

Ideology of Urban Restructuring in Mumbai: Serving the International Capitalist Agenda

Swapna Banerjee-Guha
Department of Geography,
University of Mumbai
Mumbai, India.

1. Introduction:

Questions of spatial variability in contemporary global restructuring and the resultant urban and regional transformations have attained a crucial significance in the contemporary discourse in Human Geography. Cities and regions in the periphery of the world economy occupy the centre-stage (or centrespace) of such discourses as they offer a tremendous diversity in their global-local networks. The dependent (subservient) hierarchical status of the countries and the prevailing political economic order, however is reflected in their urban/regional restructuring reaffirming that globalisation rests on a divided world and aggravates this disparity syndrome. Thus Mumbai's contemporary urban restructuration and space transformation advocating renewed concentration of specific economic activities within the metropolis have a direct link to the current globalisation and liberalisation process. Transformation of the built environment of Mumbai ought to be analysed with the above background of the world city hietus.

Mumbai as a global city construct fits partly to Hymer's (1976) world city model but more to the recent non-Fordist global city model of production disaggregation and flexibilisation (Banerjee-Guha, 1997). The latter considerably explains the logic of contemporary urban restructuring and the ideology behind it. The essential difference between Mumbai as an upcoming (sic) global city and London, New York or Tokyo as established ones does not lie only in the time lag. It rests

mainly on the placement of their respective nation states in the world economic hierarchy in which Mumbai occupies a position of a tail order. Logic of globalisation presupposes that integration of cities like Mumbai in the world system (whereby specific cities are upgraded to a global status) operates in a hierarchical set up in which upgrading or downgrading of their respective nation states finally determines their actual placement in the system. The latter thus is not a smooth, homogenous whole. It reflects a divided world (Laclau, 1971) where capitalism operates as a mode of exchange as well as a mode of production. The historical process of subversion of these cities to the vagaries of international market since colonial time can thus be identified as a characteristic feature of expansion of a capitalism on the one hand, while on the other, their cultural transformation can be explained by the hegemonistic cultural impact (Gramschis, 1971) of the world order.

Globalisation, therefore, should not be misunderstood as homogenisation (Featherstone, 1990). While cities and regions around the world are getting incorporated into the above process, they are simultaneously exhibiting characteristics that are more diverse and complex than ever especially due to the relations of their local regional base. For example, unlike the cities of the industrialised world, Mumbai is a marginal partner of global restructuring, geared up to the needs of restructuration and yet showing signs of acute tensions relating to regional cultural aspects.

This paper attempts to examine the ideology and the policies behind the contemporary urban development pattern in Mumbai with special reference to the restructuring of the erstwhile economy and land-use pattern. Before we go into the details on the above, it is worthwhile to take a look at the process of the growth of built environment and the role of urban planning therein.

2. Built Environment and the Role of Urban Planning:

Built environment, a long-lived phenomenon in the urban development process is fixed in space whose individual elements may be produced, maintained, managed and owned by diverse class and economic interests. A problem of co-ordination may arise out of it as individual producers may not always act to produce the proper mix of elements in space. The physical and cultural landscape created at one point of time may be suited to the needs of the society at that given point but become antagonistic later with the dynamics of accumulation and societal growth altering the use value requirements of both capital and labour (Harvey, 1985). In such situations tensions may arise as the long-lived use values embedded in the built environment cannot easily be altered or transformed on a grand scale. Urban development process of large cities is replete with such tensions reflecting the predicament of class struggles over control of space and spatial attributes.

Intervention by capital in struggles over the built environment is usually done through the agency of state power. State intervention thus becomes an omnipresent feature in the complex process of shaping and reshaping of the built environment. Various state regulations, legitimising control over space epitomise the abuse of monopoly power as the latter is all too easy to accumulate in spatial terms. The exact mix of private market, monopolistic control and state intervention, however, varies from time to time in any urban development endeavour. The mix that is chosen at a given point of time does ensure the creation of a built environment that serves the purpose of social reproduction in a manner to avoid crisis for a considerable length of time. State interventions are expected to stabilise crisis situations to create conditions for balanced growth. It achieves to contain civil strife and factional struggles by (a) repression, using force, (b) co-optation, by political or economic manoeuvring and (c) integration by harmonising the demands of warring classes or factions (Harvey, 1985). Only if it succeeds in internalising the conflicting interests of classes, factions or diverse

geographical groupings in its processes, can the state effectively perform all the above functions. A social democratic state due to its general structure does achieve in internalising diverse conflicting interests by means of regulations and checks and contains class contradictions to a given limit albeit with predilections towards the capitalist faction. It is only in times of crises that the instrumentalities of state power become overtly biased and active in safeguarding the interest of capital.

Urban planning occupies an important niche within the total complex of the instrumentalities of state power. Due to diverse cross currents of conflicts that get internalised in the state machinery, some sense of real limitations are placed upon the process of urban planning as well as on the planner. As the planner, equipped with essential powers, directly contributes to the process of social reproduction and transformation of the built environment, it is expected that the planning process should remain relatively open. By creating conditions for balanced growth, reducing civil strife and maintaining use values and creating exchange values for spatial elements, the job of urban planner becomes a complex one. His/her role derives a legitimacy mainly from the task of intervention to restore a social balance and define policies that facilitate social control and establish harmony through integration. Neither does this necessarily identify the planner with the maintenance of the status quo, nor does it make planning a 'defender of public interest'. As definitions of public interest, inequity or imbalance also pass through a changing set of definitions suited to the reproduction of the social order, the task of planning gets related to a rational socio-spatial ordering. While some planners are grossly technocratic and seek to qualify all political issues as technical issues thereby ideologically marginalising the issue of class conflicts on the control over built environment, some take an exaggerated political stance. With changing circumstances the planner's world view may alter. Irrespective

of these stances, the very mechanism of urban planning produces a complex mix with a right to intervene in a realistic and advantageous way that appears justifiable and legitimate (Harvey 1981).

With the above conceptual backdrop we now take a look at the reshaping and transformation of the built environment of Mumbai in recent years with an ideological support of the planning mechanism.

3. Contemporary Urban Development in Mumbai: Legitimisation of a Skewed Planning Strategy:

During the initial post independence years gap between the declared planned objective and the obtained reality continued to increase in the arena of urban development in Mumbai. In black and white, need for providing for the poor and improving the overall quality of life in the metropolis went on being projected while the share in the built environment hardly reached the larger section of the population. In all sectors of housing, transportation, recreation, ownership of land, health or education, segmentation got pronounced leading to a visible dualism in the social and economic space of the metropolis. As mentioned earlier, however, the facade of democratisation of planning process and the planning methods *inter alia* looked overtly appealing on moral grounds (Mahadevia, 1998).

With the introduction of the liberalisation policy in 1991, however, the gap between declared objectives and actual projects started reducing. With an ideological support to increase efficiency in all spheres, urban planning in Mumbai now drew up an agenda of technically managing the urban space primarily for lending a global status to the city than to intervene for distributive justice. Shift in the official planning strategy in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region can best be assessed by examining some key elements of the Regional Development Plan published by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region

and Regional Development Authority in 1995 in the backdrop of the previous Plan of 1973-74.

Without challenging the need for reviewing and altering the mechanism and elements of a major plan like the MMR plan, serious questions can be raised about (1) the total shift of the basic objective of the MMRDA itself which is a planning authority of the entire metropolitan region, and (2) the basis of the new plan. The long hailed idea of dispersal and decentralisation has been found to receive a volte-face in the new plan by getting replaced by a policy of concentration and that too in Mumbai itself. Despite MMRDA's official admission of Mumbai's population pressure, poor infrastructure and higher level of environment pollution and a declining economy, it is interesting to note that the plan echoes the current capitalist perception of the role of large cities in the present era and looks at Mumbai with a renewed interest to facilitate its further growth. This renewed vigour, however, does not rest on Mumbai's capacity vis-à-vis its organised economic base but in its potential role in integrating the country's economy with the rest of the world (MMRDA 1995). It also comments that with Greater Mumbai's status as the country's financial capital, its leadership in India's international trade, its strategic location with respect to the global market centres, its potential for fostering wide range of technical, professional and business services, Mumbai can emerge as an international city having the potential of developing financial and business services and high-tech export oriented industries (MMRDA 1995). The plan does admit that industrial employment in the organised sector in the metropolis has declined but puts hope on the high-tech export sector when it is widely known that the said sector does not contribute towards the growth of employment, increase of purchasing power of the people or for that matter, standard of living. Further, the plan also suggests a shift in the financial resourcing and administration from public sector to private sector. The goal, according to MMRDA, "cannot be achieved through sole reliance on public investment, regulations and controls. It calls for an approach that would

facilitate increased investment by private sector in infrastructure and other developments, enable appropriate structural changes in the region's economy and permit adoption of land-use policies that respond to market potential" (MMRDA, 1995). One can see in this statement the stress given on private investment and the short thrift to the public sector. The direction also is clear: business and commercial interests are now the most important aspects in urban planning that would augment privatisation of infrastructure. Shift from the earlier policy of providing infrastructure and employment to the larger section of the society, needs mention. Regarding the urban economy and employment strategy it is worth mentioning that over the last two decades there has been a gradual but steady shift from manufacturing to trading and services in Mumbai. While the proportion of manufacturing employment from total employment has reduced from 36% in 1980 to 28.5% in 1990, in trade, finances and services sector it has increased from 52.1% to 64.3%. Industrial employment in the organised sector is thus found to have declined in this hub of Indian industries which used to earlier employ the majority of urban workers in the metropolis.

Liberalisation options of the MMRDA in the new plan are as follows: (i) amendment of rent control act to facilitate recycling of old office space and urban renewal in such areas, (ii) relaxation of land-use zoning to permit new office locations in already developed commercial zones, (iii) urban renewal projects and interchange of land-use in dilapidated areas of the island city, (iv) facilitating high tech and non-polluting industries in island city, (v) recycling of land under non-profitable, outdated use, such as, mill lands, (vi) removal of constraints on land-use conversion and transfer of land to industries, (vii) increase in FSI, (viii) internal redesigning of architecturally valuable buildings for office activities, and last but not the least, (ix) development of an international finance and business centre in Bandra Kurla complex and (x) development of Mumbai as an offshore centre for financial markets.

The 1973 Regional Plan supported inter-regional dispersal of industries to reduce (a) over-concentration in Mumbai and (b) intra-regional disparities. It also recommended bulk land acquisition as a measure to control speculation and re-use of resources for the provision of infrastructure. The new plan although declares to "facilitate economic growth of the region and improve quality of life, particularly of the poor and deprived", (MMRDA, 1995), in effective policy considerations, there is no real strategy drawn for achieving the above goals. So far as industrial growth policy is concerned, the new plan recommends promotion of modern, technologically advanced, environmentally friendly industries in Mumbai and revival or replacement of sick and obsolete industries. In achieving the latter goal, the primary attack has gone on to the cotton textile mills in order to legitimise the release of mill land for redevelopment. Examples of such design can be drawn from the piece meal carving up of real estate land in Parel-Lalbaug area of central Mumbai resulting in the sprouting of several commercial and residential skyscrapers in a predominantly working class area (D'Monte, 1998). When the priority should be to revive the mills and modernise them, questions can be raised as to how the mill owners can resort to disposal of their lands, workers and assets and that too under the pretext of modernisation. The ongoing rehabilitation of the area does not lead to any proper recycling of the land to foster economic growth. The issue, however, does not only incorporate the textile industry but other production activities as well. Fall in employment in manufacturing activities in Mumbai sets in a dangerous trend that is highly detrimental to the city's role in national urban hierarchy which is the actual base of any city. The dilution of zoning laws also would allow erstwhile earmarked areas for industrial uses to gradually make way for office and residential accommodation (D'Monte, 1998).

The old plan recommended restrictions on new office growth in South Mumbai and relocation of offices and wholesale establishments to New Mumbai in the mainland and to the Bandra-

Kurla complex. Although some efforts have been made to this effect, new offices have simultaneously sprung up in the island city mainly through illegal land-use conversions. Simultaneously large areas under obsolete economic uses also remain derelict despite high land values due to land use restriction. What is not clearly expressed in the new plan is the reasons why new offices had come up in South Mumbai during the same period when the project of New Mumbai was mooted across the Thane Creek thereby creating insurmountable delay in the new city to pick up its pace. Be that as it may, the modified policy now officially responds to the recent macro-economic reforms and the resultant increase in demand for office space locations in the city itself and strongly feels that Mumbai should be equipped to host international finance and business operations and develop as an off-shore financial market centre.

In the area of urban land policy, the old plan recommended strict land-use zoning and bulk land acquisition which, in reality, could not be adopted in a strict sense. Later mishandling of ULC act also obstructed the availability of land for housing the middle class and poor. The new plan also recommends market oriented land and taxation policies. At the same time, it proposes zoning system not on the basis of land requirement for development but by the development potential of an area. Range of functions including institutions and other space extensive activities that have been permitted in the green zones is worth noticing in this context. Obviously the land-use and its relation to the environment has been addressed in a totally different vein by the plan as evident from the decision to recycle lands so long locked under obsolete uses or for that matter to industrialise Vasai - Virar subregion incorporating an area of 560 hectares (Banerjee-Guha, 1992). Severe problems also arise from the uniform coastal management regulation policy. Neither it takes into consideration the individual nature of the coast, nor does it allow for the coastal processes and anthropogenic intervention. The

persistent demand of the State government to relax Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms also calls for attention.

Regarding transport planning the new plan puts stress on railways than on roadways within the city area. However, one can easily see the thrust areas of investment in the intracity transport with nearly sixty flyovers coming up in the metropolis in a short span of time since 1998. The projects focus on constructing flyovers around the railway crossings without paying much attention to the problem of slum relocation around the railway tracks. Further, the flyover projects have created contradictions between the state government and the MMRDA despite the latter's overall shift in planning considerations and objectives. Reminding one of the previous strife between the same bodies in yesteryears on Backbay reclamation issue or on Vasai-Virar development plan, the present imbroglio highlights the ideological thrust of the state supported projects for catering to the richer segment. Reservations have also been expressed by the World Bank, the 60% provided of the Rs.4,000 crore project (coming under the Mumbai Urban Transport Project - II including several road, rail and public transport upgradation schemes) about the realisation of the objectives especially to augment the mass transit system.

In the housing sector the new plan proposes to strengthen the Government's role as the facilitator, an idea that was mooted way back in the eighties. Emphasis has been put on housing finance following which many specialised finance institutions have been established with National Housing Bank acting as the apex refinance agency. While public sector has been kept reserved mainly for the lowest 30% of the household, the government's role as the facilitator has been restricted in the area of provision of land, infrastructure and sites and services (Banerjee-Guha, 1994). In spite of ample evidences of the ineffective role of the sites and services projects in solving the housing problems of the poor, its renewed significance in the new plan is quite ironical. At this point

it is also appropriate to mention about the Slum Redevelopment (SRD) Scheme of the Maharashtra Government that has been made operational since 1995. The scheme intends to use land as a resource and hence offers additional FSI in excess of 2.5 to attract private builders' participation. The private sector has shown lukewarm response as it wants still larger FSI for commercial development. However, as the success of the scheme depends on high property rates, it becomes quite clear that the project would benefit large developers and builders who would be able to evacuate slums in the prime lands of the city. When the buying off strategy is able to displace rows of original residents from even sites and service projects, no wonder that these housing colonies would be instrumental in ousting the poor from their traditional areas. One must also examine the causes for resistance shown by the MMRDA in financially associating itself with the SRD Scheme.

Last but not the least on housing is the allowance given by amended FERA regulations in NEP to foreign corporations and NRIs to invest in real estate. This not only explains the sky rocketed price in the said sector in high income localities, but also accounts for the compulsion of dereservation in some green belt areas like Vasai - Virar where powerful international corporations like Shaw Wallace or Larsen and Toubro have invested in real estate.

From an overall assessment, it becomes quite clear that the new plan expects Mumbai to play a significant role in the liberalised economy. One of the major manifestations of the changing metamorphosis of the metropolis from being the industrial capital of the country to an international financial centre, is the process of legitimisation of the dualistic conception of urban planning. Policy formulations encouraging a segmented role of the public and private endeavour instead of a heterogeneous plan perspective for the cross section of the society (Balbo, 1993) are also supportive inferences. Segmentation pervades in all sectors of the metropolis (Mahadevia, 1998): in production, commerce, land, housing,

transportation, environment and information (Banerjee-Guha, 1985). The new plan integrates the above dualism and projects Bombay's international role as a justification for promoting investment in intracity mega projects. As a natural corollary, solution to the crucial problems of housing, employment and infrastructure for larger sections of the population goes to occupy the backstage. The current thrust on the need to realise the immense (sic) opportunities offered by Mumbai thus gets intertwined with the economic liberalisation policies of the country which not only seeks for an economic recovery of the city, but intends to achieve it by augmenting Mumbai's role as an international business and finance centre. By disregarding some 60% of its population who live in slums and a more higher percentage who form the teeming multitude of unorganised workforce, how it can be realised, is a crucial question (Banerjee-Guha, 1995).

4. Ideology behind the Ensuing Urban Development in Greater Mumbai:

Following the introduction of NEP in 1991, all the past policies of MMRDA to decongest Bombay and decentralise economic activities in the entire region to check intra-regional disparity have met with severe criticisms by the same organisation that had formulated them. Ironically, it has also been argued in the new plan that reasons for Mumbai's economic stagnation considerably lie in the nature of the erstwhile policy especially in its emphasis on decentralisation. Policy options in urban planning in post liberalisation era give a formal articulation to the above argument. The following pages offer a critique to the same.

We may start with an initial question as to why should one invoke a global perspective while studying the urban development process of a third world mega city like Mumbai? The answer lies in the proven ability of a global perspective in analysing development and underdevelopment as well as the growth and decline of third world cities (Gilbert, 1993, Clark,

1996, Banerjee-Guha, 1993, King, 1990). As patterns of urbanisation are integrally linked with the issue of development, e.g. growth of port cities in the colonies, this rather general point can be applied to specific time-space situation of the current globalisation process, especially the restructuring aspects of the social and economic space of cities. It has already been mentioned that in spite of integration of many cities from the less developed countries in the world system whereby specific cities are upgraded to a global status (even while nation states are downgraded), there does exist a rigid hierarchy in the said system which is reflected in the respective economic power and control of these cities over the international market (Sassen 1994-1994; Noyella 1989; Knox, 1995). Further to the above economic implications of globalisation, there are cultural implications as well. This is reflected in the way the 'dominant' culture gets reproduced by both force and consent, surrounded by a legitimising ideology conceptualising competition, modernity and exploitation. The current urban policy initiatives in Mumbai reflects the above complexity.

The crux of the problem can thus be articulated in two ways. First, the logic behind making Mumbai a global city. And, second, its consequence in the development of the surrounding region and access to infrastructure, employment and innovation for a larger section of the urban population. In the given competitive status of the world system it is but natural that the mode of incorporation of Mumbai into the global urban hierarchy would be according to the prevailing power relations among Mumbai and other world cities as well as India and other nation states. The process of Mumbai's acquiring a global status thus can be explained well by India's fast track effort to integrate in the new international restructuring with measures like lifting of import controls, improving investment conditions for international capital markets and so on. The dominant logic of the prevailing urban restructuring and planning in Mumbai goes well with these moves.

Central functions at a national level in India have traditionally been concentrated in some selected colonial/port cities. In post independence era with the change in the regional power structure, there has been a shift in the national urban hierarchy (Banerjee-Guha, 1997). However, in post liberalisation era, there has emerged a keen competition among the larger Indian cities to turn global in which Mumbai's claim is quite significant. This is because of its role in shaping the most decisive factors of globalisation, i.e. transnationalisation of productive capital and internationalisation of urban space. Global perspective of third world cities in the current situation should be analysed from the above political economic objective. Various researchers (Wallerstein, 1980, 1989; Braudel, 1979; Baran, 1973), have indicated that a country's status in the international division of labour critically affects its national development trajectories including urbanisation. Accordingly cities in the third world are also being shaped by the global dynamics of capitalism. Seen from this point of view the present thrust on the globalised status Mumbai is not an exceptional one. But now it achieves it by transformation of urban space and urban functions in new forms for an internationalised urban economic operation is what needs more attention.

To understand the rationale, we need to look at three basic features. First, the change in India's position in the world economy which finally led to the introduction of NEP. In order to facilitate activities related to NEP and attract foreign capital and information, cities are required to be equipped enough to provide specific physical infrastructure and institutional conditions. Hence arises the need to create space in cities like Mumbai for international functions and headquarters operations of transnational capital. Second, the overall trend of a post Fordist society to develop high-tech information base in world cities of the tail order again to serve the needs of the international economy. Establishment of infrastructure in Mumbai for developing information networks

and refurbishing of the urban planning, administration, and other related institutions follows the same logic. Finally, arising out of the first two comes the introduction of private sector in the sphere of public development. The reason for which urban development has been chosen as one of the foremost areas for such purposes is probably its high profitability (Machinmura, 1992).

The other issue that calls for attention is the prospective role that a global Mumbai would play in the economic growth of the surrounding region. From a factor analysis of 23 indicators of urbanisation and development in India in early nineties (Banerjee-Guha, 1998), observations have been drawn about the predatory and expansive nature of large cities, e.g. Mumbai or Delhi. This has got intensified in the post liberalisation era. The dominance that these primate cities had been enjoying since colonial days in their respective urban systems has got both sectorally and spatially expanded through which the economic space of the surrounding regions has got attuned to the needs of large corporate sectors. The current policy of diverting state investment of Maharashtra in Raigad district - an officially recognised backward area that singularly enjoys the status of being Mumbai's backyard - is a contemporary example of expansion of metropolitan space and activity to the surrounding region by completely disregarding the resource and labour potential of the latter. Types of industries that have penetrated into Konkan in the nineties are pertinent examples. By this process urban primacy gets reconstructed to an expanded urban space contributing not only towards an intensification of intra-regional disparity but also to a control over capital and space at a wider scale. On the one hand, transformation of the urban economy and built environment of Mumbai towards the requirements of international capital also works towards increasing marginalisation of the organised workforce and informalisation of the economy (Banerjee-Guha, 1996; Shrestha and Hartshorn, 1993); on the other, it works towards an extremely narrow sectoral development of a hi-tech, information based order that allows a mini scale growth in the metropolitan

region and thwarts redistribution of income in general (Bagchi, 1989). Kundu (1996) has already observed an intensification of disparity in regions since 1993 measured in terms of coefficient of variation (CV) in per capita NSDP as a result of such processes. Similarly disparity has also been noted in per capita consumption expenditure, infrastructural facilities, power consumption, social services etc.

Implantation of such global processes in cities like Mumbai would have a range of impact on the vast terrain of the surrounding region. The latter containing cities, towns and villages would be simultaneously unhinged from the new international growth dynamic operating within Mumbai and again connected distortedly through a subcontracting chain of the emergent transnational economic system. The type of disarticulation that such processes would result in is already evident in innumerable towns and countryside, cities and sectors and even within cities in vast areas of other third world countries. Drawing lessons from such experiences may not be too unrealistic.

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