

Mumbai slums¹

31



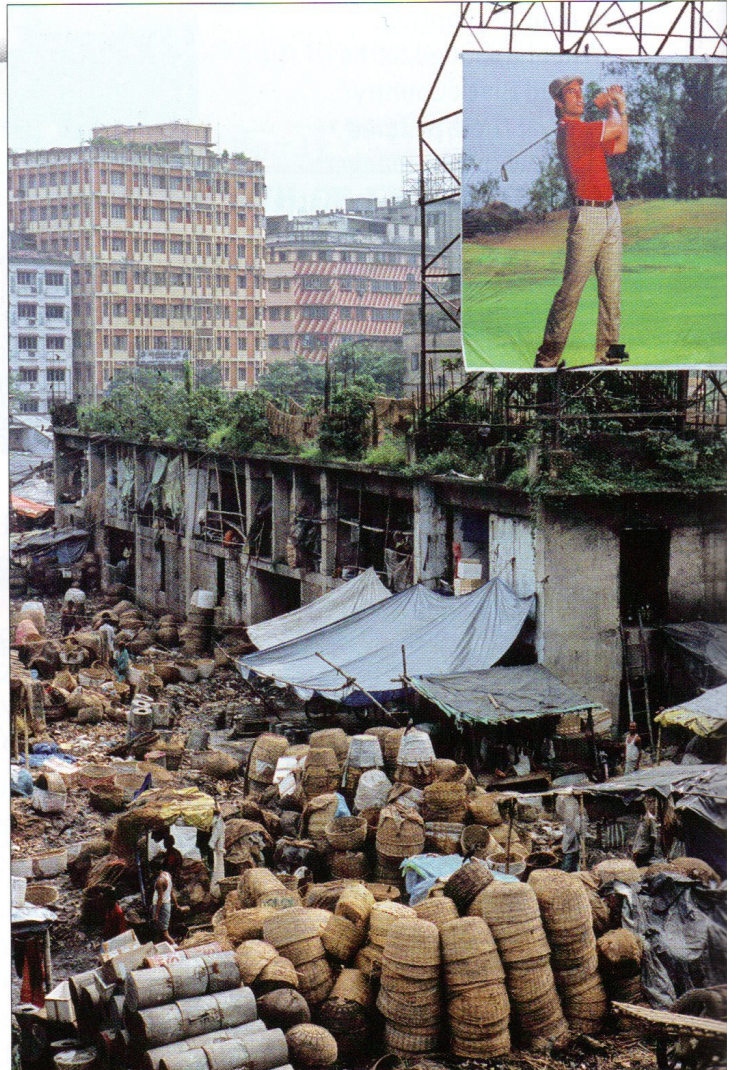
Mumbai – according to the UN – has a population of 19 million. And the UN forecasts² that total will rise to more than 26 million by 2025. At that point, Mumbai [...] would be the most heavily populated “urban agglomeration” in the world, apart from Tokyo and its surroundings. Mumbai’s increase in population will partly be caused by increasing life expectancy and partly by migration from other, poorer, parts of India. Although Mumbai is India’s commercial capital and rents for luxury apartments are some of the highest in the world, it is estimated that more than half the city’s population live in slums. And controversial plans to redevelop the slums highlight some of the problems faced by mega-cities around the world.

As Mumbai has expanded, the 600 acres of land which Dharavi occupies has become increasingly valuable real estate³. So the idea was born that Dharavi could be redeveloped. The slum tenements⁴ would be torn down, part of the land sold for commercial property development and some of the profits used to build high rise blocks and workshops⁵ for the Dharavi community. The man who has been driving the scheme forward for over a decade is Mukesh Mehta. He made his fortune by building luxury homes in the US and now describes himself as a “social entrepreneur”, determined to bring improved healthcare, education and job opportunities to Dharavi, as well as big profits for the property developers chosen to take part in the scheme.

But there is fierce opposition to the scheme within Dharavi. Rajiv Korde is 40 and has lived in the area all his life. He speaks with pride⁶ of the community spirit and the tolerance between the slum’s many different religious groups. He is not opposed to the idea of redevelopment. But he argues that the current proposal is too generous to the property developers and does not provide enough for the Dharavi community.

There is a fierce argument about numbers. Mukesh Mehta’s redevelopment plan envisages building new apartments for 57,000 families. The campaigners claim that there are something like 90,000 families living in Dharavi now, so not everyone will be accommodated. The new apartments will be provided free. But some Dharavi residents are suspicious that charges for water and electricity may be more than they can afford⁷.

“Mumbai’s slum life poses world problem”, BBC News, February 26th, 2008, by Nils Blythe



1. bidonville – 2. prévoit – 3. immobilier – 4. logements (taudis) – 5. ateliers – 6. fierté – 7. se payer

READING

1. Look and speak

- a. Look at the title and at the picture
Try to define what « a slum » can be
- b. look at the sources and introduce the document
- c. Focus on the date and comment on it.

2. Read and speak

a. Match each paragraph with a title

- a dilemma
- a counter-argument
- a project
- a two-faced city

b. List the causes for the growth of the slums

- c. What is Mehta's idea ?
- d. Why is Mehta criticized ?

e. Say if these statements are right or wrong and justify by quoting from the text.

- Mumbai is the only city in the world facing this type of issue
- Dharavi is in the suburbs of Mumbai
- Dharavi has become attractive because of the development of Bombay
- Mehta's experience in property development has not been proved yet.
- Mehta sustains social values in his project
- Mehta's project is meant to suit all the inhabitants of the slum.