people per day and is anticipated to reach 3.9 billion by the year 2015; then three-fourths of urban dwellers will live in developing countries.<sup>7</sup>

While urbanisation in Europe took place mainly in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it came to a period of stagnation, and recent demographic figures even suggest a population decrease and with it a prospected process of de-urbanisation. At the same time, urbanisation in developing countries has reached the highest growth rates ever observed, and projections estimate even further growth. In this respect, the highest growth rates are encountered in Asian and African cities. The expansion is based on progress in agriculture, improvement of nutrition and life expectancy, which led to higher birth rates than death rates. The demographic change coincided with increasing migration from rural areas to the cities due to a number of important "push factors" (for example high rural unemployment, landlessness, low standards of housing and infrastructure, and lack of educational facilities in the countryside) and "pull-factors" (for example economic opportunities, employment prospects, better education, modern lifestyle in the cities, and less caste discrimination). However, as most of the cities in the developing world could not absorb the high numbers of newly arrived settlers both in terms of housing and employment, immigrants had to settle down either in poor parts of the city and/or create unauthorized housing, namely in slum areas, and make a living from the informal sector.

### 2.2. Mega- and Primary Cities

The term "mega city" defines, in quantitative terms, an urban agglomeration of more than ten million inhabitants. Most mega cities are located in the so-called "Third World countries". In many cases, mega cities are the national "primary cities" serving as the administrative, economic, social, cultural, and scientific hubs.<sup>8</sup>

The emergence of mega cities is a modern phenomenon, occurring during the last half century. To provide some figures: in 1950 there were just four mega cities, 28 in 1980, 39 in 2002, and an estimated 59 in 2015. By that date, two-thirds of mega cities will be in developing countries, especially in South and East Asia. Between 1970 and 2000 the population in cities like Mumbai, Jakarta, Teheran and Sao Paulo tripled. According to the United Nations, each of the five biggest mega cities in 2015 will be inhabited by more than 20 million people; Mumbai with a projected 22.6 million, Dhaka with 22.8, Sao Paulo with 21.2, Delhi with 20.9, and Mexico City with 20.4 million inhabitants.

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<sup>7</sup> Figures summarised from following sources: Kötter, Theo (2004): "Risks and Opportunities of Urbanisation and Mega cities". Quoted from: [http://www.fig.net/pub/monthly\\_articles/august\\_2004/kotter\\_august\\_2004.pdf](http://www.fig.net/pub/monthly_articles/august_2004/kotter_august_2004.pdf) (download on August 31, 2007). And Srinivas, Hari (2007): "Urban Development and Urban Poverty". Quoted from:

<http://www.gdrc.org/uem/squatters/urban-poverty.html> (download on August 31, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> This does not automatically inherit an importance in the international sphere.

### **2.3. Implications of Urbanisation**

The rapid process of urbanisation<sup>9</sup> and the growing numbers of mega cities cause a variety of ecological, economic and social problems and risks - examples are pollution and problems with sanitation management, water- and energy-supply. Furthermore, massive urbanisation entails serious impacts on the global environment due to enormous land consumption, poverty, social segregation and social vulnerability. This establishes a need for more and better urban development strategies, long-term policy and effective urban management. However, for local municipalities the management of over 10, if not 20 million people has become a task that is difficult to be solved, particularly because it is hard to logistically keep up with the population growth. This holds even truer for "Third World" mega cities, many of which lack the resources to maintain and create sufficient infrastructure.

### **2.4. Socio-Economic Issues**

The main socio-economic problem of developing countries in general and mega cities in particular is poverty. In such, social fragmentation and enormous income disparities are frequent. In this respect, socio-cultural conflicts occur due to scarcity of resources, manifesting themselves on social, ethnic and religious issues (cf. Keil, Mydla, Zalewski 2009). One key issue is the conflict about urban living space, office buildings, public infrastructure, recreation space etc. Class aspects like divergent incomes and life-styles account for different demands to the government in terms of land use. However, the wells off have a lobby in politics while the urban poor are rarely accounted for, and consequently conflicts arise around space allocation and property rights in many mega cities. As an example, squatter settlements are often cleared or relocated in favour of high-priority economic and land use purposes like shopping malls, office skyscrapers, residential condominiums of the upper classes or infrastructure projects. Those urban poor who are not simply dislodged are often relocated at the periphery of the city, where living quarters are overcrowded and lack vital public services; homelessness, crime and health issues are also exacerbated.

Many cities are thus divided into different income pockets. In case of such segregated cities, resources are channelled into the rich areas, which causes even greater scarcity of resources for the urban poor and which further increases social friction.

The rising number of people living in urban poverty has made this issue important for urban planning. According to the UN report "Our common future"<sup>10</sup>, the planning of sustainable development, for both present and future, requires balancing existing inequalities coupled with an extra effort to develop urban environments in favour of the poor.

Due to high consumption rates of natural resources and generally high levels of pollution, mega cities face severe risks of both natural and man-made disasters. Lacking on choice, the process of urbanisation forces more and more people to settle in disaster prone areas, and it is particularly the urban poor who are most vulnerable.

Urban planning in mega cities is an indisputable challenge. It is generally acknowledged that not one set of guidelines can resolve the individual challenges facing each mega city, mainly due to a mix of factors including socioeconomic, cultural and ecological variables as well as geographic location. Urban planning must apply an integrated regional if not national approach. A "regional

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<sup>9</sup> See Kötter, Theo (2004): "Risks and Opportunities of Urbanisation and Mega cities". Quoted from: [http://www.fig.net/pub/monthly\\_articles/august\\_2004/kotter\\_august\\_2004.pdf](http://www.fig.net/pub/monthly_articles/august_2004/kotter_august_2004.pdf) (download on August 31, 2007); Paine, John (2001): "Mega cities in the developing World". In: Geography Bulletin, Autumn 2001; Sadowski, Abbi et al (2000): "Mega cities: Trends and Issues Towards Sustainable Urban Development". Schrader, H. 2008 'Land Tenure and Empowerment: reflections on urban poverty policy in Mumbai. A. Bartels, R. Wandel, D. Wiemann (eds.), Only Connected. Text – Places – Politics. Frankfurt/M.: Lang.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations (Ed.) (1987): "Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development." Quoted from URL: <http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm> (download on September 5, 2007)

settlement structure has to be designed which is set up on the elements density, mixing on different land uses, polycentrality and capacity of public mass transport systems and public facilities”<sup>11</sup>. These, then, are the prerequisites for achieving ecological, social and economic objectives of sustainability. However, to slow down urban growth rates should have priority in urban design, and this can only be achieved by developing secondary and tertiary urban centres, which lessen the migration pressure on the mega cities.

## **2.5. The Right to Housing**

Adequate housing is a human right, codified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”(Article 25(1))<sup>12</sup>

It includes seven elements:

*Legal security of tenure.* Security of tenure means that all people in any living arrangement possess a degree of security against forced eviction, harassment, or other threats. States are obliged to confer this security legally.

*Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure.* To ensure the health, security, comfort, and nutrition of its occupants, an adequate house should have sustainable access to natural and common resources, safe drinking water, energy for cooking, heating and lighting, sanitation and washing facilities, means of food storage, refuse disposal, site drainage and emergency services.

*Affordability.* Affordable housing is housing for which the associated financial costs are at a level that does not threaten other basic needs. States should take steps to ensure that housing costs are proportionate to overall income levels, establish subsidies for those unable to acquire affordable housing, and protect tenants against unreasonable rent levels or increases. In societies where housing is built chiefly out of natural materials, states should help ensure the availability of those materials.

*Habitability.* Habitable housing provides the occupants with adequate space, physical security, shelter from weather, and protection from threats to health like structural hazards and disease.

*Accessibility.* Adequate housing must be accessible to those entitled to it. This includes all disadvantaged groups of society, who may have special housing needs that require extra consideration.

*Location.* The location of adequate housing, whether urban or rural, must permit access to employment opportunities, health care, schools, child care and other social facilities. To protect the right to health of the occupants, housing must also be separated from polluted sites or pollution sources.

*Cultural adequacy.* The way housing is built, the materials used, and the policies supporting these must facilitate cultural expression and housing diversity. The development and modernisation of housing in general should maintain the cultural dimensions of housing while still ensuring modern technological facilities, among other things (paragraph 8).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Kötter, Theo (2004): “Risks and Opportunities of Urbanisation and Mega cities”. Quoted from: [http://www.fig.net/pub/monthly\\_articles/august\\_2004/kotter\\_august\\_2004.pdf](http://www.fig.net/pub/monthly_articles/august_2004/kotter_august_2004.pdf) (download on August 31, 2007). p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. [http://www.hrea.org/index.php?base\\_id=149](http://www.hrea.org/index.php?base_id=149), access date Oct. 13, 2008

<sup>13</sup> Cf. [http://www.hrea.org/index.php?base\\_id=149](http://www.hrea.org/index.php?base_id=149), access date Oct. 13, 2008

In spite of this right the United Nations estimates that there are over 100 million homeless people and over 1 billion people worldwide inadequately housed, which shows the difficulty governments have in guaranteeing access to housing for their citizens. While the right to housing does not find mention among the fundamental rights set out in the Indian Constitution, the Supreme Court's judgment established this as a judicially derived right in 1985.<sup>14</sup>

Housing, however, is not the only issue to be addressed when we talk about an upgrading or relocation of slums, since such areas constitute both living and working places.

### 3. Working and Living in Slums

The following paragraph deals with the conditions slum dwellers face while living and working in slums.

Nowadays one billion people are living in slums and squatter settlements worldwide.<sup>15</sup> Slums and squatter settlements have in common that on the physical level services and infrastructure (like water supply, sanitation, electricity, roads and drainage; schools, health centres, market places etc.) are below a minimum level. On the social level many but not all slum dwellers and squatters belong to low-income groups. However the fundamental difference between slums and squatter settlements is their legal status and consequences of this. Whereas slums are referred to as residential areas enjoying relative tenure security or even ownership, squatter settlers do neither have ownership of the land parcels they built their hutments on nor legal tenure. This imposes a constant threat of eviction and demolition on its inhabitants.

Both types of lowest-standard housing are important living and working areas. Many slum dweller and squatter families make their living from the informal sector. While in lowest-standard housing areas structures vary strongly according to specific regional or local factors, their inhabitants, especially squatters, commonly share their insecure legal status and subsequent vulnerability, lacking human basic needs (sanitation, clean water, electricity, medical service and other basic services). Yet, especially in India, people continue to migrate to the big cities, looking for actual or perceived opportunities to improve their lives, since rural poverty is even more severely felt than urban poverty.<sup>16</sup> Although the city has become an international metropolis that has changed the quality and quantity of its demand for labour, slums are still growing faster than rehabilitation policies are currently being implemented and still many families migrate from rural areas to big cities such as Mumbai. Even though living conditions in slums are sub-standard with regard to lacking or poor quality basic services such as sanitation, electricity supplies, public schools etc., the situation in Indian rural areas is perceived as being a lot worse since hunger and danger of starvation may be a fundamental issue.

Almost 18 million people are living in the Mumbai Metropolitan Area<sup>17</sup>. Out of the 12 million inhabitants of central Mumbai 50 to 75 percent live on only 13 percent of the urban area, in slums or squatter settlements, which shows the uneven distribution of urban space as well as the indeterminable number of slum dwellers. As Mumbai, as a peninsula, has been a focus of migrants from all over the country for decades, the city now faces severe problems of coping with the massive population influx. According to the information provided by BUILD (Bombay Urban Industrial League for Development) more than 90 percent of Mumbai's population are migrants.

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<sup>14</sup> For further information on Legal Issues on Housing Policy please refer to page 67.

<sup>15</sup> For further information on spatial structures of slum and squatter settlements refer to "The challenge of slums"; Global report on human settlements (2003); UN-Habitat; United Nations: [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

<sup>16</sup> "The challenge of slums"; Global report on human settlements (2003); UN-Habitat; United Nations: [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

<sup>17</sup> The Mumbai Metropolitan Area embraces central Mumbai including its satellite towns

However, their concept of a migrant includes every person that is not “originally from Bombay”. According to their definition, the Kolis (fisherman) are the “native people” of Mumbai. It remains unclear to consider some groups of people as “native” by contrast to others who are regarded as migrants since “people” cannot naturally be affiliated to any soil. Since in none of the data gathered there is any discussion of whom is a migrant the figure of 90 percent of Mumbai’s population being “migrants” should be treated with caution.

Poor housing conditions for a large group of Mumbai’s population have a long history dating back to India’s colonial times. The proliferation of slums in the city’s recent history is basically due to the economic structure in the area, having changed from manufacturing to service industries, which for many people with low formal qualification resulted in unemployment, pauperization and loss of access to formal housing<sup>18</sup>. Even though the city has become an international centre of service industries the share of the workforce employed in the informal sector<sup>19</sup> grew up to 65 percent in 1991<sup>20</sup>. This economic structure is closely connected to the living conditions in slums twofold.

At the outset, mostly low skilled migrants from rural areas form a large section of the informal employees as they lack skills and opportunities to obtain higher paid occupations. In addition one can observe a shift of workers from the formal sector to the informal one, which is usually accompanied by a lower standard of living. Hence the slums serve as vessels to absorb the workforce who cannot afford formal housing any longer.

Subsequently, working and living spaces are practically not divided in slums. Slum dwellers often conduct a trade or a handicraft at home or in close proximity – pottery, tanning, weaving, just to name a few examples. These economic activities are obviously often bound to a certain geographic location and therefore cases of geographic relocation impose the risk of unemployment (cf. Consequences of Housing Policy). Most of these activities could be attributed to the so-called informal sector. Pertaining to the Worldbank Group informality contains two different aspects: On the one hand, it describes coping strategies of individuals in economic environments where other earning opportunities are scarce, and on the other hand, unofficial earning strategies of entrepreneurs (illegality in business)<sup>21</sup>. Especially the latter indicates the complex linkage between the formal and the informal sector, which seems to lay the foundation for Mumbai’s prosperity. Nevertheless, the ambiguity of the informal sector becomes obvious: whereas un- and underemployment are reduced and economic activity stimulated, state regulations (e.g. taxes or labour regulations) will be undermined. The two types of employment dominating the unorganised sector – casual or contract labour and self-employment – often denote the lack of job security and low or irregular income.<sup>22</sup>

Thus slums could be regarded as the result of the precarious employment situation but economic growth additionally contributes to consolidate the role of the slums in the economic arrangement of the city.

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<sup>18</sup> For information concerning change in economic structures see Bhowmik, S. K. 2004 'Politics of Urban Space in Mumbai: 'Citizens' Versus the Urban Poor. Working Paper No. 27', Magdeburg: ISOZ.

<sup>19</sup> In contrast to the common ILO definition of the informal sector figures often refer to the unorganised sector, including activities which are not regulated by laws or ordinances and/or lack regular accounting: Schrader, H. 2008 'Land Tenure and Empowerment: reflections on urban poverty policy in Mumbai. A. Bartels, R. Wandel, D. Wiemann (eds.), Only Connected. Text – Places - Politics. Frankfurt/M.: Lang.

<sup>20</sup> Bhowmik, S. K. 2004 'Politics of Urban Space in Mumbai: 'Citizens' Versus the Urban Poor. Working Paper No. 27, p.1, Magdeburg: ISOZ.

<sup>21</sup>Homepage

<http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/eca/eca.nsf/Sectors/ECSPE/2E4EDE543787A0C085256A940073F4E4?OpenDocument>; accessed: 14.05.2008

<sup>22</sup> Schrader, H. 2008 'Land Tenure and Empowerment: reflections on urban poverty policy in Mumbai. A. Bartels, R. Wandel, D. Wiemann (eds.), Only Connected. Text – Places - Politics. Frankfurt/M.: Lang.

Against this background a slum policy aiming at simply pushing slum dwellers out of the city – as some of our interview partners stated – misjudges the interdependencies between slums and the local economy. Despite rehabilitation measures, the lack of sufficient working space generally impedes the successful resettlement of slum dwellers. However, for some dwellers the living situation may improve by obtaining more living space through resettlement and any occupation covering its maintenance costs. The ensuing chapter will emphasise the housing policy's attempt to meet these conflicting challenges.

### **3.1. Housing Policy towards Slum Dwellers**

During the last decades, an evolution of housing policy towards slum squatters took place in India. Starting with simple strategies of demolition and eviction more elaborated strategies emerged from the beginning of the 1970s onward. In brief, these different approaches could be characterised as follows.

After independence, the official approach contained clearance of settlements and re-housing the slum-dwellers (Slum Clearance Plan, 1956). Nevertheless, slum dwellers often re-built their houses or occupied new land nearby and shipwrecked these clearance efforts. As the strategy failed, slums began to be viewed as a possible solution to the housing problem. Hence, the government helped by providing basic amenities and infrastructure (Centrally Funded Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums 1970, Improvement, Clearance and Redevelopment Act, 1971). In the 1970s, the government considered slums and their inhabitants as a legal issue for the first time.<sup>23</sup>

#### **EXCURSUS: Ration Cards as Residential Proof and Qualification for Resettlement**

The ration card system was originally established for two purposes: firstly to provide subsidised basic nutrition for the poor and secondly as residential proof comparable to an ID-card or drivers license. Meanwhile a voter card was introduced also as proof of identity. In order to receive subsidised food, kerosene or gas the ration card is still required.

The application has to be made at the responsible Public Distribution System (PDS) office on a payment of 5 Rupees processing fee. The ration card itself is free of charge. There are 3 types of cards allocated by income: Above Poverty Line (APL), Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Antyodaya, destitute families and individuals. Families below the poverty line have an annual income between 15,000 Rupees and 1 lakh<sup>24</sup>. There is little subsidy on rations meant for APL cards and highly subsidised rates for Antyodaya cards.<sup>25</sup> For all administrative purposes like power or water supply systems, telephone, driving license etc. ration or voters cards are required. Additionally, families owning a ration card are entitled to participate in governmental programmes like resettlement. To qualify for governmental microcredit provided to finance allocated living space in resettlement areas or to apply for subsidised living space a ration card is obligatory.

The system is officially institutionalised and but anyway people face a lot of problems when dealing with it. Many ration shop owners for example try to accumulate extra money with the subsidised food by retaining it from the poor and selling it in the black market.<sup>26</sup> In many cases problems already appear during the application process. The applicant needs to prove the place of residence

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<sup>23</sup> Mukhija, Vinit (2003): *Squatters as developers? Slum redevelopment in Mumbai*, Aldershot: Ashgate

<sup>24</sup> Unit in the Indian numbering system. 1 lakh equals 100.000

<sup>25</sup> Against each Antyodaya card, beneficiary household or individuals are entitled to 35kg of subsidized rice or wheat per month from the designated local ration shop. The subsidized price charged is Rs. 2/- per kg. Compare <http://www.sccommissioners.org/schemes/aay>; access 13 Oct., 2008

<sup>26</sup> Compare [http://www.parivartan.com/public\\_dist\\_system.asp](http://www.parivartan.com/public_dist_system.asp)

by birth certificate. When setting up a separate family, proof is to be given by bringing the parental ration card one was initially registered on. We assume that many slum dwellers do not own a birth certificate nor can they present their parental ration card due to migration or lack of such. There is no information available on how to ascertain an alternative residential verification.

The ration card problem is very important for so many people. In online forums that give legal advice one can read that authorities claim to take several weeks (mostly undetermined) to process card applications. As nearly all applicants are highly dependent on the cards and need it urgently they understand this slow processing as a demand for a bribe. In interviews we were also told that authorities try to control the distribution to avoid larger expenditures. It seems that due to the imbalance of supply and demand bribery and nepotism have a big impact on the distribution of ration cards. During our interviews, for example, we heard several times that inhabitants of slums threatened by demolition were offered to buy a ration card for 7,000 Rupees – we do not know of which category - , which qualifies them to be resettled. Of course from their intention most types of ration cards are made for poor people and are therefore delivered free of charge. But a ration card is linked to certain privileges, and therefore people buy it nonetheless. Dwellers without a residential proof have no legal right for resettlement, which is a severe and constant fundamental threat for their living. But even dwellers with residential proof (whether acquired lawfully or not) face an uncertain future, as more dwellers are entitled for resettlement programmes than can actually be included in such schemes.

Additionally, slum dwellers face a moral conflict trying to handle the burden of proof. A ration card is just valid for the core family, including husband, wife and children (if existent). But in slums usually larger families are living together including brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, grandparents, cousins, nieces, in-laws and so on. In Dama Nagar, a squatter settlement in North Mumbai, we met a man facing this problem. The slum was declared to be demolished on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2007. Living together with 18 family members he was the only one to afford a ration card, entitling him, his wife and his two children for resettlement, but leaving the remaining 15 family members in a desperate situation. Some of his neighbours already had been resettled, also leaving family members behind. Moving altogether is not possible for two reasons: firstly it is not legal and poses a risk to the new housing and secondly the new living space is too small for all the members to move in, because new settlements are calculated for the core family. This shows that resettlement programmes very often cut across the actual family ties.

Facing those legality problems people who are aware of their rights try to evade the ration card problem. As the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF), a large grassroots organisation dealing with housing issues reported, they meanwhile use electricity bills, account data etc. for residential proof as ration cards are so difficult to obtain. Most probably those alternatives are just an option for people organised in larger groups having a certain backing.

Legalisation is still promoted as a key feature in housing policy in order to “transform” slum dwellers into legal owners. In Slum Upgrading, the dwellers receive a legal title to their properties from the administration, which should provide tenure security to the residents, based on the assumptions that once slum dwellers obtain secured legal titles to their land they would be willing to invest in their houses and settlements.

Although conventional thinking predicted that slum-dwellers prefer slum upgrading, the approach is connected with critical assumptions and preconditions: for instance security for low-income residents seems to be less dependent on legal status and more on occupants’ perception of the probability of eviction and the provision of infrastructure and basic amenities. Hence, tenure security itself is not sufficient to lead to higher investment since housing finance is not available. Furthermore, slum upgrading does not consider how the new legalized property rights are influenced by the existing land development regulations in the city, the physical structure of slum settlements and the property values in a city. First, usually formal property rights are temporary. Second slum dwellers have small, completely built-up property-lots in settlements with irregular layouts, which make it difficult to provide even basic amenities and infrastructure. Although

settlements might be well located in the city and have a high development potential, the physical structure impedes capitalizing on high land values.

Another possible solution delivers the redevelopment approach, pursued from the 1990s onward (Slum Redevelopment Scheme 1991, Slum Rehabilitation Scheme 1995). While earlier relocation practices of slums resettled slum dwellers with legal tenancy rights in vacant spots at the periphery of the city, redevelopment includes demolition and rebuilding apartment houses on the same site of land at a higher density. New medium rise and cross-subsidized apartment blocks are provided for the dwellers. In order to enable redevelopment the government amended the land development regulations to allow for increased intensity and density of redevelopment in slums. Two factors played a significant role in the change: first the high property values in the city, second the electoral competition especially between the Congress Party and Shiv Sena. For both, Slum Redevelopment as well as Slum Rehabilitation Scheme high real estate prices could be regarded as prerequisites for cross subsidizing, compensating landowners and providing profits to private builders. Unlike the Prime Minister's Grant Project (PMGP) redevelopment schemes emphasise decentralization and deregulation concerning land use plans, FSI limits or building code requirements. On the one hand profitable incentives attract private builders, on the other hand emerges a fatal dependence on real estate values. As housing supply rises, real estate values decline and in consequence cross subsidizing becomes more difficult.

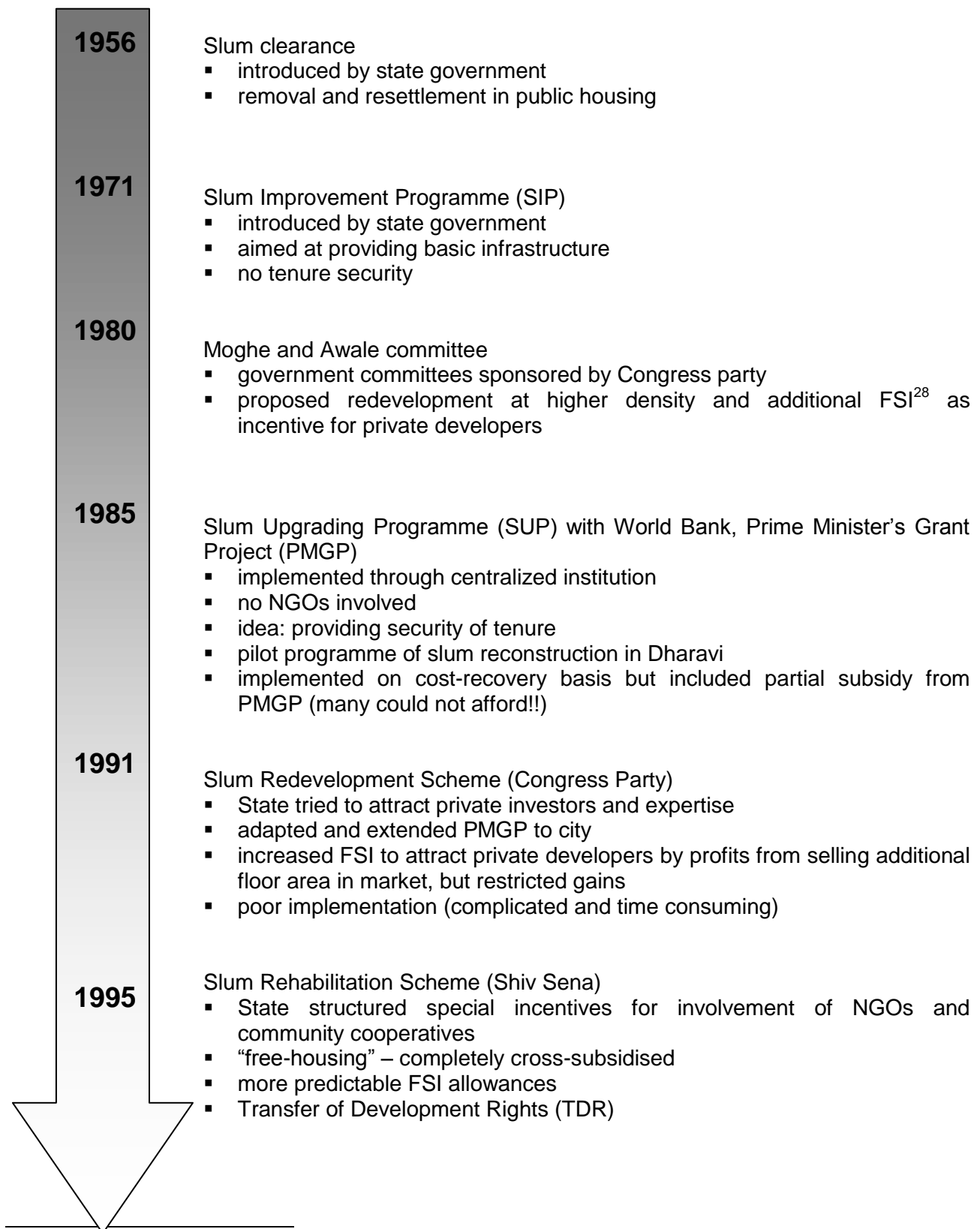
The Slum Redevelopment Scheme (SRD) was introduced by the Congress led state government in 1991 as an answer to the Shiv Sena Party's suggestion to provide completely cross-subsidised housing on original sites for slum dwellers. Builders could sell the additional floor space, gained through an increase of FSI up to 150 percent. Fearing sacrifice of land, the state government restricted the profits to 25 percent of the investment. This restriction was lifted four years later with the Slum Rehabilitation Scheme replacing SRD. While property prices reached their peak, the Shiv Sena suggested that even free housing is feasible for slum dwellers. Altogether subsidies amount to 113 percent including, besides free housing, a corpus fund for future maintenance expenses. In fact, slum dwellers exchange their old houses for new apartments. According to SRS guidelines, slum dwellers should receive housing units with a usable floor area of 225 square feet (approximately 21 square meters). In addition 20,000 Rupees per family are provided in fixed deposits for future maintenance expenses.<sup>27</sup> Altogether this scheme permits a FSI up to 4.0 in slums. For every square foot used for housing of slum dwellers the builder is entitled to 1.33 square feet for sale. Issuing Development Rights Certificates (DRC) for the extra FSI the authorities permitted the builders to transfer development rights from the complex built for slum dwellers to any part of the city provided it was north of it. Until now, only dwellers living in recognised slums before January 1<sup>st</sup> 1995 are eligible to participation.

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<sup>27</sup> Mukhija, Vinit (2003): Squatters as developers? Slum redevelopment in Mumbai, Aldershot: Ashgate



## Evolution of Urban Policy towards Slum Dwellers



<sup>28</sup> FSI – Floor Space Index or Floor Area Ratio is the ratio of the total floor area of a building on a certain location to size of the land of that location, or the limit imposed on such a ratio (consensus knowledge). Typically FSI is low in India, compared with other Asian cities. This regulation contributes to an artificial increase in land consumption.

### EXCURSUS: Recent developments - Dharavi and the Township Development Programme<sup>29</sup>

The case of Dharavi is a high profile example for in situ-redevelopment/rehabilitation, which - in the opinion of Mukesh Metha, the responsible architect - should change the whole face of Asia's largest slum. Metha's plan strives for ambitious objectives: rehabilitation of 68,000 families, their businesses and polluting industries in general; provision of 29,000 new residential and commercial premises and the establishment of a sustainable master plan as well as an investment strategy. The centrepiece of the programme aiming at higher life quality is called HIKES ( Health, Income, Knowledge, Environment and Socio-culture). The keyword health stands for an affordable health care facility, knowledge for high quality education facilities and vocational trainings. Income of Dharavi's slum dwellers should rise up to 100,000 Rupees p.a. from 40,000 Rupees today by harnessing human resources. Solid waste and wastewater management should help to create a liveable place.<sup>30</sup> Whether this programme can meet the demands is debatable, but one thing is certain: it would be the first time such a comprehensive plan would be applied to a whole slum-area not only to a small pocket.

According to recent reports some general tendencies can be summarised.<sup>31</sup> First, relaxation in land and building development regulations and deregulation of profit limits for developers, such as a higher floor space index should provide incentives for the private sector to make social building more attractive to them. Second, management and implementation were opened up to the private sector and NGOs, as well as to the slum-dwellers themselves. Third, privatisation and deregulation were accompanied by decentralisation, which led to a diversified landscape of authorities and organisations, governmental as well as non-governmental ones. From this results a shift of power and responsibility from the state to other players. In addition, demand driven strategies are supposed to be conducive to more efficient and higher cost-recovery and a stronger willingness of the beneficiaries to pay.

### **3.2. Consequences of Housing Policy**

Today the results of the latest housing policy schemes are perceived as ambitious: Despite the advantages, slum-dwellers are worse off than before. High maintenance costs, less working opportunities and working space, and deficient access to infrastructure create hardship for the resettled<sup>32</sup>. Nonetheless, one can find examples of good practice. Successful interventions such as the Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP) and the Slum Sanitation Project put emphasis on community participation. An affordable design and the understanding of beneficiaries expected willingness to pay are essential parts, which could be derived from experiences.

Indeed, until now all approaches have suffered from poor implementation in contrast to political promises. Before every election political parties promise building programmes for the urban poor

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<sup>29</sup> Mukesh Metha, Powerpoint Presentation received from Rev. Daniels during interview with BUILD; 05.10.2007

<sup>30</sup> Mukesh Metha, Powerpoint Presentation received from Rev. Daniels during interview with BUILD; 05.10.2007

<sup>31</sup> Mukhija, Vinit (2003): Squatters as developers? Slum redevelopment in Mumbai, Aldershot: Ashgate

<sup>32</sup> Bhowmik, S. K. (2004): "Politics of Urban Space in Mumbai: 'Citizens' Versus the Urban Poor"; Working Paper No. 27', Magdeburg: ISOZ. Schrader, H. 2004 'Landnutzungsrechte als Entwicklungschance. Überlegungen zur städtischen Armutspolitik am Beispiel Mumbais, Arbeitsbericht Nr. 28 Magdeburg: ISOZ.

that – after coming to power – are only fulfilled half-heartedly. Once other parties gain supremacy the old programmes are discontinued and new programmes are engendered with the same meagre results. Higher and detached levels of the administration are criticized for their lack of sensitivity to local needs and priorities, and the use of standard procedures instead of strategies adapted to local needs. Very often participation of slum dwellers in the planning process is absent.

The conclusion can be drawn that neither the private nor the public sector was able to cater to the housing needs of the poor. In the absence of a consistent governmental housing policy, different strategies emerged but until now none of them dominates the landscape of housing policy. The only consistent state policy had been that of demolitions and evictions. In general, more attention has to be paid to often idiosyncratic and city-specific policies that affect type, location and standards of housing.

## 4. Theoretical Background

Talking about social activism in slums with regard to a change of poor living condition refers to the collective action of slum dwellers. From the theoretical perspective we start by deconstructing the term "slum". From a sociological point of view it seems obvious that a slum is a social entity, i.e. an entity where a group with a similar class background develops a joint feeling, a common identity (based on socioeconomic conditions), which may constitute the basis for collective action.

The second, important theoretical concern is whether such a collective action may emerge bottom-up within slums or if it is implemented top-down from outside. The bottom-up approach suggests the development of grassroots organisations networking among each other to engender a general class-consciousness beyond the particular slum area, while the top-down approach may include non-governmental organisations and social activists.

Before dealing with the different concepts of social approaches, the paper highlights the theoretical conceptions of social activism, identity and class.

### 4.1. Social Activism, Identity, Class and Caste

Social activism is defined as an intentional collective action aimed at social reorganisation, i.e. changing social and/or political conditions. From a spontaneous, personal social affectedness of disadvantaged individual actors a joint feeling and the willingness to stand up for the intended common goal against the existent social and political order emerges.

Intentional collective action requires a common interest and a joint feeling. The latter presupposes a common identity. The term "identity" describes the individual's or group self-perception as a discrete, separate entity.<sup>33</sup> In social anthropology and sociology two contrasting conceptions of identity are distinguished: the primordialist/essentialist approach relating the sense of self and belonging to common ancestry and common biological characteristics; and the more contemporary constructivist theory, assuming that identity is not naturally given but politically constructed and manipulated. Both conceptions are related to other conceptions such as class, race and ethnicity. Important is that identity becomes only meaningful as a felt distinguishing feature between "Us" and "Them", and this may strengthen a feeling of "groupness", group identity, mechanical solidarity. Particularly when this identity is linked to a disadvantaged/discriminated minority position in social and economic life (e.g. ethnicity) it may cause political mobilisation, a collective action of changing the societal conditions.<sup>34</sup> In sociology emphasis is given to the constructivist approach, how individuals label themselves as members of particular groups such as ethnic groups, subcultures, classes, citizens etc. Symbolic interactionism showed how identity can influence social reality and be influenced by it. On a whole there is a common understanding among most contemporary social scientists that identity is less a primordialist condition rather than a process. Related to the term of group identity is Durkheim's collective consciousness.

Social scientists emphasise that identity plays an important role in collective action and social movements, aiming at improving the living conditions of politically oppressed groups by creating a sense of solidarity based on common conditions. Here the conception of class and class-consciousness comes in on a societal level. Max Weber defines class condition as a typical chance of (1) provision with goods; (2) position in life; and (3) internal life destiny, which results from power of control of goods and qualifications, out of which incomes can be achieved within a given economic order.<sup>35</sup> Class is a group of people having the same class condition. Class condition and class refer to the same (or similar) typical interest of changing societal order of class

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<sup>33</sup> Erikson, Erik (1968): "Identity: youth and crises", New York, Norton

<sup>34</sup> Barth, F. (1969). *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Oslo: Bergen; Cohen, A. (1994): *Self Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*. London: Routledge; Sökefeld, M. (1999): "Debating Self, Identity, and Culture in Anthropology." *Current Anthropology* 40 (4), August-October, 417–31

<sup>35</sup> Weber, Max (1885): *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tübingen, Mohr; pp. 178-179

conditions/antagonisms. In Marxism analysis of class divisions and struggles is especially important in developing an understanding of the nature of capitalism. Classes are large groups of people that can be distinguished from each other according to their place in the historically determined system of societal production, according to their relation to the means of production (which are largely fixed by law), according to the social organisation of labour and their acquisition and share of societal property. Classes are groups of people, where one group can appropriate the labour of the other within a particular economic system.<sup>36</sup> Basis for this definition is the relation of the particular groups to the means of production.<sup>37</sup> At several points, Marx notes how the class defines itself, or is a class only as it acts in opposition to other classes.

Class-consciousness is the societal self-awareness of a class with regard to its conditions of existence, its basic interests, its relation to other classes and strata of society and their particular role in historical development. Class-consciousness is closely related to class condition. Marx describes how class-consciousness emerges among proletarians. Initially it is only a feeling of antagonism of interest to the bourgeoisie (class instinct), then spontaneously the consciousness of the necessity of organising themselves as proletarians bursts out and the willingness to fight against the bourgeoisie to improve the living conditions.<sup>38</sup>

A class may not be aware of its position with regard to other classes, or at least the implications of this position. A class in itself is a class that exists in common conditions in a society. But members of such a class may not be aware of their common position or interests, and are not able to act on these. A class for itself is a class that develops consciousness of itself, knows its position and capabilities within society, and is able to take actions in its own interests using this knowledge. Some of the means by which the proletariat can become a class in itself is through forming trade unions and political parties.

Do classes more or less naturally change from a class in itself to a class for itself? Marx and after him various Marxist scholars (e.g. Park) emphasised that in every society there is a dominant ideology held up by the elites and bourgeoisie aiming at conserving the existing societal order from which they take their benefits. A key problem is that the labourers' class may believe in the dominant ideology instead of developing and believing in their subordinate ideology in which radical change is absolutely necessary. Other factors that may set limits to class-consciousness are a segmented working class (by income, strata, region, occupation, sex, ethnicity, etc.), the lack of struggle and experience, or open repression.<sup>39</sup>

So far having discussed collective aspects of identity from the perspective of class, we want to continue with the discussion of individual aspects of identity. The nowadays prevalent approach is that rather than having one identity agents have different ones.<sup>40</sup> The related question is obvious: how are these different identities interconnected to each other and which are the implications for collective identity formation? Hermann et al. (2004) characterise the two main models for multiple identities.<sup>41</sup> The first model suggests that multiple identities are incompatible to each other, causing an obvious or latent conflict for an individual. For our context this might mean for example, that the individual's strong religious or ethnic identity is simply incompatible to an emergence of neighbourhood identity from the perspective of the individual, due to the distinguishing

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<sup>36</sup> Lenin: Werke Band 29: p 410; in Wörterbuch der Marxistisch-Leninistischen Philosophie 1989: 278ff

<sup>37</sup> Various social scientists and economists before Marx already analyzed the existence of classes and of class struggles. Marx's contribution was placing them into the stage theory of societal evolution.

<sup>38</sup> Wörterbuch der Marxistisch-Leninistischen Philosophie 1989: 278ff

<sup>39</sup> Seminar 205 (2003): Sociology; University of Regina, Department of Sociology and Social Studies; <http://uregina.ca/~gingrich/250j3103.htm>; accessed 05.12.2007

<sup>40</sup> Inglehart, Ronald. (1971): 'The Silent Revolution'. American Political Science Review. Vol. 65. 4. (December): 991-1017.

<sup>41</sup> Herrmann, Richard, Risse, Thomas, and Brewer, Marylin, eds. 2004. Trans-national Identities. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield

characteristics of “we-ness” and “them-ness”. In this understanding, how could a Muslim be considered a neighbour by a Hindu (emic perspective)? Despite a closely shared living location and identical class characteristics, the individual self-perception may vary substantially. Considering the manipulation issue of identities, as it is discussed with the issue of communalism in India the matter becomes increasingly significant. Hatred between Muslims and Hindus is politically provoked and exercised by latent violence and sometimes open rioting by underdogs.

The second model assumes compatibility offering two positions. The first position holds that these different identities are independent from each other and come to the fore in different contexts: on religious occasions, e.g. the religious identity comes to the fore on occasions of slum activism triggering a common neighbourhood identity or even class consciousness. According to the second position, multiple identities influence each other. For example, the consciousness to be a slum dweller may severely be influenced by his or her religious affiliation, which might then also lead to segmented identities.

Social reality in mega cities segregates inhabitants in quarters, correlating to ethnicity, religion, migration wave, and the like, so that wars and riots can emerge between all these different segmented “tribes”, based on hatred and envy, rather than that such people with a similar socioeconomic background develop a class consciousness.<sup>42</sup> Berner develops this idea further with the terms ‘localities’ as certain ‘social’ places and ‘localization’ as a process of identity formation processes, cohesion and defence. He defines localisation as follows: “Localisation is the search of groups among the non-dominant classes for a local identity and the creation of localities as foci of everyday life”. Based on research in the Metro Manila slums, Philippines, he argues, although very often localities have clear-cut boundaries such as streets, railway lines, rivers or channels, they are constituted by social action and identity formation processes. Berner, however, sees a chance of common consciousness processes. According to Parkin, value systems are developed in the “moral density” of local communities and generate a meaning system.<sup>43</sup> They may put up violent resistance challenging the dominance system. To become a movement, however, requires stable interconnections and communication structures among each other. Due to spatial closeness this should be easier than in wider space, however, the Mumbai examples prove the opposite to be true.

With regard to our topic it is important to discuss from a theoretical perspective how the conceptions of identities, collective consciousness, class-consciousness, and social actions correlate to the Indian society. On that score, Max Weber is very pessimistic. He argues that the Indian caste system with its ritual-cum-economic segregation prohibits an emergence of middle class and “urban community”, since this segregation impedes any fraternisation.<sup>44</sup> But has Indian reality overcome Weber’s doubts? When we think in terms of middle-class life-styles (single family household in a suburb, two cars for commuting, sending the two children to a private high school), this seems to be true. But at the same time we know that life-styles and identities are incomparable. In that sense the Weberian term ‘middle class’ is broader than an economic characteristic of more affluent people with similar life styles but has a political and economical meaning. In political economy it is assumed that the middle-class which is situated between the upper and the lower class extenuates class conflict between the other two, gives certain stability to society, and provides a potential scope for upward mobility of the lower class. So if Weber is pessimistic about the middle-class, he is pessimistic about class in general because the Indian society on a whole is segmented into very complex hierarchical patterns of castes and sub-castes where even other believer are absorbed and classified. The caste system is rather a distinguishing than uniting feature. From the perspective of identities it cuts across a class identity. Further segregating factors in addition to caste are the religious and ethnic origin, constituting important tools for identity formation, exclusion and hatred (cf. Keil/Mydla/Zalewski 2009).

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<sup>42</sup> Berner, Erhard 1997: *Defending a Place in the City: Localities and the struggle for urban land in Metro Manila*. Metro Manila: Atheneo Press; p. 8

<sup>43</sup> Parkin, Frank 1971: *Class Analysis and the Political Order*. London: McGibbon and Kee

<sup>44</sup> Weber, Max (1885): *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tübingen, Mohr; p. 738

We investigated the field of urban habitat from the perspective of urban policy and slums. In addition, we examined organisational attempts to change the slum dwellers' rights and living conditions. If social activism intends to initiate societal change, it requires a certain critical mass to become a (powerful) social movement, given that those forces that take benefits from the status quo try to maintain it.<sup>45</sup> In addition to organisational issues and information on slums and housing policy we therefore tried to assess the identities of slum dwellers in Mumbai.

## 5. Methods

Research intended to reconstruct a social problem (scarcity of affordable housing) and social process (social activism against slum demolition/for slum upgrading/for building adequate apartment blocks for slum dwellers) by considering certain selected cases.

Research was based on the following components: (a) analysis of secondary material; (b) qualitative research; (c) data analysis with MaxQda.

### Analysis of secondary material

In preparation of field research material on housing and slum demolition in India and social activism concerning housing rights (statistics, scientific books and articles, newspaper reports, etc.) was collected and analysed to get a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. We identified agents in the field (local politicians, social activists, NGOs) and key issues of relevance.

### Qualitative research

Gathering information in the field of social activism and demolitions of squatter settlements and slums should be mainly realised by qualitative expert interviews, and observations. Experts<sup>46</sup> are regarded as members of institutions and organisations representing institutional rather than personal knowledge. With regard to our research topic we can assume that social activism of NGOs in the field is the representation of slum dwellers' voice in the public (organising protest, coping with the media, negotiating with politicians and administration, etc.) and/or providing solutions to the problem of housing on their own (helping to implement self-help mechanisms such as savings and credit schemes, housing cooperatives, etc.).

We asked our Mumbai University cooperating partner Dr. Bhosale to invite key experts for the initial seminar in Mumbai to give talks on the issue or function as interviewees, and we managed ourselves to approach several NGOs to establish contact in the field. During our field period we visited various slums, housing projects, NGOs, etc. to take interviews. For that purpose we had developed an interview guideline in advance, which was flexibly adapted in the field according to the interview situation and changing focal points.<sup>47</sup> Perceptibly the interviews express only the

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<sup>45</sup> Abercrombie, N. et al. 1988: Dictionary of Sociology. London: Penguin. Schäfers, Bernhard and Kopp, Johannes 2003: Grundbegriffe der Soziologie. Opladen: Leske&Budrich

<sup>46</sup> Following Meuser/Nagel (1991) an expert is considered as part of a special field of activity that is essential for this research subject. This implies that researchers confer the expert status on persons, but his/her expertise is limited to specific question. To be more concrete, two characteristics might point out to be an expert: it might be a person (a) who accounts for the implementation, plan or control of a problem solution; (b) who disposes of privileged access to information about groups of persons or decision processes. Expert interviews deal with tasks, activities, responsibilities and thereby gained experiences or know-how.

<sup>47</sup> Methodically, an interview guideline aims at making the researcher familiar with the topic and put him/her into the role of a competent conversation partner. The guideline is not handled as a compelling course of

interviewee's particular opinion, principally correlating with the organisational conviction. Consequently, the accumulated interview materials do not transport our personal positions.

We worked in different teams of two to three interviewers to get as much information as possible from different NGOs. Prior to the interviews the individual responsibility (interviewer, observer, writer) were appointed. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed and analysed in Germany. In addition, we took photographs of the interview situation and during the field observation. Usually interviews lasted between 60 and 150 minutes.

## **Data analysis**

As we had to process information of nine transcribed interviews and further conversations, we used the computer programme MaxQda for the analysis of text. The programme functions as a database, in which the researcher can code key issues and highlight the paragraphs of all interviews connected to the same code. Codes consist of a single word, phrase or paragraph. They are usually not automatically generated by the programme but a result of an intellectual selection and re-coding process. Hence, codes are primarily derived from the interview guidelines and consequently the result of intensive transcript evaluation; but they can also be taken directly from the text, i.e. interview. In general the strategy of "open coding" was pursued, i.e. during the coding procedure additional codes were adjoined or further differentiated. Extensive examinations and the discourse exchange in the research group encouraged the essential code description process. The researcher accomplished coding by allocating the interview paragraphs to key terms. Also sub-coding was possible. Assigning a code, regarded as a category, remains a critical point because of the researcher's interpretative action.

## **Description of code system**

The pictured code-tree illustrates all codes including subordinated ones. Seven umbrella categories symbolise the variables necessary to describe forms of social activism. Information about the institutional and spatial framework in Mumbai is summarised by the codes "conditions" and "governmental policies". While the code "conditions" aims at describing the living conditions in slums and Mumbai in general, policies concerning demolitions and strategies to deal with housing policy (e.g. rehabilitation or resettlement) are mentioned in the second code. In addition to context parameters interviews especially focussed on "organisational characteristics": events and reasons leading to the foundation of organisations, formal aspects like structure, funding and information concerning recruiting and background of members. Furthermore, underlying thoughts of the interviewees' sets of opinions about the world as the medium and exercise of human existence are taken under the umbrella term "worldview". Detailed examination of activities serves as the centrepiece. Starting with reconstructing strategies or approaches of the interview partners, description continues by identifying and describing certain kinds of action in the field of housing policy. This contains on the one hand measures in cooperation or confrontation with authorities or institutions (administration advice/negotiation/pressure), and on the other hand, measures addressed to slum dwellers (advice/support/capacity building). Conclusively information about research projects is added (see figure).

The mentioned categories should guide the cognitive process and structure all collected information. Comparing the dimensions concerning all interview partners should help to form a coherent picture of our work: about interrelationships of attitudes and concrete actions/measures as well as surrounding conditions. Therefore two points of reference are available: the intra-

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conversation, but rather used as a kind of checklist. It should be kept amenable to extensions. The interview guideline as an example is enclosed in the appendix.



organisational (within an organisation) and the across-organisational perspective (between organisations).

In the data analysis we followed the code tree and then reorganised the analysed paragraphs according to plausibility. Therefore this report does not comply with the original code tree.

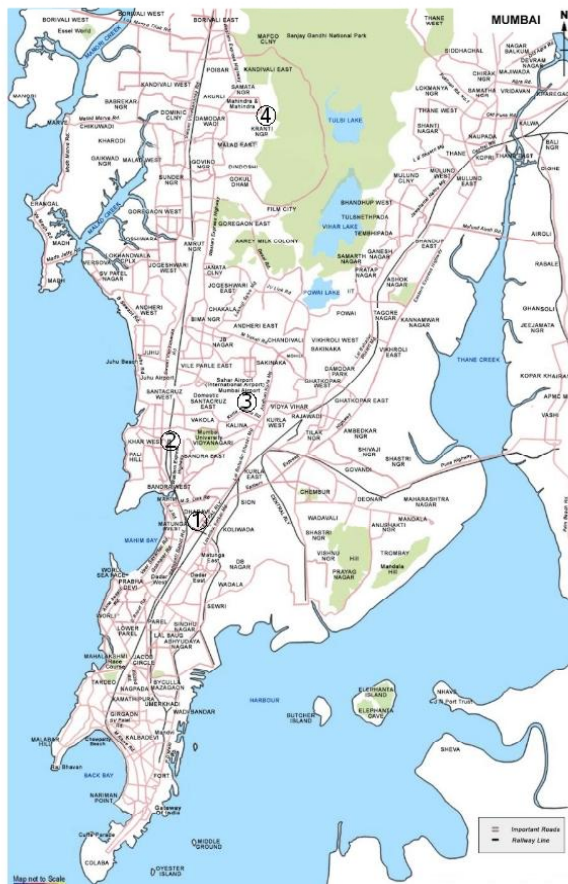
- 1. Conditions of Slums/Mumbai
- 2. Governmental Policies and Court Decisions
  - \* rehabilitation
  - \* demolitions
- 3. Difficulties in the Field
- 4. Foundation
  - \* specific events
  - \* motivation
- 5. Organisation
  - \* finance/funding
  - \* structure
  - \* background
  - \* members
- 6. Worldview
- 7. Activities
  - \* geographic
  - \* objectives/approach/strategy
  - \* community policy
  - \* administration advice/negotiation/pressure
  - \* advice/support/capacity building
    - \* participation
    - \* cooperation/network
    - \* legal issues
    - \* mobilisation
    - \* empowerment
    - \* research
    - \* self evaluation

Figure: Code-tree containing all Sub-codes

## 6. Research Findings

### 6.1. The research field

We did not coincidentally choose the various slum settlements but they represent the working field of our interviewed organisations. On the map of the Mumbai peninsula we marked the four slums we investigated.



Source: <http://www.properties.in/images/mumbai.JPG>

- 1 Dharavi
- 2 Behrampada & Indhira Nagar
- 3 Airport Slum
- 4 Dama Nagar

## **6.2. Dharavi**

The largest and best-known slum in Mumbai is Dharavi, which – as a result of the city's growth – now belongs to larger central Mumbai and includes "villages" and "townships" from all over India. Dharavi as an example to emphasise the complexity of slums shows a very heterogeneous social, religious and ethnic composition. Although sharing the same living and working space, people keep on living in segregation according to ethnic and religious criteria.

Dharavi is said to be Asia's largest slum. On an area of about 1.75 square kilometres there are an estimated 500,000 to one million residents. Most people in Dharavi live in one-storey hutments; nuclear families, but frequently also "extended families" with ten or more people share a space of less than 15 square meters. In Dharavi there are presently only one college, five primary schools and three secondary schools.

Following the aim of improving the working and living conditions in the Dharavi slum area, the government of Maharashtra implemented a number of development schemes. From very ambitious aims of constructing social housing blocks, only a minor share has been realised. Huts with plastered brick walls and asbestos roofs co-exist side by side with concrete apartment buildings. Over the years infrastructure has improved.

Compared to many other slums, the legalized Dharavi is relatively well established. The situation is quite different in settlements at the outskirts of Dharavi and other places, which are legally unrecognised. Here the municipality keeps on demolishing people's houses, which is why people can hardly find shelter or get access to clean water, medical care or employment opportunities. Very often they return to the demolished slums, perhaps settling on the grounds of their destroyed houses. Sometimes people already experienced several demolitions and expect new ones in the near future. A particular problem emerges when governmental land is sold to private investors, because then the legal situation of the slum dwellers will change. Even if they formerly obtained the right to settlement on public land, this right may become obsolete on private land, since it is simply not applied to such. For example, the city administration of Mumbai recently offered Dharavi land for sale, hoping to attract international investors to build office buildings and shopping malls in what is considered to be one of the most promising downtown areas. The slum inhabitants are therefore afraid of losing their original living and working area which stands in the way of such projects.

The responsible urban architect in charge of Dharavi, Mukesh Metha, however, defended the privatisation project. He emphasizes that slums are not necessarily contradicting private business plans. In his plan for the first time slum dwellers have not been seen as disturbing factors for urban development, but as valuable human resources. Inhabitants who had lived in Dharavi before 1995 are to benefit by obtaining a 225 square feet (approximately 21 square meters) apartment - the standard rehabilitation size in Mumbai.

Actual practice is that legalized slum dweller families obtain a 225 square feet apartment as a substitute for a hutment. The advantage of the Dharavi approach is that resettlement takes place in Dharavi itself, next to the former living space of the families, so that established neighbourhoods and networks remain intact. The problem is that this programme ignores the factual number of people living in this hutment. Often those hutments that were legalized already some time ago have two or three stories sometimes lodging different families. All such problems have remained unsolved so far, since each legalized hutment will get one such apartment.

For the vast majority of Dharavi residents who benefit from this program it may be an improvement to exchange a hutment against such an apartment, and therefore such people whom we interviewed had a rather positive attitude towards Mukesh Metha's plan. But there are also larger families who lose space when being resettled in the new apartment blocks, not to say that various people do not have the possibility to obtain such a flat at all. Also very often people lose their working space since they cannot continue their former handicraft work or trade when they live in the 7<sup>th</sup> storey of an apartment house. On the whole, it remains open whether the development of Dharavi shall be perceived as progress or drawback.

### **6.3. Dama Nagar**

Dama Nagar is a slum located in Sanjay Gandhi National Park predominantly inhabited by Dalits<sup>48</sup>. There has been an eviction process going on for about 10 years. Five demolitions have taken place so far (the last in late 2007) where brick and concrete structures of residents' houses had been destroyed. During our investigation people lived in non-permanent hutments "mostly built on the remains of their old premises".<sup>49</sup> In most cases up to 15 people share a single room. If at all there are only illegal electricity supplies, there are no legal water taps, there is no health care and there are no public schools in the area. A few public toilets are available where people have to pay for. The slum is located closely to "middleclass high-rise buildings". These two life-worlds seem to be hardly connected to each other and according to an interview partner from Yuva Bharat the middle class "wants to get rid of the slum". The land has already been sold to the "builders' lobby" to extend the middle class quarter, although on the other hand, it is argued that the land belongs to the national park. However, a closer look shows that these middle class people do not consider that they themselves benefit from cheap labour in their households provided by slum dwellers or services offered at the railway station close by. The latter view is contrary to Castells' dual city approach that upper middle class and lower class working in the informal sector are unrelated to each other.<sup>50</sup>

### **6.4. Airport Slum Area**

Due to the rapid growth of air traffic the capacity of Bombay International Airport is said to be way beyond its limits. In the longer run the airport shall be shifted to an island in Bombay Bay, but in the short run authorities and the airport company plan to expand the existing airport. However, on about 2.76 square kilometres of the airport land that was privatised in 2006 there are approximately 400,000 slum dwellers. They are about to be demolished. This is peculiar since the slum was tolerated and even supplied with water and electricity for about 40 years. According to Prof. Metha, member of the social organisation CRH, a closer look into the development plan shows that this specific area is not even needed for airport modernisation as such because it is not suitable for an expansion of the airport's flight capacity. Instead the land is supposed to be used for building health resorts, hotels and entertainment centres in the area to increase the airport company's profit. Obviously the conditions in the airport area are especially hazardous. The very close distance to the runways jeopardizes serious health risks through air and noise pollution. In addition, vice versa the proximity of the slum significantly imperils the flight and airport security. City administration offers rehabilitation for those people who had lived in the slum for many years. However, rehabilitation is planned to be far away, which would severely disturb people's ability to carry on their present economic activities. Residents offer to transfer about 2.5 square kilometres of land to the city administration and the rest for rehabilitation in this area which city administration refuses.

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<sup>48</sup> "Dalit" is the self-definition of those people who are identified as "untouchable" in the Indian caste system. Despite the abolition of the caste discrimination by the Indian government in 1949 the Dalits continued to be discriminated. The Dalits movement under the leadership of B.R. Ambedkar called for a mass-conversion to Christianity and Buddhism to escape the caste system. However, the casteless are still denominated and marginalised as "untouchable" Dalits.

<sup>49</sup> Interview in Dama Nagar; Oct. 02, 2007

<sup>50</sup> Castells, Manuel: The informational city. Information technologies, economic restructuring and the urban-regional process; Oxford, Basil Blackwell; 1991

### **6.5. Behrampada and Indira Nagar**

Behrampada and Indira Nagar are two slums located in Kherwadi, east of Bandra Station. In Behrampada, on an area of about 5-6 acres (about 20,000 square metres) live 150,000 residents; the area is very densely populated. About 90 percent out of the slum's population are Muslims. Characteristic for people's hutments in the area are 3-4 stories on average and the lack of basic civic amenities at the slum's periphery. According to a socioeconomic survey conducted by CRH the majority of the residents have been living in the area for more than 30 years, 52 percent take water from common water supply provided by Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC), 53 percent use garbage bins provided by BMC for garbage disposal, about 31 percent throw garbage on the roads and elsewhere. There are about 74 toilets in the whole neighbourhood. 69 percent of the residents use common toilets, 7 percent have private toilets, 17 percent use drainage as toilets. 83 percent of the population is literate; at least they can sign their names. 91.2 percent of the children living in Behrampada go to school.<sup>51</sup>

Indira Nagar is mainly inhabited by Hindus. Here the hutments are built on a water pipeline, which is said to be in danger of explosion due to its poor state, the hutments weight and the water pressure. The inhabitants are well aware of the dangerous living conditions and thus favour resettlement that is announced to occur in the next two years.

The following chapter will give an overview of different types of organisations dealing with housing problems.

## **7. Social Agents in the Field**

In Mumbai Metropolitan Area one can find a huge variety of social activists. For a better understanding we differentiate between two common forms of social activist groups; grassroots organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGO).

People facing a certain problem such as poor living standards, the fear of eviction or demolition in our case may trigger the formation of grassroots organisations. For us the important issue is that these organisations were formed "bottom up". NGOs in this case are activist groups formed by a higher institution (church, political party, humanitarian organisation etc.) or by people not directly affected by the problems their organisation is dealing with, such as well-educated middle-class people with an ethical stance of justice. We call such organisations as implemented "top down".

Our respondents belonged to organisations of both types. Every organisation in our sample has a different background and development; all together showing the variety of social activism in Mumbai. However, at the same time we have to admit that among our sample organisations we have a strong bias on Christian groups, which is of course not representative for the field and results from our access to the field to some extent having been prepared by the academic staff of the University of Mumbai.

For a better comparison these organisations shall be described according to the following characteristics: organisational structure; historical perspective: motivation, foundation and development of the organisation; funding; networks, cooperation and alliances, and difficulties that occur in the field.

We will start with the grassroots organisations and their characteristics and subsequently discuss the NGOs.

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<sup>51</sup> Information provided by CRH leaflet.

## 7.1. Grassroots Organisations

On the grassroots-level we actually found three different types of organisations. The first type are social movements like Yuva Bharat, the second type are guiding or advising organisations like CRH,<sup>52</sup> and the third type are community organisers like NSDF.

### Organisational structure

*“The base is the bottom. The people make the decision.”*

*Arputham Jockin, NSDF*

Yuva Bharat (engl.: All India Revolutionary Youth Organisation) is an example of a social movement in Mumbai. It is a youth organisation consisting of approximately 20 members, all of them living in slums. They are informally organised with just one basic principle; the verbal agreement that all members oppose cast and class system. “We practise democracy.”<sup>53</sup> That means that every member is free to choose an issue to work on and the way to proceed with it. So as there is no formal structure one can assume that the group of activists is quite dynamic and varies much more than in other organisations. As a youth organisation, members are in many ways more flexible than in organisations formed of more settled people.

The Committee for the Right to Housing (CRH) is part of a larger committee, which sets its own working frame. This larger committee can be seen as a kind of a coalition of almost 50 various kinds of organisations, including NGOs, but also individuals (mainly lawyers, architects or parliamentarians). In CRH’s office in Bandra East one can meet the programmes manager, Mr Saralchandran. Besides him and a few volunteers (who live in the communities CRH is active in) one also can meet the community workers of CRH who every day go into the field and talk to the people. They raise awareness of the living conditions in the slum, explain slum dwellers their rights and how to claim them, and work against communalism. Community work is a very slow process. The community worker needs to build up mutual trust with the community. This is a process of at least six months, before CRH can start the actual work. Hence, it is essential to have regular staffs, spending several hours every day in the slum and chatting with the people. Community workers work part-time or full-time. CRH pays them a salary. The community worker whom we met has been working for CRH for 4 years now. Her “working area” covers two slums in Kherwadi, Bandra/East of Mumbai. Every day she walks three to four hours within Behrampada and Indira Nagar, which won notoriety during the riots in 1992/93, because here in comparison to other parts of the city the communal riots became especially brutal. Still the situation is tense, since the Muslim and the Hindu slum lie in very close proximity. The social worker as Muslim living in Indira Nagar, the slum mainly inhabited by Hindus, states that in her work she does not face any religiously based problems.

The National Slum Dwellers Federation<sup>54</sup> (NSDF) “is a network of slum dwellers; only slum dwellers, [those who are] living in slums, or on the pavements, or in the streets, or the homeless, they are the members; it is not individual membership; it’s a cluster membership, it’s a group of people, a committee; (...) a settlement is a member, not an individual. No individual members.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> In the case of CRH two interviews were held; one with Mr Saralchandran, programme manager of CRH and the other with Prof. Metha, a member of CRH.

<sup>53</sup> Quota taken from personal conversations with the members.

<sup>54</sup> “Federation” is an umbrella organisation for a wider network of grassroots organisations or NGOs on a higher hierarchical level.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with NSDF; Oct. 10, 2007

NSDF does not offer voluntary individual membership, but the mere belonging to the slum cluster – the place of residency - makes slum dwellers members. According to Mr Arputham Jockin, the president of NSDF, joint problems must be collectively faced. He calls this “collective responsibility” of the slum dwellers for their slum. “To make it easier to negotiate for secure land in Mumbai, households have been organised into smaller networks as part of the larger Federation. For example, families living alongside the railway tracks in Mumbai have formed the Railway Slum Dwellers’ Federation, because they will mainly have to negotiate with the railway authorities.”<sup>56</sup> Likewise, slum dwellers living on municipal land fall under the Municipal Federation, those who are living on private land fall under the Private Federation, those living on the pavements under the Pavement Slum Dwellers Federation and so on.<sup>57</sup>

Becoming a member of NSDF is uncomplicated, but then membership means to take some more effort. “[Y]ou are a member of the society, in which there are laws, rules...”<sup>58</sup> Everybody belonging to the federation automatically takes over certain liabilities towards the community; from now on problems will be solved collectively. People are motivated to form cooperative housing societies. Such undertake self-educational activities; first of all savings and credit activities as a means of self-help, but also social activism: “to work at city and state levels to change policies affecting the urban poor.”<sup>59</sup> NSDF in that constellation builds the intersection point that provokes, promotes and supervises community development. Mr Jockin argues that it is not NSDF but the people themselves who act; he considers the organisation and himself as the organ of the members. In his own words “the base is the bottom. People make the decisions. The top is communicating and [...] I am the president to communicate, not to take decisions.” As the federation NSDF keeps several offices in Mumbai, one of these being situated in Dharavi where we took the interview.

Women mostly lead the groups. For Jockin the women bring a quality change into the leadership. He argues, women communicate more than men; they are more focussed and more aware of the family’s living conditions. Communication skills are especially important to spread and receive information. Women’s focus usually lies on the wellbeing of the family while men seem to rather follow selfish interests, such as drinking and gambling. In addition, women are less corruptible by the promises of political leaders and thus may not easily be manipulated. From that understanding, NSDF established a very strict leadership ratio of 40:60; 40 percent men and 60 percent women.

The number of members of the organisation varies widely depending on the source; Jockin talks about 250,000 poor families, on the Internet one can find numbers up to 750,000 poor households (all over India). When we take the lower figure and assume an average number of five members per family or household, one can argue that NSDF represents at least 1,250,000 people.<sup>60</sup>

Let us continue by having a closer look at our material how such bottom-up organisations emerge.

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<sup>56</sup> [http://www.homeless-international.org/standard\\_1.aspx?id=0:380&id=0:277&id=0:262](http://www.homeless-international.org/standard_1.aspx?id=0:380&id=0:277&id=0:262) Stand: 03.02.2008

<sup>57</sup> NSDF works in 38 cities, 6 states and one union territory. The membership concerning the whole federation is either based on the city in which the dwellers are living or on the land owner of the slum in which they reside. In other cities or states slum dwellers mainly have to negotiate with their individual city or state government for land, shelter and access to infrastructure. Here their federations are named, for example, Karnataka Slum Dwellers’ Federations or Orissa Slum Dwellers’ Federations, referring to their states. In our case we just concentrate on the city of Mumbai.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with NSDF; Oct 10, 2007

<sup>59</sup> [www.karmayog.org/nonmumbaiprofiles/nonmumprodis.asp?r=149&nonnpoproid=3019&state=Maharashtra&city](http://www.karmayog.org/nonmumbaiprofiles/nonmumprodis.asp?r=149&nonnpoproid=3019&state=Maharashtra&city); accessed: Feb 2, 2008

<sup>60</sup> Over the last two decades this form of federation of urban poor developed (in so called third world countries) all over the world. It has emerged from grassroots savings groups. The NSDF in India is called the catalyst for this development.

## The Emergence of Bottom-up Organisations

Social Activism is mostly provoked by experienced and/or perceived injustice. There is a wide spectrum of potential catalysts: for example, an expected demolition, administrative promises to provide proper housing without walking the talk, the continued miserable and unhealthy living conditions, etc. on the slum dwellers' side, or a feeling of injustice on the side of middle-class people. Yuva Bharat's members live in the slums, all of them being Dalits and therefore especially experiencing discrimination in daily life. This may identify a special motivation for their social engagement. Many of them are well educated and identify with scholars like Marx and Ambedkar, using their ideas for the struggle against the class and caste system. They thoroughly suffer from the precarious life circumstances and hence try to collectively fight them, but they are also well aware of the mechanisms of collective action of suppressed people.

CRH started their work about 22 years ago after a court decision declaring that people who have no proper housing could be sent back to their places of origin. "It was founded sometime in the year 1985/86. And when it was formed it was a part of an all India campaign, which was called 'National Campaign for Right to Housing'. The campaign was promoting the right to housing as a fundamental right. [...] You know, that housing in slums doesn't mean just the [shelter], you know, [but we also have to consider] housing in terms of its cultural context, neighbourhood, community"<sup>61</sup>, which also includes social life and education. In this campaign merged trade unions, political parties, lawyers, architects, single parliamentarians and other middle-class people. At the beginning their aim was unionising on the grassroots level pooling all activist groups in order to gain more pronounced impact. During the first years the approach proved to be successful by drafting a law on housing rights, which was presented to the Indian government for implementation. The "National Campaign for Right to Housing" incited a serious discussion on the housing issue also beyond Maharashtra and resulted in the declaration of housing as a fundamental right by the parliament. "So we tried to bring a lot of pressure. Unfortunately, when the campaign was at its peak in 1990/91, it suddenly collapsed. It is sometimes a bit paradox."<sup>62</sup> Mr Saralchandran argued in our interview that networks can only be effective if the "issue [that is pursued] is hot".

Mr Jockin, the president of the NSDF, started his work in 1967. He never intended to be a community leader, but he "became involved in community action within the settlement where he lived and worked - for instance by trying to get the household waste collected, by setting up informal schools for the children living there, by getting water pipes - and as his settlement of some 70,000 people came under threat of eviction, by fighting the eviction order. The settlement was finally evicted in 1976, but the struggle of the inhabitants successfully postponed this eviction for many years, and their struggle became very well known in India."<sup>63</sup> Probably inspired by the massive waves the dwellers made, he started to develop his idea of a federation. At the beginning NSDF was primarily male dominated and Jockin "was running all over the country, struggling so much, talking so much, but [his] federation was not growing." In 1978 he realised that the people who were fighting with him were to 90percent female and to 10 percent male; but the leaders of his federation were 90 percent male and 10 percent female. In 1984 membership numbers rose and an organisation called Mahila Milan was founded. In the federation a leadership change took place [from males to females] and over the years they developed their special way of practise (...). The

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with Dr. Metha; Professor of Sociology at University of Mumbai and member of CRH, Oct 10, 2007

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Dr. Metha; Professor of Sociology at University of Mumbai and member of CRH, Oct. 10, 2007

<sup>63</sup> Homepage:

[www.habitatjam.com/webuploads/members/oArpurtham\\_Jockin\\_Bio\\_English.pdf+slum+dwellers+federation&hl=de&ct=clnk&cd=3&gl=de](http://www.habitatjam.com/webuploads/members/oArpurtham_Jockin_Bio_English.pdf+slum+dwellers+federation&hl=de&ct=clnk&cd=3&gl=de); accessed: 02.02.2008



membership figures grew constantly until today. "Today I can tell you, I am working in 70 cities and in 30 countries, because the women came in."<sup>64</sup>

## **Funding**

Concerning finance Yuva Bharat is a very self-sufficient organisation. As they work very informal without any fixed costs one can assume that they do not raise any money for their work, but acquire any material requirements (flyer etc.) in the short term.

CRH stresses that they are solely funded by personal material and immaterial contributions, for instance volunteer collaboration. One can assume that personal contributions could be understood as rather personal funding than institutional.

NSDF finances its projects by drawing on credit loans from numerous banks. "We borrow the money from the bank not by giving guaranty, but by showing the strength of the people [...] I take money anywhere in the world. I go and show them the saving scheme; how many people are involved; we are here all together. So, we have a large loan from almost six banks. These big banks give us a very large loan. We take loans and we repay them once the work is over."<sup>65</sup> In our opinion the thrift and credit groups and their savings at the bottom of the organisation provide collateral for the bank credit. In their scheme saving comes first. Every member is stipulated to a daily saving. In cases of emergencies the slum community may borrow money from banks by referring to the community members' savings. This savings-led microfinance has gained recognition as an effective way to bring very poor families low-cost financial services. "[A]nd almost all the slum dwellers have to have a daily saving. They should save daily; not monthly, not annually, but daily." This is essential for the financial independence, but also has an impact on the social cohesion of the community.

## **Networks, Cooperation and Alliances**

*"To effect change on a large scale requires partnerships."*

*Asian Coalition for Housing Rights*

Networking is a key issue in social activism; all interviewed grassroots organisations show some similarities in networking. Although the organisations lack trust in political parties and larger NGOs, they see the necessity to build cooperation and found local, national and international networks and forums. Network links should also include political representatives and NGOs.

Yuva Bharat for example is a member of at least two forums discussing housing problems. They also cooperate with organisations working in the same field such as Bharatiya Bahujan Sabha, an organisation situated in Dama Nagar<sup>66</sup>. Bharatiya Bahujan Sabha resembles Yuva Bharat in structure and object intention. In Dama Nagar alone there are two more organisations framing a forum together with Yuva Bharat and Bharatiya Bahujan Sabha.

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with NSDF; Oct. 10, 2007

<sup>65</sup> Interview with NSDF; Oct. 10, 2007

<sup>66</sup> A slum situated in the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in the North of Mumbai. Demolished Dec 31,2007

Besides the committee, CRH established further contacts in four additional Indian cities. They socially engage in several districts of Mumbai like in Bandra, Kurla, and Santa Cruz (airport region). CRH is a member of a coalition of around 50 organisations, including NGOs, but also individual lawyers, architects or parliamentarians. If this committee set the issues for all 50 organisations, the social impact would considerably increase. The support of specialists like architects and lawyers will help to compile attainable development plans on housing issues, while the support of parliamentarians may help to bring them into parliamentary discussion. As this kind of coalition promises to be very successful and their ambitions could demonstrably improve the living situation of slum dwellers, our interview partners scrutinised their outreach. “On paper it is a big coalition. I mean, on paper it sounds very impressive.”<sup>67</sup> We assume that too many organisations are involved for a successful coordination to joint action, so that a lot of power is lost in endless discussions.

Talking about NSDF means that one has to take SPARC and Mahila Milan into consideration as well. This alliance was formed in 1986 and became a strong advocate for pro-poor development. Today, the so-called Indian Alliance comprises four organisations, each fulfilling a specific role. While NSDF and Mahila Milan design and manage programmes to improve the living conditions of Indian poor (like Slum Upgrading, the Savings Scheme or the Slum Police Panchayat Scheme), SPARC, an organisation formed by housing and social work professionals, supports the activities of the federation with its expertise, functions as their public relations division and seems to be the connecting link to the international level. The fourth member of the Indian Alliance is Samudaya Nirman Sahayak (SSNS or short Nirman), “a non-profit company founded by SPARC, NSDF and Mahila Milan in 1998. Its role in the Indian Alliance is to support building and construction projects put together by SPARC, NSDF and Mahila Milan.”<sup>68</sup> “Over the last two decades, the Indian Alliance has developed an incredible network of partners from across the social and financial spectrum. The progress they have made in improving the lives of slum dwellers throughout the country is unprecedented. Through creating strong and unified federations of the urban poor and partnerships with government bodies and the private sector, the Indian Alliance has been able to create alternatives to forced evictions and enable poor communities to find their own solutions to the challenges they face.”<sup>69</sup> Other NGOs and social activists are less enthusiastic about their work.<sup>70</sup>

The Indian Alliance also helped to found the Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) network, “an international people’s organisation, which represents member federations of urban poor and homeless groups from eleven countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.”<sup>71</sup> It is linking federations like NSDF to share ideas and experiences and to support one another in their activities. As the inspirer of this organisation Arputham Jockin, founder and president of NSDF, is also the president of SDI. Via SDI the Indian Alliance maintains contacts to international organisations like Homeless International or the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR). Together with ACHR SDI also joined with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements – Habitat (UNCHS) to “make the Secure Tenure Campaign<sup>72</sup> relevant both globally and locally and to demonstrate how global and local partnerships can create win - win solutions.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Interview with Dr. Metha; Professor of Sociology at University of Mumbai and member of CRH, Oct 10, 2007

<sup>68</sup> “As the Indian Alliance’s projects became larger in scale and complexity, a need for more sophisticated legal, financial and technical expertise arose and Nirman was created to fill this void.” ([http://www.homeless-international.org/standard\\_1.aspx?id=0:380&id=0:277&id=0:262](http://www.homeless-international.org/standard_1.aspx?id=0:380&id=0:277&id=0:262); accessed: Feb 03, 2008)

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Personal communication

<sup>71</sup> Sheela Patel, founder and director of SPARC, in “Environment and Urbanisation - Slum/Shack Dwellers International – foundations to treetops” <http://eau.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/13/2/45>; accessed: Feb 03, 2008.

<sup>72</sup> For further information see <http://www.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=24>

<sup>73</sup> Asian Coalition for Housing Rights: [http://www.achr.net/new\\_page\\_3.htm](http://www.achr.net/new_page_3.htm); accessed: Feb 03, 2008.

What follows is a description of which difficulties occur in the work of the interviewed bottom-up organisations.

### **Difficulties in the Field**

“The thing is that the problem is so huge, the population is so great and our manpower is so limited”, Prof. Metha summarised one of the major problems of social activism.<sup>74</sup> According to UN-Habitat 170 million Indian people are living in slums. If we assume that collective action requires a common interest and a joint feeling, one can observe that even if there is an apparent common interest (the improvement of the own living conditions), slum dwellers are yet mobilised to collective action only with incremental difficulty. Comparing the three organisations the membership figures constitute seven, 20 and at least 1.2 million. Membership size also influences social activism the groups take. Jockin tries to mobilise masses in demonstrations, rallies or protest marches, and he plays on “producing a joint feeling” with slogans such as “You are a community!” We have to keep in mind that when they organise a demonstration with 50,000 slum dwellers they only mobilise a small share of Mumbai’s slum community.

Yuva Bharat primarily complains about missing recruitment. The youth is less willing to fight for their rights due to an increasing alienation from their living situation (slum, community, family etc.). Constant direct confrontation with the “better world” misleadingly simulates an image of easy access to it. Success appears as an outcome of individual effort and not as a product of communal attempts. Consequently the younger generation follows individual strategies to escape their social status, which hinders social activism since it calls for collective action. In addition, since the organisation is constituted of university students and employed persons their voluntary time input greatly constrains their gross social work. Anyway, this fact may also provoke a higher membership fluctuation than within different organisations. It keeps Yuva Bharat more flexible in changing to immediate issues and in adjusting their strategy to their issues.<sup>75</sup>

CRH is affected by missing manpower because their way of practise requires a long time horizon. They raise conscious awareness through interpersonal contact and direct approaches. Of course, one can assume that their work causes a similar dynamic like that of NSDF - people also start talking to each other and hence reproduce information – but referring to their work, less active people mean primarily less activated people.

Besides manpower another prominent resource may affect the work of the social activists, namely financial support/limitation. If organisations like Yuva Bharat are less dependent on money, this nevertheless sets limitations to their activities; the other way around, the work and the projects of organisations like CRH and NSDF are highly dependent on money. NSDF has to pay for architects, builders and constructors, mass mobilisation, and the like; and CRH has to pay for community workers to bring forward their ideals. Furthermore, networking on a level higher than city level is more expensive. Participation at international conferences, on the other hand, might be sponsored by external sources. Subsequently the success of those organisations shrinks and expands in proportion to their monetary resources.

Moreover, two additional housing policy agents may interfere with the grassroots organisations: political actors and the non-governmental institutions. “[O]n the one hand there are political parties, political forces, who [represent] various interests with the backing of the builders lobbies, or the World Bank policies. On the other hand there are NGOs who take up a stance, very much poor people’s stance, but in reality they follow the agenda the World Bank [is directing]. We are fighting on both sides. And trying to bring a larger picture how Mumbai belonging down to the masses, not

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<sup>74</sup> Interview with Dr. Metha; Professor of Sociology at University of Mumbai and member of CRH, Oct 10, 2007

<sup>75</sup> For example until the end of the year 2007 the organisation was active in preventing the demolition of Dama Nagar, a slum in the north of Mumbai. As the capabilities to prevent the demolition were exhausted, they refocused on Anti-SEZ movement.

to this elite.”<sup>76</sup> On the grassroots level one repeatedly hears about the struggle against these two actors and their top-down planning. The grassroots organisations claim that all the social activists are concerned with housing subjects, while the two other agents follow a rather self-interested agenda under the topic of fighting urban poverty. To state that more precisely, the grassroots organisations gave the following example: One heard of political actors who first gave the order to demolish a slum and then helped to rebuild it again to catch votes for the upcoming elections. Despite their negative attitude towards politicians and planners on the administrative level grassroots organisations see the necessity to cooperate, due to their weak position, and maybe to ally with political parties, the administration, NGOs or representatives of one of these groups, to get a backing for their work. NSDF seems to be the best example for this conflicting nature.

Let us switch now from the grassroots level to the NGO level.

## **7.2. Non-Governmental Organisations**

In India and particular in Mumbai there is a huge variety of NGOs dealing with housing problems. The administration and other stakeholders regarding housing policy are certainly and steadily recognising the role of NGOs. Especially their expertise is important for the national slum rehabilitation in India. In what follows we shall give examples of NGOs in Mumbai Metropolitan Area and discuss what makes the significant difference to grassroots-organisations that often work in the same field. Within the NGO landscape in Greater Mumbai one can find different organisational forms and ways of practise. Their founding impetuses as well as their world-views vary significantly. All of the examined NGOs follow the top-down approach, in contrast to the grassroots organisations, which are following a bottom-up approach as described above.

### **Organisational Structure**

The Bombay Urban Industrial League for Development (BUILD) is a charitable society, which is basically highlighting social issues from a Christian perspective. The organisation works in two administrative wards of the city and initiates People’s Ward Committees and forums to address the civic matters in the area. The organisation also facilitates these forums to submit the People’s Area Development Plan to the state authorities to incorporate them in the municipal development plans and allocate sufficient funds for that. BUILD initiated about 124 self help groups of women to attain economic empowerment and also facilitated many groups and individuals to start small entrepreneurship, to have tie-ups with banks or other financial institutions and government and municipal schemes. There are also similar children’s groups. The organisation is conducting training programmes, workshops, seminars and campaigns on wider concerns and issues. The majority of the staff lives in slums, as the Secretary General, Reverend Daniels told us: “My workers have not studied at the universities. They are slum dwellers, they are from the community. I picked them.”<sup>77</sup> The highest administrative level of BILD is the General Body. Its members come from three different churches: the Church of North India, the Roman-Catholic Church and the Methodist Church. Members of these churches are sent by the bishops to build the management staff. The general body appoints the chief responsibilities: the chief coordinators for the programmes, the lawyer, an accountant, and one external auditor. BUILD employs a linguist as well, because there are exceeding language problems between the slum dwellers and BUILD workers as well as with the administration bodies. Further employees are an administrative officer, secretarial support staff, a mediator, and support staff at very low level. The ground staff is

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with Dr. Metha; Professor of Sociology at University of Mumbai and member of CRH, Oct 1, 2007

<sup>77</sup> Interview with BUILD; Oct. 05, 2007

constituted by six employees. BUILD also runs an institute to support about 50 children with small scholarships. The institute sponsors school materials like books and schoolbags. Fifteen people are directly working for the secretary general George Daniels in charge of employment decisions.

Another organisation of Christian origin is the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS). CISRS employs representatives from different parts of Dharavi. To increase work efficiency they divided the whole quarter of Dharavi into five areas. Within these areas community representative elections are held, which subsequently establish four issue committees (Land and Housing Committee, Peace and Communal Harmony Committee, Women's committee and Basic Civic Amenities). The Executive Committee proposes the nominees (members, president and chairman) and adjoins all the representatives of the diverse communities.

Also the Slum Rehabilitation Society (SRS) has a Christian background. This non-governmental organisation was founded in 1972 by Adolf Tragler, an Austrian priest. He is still the director of the organisation. There are two deputy directors, three advisers and 32 social workers. Their work includes the facilitation of slum rehabilitation projects and the implementation of the resettlement and rehabilitation components of the various transportation and infrastructure projects of the MMRDA. SRS retains 15 full-time employees while the remnants work on contract basis. Like NSDF SRS establishes housing societies: "[...] We form cooperate housing societies with women. People, who collect some amount of money, [...] spend for water supply, electricity, and things like that. Then other things like care for the environment".<sup>78</sup> Housing societies, primarily managed by women, are initiated with the foundation of a rehabilitation colony. The societies acquire the input of SRS over public information centres in the colony. The Centres' staff members help to organise the housing society, ensure the democratic process in the colony, and assist the families with the building maintenance and everyday concerns. Furthermore, they alleviate legal issues and documents' verification. The colonies consist of a number of fenced-in multi-story buildings with an interior garden and playgrounds. At the same time colonies are commonly training-, workshop- and cultural event sites (we observed e.g. the celebration of the UN-Habitat Day). SRS workers are directly and actively involved in the processes, such as event preparation and realisation.

The terms of employment are market economical at SRS. Workers have to apply for the jobs in advance and receive payment: "We don't have a very strong volunteer base [...]. Initially you have to spent time with volunteers, take them along. We did try for many years."<sup>79</sup> Employees have the opportunity to attain a Master's degree in social work with the financial and technical support by SRS. If the workers do not want or cannot achieve the degree, they mutually have the possibility to graduate from a private professional course. Hence, most of the employees focus on social work.

## **The Emergence of Top-Down Organisations**

The catholic organisation BUILD was founded in 1973 as a part of the Urban Industrial Mission of the Church of North India (CNI), Mumbai Diocese. At that time Bombay's Bishop Arthur took the initiative and Reverend Dr. A. George Ninan (retired) was entrusted to set up the organisation and programmes. In 1975-77 BUILD organised 70,000 people of the Janatha Colony who were threatened by demolition of their dwellings. They achieved a collective bargain with the government to receive alternate land and support to build their dwellings. This was the largest successful action in the history of the organisation. BUILD initiated several socially active groups and organisations in Mumbai and all over India. The current programme enhances approximately 1,600 women to achieve economic independence from their spouses' income and local moneylenders. Many could realise better earnings through income generation programmes. The women's overall awareness noticeably increased, further encouraging to directly addressing their complaints and grievances to public authorities. Regarding his motivation to join BUILD, General Secretary George Daniel mentioned his crucial experience in a village near Mumbai. He realised

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<sup>78</sup> Interview with SRS; Oct. 04, 2007

<sup>79</sup> Interview with SRS; Oct 04, 2007

for the first time how a gradual change towards self-development became possible by uniting the village. A deep religious feeling of justice continually nourishing his hope mainly generates Reverend Daniels' motivation. The aspiration, which he shares with countless other social activists in Mumbai, is to give the slum dwellers a voice and rights.

CISRS started in 1952 as a research programme for the benefit of Christian Priest League for students to study, research and publish. In the late 1970s they began their social work with the Community Organisation Programme. The organisation also opened to other religions: "Now we are involved with the community, we have Muslims, Hindus. [...] The majority of them are Muslims. So it is a secular organisation."<sup>80</sup> Today CISRS is basically engaged in implementing their Social Action Programme, which began with ten trainees. An important pillar of their education was the participation of the community in the working process. Fundamental problems like the lack of drinking water and sanitation had been the most pressing issues in the years after 1970. An example shall illustrate the matter: Slum dwellers had to walk long distance to get water from very few taps, which actually were provided by the government but managed by some slum lords affiliated to political parties who sold the water to the slum dwellers. Since then the organisation started to organise communities in different parts of Dharavi, simultaneously training numerous community organisers. A land and housing committee was created to organise protest marches and rallies. In addition supply problems and especially the lack of freedom forced members and sympathisers of CISRS to fight for their rights.

SRS started its work on housing problems in one quarter of Mumbai, Bandra. Therefore, SRS was originally named "Bandra Improvement" Project. For Director Tragler it soon became obvious, that housing rehabilitation is the key to development. SRS had the vision to provide all people, including slum dwellers, solid shelter in stable buildings. "[...] When we realised that we needed to go into housing, slum rehabilitation was born. [...] In fact, that time it was only demolition or up-gradation. Facility was needed. You couldn't think of slum dwellers moving into buildings that were more middleclass and higher income conceptions."<sup>81</sup> The Slum Rehabilitation Society targets not only slum modifications to improve the living conditions but also endeavours a total change of the slum environment including health and educational services as well as water supply and sanitation.

## **Funding and Networking**

Usually BUILD designs projects with a clerical budget. Sometimes they do not use all their funds. BUILD is a constituent member of many networking groups on city level as well as in the national sphere and has initiated many networks to address wider political concerns. During the interview cooperation with numerous NGOs and the partial collaboration with SRS was mentioned. Furthermore, BUILD has supporters in the media.

CISRS is basically funded by German and Dutch organisations. Nevertheless, they have to struggle with financial problems, mainly caused by a change of leadership. CISRS is an accredited NGO of the UN Settlement Programme (UN HABITAT). Moreover, the organisation is closely linked to the NGO PROUD. Especially on the local level in Mumbai the Institute is closely associated with approximately 35 organisations working on housing and eviction as well as on communal harmony: "So we meet once in a week and discuss the issues and we don't represent the Institute. Of course on a city level we have seminars and workshops."<sup>82</sup> The local agent of CISRS emphasised that nowadays there are many NGOs working in Mumbai but only very few work on housing matters. He especially stressed the differences in ideology and the different approaches to work.

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with CISRS; Oct 04, 2007

<sup>81</sup> Interview with SRS; Oct 04, 2007

<sup>82</sup> Interview with CISRS, Oct 06, 2007

There is a close cooperation with the “People’s Responsible Organisation of United Dharavi” (PROUD) which is currently running 70 housing societies. PROUD describes itself as the largest basic democratic people’s organisation in Mumbai. During our field research a PROUD member represented CISRS in the Municipal Ward of Dharavi.

The Slum Rehabilitation Society follows the approach of self-financing of projects. Nevertheless, they cooperate with banks like HDFC and foreign funding organisations like NOVIB<sup>83</sup> from the Netherlands. Due to this principle the organisation does not suffer from high financial risk. The self-financing tactic even contains important psychological and idealistic aspects. The organisation does not spend a lot of money for itself, i.e. does not have travel costs: “[...] we are not an organisation that believes too much in formal funding. We take up projects that sustain themselves; [...] we don’t have over the head expenses, so the organisation is quite thrifty in its administrative expenses. [...] Philanthropists support our welfare activities. [...] And post rehabilitation is among the consultancy.”<sup>84</sup>

### Difficulties in the Field

A recurrent problem of NGOs working in slums is the temporary interference of politicians, for example during election campaigns. In vote competition the politicians dispatch own social workers into the slum who promise radical political changes. This is very exasperating for non-governmental social workers as they object bribing slum dwellers or community leaders to make them join their projects. Political parties as well as NGOs join community meetings to present their ideas and designs for rehabilitation programmes. But obviously it is common that political agents induce community leaders for their opinion. Reverend Daniels, for example, differentiates between two types of social workers, the bribable and the honest social workers. He compares social workers with the occupational group of priests, emphasising that susceptibility to corruption is not depending on the membership in a certain organisation but widely spread in India.

For CISRS it was easier in the past to mobilise people because the most pressing issues like lack of drinking water and evictions acutely threatened the livelihood of the slum dwellers. Nowadays participation in housing campaigns has decreased, as a lot of people are no more directly affected by evictions or other severely pressing housing problems. Furthermore, it is easier for CISRS to mobilise people in urban areas since they are not strongly identified with their community. CISRS is longing for comprehensive solutions and therefore faces the challenge to adjoin the existing religions in Mumbai to collectively tackle the problem of housing. The organisation recognised that cooperation is inevitable. Because CISRS succeeded in gathering people of different communities and religions to work on actual problems, they earned a lot of envy from political parties: “We have an issue solving process. We gather the community only to solve the issues. In other words, this is a way to divert the people, those who are thinking of the Hindus, Muslims and Christians and communalist issues. So just to divert the community into actual problems, the ones the people are facing. Now in the community we have Hindus, Muslims and Christians living together facing the same issues. So we can’t tackle as Christians. The problem cannot be solved as a Hindu, Muslim. All come together to solve the issues.”<sup>85</sup> For CISRS political and religious parties are the main opponents. The organisation harshly criticises the parties’ policy to promote their own interests or their religious and political agenda in the slums. CISRS accuses them to be undemocratic and self-interested, especially because not one of them pushes housing rights campaigns.

SRS describes itself as an organisation with relatively little importance in Mumbai, although it significantly changed Mumbai’s resettlement policy. As already described, the organisation

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<sup>83</sup> “Nederlandse Organisatie Voor Internationale Bijstand” (Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation), belonging to Oxfam since 1994 (Oxfam Novib).

<sup>84</sup> Interview with SRS; Oct 04, 2007

<sup>85</sup> Interview with CISRS; 06 Oct., 2007

considers community leaders as being bribed by the builders' lobby and politicians, which undermines opposition of the community and cooperation with SRS and instead promotes signatures of resettlement treaties with the builders, at the expense of the community (e.g. high maintaining costs in the new buildings which they do not overlook). "They are making money. [...] They [the builders] have private dealings with the community leaders".<sup>86</sup> Therefore, for SRS it is important to get the community leaders on their side, to obtain their trust and support for getting into close contact with the community. At the beginning of SRS' work in the field money for projects disappeared and a community group initially suspected the community leaders and then SRS of cheating the community. This event severely damaged the reputation of the organisation. During this project people also tried to spend more money than it was calculated. Mr Tragler also mentions that some of their cooperation partners lack the experience of coping with higher amounts of money. "A bad experience. Maybe we went too far in idealising, okay you become the developers in the full sense and we only assist you. And then you have a committee of people who like money, have never had it to that extent."<sup>87</sup> Thus, the organisation learned not to redirect the entire decision-making process to the beneficiaries. Actually, this leads to less participation of the slum dwellers – a vicious circle: "We think that whenever possible we want close participation of the community. But don't make them the bosses. 'Cause it's risky."<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, Tragler is fully aware of the risk that SRS workers can be easily involved in some illegal business with the builders' lobby. Another threat to SRS' fieldwork is the worker's affiliation to political representatives. The politicians are quite often the intermediaries between the builders' lobby and the community leaders. If SRS members become corrupt it is sometimes necessary to exclude them from the organisation, otherwise SRS risks its reputation: "We should function as an honest, reliable, reputable organisation. But we had some trouble one time. It is in the MMRD rehabilitation projects. [...] In one case the story was that staff had started making money, [...] we could never prove it. [...] Some of them [are] mixing too freely and too often with political fellows who are the mediators. [...] Staff could possibly be involved to some extent."<sup>89</sup>

### **7.3. Conclusion**

Most of the slum and squatter dwellers are hardly able to solve housing problems or sustainably improve their living situation on their own. This may have several reasons like fragmentation in slums, constant threat to be demolished, unconsciousness, or simply lack of time in everyday struggle for survival. As a consequence, people need support for improving their living conditions. NGOs and grassroots organisations provide this assistance. Both types are motivated very much alike by a strong feeling of injustice and awareness for the need of development. While in some cases these organisations are implemented from above by a higher organisational form, in other cases social activism emerges from within the slums as a result of pressure on the population. Also the style of decision may differ. In some cases organisations keep control of power, in other cases they consider themselves as organs of the voice of slum dwellers only.

Regardless of how membership is defined and which role members play in the organisation, the work of the organisation is highly dependent on the number of people and money available and the continuity of their physical and monetary contribution. Hiring field staff guarantees physical availability in the field at the expense of higher costs. Other organisations work with volunteers only, so that they can minimise their costs at the expense of limited availability. NGOs seem to be in an easier position concerning finance as they are mostly supported by higher institutions; in our case mostly Christian institutions. Some of them even reject volunteers, because they consider them more as a burden than a help and instead prefer more professionalism in social work.

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<sup>86</sup> Interview with SRS; 04 Oct., 2007

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.



Organisations just working on a voluntary basis seem to be more flexible in the short run, as they do not have to bind themselves to one topic. But in the long run they experience difficulties to plan longer projects or to secure the persistence of their organisation.

Mainly being influenced by their democratic approach, most grassroots organisations reject a hierarchical structure. The decision making process in grassroots organisations is either thematically dependent on larger committees (e.g. CRH) or democratic and collective (e.g. Yuva Bharat). In contrast, NGOs mostly have a hierarchical structure, which makes decision making also hierarchical. But as most NGOs are also in favour of participation of the poor, many promote democratic decision making in fields like self-help groups and committees. Theoretically this difference between both types of organisations seems to be reasonable, but in practise one can recognise that a non-hierarchical structure cannot be held by any grassroots organisation in the longer run. This is obviously not intended, but may occur over time due to different engagement, knowledge or intellect of the organisational members.

The different approaches do not necessarily influence the adaptation of a certain strategy or the choice of a certain instrument, but they very much seem to influence the understanding of independence. While grassroots organisations aim at a complete independence from external factors, NGOs pursue independence from governmental and political interference. Especially in terms of funding, grassroots organisations attach utmost importance to independently finance their work, which in many cases makes funding insecure. But as seen in the case of NSDF also grassroots organisations are very capable to secure the finance of big housing projects, without being dependent on external financiers. In contrast NGOs may find various sources for external funding. Especially NGOs with religious background may find it relatively easy to get regular funding from their religious roof organisations or donors from within their religious commune, although some of them also recently experienced a drying-up of finance.

Each type of organisation faces other difficulties in its daily work. It is not only segregation, communalism and passiveness within the slums, which is hindering a collective action of the people but also the partly corrupt housing industry, political actors and even community leaders or social workers that try to take personal benefits from the land scarcity and severe housing situation in Mumbai, as well as from the vulnerability of slum dwellers. Social activists, community leaders and field staff are bribed to smoothen building processes and hinder organisations to slow down such processes by fighting for slum-dwellers' rights. But the most challenging difficulty probably remains the complexity of the situation. The legal situation is very complicated and leaves open grey zones where justice can be wrapped. Also the quantity of the problem is tremendous. Having between six and nine million people living in the slums of Central Mumbai the number of social activists concerned about the disastrous living situation in slums is like a drop in the ocean.<sup>90</sup>

Trying to widen their outreach, many social organisations arrange in networks and build alliances. Every organisation investigated, whether NGO or grassroots, was somehow connected to another organisation if not several ones. Especially the grassroots organisations prefer similar organisations for cooperation and networking, but even if being sceptical towards political parties and larger NGOs, many concede the necessity for cooperation with them once they aim at recognisable change. Unfortunately the positive impact of networks does not widen proportionally with the size. The example of CRH shows that networks stop working efficiently without proper coordination and maintenance. Sometimes hierarchies might be the better solution for coordinating cooperation between different organisations. This would resemble hierarchal approach. Thus it remains questionable if grassroots organisations organise under such guidance. NSDF as a grassroots organisation building an alliance with the NGOs SPARC and Mahila Milan remains the most impressive example for cross-organisational cooperation as well as division of labour within a network. The expertise of NGOs is in growing demand for pro-poor development plans. NGOs are welcomed consultants or negotiating partners for public and private housing projects. Grassroots organisations, on the other hand, can be the connection to the poor as they mostly consist of slum

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<sup>90</sup> Homepage: Official Website of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai: [www.mcgm.gov.in](http://www.mcgm.gov.in); accessed November, 18<sup>th</sup> 2008

dwellers and therefore are recognised as more trustworthy than NGOs with often middle-class academic staff. Complementing each other, NGOs can lobby political actors for policies in favour of the poor and guarantee the design of housing programmes that meet the needs of the poor; and grassroots organisations provide expert knowledge from their daily experiences and can function as mediators to get the much-needed support of the slum dwellers for implementing these programmes. NSDF and SPARC exported their concept to many Indian cities and beyond India's borders.

Having taken a closer look at these obviously different organisational types, it seems that by following the same aim - the sustainable improvement of the living conditions of Mumbai's poor - the analytical differences become factually blurred, underlining the similarities a common goal can provoke.

## 8. The Worldview of the Social Activists

*“Bombay is more or less a mother of all cities, it's a dream city, and no one starves in there, that's the truth. You earn five rupees only for a day? You will buy food for five rupees only. Everything is possible in Bombay, but it takes time, it takes struggle.”* (Rev. Daniels, BUILD)

Adjoining different people and interests in order to convey social change is not a simple task. Initial ideologies and worldviews may notably differ. In the following chapter, we will have a closer look at the worldviews of social activists in the field of housing. We will particularly stress on strategies to unite people, difficulties arising from external factors and the current economic system, the question of outreach and impact on social change, and the problem of the “NGOnisation” of social activism.

### 8.1. Uniting people

Many of the interviewed social activists and NGOs<sup>91</sup> complain that urban policy in Mumbai is merely constituted for the better-off minority occupying most of the urban space. However, Mumbai greatly depends on the slum dwellers' labour because they are often performing unalluring tasks at the margins of society. Instead of valuing this fact, the middle-class feels disturbed by the slum and pavement dwellers because of their precarious living circumstances, particularly when they are living close by. Therefore urban policy of slum demolitions and resettlement in far distant places at the outskirts of the city is supported by the upper and upper middle classes. A Yuva Bharat activist was guttered that Mumbai stopped belonging to its people a long time ago; now it affiliates purely to the elites and foreign investors, because the government has “cleared” the city centre and even the larger city off the poor. He added that the government even evicts the native fishermen, the Kolis who had originally settled on the islands now constituting the peninsula of Mumbai. The Kolis are relocated to offshore vicinities and thus deprived of their subsistence occupation. These resettlement and eviction conditions destroy the lives of many poor people and dismember India as such. It seems equivocal and unethical to devolve the land to someone else than its indigenous inhabitants.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> The following two chapters and opinions are mostly based on various conversations with Dr. Metha and Yuva Bharat.

<sup>92</sup> In this context the tendency of romanticising the “original lifestyle” of one's ancestors and the term “natives” should be considered; however, from the point of view of the collective memory, taking into account this tendency should not affect the credibility of the narrative, but eventually question the correctness of the given information.

Why then do people accept these circumstances and keep quiet at all? Dr. Metha, professor of sociology, remarks that people are rather concerned with improving their own life situation rather than engaging in communal issues. Yet, the only solution to the nuisances is to convoke all available forces to achieve any societal or policy transformation. Hence Metha and also the Yuva Bharat members consider unionisation the best strategy to meet this alteration. Lacking the preconditions to unionise the proximate aim is to mobilise people through awareness making and consciousness building. Emancipatory movements should not detach but unite their forces and fight together. Nonetheless, the dilemma of trade unions, however, is that they are the spokespersons of the labourers' class belonging to the formal sector whereas they could organise and mobilise people beyond such class concerns. Indeed, there are attempts in India to unionise hawkers from the informal sector, and there are voices aiming at unionising slum dwellers as well.

According to Metha, politics, economy and social life cannot be separated from each other, because they are interconnected. Anti-poor-policy evolved precisely during the 1980s and early 1990s as a result of an increasingly neoliberal phase, in which Mumbai was in a process of de-industrialisation but emerged as a business and financial centre. From Dr. Metha's point of view, India has not yet learned the logic of forming integrated coalition movements, which has been well done in Europe during the last 10 to 15 years. Therefore a collaboration of labour unions, trade, slum dwellers', student, and youth organisations has to occur in the future. However, it is not apparent whether Metha describes a slowly starting process or desire.

Likewise, the National Slum Dwellers' Federation considers the people to be the central actors in this context: "People's power! The philosophy is people's power. It is for the people, of the people, by the people, from the people. That is our philosophy."<sup>93</sup> However, unlike Metha they suppose that the struggle of Dharavi has to be fought on non-political grounds and therefore refuse the involvement of political parties in the whole process. CISRS sees the strength of the poor in civil disobedience: protesting in a peaceful way is crucial for reaching one's goals.

## **8.2. External and Economic Factors**

Dr. Metha considers "modernisation" to be today's overall key component for justifying a broad number of means. Therefore analysing the term as such and asking whether there is a need for modernisation, is crucial to grasp its contemporary global context. This context is dominated by the conception of modernisation, which regards economic growth and prosperity as the desired "development" and thereby impedes other concepts (such as qualitative growth) from gaining importance. Metha doubts that merely economical virtues can be valued as progressive.

Generally, the Structural Adjustment Policy towards a free market and the subsequent process of privatisation and deregulation are considered to be among the most striking problems of Mumbai's poorer inhabitants by many of our interviewees. According to BUILD, nowadays people increasingly focus on personal prosperity instead of sharing empathy with their neighbours. They lack a collective awareness of their intersected living conditions. Adolf Tragler affirms that today's distribution of ownership in Mumbai still parallels colonial times<sup>94</sup>. Similarly, Dr. Metha denies international consulting firms the comprehension of the real circumstances in Mumbai and criticises their overestimation and outside interference. Moreover, exterior ventures do frequently not assume an obligation towards India if their commercial projects fail.

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<sup>93</sup> Interview with NSDF, Oct 10, 2007

<sup>94</sup> Interview with SRS, Oct 4, 2007

### **8.3. Yuva Bharat and the “NGOnisation” of Social Activism**

This aspect punctuates the fundamental rejection of the common top-down approach by the grassroots organisations, clearly demonstrated by Yuva Bharat. The question can be put as follows: Does the NGOnisation of social struggles eradicate social activism as such? Yuva Bharat’s position is clear: NGOs do not perform any effective change in the social struggle. According to them, there are two kinds of NGOs: those that make noise, and those that do not. Those that make noise spend their energy on organising conferences and workshops, they invite people from foreign countries, but they do not thoroughly enter the issue at stake. They mainly oppose “active” activism. They aim at “empowering” the poor; yet it must be scrutinised whether they really reach them. In Yuva Bharat’s opinion, NGO activists never fight whole-heartedly due to their cooperation with the public sector and the money involved in resettlement projects. Once a project starts, NGOs do not actively oppose; they are not genuinely involved in the struggle. Their action is more symbolic. Consequently, NGOs become anti-people in the eyes of Yuva Bharat: they may believe to essentially improve a social injustice but they only carry out projects according to arbitrary and hierarchical criteria which gradually modify their main focus. At the end they intentionally or involuntarily misguide people.

On the other hand, there seems to be a certain evolution from grassroots organisations to NGOs. Yuva Bharat also criticises that all contemporary important social issues like education, equality, women’s rights etc., have been hijacked by NGOs. They object the last resort of choice of employment for social workers entering NGOs in order to earn their living. Even more so, they reflect this to be the first step to corruption and loss of accountability. One grassroots activist criticises an opportunistic behaviour of some NGO activists: “...for him, the first step would be to go to the mafia, then to political parties, and if one does not want to do so, he or she could go to work in an NGO, since NGO work gives you a sophisticated job, a powerful life, and a good conscience, in short: working in an NGO means status.” Moreover, NGO activists are often related to political parties; this further lowers their prestige in the eyes of Yuva Bharat<sup>95</sup>.

## **9. Assessment of Slum Policies**

While in the first chapters we gave a review of official slum policy, the following chapter shall outline the assessment of this policy by the interviewed grassroots organisations and NGOs. During our interviews relatively little statements referred to historical aspects of slum policy, but recent measures were all the more discussed. Thereby, the distinction of the respective actions taken by the administration, by political parties and by the builder’s lobby was conjointly made by most interviewees. Yet, with view to bandwidth of the organisations and NGOs, it should not surprise that the opinions on more specific questions like the preventability of demolitions or the concept of rehabilitation as such are much different.

### **9.1. Housing Policy during the 1980s and 1990s**

In the 1980’s, as a result of the slum dwellers’ struggles for the improvement of their situation, the central and state governments as well as city administration came up with various schemes, which defused the situation and gave some amenities to the people (e.g. water taps and toilets; for further information please consider the Chapter “Housing Policy towards Slum Dwellers”). Under Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, one billion Rupees were provided for the improvement of Mumbai’s slums, out of them 370 million rupees only for the area of Dharavi. Thanks to this money, many things in Dharavi and other slums were ameliorated: roads and infrastructure, sewage, new construction of buildings, and community development projects, as to name only a few of the taken measures. When the Shiv Sena came to power in 1995, the Free Housing Scheme was set up in

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<sup>95</sup> E.g. they consider that Mukesh Metha sold India’s power to the World Bank.

order to subsidise the slum through giving an additional Floor Space Index (FSI)<sup>96</sup>. “In 1990 again the government changed, the other party came into power, Shiv Sena. They announced the popular scheme, the Free Housing Scheme. The existing people had to be rehabilitated by subsidising the slum, giving benefit, extra FSI, to the builder, a corporative housing society who ever developed the land with an additional FSI.”<sup>97</sup> However, during this time of planning and projecting, in many cases the rehabilitation construction was neither of good quality, nor was it completed due to a lack of finance<sup>98</sup>. Only a small proportion of announced houses were built during this period. Moreover, in most cases this scheme did not take the interior areas of the slums into account, where things hardly improved at all.

From 1990 onward there was a shift in Indian policy from rather communal-based policy towards more market-orientated decisions. The situation in the slums became increasingly difficult: slums were divided into pockets, government started evicting people, and the dwellers were told that they had no right to stay on the place where they had been living up to then. Likewise, at that time the government ceased to provide welfare measures and low-cost-housing. As a result, from the beginning of the 1990s onward human rights were even more violated than during the 1980s, leading to the collapse of rehabilitation concepts.

## **9.2. Recent Slum Policy**

It is difficult to distinguish the term “government” as used by NGO representatives and social activists during the interviews. Hence the terms “government” and “official authorities” will be used interchangeably when referring to the local government of Maharashtra, the Mumbai city authorities or governing politicians at the municipal level.

## **Governmental Measures**

BUILD characterises the new Slum Rehabilitation Scheme as “horrible”, “poisonous”, and “senseless”, since it destroys the old slum structure offering too little living and working space for the inhabitants in return. Besides, they complain that real estate agents enrich themselves through the constructions while the slum dwellers are predominantly pushed out of the city centre. BUILD claims people should be rehabilitated in close proximity to their slum huts. As the administrative bodies neglect the slum dwellers requirements, BUILD argues that the governmental slum rehabilitation concept failed in Mumbai.

Unlike BUILD, CISRS characterises the recent rehabilitation plans as more comprehensive and argues in favour of the slum rehabilitation concept. According to them, current plans include concrete buildings and guaranteed free maintenance of electricity, water, lift, wall painting and so on. At the community level, education and health centres, a post office, a police station, playgrounds and other basic amenities are to be built. Apart from this, public education programmes will be set up to develop the local industries improving people’s earnings and increasing productivity. Yet, one of CISRS’ main demands to the government is to design the rehabilitation policy so that people can maintain their current occupations even without official license. As already mentioned above, many people are working in the informal sector, many of them producing goods and food in their homes not holding an official working license. They need adequate space in order to maintain their home-production activities. For example, the ground floors of rehabilitated houses mostly offer such additional working space and are therefore highly popular. However, ground floor apartments are limited in number and meant to be reserved for

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<sup>96</sup> For explanation of FSI, see footnote number 28

<sup>97</sup> Interview with CISRS; Oct 6, 2007; the Free Housing Scheme is an informal term for the Slum Rehabilitation Scheme.

<sup>98</sup> Also see Bhowmik, S. K. (2004) “Politics of Urban Space in Mumbai: 'Citizens' Versus the Urban Poor”. Working Paper No. 27 p.10, Magdeburg: ISOZ.

licensed producers. Yet, because of nepotism licensed producers may not necessarily receive the promised ground floor apartments but rather people who can afford bribes. An alternative construction model would be to construct the whole building with additional working space, for example bigger corridors or accessible rooftops.

Polluting industries like tanning shall be shifted to Govandi, far west of Dharavi, where they are officially banned. CISRS demands to permit the prohibited polluting industries in Dharavi because they are a vital income source for many slum dwellers. Already it seems that small industries and shops will be wholly rehabilitated. Generally speaking, CISRS does not reject the idea of slum rehabilitation; they consider themselves as a mediator between slum dwellers and government giving the slum dwellers a voice. They collect people's claims and present them to the government to protect people from administrative arbitrariness, e.g. through drawing the attention on the economic consequences of slum rehabilitation for resettled people.

Various social organisations help affected people to get qualified for alternative housing. Yet the qualifications may not be a guaranty to be resettled even for those who qualify according to the key date regulation. For example, in Dama Nagar middle-class residential blocks shall be extended into the existent slum. In December 2007 thousands of families who had qualified for resettlement should have been resettled before slum demolition, but the authorities claim that they do not have sufficient space in social housing blocks, thus leaving the demolished inhabitants of both categories homeless.

Land scarcity in Mumbai is a dilemma for urban planning designs. Nevertheless, the city administration promotes commercial and recreation areas for the upper middle and upper classes instead of implementing rehabilitation and resettlement areas.

Another problem that we already addressed is the practice of hut-resettlement: one hutment is replaced by a 225 square feet flat without consideration of the number of people or families living in the hut, or the size of the hut, respectively. Furthermore, this rehabilitation scheme does not recognise former claims of slum dwellers on communal land when this land is sold to private owners by the city or state authorities.<sup>99</sup>

The National Slum Dweller's Federation (NSDF) believes that if slum dwellers aim at being considered at all, they have to adjust to administrative decisions. The Federation's director A. Jockin deems continuous demolitions "a cancer in the society" that the affected people will resist. NSDF tries to improve the dwellers' situation by negotiating with the government. Currently, they debate with the administration officials to create a space for all the newly arrived migrants at the periphery of Mumbai. Integration is vital, but migrants can and should also contribute to getting acceptable living conditions. Hence, NSDF declares that all the slum dwellers should pay for accommodation: "If accommodation is free, it is too easy, nothing happens". In this respect, NSDF disagrees with the governmental policy of complimentary rehabilitation, because people might not value the proper accommodations.

Unlike the majority of the social activists we met, SRS agrees with the governmental rehabilitation scheme, which they had designed and implemented, as well as with Mukesh Metha's plan to rehabilitate Dharavi slum. However, they doubt that this is possible without the involvement of NGOs. They believe that the idea of moving into multi-storey buildings roots in Mumbai's land scarcity. People have to move vertically, but they doubt that people can pay the maintenance costs after rehabilitation. Moreover, rehabilitation is exercised in small units (e.g. slum pockets) discriminating interior parts located farther from the slum main roads as well as at the periphery of the slum. Instead, they promote upgrading of the whole slum structure, because people need new environments to change their ways of life and attitudes. Instead of improving, most slums deteriorate over time because of increasing migration and expansion influxes. Thus, they agree

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<sup>99</sup> E.g. after the privatisation of the airport, the government changed its policy towards the airport dwellers, since now the land technically belonged to the private airport authority and they claimed to need it for their purposes. So since the land was sold, the people whose residency had been recognised before are no longer protected by governmental recognition.

like NSDF that accommodation should not be provided free of charge. They again stress that the situation in Mumbai is particularly tense because of natural land scarcity. In such a context it appears exceptionally dramatic that the governmental Slum Development Plan is only revised every 20 years.<sup>100</sup>

Socially active slum inhabitants generally show an exceptionally critical attitude towards administrative slum planning measures. They claim that official authorities try to divide people by invading their homes to collect signatures without explanation. The signatures effectively express consent to Mukesh Metha's rehabilitation plan. For the same reason, as not to scare off their potential electorate, there are currently no evictions of illegal slum pockets taking place in Dharavi. Likewise, they criticise that the Prime Minister visited Dharavi several times announcing the prompt implementation of the Redevelopment Plan without respecting the residents' opinion. They also challenge the sustainability of the World Bank's 70 billion Rupees fund for slum development. Another evidence for the governmental strategy to segregate Dharavi's population is the exclusion of the Koli community from rehabilitation, the original settlers in Dharavi. People argue that this and other measures are directed to destroy Dharavi as a community; people who benefit from resettlement/upgrading might support the administrative measures, which breaks joint resistance likewise the cut-off date regulation which decides who is legal and illegal. "Legal" and "illegal" families jointly reside in Dharavi and other slums, and this ascribed distinct status creates different social positions and therefore dissent. Those who are selected for rehabilitation experience corruption during flat allocation, deficiency of new living space, and often financial problems with maintenance costs. Moreover, the municipality's failure to satisfy promises creates substantial scepticism in administrative measures. One activist stated that the government provides a number of amenities until the elections (water taps, electricity, voting cards etc.), but afterwards the slum dwellers are denied residency on the very same land or offered any other support. Therefore, slum dwellers are hesitant to trust the municipality or state authorities, often even NGOs, as many of them cooperate with the former and are considered to provide rehabilitation agencies rather than taking people's stance.

## Political Parties

Political parties were also widely criticised for a number of reasons by our interview partners in terms of their integrity, truthfulness and objective intents. Political parties are accused of first "bribing" slum dwellers with promises of improvements to get their votes and, once they won the election, aiming at pushing them off the land. Hence, politicians appear to have a strategy of misguidance. Also it is very difficult for the slum dwellers to get voice in the public since "newspapers (...) are connected to politicians and political parties"<sup>101</sup>. Likewise, political parties such as the BJP and Shiv Sena often enough bribe social activists and other important key figures in the slums to undermine their resistance or, the other way around, support resistance to the Mukesh Metha plan in order to mobilise people against the Congress Party<sup>102</sup>. After the elections, however, hardly any concrete improvement is effectuated and demolitions continue; consequently, the electorate "punishes" the governing party in the next elections.<sup>103</sup> From this perspective, it may be understandable why Yuva Bharat activists, who originate from precarious slum conditions and

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<sup>100</sup> The generational argument implies a new generation every 20 years. While the population index increases the land expansion stagnates. This may serve as an explanation why so many plans and projects become non-implementable and solely remain on paper.

<sup>101</sup> Interview in Dama Nagar; 02.10.2007

<sup>102</sup> Interview in Dharavi, Pramila's Home, Oct 04, 2007

<sup>103</sup> In Dharavi, for example, slum dwellers voted for Shiv Sena after some members of the Congress Party had enriched themselves from an emergency assistance fund in 2005.

directly suffer from eviction, consider the policy makers' promises as tools to restrain the slum inhabitants.<sup>104</sup>

## **The Builder's Lobby**

Social activists claim that politicians and the builder's lobby work hand in hand and cooperate in rehabilitation matters. Disregarding the specific organisational background, the interviewees share the common feeling of the builder's lobby being too powerful and profit-orientated. The situation is quite obvious: depending on the geographical location slum space has become extremely valuable. Dharavi is such an example, which – once at the outskirts of the city built on dump land consistently having been dried up – is now next to extremely costly office space (Bandra-Kurla Complex) still in the larger city centre. As Mumbai's importance as a commercial centre is still growing, slums are threatened by commercial and private interests to extend office space and upper-class residential areas. Of course, the builders take benefits from such developments. The other way around, the public authorities also need the builders for the construction of social housing. However, here profits are much smaller. Therefore the builder's lobby imposes pressure on the city and state authorities to sell the land for commercial and tourist purposes.<sup>105</sup> As we already discussed the public authorities even permit the builders to sell a certain share of social apartments in the private market to make them cooperate. But as a matter of fact, middle-class people consider slum dwellers to be dirty and noisy, not willing to live with them next door. Therefore, real estate prices for such flats in rehabilitation buildings to be sold in the market cannot be priced according to usual market rates. Therefore builders aim at separate buildings for private / commercial and rehabilitation use.

Another severe problem is the limited space for social apartments provided by the rehabilitation schemes. This is caused by land scarcity in Mumbai and by governmental rehabilitation plans developed in cooperation with the builder's lobby. Alternative plans (e.g. NGO-developed) are hardly discussed by the authorities, but certain cooperative societies were nevertheless successful to adapt the houses to the requirements of the dwellers, e.g. in terms of community activities, living and working space, etc. (see Appendix 2, Internet-version).

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<sup>104</sup> Of course this picture of corrupt and self-interested politicians and political parties in this case appears quite one-sided. There are also politicians willing to improve the living conditions in slums and supporting the dwellers struggle towards that goal.

<sup>105</sup> Interview with SRS on Oct 05, 2007



### **9.3. Recent Developments**

#### **General Reflections and Tendencies**

When we try to assess the recent slum policy development from the perspectives of slum dwellers and social activists the opinions of our respondents vary. There are organisations like SRS favouring slum rehabilitation and partially cooperating with the administrative bodies. Other organisations, like BUILD, regard official slum rehabilitation concepts as failed but nevertheless acknowledge the success of SRS. Moreover, Yuva Bharat contemplates all governmental measures as appeasement strategies to avert communal riots and civil disobedience.

All of the interviewees criticised the arbitrariness and hypocrisy of the official authorities, political parties and the builder's lobby. Despite promising and conceding better living conditions they continue destroying residencies and deprive people of their basic needs. Slum dwellers indeed seem to believe that they have no other option than reckoning with demolition or resettlement, depending on their legal status. However, people can collectively resist such measures by insisting on their fundamental and legal rights to housing<sup>106</sup> and by adopting different, more offensive collective strategies as e.g. the National Slum Dwellers Federation proposes: in order to strengthen the joint feeling among the slum dwellers community should feel as part of society and city of Mumbai rather than having the perception of being excluded. They argue that slum dwellers will always keep on fighting against demolitions - and that "we will find a way..."<sup>107</sup>

#### **Preventability of Demolitions**

Concerning the question of prevention of and dealing with demolitions, information diverges a lot. CISRS, for example, tries to coordinate the community leaders to have emergency meetings in case that urgent action is required. They also directly mobilise people for demonstrations, although one NGO representative stated that nowadays people comparably rarely become socially active because personal desperation and apathy have increased.<sup>108</sup> In contrast, SRS hardly ever joins demolition areas to directly start social activism since they do not consider it to be an auspicious strategy. Yet, the knowledge about imminent demolitions is of greatest magnitude. Some of the interviewees mentioned it is virtually impossible to foresee a demolition, whereas others stated that such are predictable, due to gossip<sup>109</sup>. In any case, the authorities often do not inform people in advance; this regularly makes a quick rescuing of one's personal property impossible. Dr. Metha affirms that certainly people do not officially know about demolitions, nonetheless reassures the existence of informal channels. We assume from our interviews taken that there is no generally applicable strategy to effectively prevent demolitions yet.

#### **Assessing Rehabilitation**

There is no consistent perception about rehabilitation as such. Most interviewed organisations notice that unadapted rehabilitation processes annihilate people's businesses and dissolve people's social capital hidden in the social structure of slum communities. We already addressed that the rehabilitation practice "one hutment – one apartment of 225 square feet" neither considers the number of people nor such cases where several families share one hutment; then only one of them will be considered for rehabilitation.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> E.g. according to Dr. Metha housing is not yet considered a fundamental right in India, cf. Interview Dr. Metha; Oct 10, 2007

<sup>107</sup> Interview with NSDF; Oct 10, 2007

<sup>108</sup> Interview with BUILD; Oct 5, 2007

<sup>109</sup> "One can smell it", our interviewee argued; Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> This information was given during various interviews.

Another central point of disagreement is that the alternative rehabilitation ideas modelled by social activists and NGO representatives hardly have any chance to be taken into account at all. This stipulates frustration among the social activists and dwellers, as the dwellers are required to pay for their resettlement and housing maintenance, although very often they consider this type of housing as inappropriate for their purposes and since these resettlement colonies are too often located in far-off areas. Moreover, since some of the communities within a slum are excluded from rehabilitation (e.g. the Koli and the potter communities in Dharavi), dissent between these communities / castes is even more reinforced. The majority of our interview partners approves rehabilitation practices but on the contrary questions the administrative application procedures. CISRS characterises the recent measures as more adequate and supports the idea of comprehensive community programmes in order to improve the situation. Several of their members live in successful examples of rehabilitated areas. While SRS believes that the whole slum structure should be modified to sustainably improve the living conditions of the urban poor, they rehabilitate smaller slum pockets through feasible housing programmes in the mean time. Yuva Bharat, on the contrary, fundamentally disagrees with the idea of rehabilitation since it only serves to lead people on and meanwhile increases the builder's lobby's benefits.

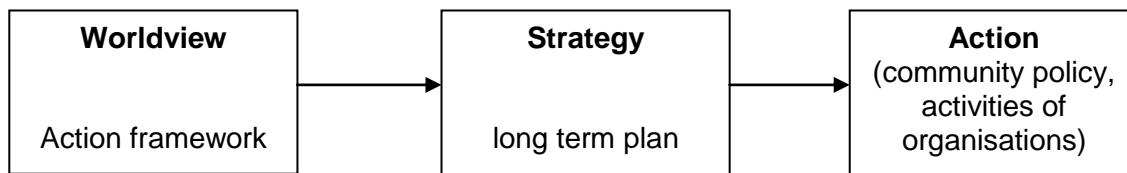
## **10. Analysis of Activities**

The following part deals with measures and activities conducted by the organisations interviewed in the field of housing and protest against public slum policy. The first part gives a short introduction to the geographical focus of their work and the underlying thoughts and assumptions behind the concrete activities; the second part examines, which organisation concentrates on which kind of actions. In general, we distinguish measures according to the addressed actors. While some agents function as intermediaries to the administration giving advice on housing issues or negotiating with the administration on behalf of the slum dwellers' interests, other agents directly focus on the slum dwellers by giving them advice in legal and other questions, providing them support or aiming capacity building among slum dwellers. Research on housing issues is somewhere in between both approaches. One crucial point to be addressed is the issue of mobilisation of slum dwellers and their participation in social movements or organisations, as well as networking between organisations in the field. The organisational approach towards the slum dwellers is of great importance. This issue will be referred to by the term community policy.

From a geographical stance the scope of the organisations has often widened over the years but the paths to their today's field of action seem to be different. BUILD and SRS started with and still focus on the Mumbai Metropolitan Area. Other organisations such as NSDF or CISRS act as umbrella organisations with cooperation on the regional, national and international levels. Even at the time of their foundation CISRS, CRH and NSDF were not exclusively an outcome of the situation in Mumbai, as their members came from all over India. To sum up, organisations emanating from different places nowadays often seem to have a broader geographical field of action and tend to be a part of or even the roof of a widespread network.

### **10.1. Strategies and Approach**

"Strategy" shall be defined as a planned long-term action designed to achieve certain aims by applying means in a suitable manner. Strategies usually refer to subordinate aims under a broader aim. In order to locate the term strategy in our analytical framework a small model shall be introduced. The broader aim shall be described as "worldview" of an organisation and its members respectively – a common understanding of a better society in terms of freedom, equ(al)ity, and justice. We assume that worldview – manifested in a general attitude towards human rights and moral values – comprises the framework for designing strategies as well as on concrete activities in everyday life.



Comparing the strategies pursued by NGOs as well as grassroots organisations one can find different points of reference. On the one end of the continuum there are organisations like NSDF and SRS having a quite elaborate strategy in mind, and on the other end we find CRH striving for concrete aims by means of their work. In between there are organisations and movements pursuing less elaborate strategies, aiming at unspecific, abstract categories like increasing awareness or mobilising people. In some cases, strategies cannot be identified at all. It seems that some organisations appear to react towards particular injustices like prospected slum demolitions.

SRS for example reveals a typical dilemma, faced by organisations working on complex social problems. In some respects the approach of SRS, in the interview represented by its founder, could be described as somewhat contradictory. In general SRS prefers new planning of houses in resettlement areas to in situ rebuilding<sup>111</sup> and considers issues on a whole-city-level. On the one hand SRS is striving for permanent solutions capable to change the whole environment; on the other hand SRS acknowledges that “redevelopment is presently the only solution they can get”<sup>112</sup>. Maybe this could be interpreted as a rather pragmatic view, which realises the necessity to change policy but restricts practical work to feasible measures. Nevertheless, there is no doubt in the belief in the rehabilitation strategy as such.

Furthermore SRS distinguishes between ideal forms of work, self-development, and work it is actually doing. The interview shows that the primary strategy had changed after unpleasant experiences in the past. Nowadays their strategy is finding the balance between closeness to the community and keeping decision making among the organisation<sup>113</sup>. These assertions may lead to a certain type of organisational strategy based on a lot of practical experience in the field, but characterised by a change from an idealistic attitude of self-development to a more pragmatic top-down approach.

In contrast to the scepticism towards the slum dwellers’ capacity expressed by SRS NSDF belongs to such type of NGOs having absolute trust in the self-help-potential of poor people in general and slum dwellers in particular. “The philosophy is people’s power! It’s for the people, of the people and by the people”, the NSDF president states. According to NSDF similar problems that all slum dwellers have to cope with create a mutual basis for activity. Here lies the basic idea of NSDF. The depreciative attitude towards trainings expresses the unconditional trust in the capacities and the self-help-potential of slum dwellers. That is the reason why, according to NSDF, solutions for housing problems shall be found in the community itself, but not necessarily on the administrative level. From this worldview follows NSDF’s self-perception as a catalyst because the resources for solving the problem are immanent to the life-world of the slum dwellers. Especially women are seen as the key in the philosophy. NSDF harks back to a quite elaborated theory of development, based on three basic pillars, which are each connected to women. Information, money and communication are the essentials for development, and they can best be handled by women. NSDF clearly ascribes its success since the mid 1980s to the recognition of these three factors and

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<sup>111</sup> “In situ rebuilding” denotes rehabilitation measures on the same location, e.g. the slum. For example, a certain number of slum huts are broken down and a new apartment block is built on that land, the neighbouring legal slum dwellers being moved into the new apartment block, and so on.

<sup>112</sup> Interview with SRS; Oct 04, 2007

<sup>113</sup> “Don’t make them the bosses”, Ibid.

their relatedness to gender. At the same time their relationship towards knowledge and information is very special. They dissociate from academic or scientific categories and go back to handling of information through common sense. The implications of this approach will be scrutinised later.

Similar to NSDF BUILD relies on the self-organising potential of women. Both organisations share their strong belief in inborn capabilities of women, which again leads to an approach based on the idea of self-help.

Acting as an umbrella organisation, CISRS bands together a great variety of initiatives focussing on residential people, a pronounced culture of meetings and discussions. This organisation assumes that this is like a natural process for people.

What unites all the organisations mentioned above is the existence of a specific principle they stick to, either the conviction of female participation, the inborn-qualities of slum-dwellers or a distinctive organisational culture constitute the pillars of their work.

By contrast CRH as well as Yuva Bharat represent a type of organisation lacking this kind of specified approach mentioned in favour of a rather responsive approach. What bands the members of Yuva Bharat together is the aim to encounter problems arising from the caste or class system by awareness building of the slum dwellers rights. As mentioned above members are free to choose their field of action, which might be the reason for the lack of group specific targets. Briefly, Yuva Bharat's method could be labelled as fomenting, which is expressed by discussion rounds, forums and oral meetings they organise and participate in.

While the other organisations exclusively focus on the urban context, CRH has expanded its focus to the rural areas as well demonstrating their broader approach. In the field they pursue a long-term strategy based on getting familiar with the people in order to create basic trust in the work of CRH. Time plays an important role in this process. CRH is also one of the few organisations stating concrete objectives, like the prevention of the airport privatisation and the consequences for adjacent slums. But in spite of detailed targets and projects actions remain on the vague level of raising awareness. As mentioned above, a belief in the self-dynamics of the people affected can be encountered.

Moving one step ahead in the model provided, it can be examined how the interview partners describe their activities in the community. Generally community development aims at establishing functional structures in the community, e.g. self-help groups, savings groups, cooperative housing societies, etc. As these functional structures so far do not exist, they have to be implemented from by slum development programs or by social activists. We shall call this process of organisation building a "structuring" process. How far does this structuring build upon existing "older" structures found within the slums?

Most organisations prefer a strong pre-structured setting for their work. Such existing structures in slums are e.g. neighbourhoods, which usually do not only express geographical but also social proximity, because neighbours usually originate from the same place, ethnic group and religious background. CISRS, for example, builds upon given structures of chawl committees when implementing housing cooperatives. "Chawl committees means a group of people who come from the same village, same background, they get settled. So later on for the sake of housing we organised three, four chawl committees into cooperative housing societies."<sup>114</sup>

How can we characterise the relationship between social activists and community? Let us consider again the example of housing cooperatives. CISRS emphasises democratic principles such as elections taking place on a regular basis for nominating delegates representing the slum-dwellers. An image of direct democracy emerges: "The decision is made in the meeting, not individually. Although there are elected leaders, they don't take decisions themselves. Community problems -

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<sup>114</sup> Interview with CISRS; Oct 6, 2007

community decisions.”<sup>115</sup> BUILD takes a similar view: “We don’t moderate them, we only engage people, we only empower people, we don’t feed them, and we only teach them how to fish.”<sup>116</sup> Structuring remains an important issue but it is realised in different ways. Cooperation seems to be limited to certain aspects resulting in a one-sided relationship.

Housing societies are a widespread concept used by NSDF, too. It stands for a quite uncommon relationship between the slum dwellers and the organisation. In this case it seems to be difficult to draw the piecing line between organisation and community because of collective membership of clusters. According to their rhetoric, the organisation is the community and vice versa. Community policy is at the same time organisational policy. As the core of cohesion the similar frame of reference shared by all members can be named. Everybody shares similar experiences from the living conditions as a slum dweller. That is the reason why there seems to be less distance between members and community than in other organisations. Basically the members rely on a common language. “You need to be among them. You cannot come from outside. [...] The whole situation changes. Everywhere I go the people talk to me like I am a bloody slum dweller.”<sup>117</sup> There are no outsiders, ‘experts’ from the middle-class who believe to have a better, scientific knowledge. Thus, no explicit community policy is necessary; a similar background of the people replaces it.

SRS’ housing societies form the centre point of their work like in the former case. But the organisation differentiates between internal and external affairs, as the following quotation shows. “We have contacted the builders first ...We decide about it for the slum dwellers.”<sup>118</sup> On the other hand, they also apply a participatory approach as far as internal group processes, i.e. self-organisation, is concerned. “So the election [of the spokesperson within the cooperative housing society] normally doesn’t take place, doesn’t happen in front of all of us. It [the voting process] does not go absolutely democratic. [...] They speak on behalf of the people, but it has not been accepted by everyone. [...] And if we find it is reasonable, then we go back to the people.”<sup>119</sup> This quotation implies that even though democratic principles are violated, no intervention take place, as long as community affairs are concerned. The organisation recognises the self-dynamics and internal rules of the community and knows that interference with community decisions would deteriorate the community relation.

At the same time a staff member of SRS emphasised the importance of considering slum dwellers as individuals rather than as belonging to an anonymous mass. “I used to be able to do this with people in the slums till now. [...] People value the fact that you remember their names.”<sup>120</sup> This small gesture in a politically affected field of work illustrates respect to the poor, gives them names and voices to express themselves, and relies on local knowledge. NSDF seems to be closest to such an approach, because they regard communication as essential key component of their social work. They actually practice communicational methods by exercising an open house policy. They express that slum dwellers should be recognised and respected beyond their belonging to a slum as equals. Slum dwellers have an unparalleled knowledge about their own living circumstances and thus their specific views, opinions and practical wisdom must be considered in order to implement sustainable housing policies.

Furthermore, most organisations make a fine distinction between party policy and social politics in which they are involved. Not only that they agree a party political stance is disturbing their own work as the following quotation shows: “So whether my political conviction is with Congress, BJP

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with BUILD; Oct 05, 2007

<sup>117</sup> Interview with NSDF; Oct 10, 2007

<sup>118</sup> Interview with SRS; Oct 04, 2007

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Interview with SRS; Oct 04, 2007

or [Shiv] Sena that is secondary. So as farmers we have to come together"<sup>121</sup>; the common understanding is that segregation and even communalism can only be overcome by drawing upon a common identity, for example, a professional one which criss-crosses such strong identities as religion or ethnicity. But in other organisations there can also be an agreement that membership is bound to non-party membership. "So we created a kind of non-political movement, we organise the people, all of them together."<sup>122</sup>

Whether NGOs have a Christian, Muslim, or Hindu background, they very often transgress their religious perspective and apply inter-religious approaches. They and the organisations with non-religious background can all pursue the same strategies of building cooperative housing societies, savings and neighbourhood groups or particular actions. In addition, local proximity and an appropriate degree of structuring (in vertical as well as horizontal direction) support a community. The existing old structures are the key factor to enable the formation and implementation of new structures, such as the housing cooperatives, because they are based on shared trust and mutual communication. The formal framework is complemented by a certain attitude or characteristic shared by all members of the (potential) community.

Strategies imply means and goals of social activism. During our analysis we identified mobilisation, capacity building, participation and empowerment as key issues in the work of both NGOs and grassroots organisations. However, identifying causal relationships between them resembles the old question of the hen and the egg. Therefore we will take up these key issues one after another.

## **10.2. Mobilisation**

On their worldviews of injustice social activists such as NGOs and grassroots organisations try to mobilise people using their activism as a tool to pinpoint at injustices. This shall force politicians to take action on behalf of the poor and / or make people ideally participate in self-development to diminish injustice. To put it another way, what is expressed here are important constituents of civil society. Mobilisation of people is an important instrument of NGOs and grassroots organisations. Mobilisation means that people express their deficiency situation in the public and stand up for their rights. Mobilisation refers to both affected as well as unaffected people aiming at improving the lives of suffering people, reduce poverty and social injustice, and thus achieve a better and more just society.

Organisations vary in their mobilising methods ranging from confrontation via information to cooperation.

Non-governmental and grassroots organisations are aware that they need support from the public to meet their goals. Larger professionally working organisations seem to use rather sophisticated public relations campaigns to raise funds and employ standard lobbying techniques with governments, while community based groups may be of political importance because of their social embeddedness. At times both, however, seek to mobilise public support in order to increase their awareness level and thus campaigning success.

In our interviews we were particularly interested in the mobilisation techniques of the different types of organisations because mobilisation seems to be directly linked to the impact and work of a socially active organisation.

Most organisations use a variety of actions to mobilise affected dwellers as well as the rather unaffected public. CRH takes advantage of „sit-ins“. During „sit-ins“, CRH members and slum

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<sup>121</sup> Interview with Dr. Metha/CRH; Oct 10, 2007; in another interview this statement is complemented by reference to a shared professional background.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with NSDF; Oct 10, 2007; and even more pronounced by Yuva Bharat as their common basis.

dwellers non-violently occupy the offices of parties that are found to be involved in housing incidents. This direct action aims at promoting political, social, or economic change for the affected people by attracting public attention, e.g. through media coverage.

Dr. Metha wants to establish mass movements, aiming at a comparably higher impact on administration, government and legislation. He is aware of the fact that the collective consciousness of the slum dwellers is rather weak, because there are a number of competing if not divergent identities based on religion, caste or political affiliation. Hence he promotes mobilisation on occupational background. In his view unionising, as one way of mobilisation, means to make people congregate in an organised way. Furthermore, unions can make powerful coalitions and fight against evictions of slums and illegal settlements, as well as the living conditions as such. The coalition could then submit alternative plans of rehabilitation schemes. Rehabilitation plans are usually introduced top-down according to suggestions of experts from other social classes sanctioned by politicians from the same classes. Thus there is a need to inform and train the inhabitants of slums and squatter settlements through workshops on urban renewal. The workshops are seen as a promising source to gain more influence in urban policy and find support. The Urban Resource Centre, a committee of numerous architects, is one of the major activists. The members of The Urban Resource Centre file, examine and criticise all development plans such as the Dharavi Plan or plans of the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA). Furthermore, union programmes are created in order to develop into mass organisations. Dr. Metha who acts as an individual activist but also in cooperation with CRH and The Urban Resource Centre talked about his struggle on the grassroots level, for example at the airport slum in Mumbai. Inhabitants of the airport slum organised themselves in federations approximately five years ago with the idea to implement a housing policy.

Metha's very detailed approach also reflects crucial problems with regard to collective identities of slum dwellers, namely that as a result of slum policy slum dwellers fall into different categories, illegal, legal and "no-more-slum-dwellers" if they have been resettled. This dichotomisation withdraws the basis of collective identities, which is necessary for mass movements aiming at changing existing social structures.

NSDF, on the other hand, considers communication as the fundamental basis to mobilise people, and such a communication can even be instrumentalised. Intentionally triggering rumours or creating problems makes people easily gather due to their inquisitive nature. As an example the founder and president of NSDF referred to an activity some time ago when they started attaching numbers to the houses and huts in Dharavi. This activity was aimed at mapping the houses, but immediately provoked communal interaction. The dwellers started wondering what happened and ask for the reason of this action. Hence, an interaction started between the activists of NSDF and Dharavi's slum dwellers.

CISRS aims at mobilising the affected community for that they may stand up for their own rights. They ensure people's participation in the process of planning and decision-making. CISRS started their work by forming associations of 40 people demanding drinking water from the authorities. Through constant repetition this action finally proved to be successful. Success engenders confidence, the existing associations are strengthened and other communities can be reached. In these communities 15 chawl committees were formed, which constituted the founding basis for the „People's Responsible Organisation of United Dharavi“ (PROUD). PROUD assets 70 initiated cooperative housing societies within Dharavi. They signify themselves the largest people's organisation but are not considered an NGO. The organisation uses a wide variety of non-violent actions such as demonstrations, office occupancy, peace meetings, communal meetings, festivals and interreligious meetings to attract broader public attention. The latter are used as platforms for information and training about the various religions intermingling between religion and policy in Mumbai and India. As our interview partner clearly stated: Religion „[...] is a political issue and some self-interested people are exploiting the religion for their political gains.“ Due to social and cultural change in India mobilising people has nowadays become more difficult. Also direct pressure has decreased as evictions and demolitions have diminished. Nowadays CISRS concentrates on issue solving processes. Communities are gathered and directed towards solving actual problems. CISRS tries to show that the problems faced by the communities are general

problem among all slum inhabitants, and instead of fighting among themselves for religious differences, they should consider their common living situation. Insisting on one's religious distinctiveness cannot solve the problems. Furthermore, CISRS arranges a six-month community organising training programme including a multiple-step process. One indispensable step is emphasising people's common inherited culture, communal structures and problems rather than pinpointing at difference. Integration means to understand the real nature of the communal problems, which can then be mutually addressed and approached. In the discussion process all members of the community are involved and must find a joint decision on their own.

During our interviews in Mumbai we came to understand that in most cases evictions are announced either months in advance or gossip through informal information channels may foresee such events so that people in the affected areas may take defence measures. Hence their task is to mobilise people's resistance by taking non-violent but often despairing actions like, for example a "sit in" in front of the bulldozers. But much of CISRS' and other organisations' action is giving legal advice.

The grassroots organisation Yuva Bharat tries to make the affected inhabitants more aware of their precarious situation. However it is very difficult to mobilise the slum dwellers since they have to face everyday challenges of survival, which hardly leaves any time for social activism. In addition, the caste system and religious difference deeply shape people's identities thus preventing them to realise that all slum dwellers suffer from the same problems irrespective of their religion or caste. Yuva Bharat proposes the collaboration of slums to be more effective in their fight against evictions and demolitions but such intentions seem futile. Further worries include lack of interest in the challenging situation among youth slum inhabitants, as already described above.

Summarising the ways of mobilisation, we can see that any activity which is promising will be pursued. It builds upon people's energies and commitments, on available resources and on situations that can help making people aware of their common life situation and the power to jointly change it. People have to understand that slum dwellers all over Mumbai as well as other cities in India and even beyond face the same problems of poverty, vulnerability, substandard housing, social, economic and political discrimination. Once people are aware of the reasons for their life situation this may be a starting point to build a broader coalition against social injustice, which in the 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot be legitimised by caste theory. Although caste rules cannot be strictly kept in the urban context, caste ascription nevertheless plays an important role in contemporary Indian life. As a result we can say social mobilisation involves planned and intended actions of social activists to reach, influence and involve all relevant segments and sectors of society.

### ***10.3. Capacity Building and Participation***

Aiming at sustainable empowerment, the question arises how to accomplish it? A possible answer might be the concept of capacity building, which is dealt with in the following part. In this context it is crucial to point out what the specific understandings of this strategy are and how it is implemented by the organisations considered.

In general, capacity building refers to the process of creating, developing and enhancing abilities, skills and knowledge. It helps individuals becoming aware of their rights, exercise their rights and responsibilities and improve their lives and communities through advocacy, negotiations and cooperative actions. Besides providing information, it is crucial to put the slum dwellers in a position to be critically aware of, to assess and to productively apply this information. Most important is to consider slum dwellers as being capable to involve in their own development instead of treating them as an amorphous mass that can be shifted among the city as it fits the requirements of administration, business and middle-class – even more precise: the poor must play the key role in their own development. In addition to awareness building it is therefore necessary to train their skills and provide resources and support they need to participate. In this context participation constitutes a significant key word, since it is a precondition and aim of capacity building at the same time.



How far do the various organisations respectively movements take participatory aspects into consideration? That is one of the issues, which will be dealt with in the subsequent part. Another aspect is the description of the different steps within the process of capacity building. The question is how each organisation tries to transfer knowledge to the slum dwellers, to bring out their potential and develop their skills? Every organisation has to consider: What expertise is needed? Which skills are available? How can knowledge be transferred?

With regard to our interviewees we observed two different approaches. The explicit approach is “learning by teaching”. The implicit approach is “learning by doing”.

An asymmetric information<sup>123</sup> situation is usually linked to the explicit approach, because the common way to overcome information deficits is knowledge transfer by teaching. Teaching takes place by offering training programmes, seminars, workshops or lectures. An asymmetry of social status reinforces the one-sided flow of information.

Although less frequently applied, it is also feasible to work with the implicit approach. It takes action of the learner into the core; people have to learn by their own action - success and failure as well. The social activist or organisation takes more a position of a moderator, guiding people through their discussion, decision making and action process. NSDF reports how they apply the latter approach. As they originate from the same social background there is not such status difference as between academics and slum dwellers. They motivate the slum dwellers to form housing cooperatives by themselves. „The first condition to form a society is work. You have to work. It is your problem. You need a house. You need a building. You need to do everything.“<sup>124</sup> This quotation underlines the significance of acting in one’s own initiative to achieve possible changes. Also CISRS applies the latter approach, as the following quotation shows: „Our first action was [taking] about 40 people to the municipal corporation. 40 people. We organised a meeting and we mobilised 40 people to the local municipal corporation asking for drinking water. So after five, six constant actions the water tap was installed in Dharavi. [...] So that gave much confidence to the local people.“<sup>125</sup>

By now, we merely mentioned the aspect of how to build capacity, but we have not yet discussed what kinds of capacities are developed. Our interviews show five different categories of capacities to be developed, namely legal, administrative, economical, technical and social competences. “Legal capacity” describes the aspect of being aware of one’s rights and to exercise them. The aim of conveying “administrative capacities” is to train the slum dwellers in their contact with official authorities. The “economic aspect” focuses on advising the residents about financial matters, e.g. opening and running an account, joining thrift and credit groups etc. “Technical capacities” include mainly practical skills on how to cope with formal housing, in regards to the fact that “not always are people capable of living in them [...]”<sup>126</sup>. Finally, “social capacities” refer to individual as well as collective competencies. This category includes capabilities like self-confidence, sense of responsibility, communication skills, motivation, community spirit, discipline, tolerance, and public spirit. Let us consider which capacities are addressed by the particular organisations.

Yuva Bharat considers awareness building of the slum dwellers, in particular about political procedures and programmes, of great significance. Their guiding principal is participation. The slum dwellers are the agents of change and therefore they have to take social actions. It becomes obvious that they try to combine the two different approaches of capacity building, the explicit one with the implicit one. “Learning by teaching” is essential to overcome the information gap by means of knowledge transfer. Yuva Bharat tries to make the slum dwellers aware of their shared living conditions. They organise public meetings and discussions and talk to people in the street in order to raise class consciousness. This is obviously a rather time-consuming if not costly method,

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<sup>123</sup> Varian, Hal R. (1995): Grundzüge der Mikroökonomik. München, Ch. 34

<sup>124</sup> Interview with NSDF; Oct 10, 2007

<sup>125</sup> Interview with CISRS; Oct 10, 2007

<sup>126</sup> Interview with SRS; Oct 4, 2007

regarding the small number of members respectively the informal structure of the organisation. To be themselves fully informed, they participate in local, national and international networks and forums. Besides information transfer and awareness building, the second step is to involve the people in collective actions like protest marches and rallies. Hereby they seek to convince the people to stand up for their rights and to make them aware of their own capabilities. They shall learn from the actions they have done on their own. These collective actions train social skills like team spirit, communication skills and self-confidence.

CRH's main approach is the explicit one, since they are an advising organisation. In their view "people are not aware"<sup>127</sup> of their situation and therefore find it necessary to provide them information either by transmitting knowledge about contemporary governmental policies on the issue of housing or by presenting the results of their own research work. Their aim is to make the slum dwellers aware of their rights and how to claim them, since "housing should be a fundamental right"<sup>128</sup>. In order to pass on information, CRH employs community workers. Apart from that they organise and support collective actions like sit-ins, marches and rallies. Here the implicit aspect of capacity building comes in. An aim is to develop social skills among the slum dwellers.

„I don't believe in trainings."<sup>129</sup> This statement expresses the attitude of NSDF towards the explicit approach of capacity building in an emphatic way. They oppose training programmes, because slum dwellers know best how to cope with poverty and connected difficulties in everyday-life. However, they give certain impetuses that people do not arrange with these miserable circumstances, but try to improve their life situations.

NSDF strongly believes in the inborn qualities and the self-help potential of slum dwellers. "Yes, slum dwellers know absolutely."<sup>130</sup> Representing this opinion, it is straight forward that NSDF demands the residents to be proactive. This approach is supported by self-educational actions like savings and credit activities as a key issue of the housing cooperatives. Their participatory approach presupposes to involve the slum dwellers in all actions. "This is the building designed after the vision of the people [...] managed by the people, [...] selection by the people, this is all done by the community, not by the government."<sup>131</sup> By participating, people attach more weight to the values of their results. In this respect, NSDF regards itself only as a facilitator. The residents are the catalysts for the solution finding within the frame of housing problems. NSDF even considers their function as being the organ of the slum dwellers.

The social skills they try to evoke most are public and team spirit in the sense of collective responsibility. "So it is a collective responsibility of everybody to get everything collectively."<sup>132</sup> In the process of capacity building communication plays a dominant role for NSDF. The directness of NSDF in their statement "It's up to them [to make a difference]" reappears in their approach towards communication. "If you don't talk to the people like that how do you want them to see the problem?"<sup>133</sup> The attitude that "information belongs to the people" can be interpreted in such a way that NSDF collects this information with open ears and reassembles it in a meaningful way to facilitate social action.

Similar to NSDF, SRS started with the conception of self-development based on a strong believe in the self-help potential of the slum dwellers. However, caused by experiences gained from their work in the field of housing issues, they shifted to "a more pragmatic approach". This recognition led to the following mission statements: relying to learning by teaching, the explicit form of capacity

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<sup>127</sup> Interview with Prof. Metha; Oct 10, 2007

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with NSDF; Oct 10, 2007

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

building; and, following the idea of self-development by continuously accompanying the residents in their housing struggle. The first statement has been addressed in the variety of training programmes that is provided by SRS. They offer vocational training courses like computer classes, tailoring classes, driving training courses and domestic worker training facilities, which serve as transmitter for human capital formation, being the basis for making a living. Furthermore, they initiate and accompany income-generating activities for slum dwellers like self-help groups of women, which are producing flowers, candles, chalk, liquid soap etc. They also supply non-formal education for children and youth that are beyond the formal education system because of their living conditions. Moreover, SRS provides health education in the fields of disease prevention, childcare and family planning.

With special focus on our topic of housing problems, capacity building is done through the post-rehabilitation programme of SRS, which is called Community Habitat Services Programme. In their view it is quite important to sustainably care for the residents, since „not always the people moving into buildings are capable of living in them.“<sup>134</sup>

SRS is one of the few organisations assuming that people need guidance, which they practice in a more hierarchical decision-making process. Their insight results from their past experience: “[...] We went too far in idealising. [We said] okay, you become the developers in the full sense and we only assist you.” But they failed with that attitude. Nevertheless they also emphasise that they practise the participatory management approach.

A similar position towards capacity building takes BUILD. They do not only want to improve the living conditions of the poor, but raise their self-help potential. Therefore training for self-help is the key component of BUILD’s work. Self-help groups are created, which then form neighbourhood groups including 10 to 15 families. All neighbourhood groups merge to a neighbourhood committee further building a local area committee. The local area committee is able to make complaints before the municipal council. Hence a people’s area commitment accrues. In addition, 200 to 400 people publish the setup of a ward and postulate their needs. BUILD tries to initiate cooperation and starts campaigns every four months in order to advert to the multitude of problems in slum settlements. Looking at that modular system it becomes obvious that they regard teaching as the initial step of and basis for capacity building. Therefore they conduct training programmes, workshops, seminars and campaigns. Above this more explicit approach, they installed the more implicit approach that motivates slum dwellers to take on initiative and action by forming community projects with the intention to develop a sense of responsibility and solidarity among the people, which constitutes the power basis of claiming rights and negotiating with the authorities. They shall achieve their own success and shall learn from their own mistakes on that long way.

The organisation gave us the following example of the work of such self-help groups. There are small local groups of 10 – 15 people (mostly women) where the members produce and sell things like Saris or Masala powder. The earnings from these sales contribute, together with some financial assistance from the municipality, to the cooperative income of the self-help group. Into these groups they transmit loads of skills of all categories mentioned, whether economic skills by producing, selling and saving; or social skills like self-confidence, motivation and sense of responsibility by successful collective actions. Important are administrative and technical skills like finance matters as well.

The following part deals with CISRS respectively PROUD, one of their sub-organisations. In the beginning, CISRS as the “Research Arm of the Indian Church”<sup>135</sup> and the “Think-tank of Asian Churches”<sup>136</sup> was mainly concentrated on spreading a social thought to enable “harmony and dialogue among people of different faiths and ideologies and in the empowerment especially of the

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Homepage CISRS: [www.cisrs.org](http://www.cisrs.org)

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

marginalised people, such as women, Dalits, tribes and children, among others<sup>137</sup>. Their research-based academic approach was, however, obviously not merely focused on slum dwellers and related issues of housing. A change took place during the 1970s, when CISRS started their Community Organising Training Programme resulting in the foundation of PROUD. This sub-organisation is more grassroots orientated compared to the rather general capacity building of CISRS. In order to get a general idea of PROUD's approach it is helpful to give a brief overview of their working process. First of all, they integrate their community workers into the slum community by letting them live among the people. "We used to stay in the slum itself where we used to spend maximum time with the community to know the culture, the problems, everything."<sup>138</sup> After building trust between community workers and residents it becomes possible to initiate interaction in form of meetings and discussions. In these discussions community issues are addressed and collective solutions found. "Community problems, community decisions."<sup>139</sup> Apart from this PROUD provides legal, technical and vocational support. Furthermore, they organise a variety of non-violent actions like demonstrations, office blockades, sit-ins, marches and rallies. The final step is representing the slum dwellers respectively their decisions and demands in administrative and Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) meetings. What kinds of capacities are transmitted within this process? Firstly, interactions like meetings and discussions develop social skills, in particular communication, self-confidence, community sense, motivation and political awareness. Beside, economic skills are implemented by vocational training and income generating programmes. Belief in the success of collective action; trust in the community's own potential and competences; and building of political awareness and power are characteristic for this approach. The latter is channelled into protest marches and demonstrations. PROUD therefore also shows a combination of explicit (learning by teaching) and implicit (learning by doing) approaches.

The following quotation aptly expresses this combination of approaches: "We organise along with the community. We sit together and discuss. We always discuss. We may have the idea. We share with the community and decide." Emphasised is how the process of decision-making works: the process of problem solving has to be realised by "community participation". Their first priority is integrating the residents in planning and decision making processes, in a democratic way. That puts the slum dwellers in the position of becoming aware of their own situation and of taking over responsibility, leading to higher motivation among the people. The task of PROUD, in this context, is to stand by the slum dwellers as a facilitator and at the same time, to create the preconditions for reaching their aims, through capacity building. "The decision is made by the people. We don't take decisions ourselves; we take the decisions on the ground itself."<sup>140</sup>

Regarding the previous analysis, our assumption that capacity building is a necessary instrument to achieve empowerment has been supported by our interviews. In order to enhance the slum dwellers' ability to act, the organisations choose different paths. We analytically distinguished the implicit and explicit approaches of decision-making, in the form of learning by doing and learning by teaching skills. In reality, most organisations combine the two approaches. Decisive for the success of capacity building is the instruction and leadership by external facilitators like our organisations. During this process the degree of participation increases, involving slum dwellers in decision making processes, creating awareness, developing self-reliance and solidarity, and supporting the willingness of the community to stand up for their rights and carry on their political claims.

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Interview with CISRS; Oct 6, 2007

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

#### **10.4. Empowerment**

The major strength of NGOs and grassroots organisations comes from their interaction with the community and insistence on the empowerment of the poor as the key to transformation of their livelihoods. Nevertheless, the term “empowerment” should be treated carefully for two reasons: the term is used for various contexts where disadvantaged people are addressed: women, black, ethnic and indigenous groups, religious minorities, and the like, where the aim of action is obvious (less discrimination) but the ways to achieve that too often remain vague; and a scientific analytical definition is difficult due to the fact that the boundaries to “mobilisation”, “empowerment” and “self-help” are indistinct.

Empowerment can be as basic as enabling groups to improve their living conditions through socio-economic development programmes or projects: to help the people to help themselves in (economically) making a living. But many organisations view empowerment as a much larger concept that enables people to consider themselves as equal citizens, confront themselves with the system and structures that maintain their socio-economical and socio-political marginalisation. This broader view of empowerment ensures that the affected people are able to advocate and protect their interests in front of other more powerful social agents like administration, political parties, builders’ lobby or upper and upper-middle classes. Empowerment therefore becomes essentially a transfer of power to the marginalised groups in order to change the present structures and mechanisms that keep them in their poverty situation and condition of powerlessness.

CRH takes such a stance. People who are aware of their rights get angry once their rights are violated and thus will fight for their rights. They believe in the power of the marginalised people to paralyse the city, due to their involvement and crucial activities that keep the city running (e.g. hawking, domestic and other services, taxi and rickshaw driving, etc.), but the administration restricts their power through legal channels and mechanisms, for example by controlling the distribution of ration cards, and thus cripples their potential by again splitting the poor in “have more” and “have-nots”.

BUILD, on the other hand, concentrates more on the grassroots level. They consider labour and security a necessity to empower people. Security means to have rights to a dwelling place. However, the legislation is very contradictory; when people are evicted from their settlements they lose their dwelling place, their security, which is a precondition for self-help.<sup>141</sup> Therefore, empowerment becomes obsolete with the lack of such a security. Despite many efforts to empower slum dwellers, the decision-making practices in urban planning are that administration, politicians, and planners continue taking the vast majority of decisions within the program and implementation processes, while participation is more a show for legitimising procedures in front of the public rather than a full-hearted attempt to change structures of decision-making methods.

SRS focuses on the empowerment of women to promote gender equality. In addition, they prefer resettlement schemes with a joint ownership of houses by the new residents. Joint ownership, first of all, provides security in so far that the apartments cannot easily be sold or appropriated by creditors if debts from gambling, drinking and even thrift and credit groups have to be repaid. Legal property is therefore the key issue of empowerment. Secondly, joint ownership strengthens cooperation and solidarity.

It must be emphasised that in order to have a significant political impact, empowerment measures have to go beyond the scope of the single project, through which of course a limited number of people may improve their living conditions. The issue of sustainability of a measure is therefore a key concern. Empowerment of the urban poor and community mobilisation are crucial for sustainability, yet they are protracted processes of accomplishment. Therefore, NGOs and grassroots organisations are agents following short- and long-term goals in the fight against poverty and housing demolitions. Short-term goals may be directed towards certain actions like mobilisation for demonstration or sit-in against demolition, while the overall long-term aspiration to build a “better society” is beyond the reach of any single organisation but in the minds of all of

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<sup>141</sup> Cf. Schrader (2008).

them. In between, the tactics to reach this goal are defined by a number of sub-aims like capacity building in various fields or legal recognition. Ideally social action substantially, gradually reduces the vulnerability of the marginalised slum and squatter settlement dwellers and raises them onto the level of equal citizens.

### ***10.5. Interrelating Important Concepts of Social Activism***

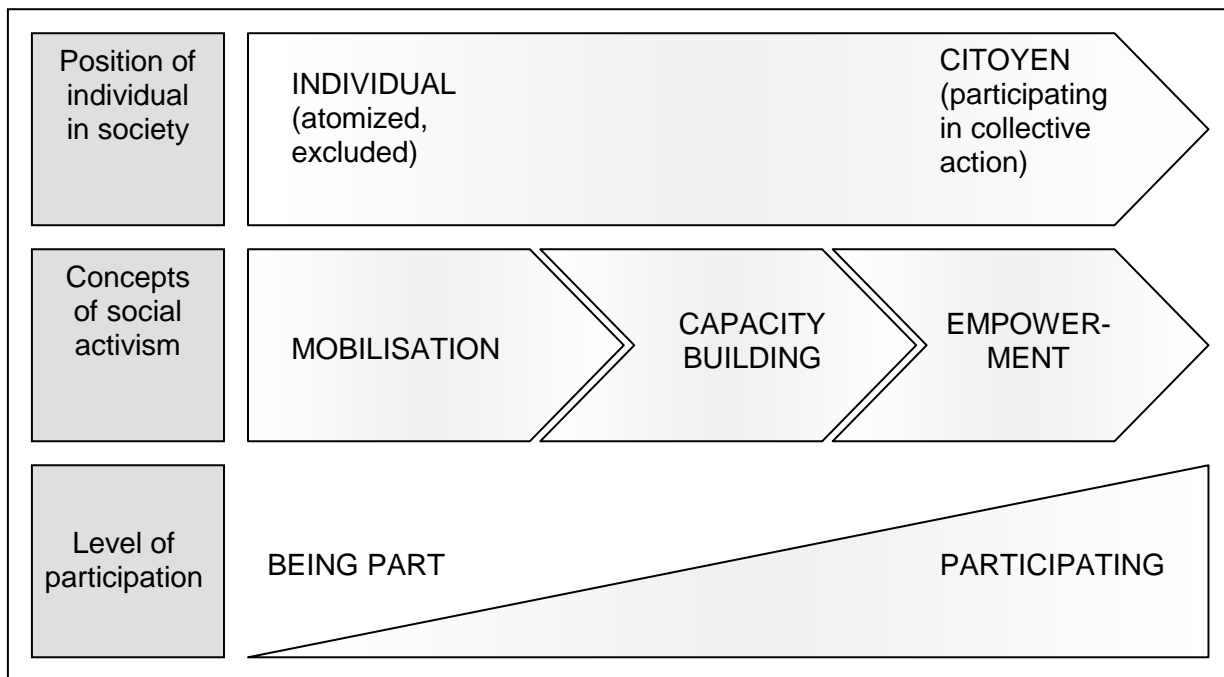
After discussing the issues of mobilisation, capacity building, participation and empowerment we would like to put these categories in relation to each other in order to illustrate the process/course of social activism. In the context of our research work, social activism is defined as an intentional collective action aimed at social reorganisation. The latter can neither be achieved by individual, atomistic and socially excluded slum dwellers nor by segregated slum communities fighting each other on the grounds of distinct identities (religion, ethnicity, caste); rather active, socially responsible and mutually supporting slum dwellers are required who build a new identity on the bases of their disadvantageous living conditions beyond imagined differences and therefore take collective action. However, the formation of such new identities out of which collective action emerges is no auto-dynamic process; therefore socially active organisations become involved at this point.

We built a model, which relates the categories to each other. In our opinion, mobilisation represents the first step. Although the organisations differ in their mobilising methods, mobilisation generally refers to creating awareness about personal social affectedness and common social situation. So the consciousness of the slum dwellers shall be awakened and an impetus shall be given to take part in collective action. Against this background an external facilitator is required – the process is analogous to what we described in our theoretical part with reference to Marx' analysis of the development of class consciousness. While mere mobilisation can also engender short-term action like a single demonstration, it builds the basis for a long-term orientated and sustainable capacity building. Once the willingness to participate is achieved, capacity building, either in its implicit or explicit form, becomes feasible.

As mentioned before, capacity building refers to the process of creating, developing and enhancing abilities, skills and knowledge with the aim of supporting slum dwellers' self-help potential. During this process the degree of participation increases, in the sense of transferring responsibility to them.

The highest degree of responsibility is reached when the community is empowered to act independently from the facilitator and ready to claim their rights – both legally as well as by the way of participating in socio-political decisions. Empowerment thus describes a process that starts straight from the first step of mobilisation. However, at the same time it refers to a different status at the end of this process. Only successful capacity building and strong participation of the community in collective social action can achieve the completion of this process, provided that the converse powers are not too strong. Ideally, empowerment generates an active and self-dependent person willing to coordinate its individual power with that of other people, because only as a commune they are strong. At this point an external facilitator becomes redundant. The slum dweller is now more than a mere participant, but capable to manage the processes by himself thanks to his enlarged capacities. So participation in our model should be considered as a corresponding process of change, as well as a normative approach for social activism.

**INTERRELATING IMPORTANT CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL ACTIVISM**



**10.6. Administration – Pressure**

NGOs and grassroots organisations represent the development needs of civil society and hence, of universal service. In their social work they can devise and agree on common agendas in order to develop strategic coordinated action. Aiming at institutional change they sometimes demand to be involved in multilateral organisations or federations.

Socially active groups put pressure upon the other main actors, administration, private sector and upper and upper-middle classes. The most effective pressure upon these is risen consciousness among the community, forwarding their claims to the public as a social movement.

During our research we investigated the role of NGOs and grassroots organisations imposing pressure upon administration and the private sector. CRH, for example, collects and presents the complaints of slum inhabitants. As there is no single or one step solution to the various problems mentioned, larger and also preventive strategies on the macro level have to be found such as economic growth or another taxation system, which generates capital for public investments, a linkage between the formal and informal sector with better rights for the slum dwellers and a protection through unionising, or a changed migration policy that withdraws pressure from the primary cities. Thus CRH focuses upon governmental strategies.

NSDF also listens to the complaints and claims of the slum dwellers and negotiates with administrative bodies by putting pressure upon them. BUILD, on the other hand, creates powerful committees, which then enter into negotiations with the government. Their primary focus is yet to effectively integrate the slum dwellers into the negotiations.

Summarising our findings we see that besides social action as a pressure mechanism, negotiations with the administration are an important tool in order to give slum dwellers a voice in the city and achieve their participation in urban planning. Hence we must be aware of the tight link between pressure and negotiations and vice versa.

## 10.7. Organisational Research

What role does research play in the work of the various organisations? We can distinguish organisations that attach strong weight to research and organisations respectively movements that lack such focus. Generally speaking, well-founded research puts the organisation in a position of having a firsthand informational advantage compared to the administration, upon which a suitable strategy can be built both with regards to social action and negotiations. Apart from that, they also perform consultancy research work on behalf of external clients in order to generate additional income and present their issues to a broader audience. However, research also plays an important role in economising on time, money and staff in the longer run. At the same time, conducting research is a cost factor (money, time, knowledge) in the short run. Therefore, the question is connected to the resource basis. Let us look at the particular organisations and movements.

According to their background, it seems plausible that Yuva Bharat neglect research, since they are informally organised and therefore short of resources. They rather mobilise people, create awareness and aim at uniting slum dwellers in the slum neighbourhood context for the fight for their rights. Yuva Bharat is neither in the position to nor interested in negotiating with the administration, but simply in pushing through their objectives.

NSDF is characterised by an elaborate overall strategy. However, their point of view is that „information belongs to the people“<sup>142</sup>, so that NSDF prefers common sense communication instead of an academic discourse. Due to their close cooperation with SPARC one can assume that local knowledge nevertheless enters academic work.

Although CRH represents an organisation taking a rather responsive approach as Yuva Bharat, they conduct research as a substantial part of their work, in order to „bring depth in the whole thing“<sup>143</sup>. This depth is helpful to gain ideas and therefore to develop alternative solution plans for housing issues. Research also provides an effective tool to create awareness and consequently convinces people about CRH's strategy. For that purpose CRH cooperates with the Urban Resource Centre. This institution collects information, links the empirical findings to the theoretical framework and disseminates information in readable format for concerted actions.<sup>144</sup>

In contrast, CISRS has always considered research work as one of their key tasks. Their spectrum of research, however, is not confined to the field of housing issues; they do „in-depth studies and research on religious, national, socio-economic, political and theological issues by way of conferences, consultations, seminars, field-studies and dialogues at the academic and at grass-root level in collaboration with other research institutions (universities), ecumenical bodies or churches“<sup>145</sup>. In other words, they aim at a more just world, based upon human rights, peace, religious freedom and less inequality. As an umbrella organisation they cooperate with sub-organisations like PROUD or other „action groups“<sup>146</sup>.

SRS also consider research work as a substantial part of their work. In the past SRS conducted several studies. „We have done mappings, socio-economic surveys.“<sup>147</sup> However, they are not just aiming at getting better information on their field of operation, but do consultancy surveys and studies on behalf of external clients like local authorities. In this context they are aware of the boundaries concerning their academic, technical and financial scope. „We are not able to do biometrical mapping. We don't have the technology to do it.“<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Interview with NSDF; Oct 10, 2007

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Prof. Metha, Oct 10, 2007

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Homepage CISRS: [www.cisrs.org](http://www.cisrs.org)

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Interview with SRS; Oct 4, 2007

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.



As far as BUILD is concerned we can only assume that they prefer case studies about issues like the work with self help groups of women to present their findings in the public.

### **10.8. Legal Issues**

Teaching pavement and slum dwellers about their rights in the face of authorities is one of the key objectives of many socially active groups, and therefore we find a number of lawyers involved in such groups. Indeed, it was the arbitrary removal of pavement dwellers' property by the Bombay Municipal Corporation that led to the creation of numerous NGOs and grassroots organisations. In 1981, the municipality decided that pavement dwellings were illegal and started demolitions and eviction drives. Civil-society groups took the matter to court and were able to enforce a demolition stop. In 1985, however, the Supreme Court withdrew the stay of pavement and slum dwellers and granted the state the right to remove the dwellings.<sup>149</sup> It was during this period that a group of people from such diverse backgrounds as counselling, community health, welfare, and other fields decided to participate in such civil-society-activities. Most NGOs and grassroots organisations found that a welfare approach to the poor was insufficient and had too many white spots. For example, government welfare agencies did not take up the issue of pavement dwellers.

While the right to housing does not find mention among the fundamental rights set out in the Indian Constitution, the Supreme Court's judgment established this as a judicially derived right in 1985.<sup>150</sup> In a case, filed on behalf of pavement dwellers in Mumbai, the court held that the right to livelihood is an integral part of the right to life - as guaranteed by Article 21 - and concluded that "in terms of the constitutional phraseology, the eviction of the petitioners will lead to deprivation of their livelihood and consequently to the deprivation of life".<sup>151</sup>

This broadened definition was upheld and expanded in subsequent cases in which the court held that the "right to life guaranteed in any civilised society implies the right to food, water, decent environment, education, medical care and shelter".<sup>152</sup> Article 19(1), part (e) accords the right to residence and settlement in any part of India as a fundamental right. The right to life has been assured as a basic human right under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. Article 25(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family; it includes food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services.<sup>153</sup>

It is important to note that in most cases the courts have upheld the right to housing. As a consequence to this practice pavement-dwellers who are removed from public land have to be rehabilitated elsewhere.

While this seems to be a success, judicial case history suggests that while until the 1980s a moral stance had been taken towards slum dwellers as having to get support by society, the courts changed towards a strictly judicial consideration of cases. The slum dweller is no longer seen as a helpless victim of the circumstances who deserves the compassion of the law but a cynical manipulator of the system – "a usurper and land-grabber, living off the taxpayer's money, and so inviting the wrath of the law".<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Sethi, Aman: Pushed to the Margins; Frontline, Indias National Magazine, Volume 23 - Issue 09: May 06 - 19, 2006

<sup>150</sup> J. Chandrachud in *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation*, 1985; (3) SCC 545; [www.indiatogether.org](http://www.indiatogether.org)

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

But neither standpoint provides a solution to the legal issues of slum dwellers having encroached public or private land. And one of our arguments, put forward here, is that the self-help potential of slum dwellers and pavement dwellers as well is linked to a minimum standard of security of housing, which has to be provided to them by law.<sup>155</sup>

In our research we also asked the different organisations whether they are taking up the very difficult matter of legal issues in their social work. While some of the organisations explicitly do so by, for example, having lawyers among their members who give advice to affected slum dwellers, others do explicitly not touch upon it. However, due to the fact that the very nature of the arguments on demolitions and resettlement is tightly linked to legal recognition of habitat of the slum dwellers it can be assumed that legal issues at least implicitly matter to the interviewed organisations.

### **10.9. Networking**

As the previous chapters show, social activism is embedded in a field of stakeholders with competing interests and power differentials between them. As the organisations and movements working in the field investigated are in a comparatively weaker position than the state and city authorities as well as the influential builders' lobby and the upper- and upper middle classes lobbying in politics, networking is important not only as a means of mutual learning from each other but also for increasing their power by cooperation. We will start this paragraph from the topic of a network and afterwards focus on the investigated organisations and their networking strategies.

A social network is a structure made of nodes, which are generally individuals or organisations related to each other in specific ways. Network analysis views relationships in terms of nodes and ties. Nodes are the individual or collective actors within the networks whereas ties are the relationships between them. There can be many kinds of ties (e.g. strong and weak ties, mutually directed or one-directed, etc.) and lacking connectedness (structural holes) between the nodes and the ties can be binding or non-binding), short-term or long-term orientated. The network structure is often very complex and can be visualised. Social networks operate on many social levels and play a fundamental role in determining the way problems are solved, organisations are run, and aims are approached. The shape of a network helps determine a network's usefulness to its individuals. Smaller, tighter networks can be less useful to their members than networks with lots of loose connections (weak ties) to individuals outside the main network. More open networks, with many weak ties and social connections, are more likely to introduce new ideas and opportunities to their members than closed networks with many redundant ties.<sup>156</sup> In the field of housing that we discuss here, one can assume different networks of often antagonistic pressure groups, which may either be unlinked or linked to each other if negotiations take place. We take the perspective of actor-centred networks by considering the networks from the perspective of the individual organisation.

How do the organisations investigated execute networking and how do they reason about it? The first incentive for the organisations interviewed in this study is the exchange of information. Another major benefit of networking is to develop a feasible division of labour between network organisations, which leads to an efficiency increase. This results in economies of scale<sup>157</sup> for organisations with similar background, where different organisations specialise in certain fields,

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<sup>155</sup> Cf. Schrader (2008).

<sup>156</sup> Granovetter, Mark (1973): "The strength of weak ties". *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 78, No. 6; May 1973, p. 1360-1380.

<sup>157</sup> In economics economies of scale are referred to as cost advantages resulting from the expansion of enterprises. In this context the term shall not be understood in a strictly economic manner, but rather as an illustration of larger networks enjoying benefits from access to a large pool of information and other resources.

and economies of scope<sup>158</sup> for organisations with different background where e.g. foreign foundations, political parties and professionals like lawyers, architects or doctors are involved.

On the other hand, networks do not only provide benefits for the participating organisations. Entry into networks is accompanied by rising transaction costs. A further problem is loss of independence. Furthermore, increasing complexity of networks leads to higher costs of coordination. Last but not least; network agents may compete for the same resources – money and members, supporters and clientele. A strong resource basis means power and influence within the network.

Referring to the organisations interviewed one can conclude that all of them are involved in networking. All of them also share a kind of sceptical view towards the collaboration with political parties and larger NGOs. This scepticism is based on three assumptions. Firstly, they are scared of losing reputation and trust among the slum dwellers, due to collaboration with political parties. This is not surprising, because the slum dwellers have not experienced an efficient and reliable long-term housing policy, where election promises of the parties were kept. Secondly, as one can see from the interviews, they are convinced that larger NGOs are often closely connected with governmental institutions and therefore have no real interest in improving the housing situation.<sup>159</sup> Furthermore, the smaller organisations have certain reservations concerning cooperation with larger NGOs, fearing that they cannot prevail and assert their objectives and strategies.

However, all organisations, NGOs as well as grassroots organisations, are aware that they have to build up cooperation with and participate in local, national and even international networks and forums to increase pressure on the government. Also most of them are aware that – even if they reject slum rehabilitation policy – in order to achieve their aim of improving the lives of slum dwellers they have to get into strategic cooperation with politicians and builders to be able to change the plans to a certain degree so that they fit better to the living conditions of slum dwellers. Yuva Bharat provides an exception because as a social movement they are very uncompromising. Their actor-centred network is much smaller, and there are hardly any bridges to the networks of antagonistic agents. CISRS, BUILD, SRS, NSDF and CRH already have more complex network structures and emphasise the importance of building such bridges by negotiating with the administration or even participating in planning. Our examples clearly show the relatedness of organisational aims and network structure, respectively complexity of networking.

How do the organisations critically reflect upon their work in the field of housing?

### **10.10. Self-Evaluation**

It is understandable that Adolf Tragler, apparently confronted with unconquerable obstacles, assesses the outreach of the Slum Rehabilitation Society not to be “tremendous”. He considers SRS to be “small fishes” and wonders whether they can make a difference at all. However, SRS’s strives at combining a sensitive approach with a systematic understanding of ground realities and thus improving things on a (perceived) small scale. In order to increase its outreach CISRS avoids emphasising their Christian background and instead emphasises moral/humanistic aspects to be found in all religions. They see themselves as a mediator between city administration and poor people by claiming and representing the people’s demands to the authorities. Hence, SRS’s and CISRS’ self-evaluation tends to be rather realistic.

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<sup>158</sup> Economies of scope is referred to as a concept describing cost advantages resulting from bundling different products in a single package for sale. Economies of scope emerge if the costs of the joint production of different outputs are lower than the sum of the costs of separate production. Analogous to economies of scale in this instance the term shall not be understood in a strictly economic manner, but rather as pointing to advantages resulting from organisations of different background working together on similar issues.

<sup>159</sup> Interview with CRH; Oct. 4, 2007

According to BUILD, people's selfish short-term-orientation and the daily conflict with the authorities frustrate the social workers, because often enough obstacles and impediments seem insurmountable. This frustration leads into desperate struggles and self-doubts raising questions such as: Why are we not able to visibly diminish the social injustice? Why do the poor always have to suffer from the rich?

A major reason of the limited outreach is an insufficiency of resources, especially for smaller groups like Yuva Bharat. While the growing disappointment with political actors creates space for movements like them, the lack of manpower and financial resources inhibits their effective growth. Nevertheless, Yuva Bharat affirms their continuous effort, despite their marginalised impact in comparison to political parties, the builder's lobby, the banks, and even other organisations. But they consider themselves on the right track, regardless of their resource base, since they deem the majority of NGOs as not being partners in the same struggle against injustice, but rather as collaborators and dogsbodies of the World Bank agenda.

## 11. Conclusion

We initially wanted to determine different approaches of social activism on housing problems in slums and squatter settlements. We assumed that the level of social activism correlates with the living conditions, social structure and legal status of the dwellers. Especially their perception of life world seemed important to us. We therefore planned to investigate two types of settlements and organisations working in these two fields: slums (with legal recognition) and in squatter settlements (without such and therefore constant threat of being demolished, so that no stable structures can emerge), to identify different practices of social activism with regard to legal status.

However, during our field research in Mumbai we discovered that we cannot talk about legal slums and illegal squatter settlements as such, due to the fact that legality and illegality of households cuts across all geographical locations. The legal status does not refer to the whole community but is rather contingent to families. Furthermore, even a legal status does not necessarily protect people from demolition and homelessness. We saw that public land is privatised (e.g. airport) and that with privatisation legal claims to resettlement are lost, because these claims are linked to a legalised living on public land. We further noticed the interconnectedness between legal status and ration cards and the corruption of authorities in providing such. We also discussed the practice of resettlement, that one slum hut obtains a claim on one apartment; irrespective of the number of people correspondingly families living in such a hut, and that the number of the built resettlement apartments is insufficient to cater to all affected people. And we witnessed that very often such apartments are not constructed in accordance with the life world of slum dwellers, living and working place often being the same space. The newly built resettlement areas rather resemble miniature middle-class apartments where people leave their home to work outside the premises in offices and shops.

We experienced the destitution of squatters who know that they are going to be evicted in two months without any imagination where to go afterwards. We observed the miserable living conditions in such illegal settlements where even the barest infrastructure (running water taps, health post, school, electricity) is destroyed in order to make the living for the slum dwellers as uncomfortable as possible, in order to motivate them to return to their villages from which they migrated long time ago. We were invited into the interior of many slum huts: very clean and even cosy houses as far as this is possible under such circumstances – just the contrary to the dirty lanes outside, which are immediately becoming torrents during monsoon time; and we experienced the hospitability of the people in their homes. But we also felt hostility from slum dwellers. Some of them aggressively approached us complaining that so many outsiders come, take photographs, collect information, promise changes – but nothing happens. Yet again we also met content apartment dwellers who originated from resettled slum areas and now with regard to their outfit and

their homes' appearances are hardly distinguishable from middle-class people and their living quarters.

Organisations working in the housing policy field are often tied to the location, the particular slum or squatter settlement in which they work. They want to improve the living conditions of all slum dwellers irrespective of their legal status. This includes the living conditions as well as conflict prevention, based on communalism. Of course legal questions arise once resettlement programmes are concerned, since the law distinguishes between legally recognised and illegal slum dwellers, treating them differently in terms of rehabilitation.

Furthermore, we initially talked about class aspects as one important cause of housing problems. The overall approach is that people have to unite to empower themselves, raising the consciousness of shared living conditions and creating an identity based upon political-economical power relations rather than religion, ethnicity or caste. In our interviews we learned that class-consciousness is weak if not even weakening. The willingness to unite increases in life-threatening situations such as demolitions but again decreases in smooth times. Ethnic, religious and caste identities are much stronger than slum-dwellers' identities and open to manipulation by political parties and the state. But also social activism weakens among youth because of atomisation tendencies even among slum dwellers. Although all organisations refer to collective identities as a necessity in the fight for better living conditions, their success to raise such has been very limited so far. The collective mindset of a community appears to be refined within the borders of the particular slum or squatter settlement and even such is weak if the slum population is multi-religious in composition. The shared living circumstances are not the determining factor prompting social activism beyond the limits of one slum or squatter community. Although many slums are threatened by demolition slum dwellers of different slums lack mutual empathy. In everyday life we see that even the marginalised are segregated into religious, ethnic and caste groups forming a complex hierarchy of more and less privileged marginalised people. As if these antagonistic belongings are not enough, party policies further split the marginalised and often convert them into enemies rather than supporting the growth of neighbourhood communities or even a class.

It seems that class-consciousness and struggles of the weak<sup>160</sup> that we occasionally find in the rhetoric of the interviewed organisations (when we asked about it) are a dream, a utopia. Their aims and actions are more grounded, often short-term oriented and with limited sustainability or more directed towards general issues such as capacity building and empowerment, whereas it remains an open question whether capacity building really results in empowered, class-conscious people or whether empowered individuals choose individual strategies to achieve an upward mobility.

Subsequently, we studied what categories of social activists exist in Mumbai. Our research ascertained how the various social agents work, which strategies they follow and how they succeed in different slums. We came to understand that all social agents, whether NGOs or grassroots organisations, are concerned with slum demolitions, but that their actual work is more related to the entire question of housing and poverty rather than the demolitions as such.

In our theoretical assumptions we assumed that NGOs follow the top-down approach while grassroots organisations pursue the bottom-up approach. However, the approaches allude rather to the impulses of the foundation of the particular organisation. Their modes of operation may mutually apply to both types of organisations. NGOs may as well follow a bottom-up operation method and grassroots organisations may exercise top-down practices. Community based decisions are sometimes very important for the organisations, sometimes considered to impede an efficient functioning. As a matter of fact, however, NGOs do not only need legitimisation towards the slum dwellers but also towards the hierarchical structure to which they belong. The latter is often linked to such important questions as funding. These hierarchical structures tend to promote top-down structures and efficiencies since outsiders usually judge their assessments. Hence it is

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<sup>160</sup> Scott, James 1985: *Weapons of the Weak: everyday forms of peasant resistance*. New Haven: Yale. Contrary to Scott we do not refer to certain occupational groups but to the urban poor.

impossible to draw conclusions on operational strategies solely from the formation of the respective organisation.

In addition to the categorisation and different approaches of social agents, we can distinguish two opposite general ideologies behind the work: the ideology that only the slum and squatter dwellers have the right and power to change the system. This tendency can be ascribed to the grassroots organisations. However, as people are not aware of their power “to make the city stand still” they need facilitators to create awareness. The other more conservative ideology is more humanistic, referring to charity as a means of alleviating the suffering of the poor, but not necessarily scrutinising the existent social structure. A typical attitude in development planning is that the poor have no own capacity to change their own destiny – so that they are treated as a passive mass. Most organisations observed are somewhere in between these two opposites. They offer social work and professional assistance from civil society activists but do not limit themselves to charity aspects in their work. They aim at human growth. Particularly for NGOs the consequence for participation is that decision-making takes place by the organisation for reasons of efficiency as well as control, and only in certain aspects of decision-making the target group may participate.

Furthermore, also stereotypes and biased preconceptions of the various social agents involved play a significant role in their acceptance and successful strategy implementation. While in the literature NGOs are romanticised as the big benefactors with expertise and expert knowledge, the contrary bottom-up image found is that they are open to being corrupted by the state or international organisations, since they need financial resources. Grassroots organisations, on the other hand, are deemed inefficient with lack of professionalism as they practise basic democracy, but they are much closer to the people.

Also the authorities and planners apply stereotypes to the social agents. While NGOs are welcomed as respondents and deliverers of information, grassroots movements are hardly considered to be contact persons. Another political reasoning might be that the dialogue with NGOs proves the straightforwardness of the government to search for solutions in the housing dilemma situation. Through amalgamation of political and civil spheres the status quo may even be justified. The NGOs appear to be the mediators between the slum dwellers and grassroots organisations on one end, and the state on the other end. The United Nations developed a scenario that the partnerships between state authorities and NGOs, which seem to have tightened during the last two decades, are rather project-oriented. Nevertheless this relationship might be problematic for the following reason. In the same way as the authorities bail out infrastructure projects to constructors they might (mis)use NGOs as social contractors making infrastructure planning and implementation smoother, thus breaking social resistance. The outcome of the shift of the role of NGOs is that they less address the structural causes of poverty and injustices and increasingly fail to meet their proper assignments. Not only the increase of resources and productivity should be in the focus, but also the redistribution of power and its accessibility, the participation of poor people and their empowerment. According to the UN Habitat Report, individual grassroots organisations possess the lowest bargaining power but they possess the ability to build powerful cooperation with other grassroots or NGOs.<sup>161</sup>

In this context we would like to add another function of grassroots organisations. Due to their closer relation to the slum dwellers they may take a mediating role between slum dwellers and NGOs.

The Third Sector is an outcome of state and market failures. Within this sector we identified NGOs and grassroots organisations. While one might assume close cooperation between them, the relationship seems to be tensed. When there is a certain truth in the prejudice that NGOs cooperate too much with the state, international organisations or even capital, in so far that some of these NGOs even support resettlement projects, the reason behind this might be an allegation that they bespeak the original civil society principle of constituting a sector independent from both state and market and let themselves corrupt. Then grassroots organisations may perhaps consider

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<sup>161</sup> United Nations (2003): “The Challenge of Slums”; global report on human settlements (2003); UN-Habitat; United Nations: [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

NGOs as having failed as social agents (re)presenting the poor while their self-image is that of true and uncompromising defenders of the civil society thought. It is therefore important to understand where grassroots organisations position themselves in society and in relation to NGOs working in the same field.

During our field research we also realised that although slums belong to Mumbai city as the Red Fort region and the Taj Mahal Hotel, we came to understand that not all inhabitants of Mumbai realise slums as places of living and working, since these constitute a social life world totally distinct from their own one. Often they neglect the fact that both life worlds overlap; the latter is built upon exploitation of the former. Slum dwellers work as housemaids in middleclass households, men who return from their office jobs take a cheap three wheeler and go home from the station or they shop in one of the stalls close-by. It even seems that some of the middle-class and upper-class students who sometimes accompanied us have a very limited knowledge of what is going on in slums and slum policy – although they study sociology and are well aware of concepts such as social exclusion. It is essential for an open, democratic society to establish comprehension that every human being has a right to the city<sup>162</sup> and not only those who can afford it. This includes the right to habitat as well as other civic rights referring to equality and justice.

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<sup>162</sup> We should not forget that for those who migrated to the cities and now live in slums these living conditions are often much better than those they had experienced as rural poor. In the villages, poverty is less visible but strongly linked to social exclusion by the caste system.

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Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS): [www.cisrs.org](http://www.cisrs.org)

CRIT Collective Research Initiatives Trust: <http://crit.org.in/>

Human Rights Educations Associates: [www.hrea.org](http://www.hrea.org)

Habitat Jam/UN-Habitat: [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

Homeless International: [www.homeless-international.org](http://www.homeless-international.org)

India Together: [www.indiatogether.org](http://www.indiatogether.org)

Karmayog: [www.karmayog.org](http://www.karmayog.org)

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## **Appendix: Background of Organisations – Portraits**

This appendix provides an overview of our interview partner organisations in Mumbai in alphabetical order.

### ***BUILD – Bombay Urban Industrial League for Development***

The Bombay Urban Industrial League for Development (BUILD) was founded in 1973 as a part of the Mumbai Diocese of the Urban Industrial Mission of Church of North India. BUILD is a charitable society. The main focus of its work is empowerment of the poor (especially of slum dwellers), and fight for their rights with regard to livelihoods, land, and human dignity. The organisation works in two administrative wards of the city and initiates people's ward committees and forums to address the civic matters in the area. It is conducting training programmes, workshops, seminars and campaigns on a wide range of concerns, e.g. women's saving groups, small-scale enterprises, and interaction with official, legal, and financial authorities, or children's education groups. In the slums, the organisation establishes contact with the dwellers through training programs and workshops. The local reference group members are directly involved at all levels, while the NGO staff considers itself as only acting as facilitators.

BUILD periodically assesses its activity through independent evaluators and is constituent member of many networking groups on the local as well as on the national level. Although it has a Christian background, the clientele are underprivileged people from different religious backgrounds.

### ***CISRS – Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society***

The CISRS (Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society) was established in 1957 as an ecumenical research institution in India. In the first place it mainly focussed on developing „a Christian social thought“ (website) among the Indian population. When it started its work, CISRS was predominantly concerned with academic work, i.e. research and publication in the field of religion, politics and economy. During the late 1970s, CISRS took up a social action programme with special emphasis on empowerment of the urban poor, landless rural labourers, women and Dalits. Since then, the organisation has been actively involved in a community organisation training programme.

CISRS functions as an umbrella organisation, which by now unites more than 100 non-political, secular people's organisations e.g. PROUD (People's Responsible Organisation of United Dharavi) and POWER (People's Organisation of Wadala for Equality and Rights). Their work is not only limited to India, but goes far beyond. They built up a network of contacts and cooperation with foreign organisations (e.g. in China and Indonesia) aiming at developing strategies against „the anti – people policies“ (locoa.net).

In the last decades of their work, the World Council of Church, Bread for the World and a German church group funded CISRS. Apart from substantial decrease in funding during the past years, some financial problems appeared, caused by a change of leadership.

### ***PROUD – People's Responsible Organisation of Unites Dharavi***

PROUD is a sub-organisation of CISRS, which we will describe at this point more in detail, since they were one of our key informants. They provide a good example for an organisation as an outcome of the Community Organising Training Programme (COTP) initiated by CISRS.

The COTP started on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1979 with the aim to „build a people's organisation on political secular basis and also a process of issue solving with community participation.“

(Interview). At this point there had already been some unorganised approaches in form of ad – hoc chawl committees in Dharavi. Under the COTP it now became possible to work more organised, systematically and skilled, leading to more success in organising people and their collective action. These improvements convinced the residents of the need and importance of a functioning planning resulting in the foundation of People's Responsible Organisation of United Dharavi, which took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> December of the same year.

As a community-based organisation they mainly focus on creating awareness among the slum dwellers, arranging legal, technical and administrative support, representing the people of Dharavi in negotiations with the authorities (e.g. Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA)) and ensuring people's participation in planning and decision making processes concerning the implementation of Dharavi Development.

### ***CRH – Committee for the Right to Housing***

CRH is a widespread grassroots network of about 45-50 NGOs, CBOs, lawyers, labour unions and other kinds of mass organisations mainly within Mumbai, but also in four other cities of India. Funding is done through “personal contributions” and indicates that there is no organisational funding of CRH like in the case of the Church with CISRS. CRH generally opposes networks with political parties but has contacts to single politicians who also favour a policy of making the city “inclusive for all its residents”. CRH was founded in 1985 in Mumbai “in response to widespread demolition and violation of housing rights of the poor in the city”. In its self-description in 1985 CRH initiated “the only campaign with an all India label in terms of involving various trade unions, mass organisations and also parliamentarians”.<sup>163</sup> It pursues its activities mainly through community workers, who are paid and in many cases work full-time for the organisation. In 1990/91 their housing campaigns collapsed. In their own view this is mainly an outcome of the decline of industrial production in Mumbai which made it more difficult to organise workers, and through the ever more accelerating process of globalization after the decline of the Eastern bloc. One of their aims is to evaluate the relationship of modernization and development. They do not oppose modernization and development in general, but they demand that slum dwellers participate from such developments in the fields covered. Contrary to other organisations investigated they apply a non-dogmatic approach towards resettlement of slum dwellers since relocation may be necessary for economic development of the particular area, and from such slum dwellers may also participate once they are resettled, provided that the resettlement areas are not at the outskirts of the city. But members of CRH are also aware that resettlement disturbs the livelihood-system of slum dwellers.

### ***NSDF and SPARC - National Slum Dwellers Federation and the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres***

The National Slum Dwellers Federation organises slum-dwellers in cooperatives. While from such a perspective they can be characterised as a community-based organisation, they built a widespread network all over India and even beyond. NSDF works in 71 Indian cities, representing 750.000 households.

NSDF assists slum dwellers to obtain secure tenure, adequate housing and develop basic infrastructure. Households are organised according to geographical location in order to negotiate with the landowning authorities. Membership is not individually, but bound to the location, where the slum dwellers are living (cluster membership). The cooperatives formed are based on thrift and credit and housing issues.

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<sup>163</sup> Interview with Prof. Metha; Oct.10<sup>th</sup> 2007

Although formed in the early 1970s, the Federation only began to make an impact on the lives of the poor in 1985 when it began to cooperate with SPARC. The outcome of this meeting was the formation of Mahila Milan (Hindi for “women together”), a women’s organisation.

SPARC, short for Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres is one of the largest and most influential NGOs in India working in the field of housing and infrastructure. This NGO was established in 1984 by a group of social workers and other professionals who worked for welfare-oriented NGOs. SPARC plays the role of supporter by designing and developing strategies to enable their partners to deal with government agencies as well as by performing administrative tasks.

SPARC’s, NSDF’s and Mahila Milan’s self-description is “The Alliance”. The Alliance started by setting up a savings scheme for providing credit during crises. The Alliance is described as one of the most powerful and visible organisations directly working with urban poor in Mumbai, being recognised by the state. Their all-Indian network also involves exchange programs with Africa and Asia.

The sociologist Arjun Appadurai summarises their approach as follows. “They have also agreed upon a radical approach to the politicisation of the urban poor that is fundamentally populist and anti-expert in strategy and flavour. [...] The first principle of this approach is that no one knows more about how to survive poverty than the poor themselves.”<sup>164</sup>

As a fourth organisational unit a not-for-profit construction company called SPARC Samudaya Nirman Sahayak (SSNS), short for “SPARC assistance to collective construction”, complements the Alliance. SPARC, Mahila Milan and NSDF are partners and joint owners. This company aims at assisting communities in obtaining technical support and financial resources.

Because of this alliance the work of SPARC and NSDF seems to be inseparably connected, which makes it difficult to distinguish between the responsibilities of both organisations. Their approach being based on political negotiations with the state bureaucracy and city authorities is occasionally suspicious in the eyes of other local organisations.

### ***SRS – Slum Rehabilitation Society***

When during the 1960s and 1970s the urbanization process led to proliferation of slums, the government had still not found a policy to effectively address the problem. At that time Adolf Tragler, an Austrian seminarian and the present director of the Slum Rehabilitation Society, believed that rehabilitation of slum dwellers in apartment houses might contribute to addressing housing problems of urban poor. He then founded SRS. The objectives of the NGO then were to provide accommodation with sanitary infrastructure for hutment and pavement dwellers, and, on the other hand, to work for the upgrading of these people. Today, they stand to “improve the quality of life by partnering with the various stakeholders in building sustainable social structures and creating environmentally compatible housing”<sup>165</sup>.

SRS mainly focuses on rehabilitation and resettlement, encourages self-development initiatives by (ex-) slum dwellers (e.g. through financial, technical, or legal support), and carries out consultancy activities and special projects. These include e.g. the Slum Electrification and Loss Reduction Programme or institutionalizing pre-primary education. Recently, SRS began emphasising the need for a post rehabilitation policy to ensure a smooth transition for rehabilitated people. These activities include awareness building for the maintenance of the buildings and support in social, financial and legal matters deriving from their new status (study centres, community kitchens, crèches, maintenance costs, etc.). SRS abstains from political involvement and interacts with local

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<sup>164</sup> Arjun Appadurai: „Deep Democracy: urban governmentality and the horizon of politics: Environment&Urbanization”; Vol. 13, No 2, October 2001, p. 29

<sup>165</sup> Quotation from self-portrayal in an email, received before starting the research in India.

federations, in partnership with the government and with academic institutes. The organisation is accredited by the Credibility Alliance and the Indian platform IndianNGOs.com

## **YUVA BHARAT**

Yuva Bharat (engl.: All India Revolutionary Youth Organisation) is a people's organisation working at the all-India level. In Mumbai they have about 20 members. Basically they try to make slum dwellers aware of their oppression and their rights aiming at creating collective consciousness. By following the idea that all Indias poor are in the same situation and should stand together for their rights they try to mobilise as many people as possible by organising rallies or marches and public meetings within communities in and around Mumbai. They also want to make people aware that the caste system and caste policies like communalism split their joint power and therefore support the present social structure. They are informally organised and have only one basic principle they have agreed upon: all members oppose caste and class system. Beyond this point every member is free to choose an issue to work on and the way to proceed. They call this preceding a "practised democracy" which brings in a variety of fields of action like for example prevention of demolitions or participation in anti-SEZ<sup>166</sup> or generally anti-capitalistic movements.

Yuva Bharat is a grassroots (bottom-up) organisation, which neither believes in political parties' promises to support slum dwellers nor any larger NGO, since they cooperate with political authorities. Anyway, they see the necessity to organise in local, national and international networks and forums as these provide a space for discussing topical subjects, exchanging experiences or building coalitions between mass organisations, other social movements and NGOs.

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<sup>166</sup> The project 'Maha Mumbai Special Economic Zone' (MMSEZ) is proposed to be setup in Navi Mumbai area, as an international standard business centre. For the implementation of this project 10.000ha of land shall be developed over a period of ten years, directly affecting 15 villages, approximately 5521 households and 26171 persons. For further information see: Report by TATA-Institute [http://www.tiss.edu/SIA\\_MMSEZ.pdf](http://www.tiss.edu/SIA_MMSEZ.pdf) or official website <http://www.navimumbaisez.com/>

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