



Enclave urbanism in Mumbai: An Actor-Network-Theory analysis of urban (dis)connection

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ABSTRACT

Mumbai is changing quickly. Condominiums and office towers shoot up everywhere, shopping malls and multiplexes are opened, train lines, motorways and other infrastructures are planned and built, and informal settlements grow. These changes are easily read in terms of the alarmist narrative on urban fragmentation that depicts 'enclave urbanism' as a tool of urban elites. Employing the forces of globalisation, these elites are said to enhance their dominance through the development of walled and well-connected enclaves, while pushing away underprivileged groups. Analysing the Tardeo Towers project in Mumbai, this paper employs Actor-Network-Theory to reflect on the adequacy of this narrative. In this city urban enclaves turn out to be nothing new. And while globalisation and economic liberalisation do support the emergence of new urban enclaves, domestic characteristics like the existing urban landscape and its objects, the structure of the Indian state, land and building regulations, corruption, mafia, and the business-politics nexus structure the specific local expression of urban enclaves as well. We conclude that urban objects like the Tardeo Towers create and bind groups of stakeholders in new and surprising ways. While some elites do benefit from these urban enclaves, others resist, and underprivileged groups do benefit as well. Therefore, the study of 'enclave urbanism' has to move beyond a general alarmist narrative, towards precise empirical research into the causes and effects of the emergence of specific enclaves in specific local contexts.

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1. Mumbai – the making of another enclave city?

"Ten years ago, the perception of this area was totally different. It was a mill workers area. It was very central in Bombay, but it was also always a poorer part. Just like you do not want to go into a slum, you did not want to get into the mill area as well. All of that has changed over the last decade". We are talking with the owner of one of the former cotton mills in Mumbai's Girangaon, or the 'mill village'. Until the start of the 1980s, this 2000-plus acre area was home to some sixty mills that had been the basis for the city's emergence as an industrial centre in the nineteenth century (Chandavarkar, 1994; Dwivedi, 2006). At its peak, the area housed some 250,000 mill workers, creating a unique workman's culture (Chandavarkar, 1994; D'Monte, 2006). But this is all history. With the demise of the textile industry in the 1970s, the Bombay Textile Strike in 1981–1982, and new land regulations, one mill after another closed. Since the early 1990s, mills started to be controversially redeveloped into high-income apartment buildings, shopping malls, leisure spaces, and office towers, changing the Mill area beyond recognition.

The Mill area developments are part of an endless list of new projects in Mumbai (Fig. 1). These include office areas like Mindspace in Malad, the Bandra Kurla Complex between Bandra and Kurla, and the Dhirubhai Ambani Knowledge City in Navi Mumbai; mixed use areas like various former mills in Lower Parel or Hirvanandani Gardens in Powai; housing projects ranging from the glitzy Tardeo Towers to the middle-class Mittal Housing Enclave in peripheral Vasai; new public spaces like the Bandra seafronts; and infrastructure projects such as the Bandra-Worli Sealink, the metro from Versova to Ghatkopar, the JV Link Road, and the new JNTP harbour East of the city. And there are many more plans: amongst others for two Special Economic Zones (SEZ's) in Navi Mumbai encompassing a new harbour and a new international airport, trans-harbour links, eight more metro lines, and numerous housing, office and retail projects.

Together, these new developments contribute to the transformation of the urban structure of Mumbai. This transformation was kick-started after the 1980s, when economic liberalisation ended a decennia-long national economic policy of import substitution (Panagariya, 2008). The enhanced integration of India in the world economy coincided with the rapid expansion of new middle classes (Varma, 2007). The majority of the current developments mainly seem to cater to the consumption preferences of these emerging groups.

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MUMBAI MAP project overview

- ① Bandra, Bandra Kurla Complex
- ② Bandra, seafront
- ③ Bandra-Worli Sealink
- ④ JV Link Road
- ⑤ Malad, mindspace
- ⑥ Parel, Phoenix Mills
- ⑦ Parel, The Millarea
- ⑧ Powai, Hiranandani Gardens
- ⑨ Tardeo, Imperial towers
- ⑩ Vasai, Mittal housing enclave
- ⑪ Versova to Ghatkopar metro
- ⑫ Navi Mumbai, Dhirubai Ambani Knowledge City
- ⑬ Navi Mumbai, Special Economic Zones (SEZ's)
- ⑭ Navi Mumbai, JNTP harbour
- ⑮ Navi Mumbai, Trans-harbour link

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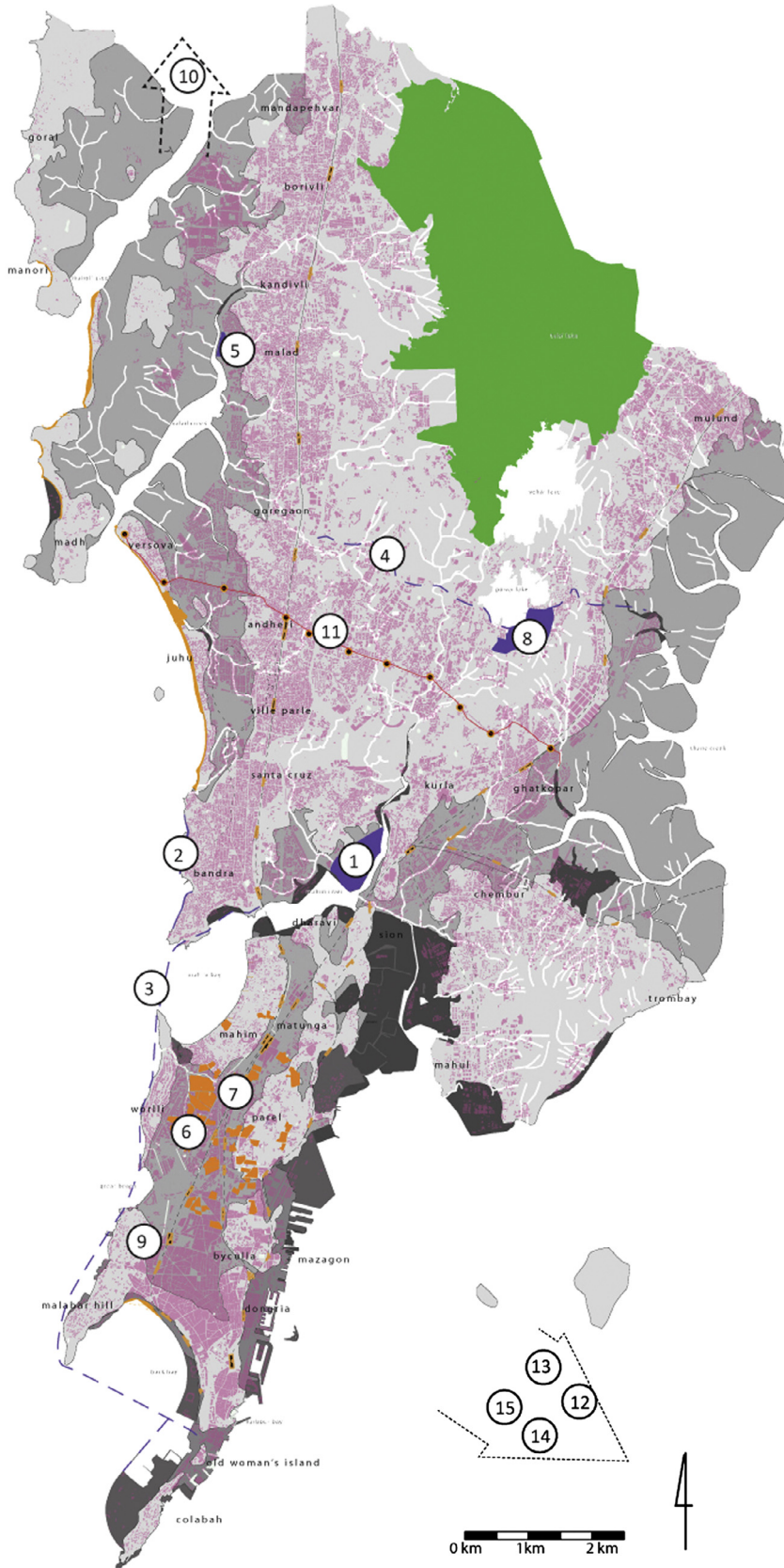


Fig. 1. Recent landmark projects in Mumbai.

Many of these new developments are physically separated from their surroundings through walls and gates. Mumbai's urban transformation is thus easily read in terms of alarmist studies of the

fragmentation of cities in the post-industrial society. These studies argue that previously integrated cities transform into 'archipelagos of enclaves' (Graham and Marvin, 2001; Hajer and Reijndorp,

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