Mumbai slums since independence: Evaluating the policy outcomes

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A B S T R A C T

The urbanization process in Mumbai is closely integrated with housing crisis and informality in settlement growth. Slums have emerged as a significant settlement form, catering to the housing demand of a large section of the population of Mumbai, primarily for the urban poor. Statistics show that nearly half of the Mumbai population lives in slum areas which in turn spatially occupy a very small portion of the city. Since 1947 (i.e., after independence), a range of policies related to housing and slums have been implemented at various points of time in the city planning framework. However, the housing crisis situation has worsened over time and resulted in further slum growth. In the past, research has concentrated on spatio-temporal identification and spread of slums. However, the policy impacts on reduction of slums is relatively a less touched area, especially in developing cities like Mumbai. In this study, authors argue that the housing and land policies implemented in Mumbai to solve the problem of slums have actually provided the momentum to the undercurrents that fuel further proliferation of informality. The paper analyses these policies chronologically and focuses on the persuasive top down approach of policy implementation. Using the framework of bounded rationality, authors develop a "*cause-effect*" model to identify the impact of ten major housing and land policies implemented since independence. Further, a gap coherence analysis revealed the lack of participation of direct stakeholders (i.e., the slum dwellers). The study proposes participatory approach as an alternative to the current policy frameworks. Internalizing the strengths of the actual users in the policy framework may unlock the opportunities for the success of the policies.

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1. Introduction

The inability of the federated "State" to meet the growing housing demand for population has emerged as a major crisis in Indian metro cities such as Mumbai. In spite of various policy based efforts to reduce the housing demand gap, the dilemma still persists. Mumbai has been the financial capital of India as well as the largest urban agglomeration of the country. The city has attracted a large population from different parts of the country both informal and informal sectors. During 1960s the industrialization phase of Mumbai had been coupled with huge immigration of low skilled labor force in to the city. These workers were predominantly poor and the only choice of affordable shelter available to them was the slums. A glaring evidence of this failure has been the mushrooming of informal settlement, commonly known as slums, in Mumbai.

Slums have been an integral part of urbanization process of Mumbai and are invoked as an iconic example in the twenty-first century (Anand & Rademacher, 2011).

Census of India defines slums as "*residential areas where dwellings are unfit for human habitation by reasons of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangements and design of such buildings, narrowness or faulty arrangement of street, lack of ventilation, light, or sanitation facilities or any combination of these factors which are detrimental to the safety and health*". The slums are further classified into three heads (as per Census of India): (1) notified slums, (2) recognized slums and (3) identified slums.

a. *Notified slums*-All notified areas in a town or city notified as 'Slum' by State, Union Territory (UT) Administration or Local Government under any Act including a 'Slum Act'.
b. *Recognized slums*-All areas recognized as 'Slum' by State, UT Administration or Local Government, Housing and Slum Boards, which may have not been formally notified as slum under any act.

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c. *Identified slums* – A compact area of at least 300 populations or about 60–70 households of poorly built congested tenements, in unhygienic environment usually with inadequate infrastructure and lacking in proper sanitary and drinking water facilities.

These slums accommodate the urban poor who also seek accommodation in "chawls"(explained in subsequent section) or live as pavement dwellers. Though the living conditions of both the "chawls" and the pavement dwellers are similar to that of the slums, but by definition these cannot be considered as same.

Thus, it becomes self-explanatory that the slums cannot be considered as a livable habitat. A general tendency of a "planned city" has been to exclude the poor (i.e. major urban planning policies tend towards removal of informality from the urban space for efficient planning (Watson, 2009)). Slums are generally looked upon as seedbeds for crime and are considered mandatory to be evicted to make the cities livable and safe (UNSP, 1996). Such measures have also been witnessed in most of the initial planning policies of Mumbai. Efforts to remove vulnerability from urban spaces have often translated to displacement of these slums if not their complete eradication (Stecko & Barber, 2007). As Mumbai moves toward becoming a global city, providing shelter will remain a major challenge. As per Census 2001, more than half of the city's population lived in the slums; it has seen a marginal decrease to 41.9% in the last decade. The distribution of slum population in different wards of Mumbai shows that majority of the wards have more than 50% of the population living in slums (see Fig 1). The stacked chart in Fig. 1 shows the proportion of slum population to the total population of the wards.

Such distribution does not follow any regular pattern and is highly dispersed in the form of slum pockets throughout the city. In other words, in every part of the city there is some kind of slum development.

The provision of shelter has been considered to be the responsibility of the Government. The Indian Constitution also provides land, housing, urban development and provision of civic infrastructure as State subjects, and are under direct jurisdiction of State Government. As far as the question of affordability is concerned, the higher income groups have plethora of choices. With the housing loans provided by the banks and the financial institutes, it caters to the middle income households' housing demands. However, housing emerges as a problem for the lower income groups (LIG) and the economically weaker section (EWS), which constitute the urban poor class. According to Choguill (1993), though historically housing has been regarded as a non-productive investment and an individual responsibility, provision of housing for the poor has been taken up to be the responsibility of the State. As stated earlier, there have been many policies formulated and implemented in the last six decades to solve this problem, but the attainment of success can hardly be claimed. The crisis still persists; and in many cases has accelerated after the policy implementation. The present study highlights the impact of various policy initiatives on the housing issues, especially that of slums, in Mumbai.

Existing research on Indian slums mostly focus on spatiotemporal identification and its spatial spread; however, understanding the policy impacts on reduction of slums is relatively less studied. This is especially true for developing cities like Mumbai (Bakore, 2007). In a study by Kit, Lüdeke, and Reckien (2012), they attempted identification of slum areas in Hyderabad (one of the metropolitan cities in India) using "lacunarity" based pattern recognition. Similarly, Taubenböck and Kraff (2014) studied the slums from morphological point of view and identified the physical features of slums in Mumbai. Kohli, Sliuzas, Kerle, and Stein (2012) tried to amalgamate the general indicators of settlement types at three spatial levels namely environment, settlement and objects.
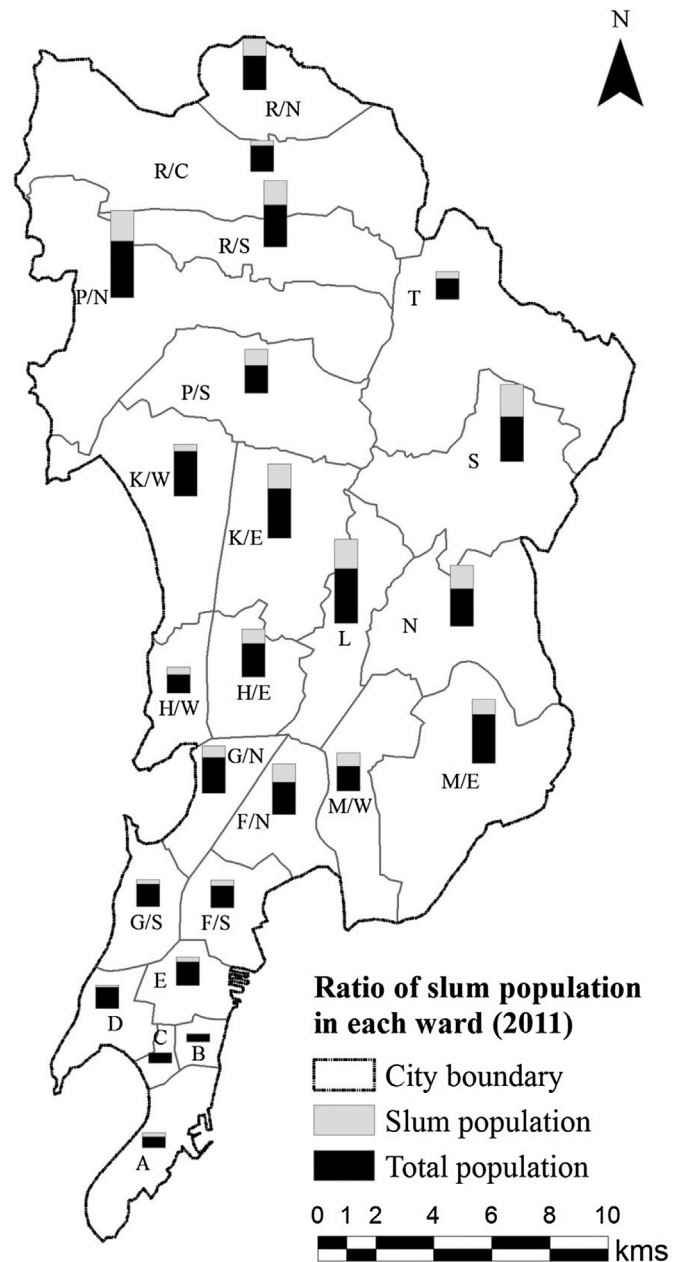

Fig. 1. Ward wise distribution of Slum population (in percentage). Note: Alphabets within the polygons depict respective ward name.
Source: Adapted from Census of India 2011.

The indicators considered location and neighborhood characteristics for environment; shape and density of the settlement; and access network and building characteristic for object spatial level. Baud, Pfeffer, Sridharan, and Nainan (2009) identified hot spots of poverty clustering in different degrees besides the slum area, in Indian metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai. Patel, Koizumi, and Crooks (2014) estimated the total number of slum households in Mumbai and Kolkata based on a new criterion Slum Severity Index and found that there is an existing gap between identification of slums by the Census of India and United Nation (UN) Habitat in Mumbai and Kolkata. They concluded that the Census categories might not be fruitful for urban planning and policymaking. Roy, Lees, Palavalli, Pfeffer, and Sloot (2014) devised a new technique called *slumulation* to model the informal growth