

Brazilian favelas and Indian slums upgrading: two case studies

Camila D'Ottaviano¹, Urmi Sengupta², Suzana Pasternak³, Brendan Murtagh⁴

¹*FAUUSP - Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of University of São Paulo*

camila.dottaviano@gmail.com

²*Queens University Belfast - School of Planning, Architecture and Civil Engineering*

u.sengupta@qub.ac.uk

³*FAUUSP*

suzanapasternak@gmail.com

⁴*Queens University Belfast*

b.murtagh@qub.ac.uk

The depressing housing condition for the majority urban poor in the world is a pervasive and persistent global reality today. Over a billion people in the world live in substandard housing conditions. This population is likely to grow in rapidly urbanizing countries such as India and Brazil. In 2010 the number of Brazilians living in these conditions increased from 6.5 million in 2000 to 11.4 million in 2010, distributed in 6,329 clusters across 323 municipalities. In India, one third of the country's population is estimated to be living in substandard housing. A recently released 2014 UN Prospects report 66 per cent of the world population will live in cities by 2050. With this the slum population in the world is likely to grow exponentially. We can expect the situation to worsen due to multiple, interlocking disadvantages slum dwellers face that relate to all three - social, economic and environmental – dimensions of their lives. The situation is challenging in the cities where the deficit of urban housing is already glaringly evident in their urban landscape in the form of numerous slum and squatter settlements.

Historically, squatters and slum dwellers have exhibited unique social, demographic and spatial characteristics of multiple, interlocking disadvantages involving many dimensions: livelihoods and assets; organizational; institutional; security; social and gender relations; capabilities and so on. Government intervention on squatters/slum policies however have been characterized by the various approaches such as regularization of land tenure, sites-and-services schemes, slum

upgrading, and other self-help models yielding various levels of success. Lately, the market-oriented economic reforms implemented during the past 20 years have obfuscated the real problems faced by the urban poor as it failed to address the core principles of enablement, transparency and participation in access to housing and basic services. Moreover, other actors in the shelter sector –NGOs and community groups – continue to be unable to play an effective role in housing development. It is possible to find extremities of poverty in slums in parts of South Asia, Latin America and Africa. Slum population continues to expand unbridled throughout the world.

The two decades of policy experiments and government intervention have generated an inventory of ‘best practices’. In Brazil, cities such as Sao Paulo have been the host of innovative practices in favelas upgrading, interventions in cortices and self-constructed housing policies. Federal Tenement Houses Services Program (PAC) launched in 2007 was the biggest favelas upgrading program ever implemented. In India cities such as Kolkata have been pioneers in land regularization, legal entitlement and integration with wider urban context. These programmes, tailored to suit the specific context and need, however offer opportunities for mutual learning and understanding.

The socio-economic contexts of slums and favelas illustrate the distinct characteristics that often require a ‘bottom up’ approach to fully understand them. Favelas and slums in Global South have nuances and variants that exhibit different traits and characteristics distinctive to the specific context and culture. They display distinct behaviour patterns of urban poor across regions reflecting different survival strategies developed by the urban poor - individually or collectively - to acquire land and shelter. For instance in Brazil, the most effective approach for squatters has been through popular urban social movements but after 2001 City Statute, the federal government included popular housing and favela upgrading into the official agenda. Conversely, the urban poor in India have looked for opportunities elsewhere and developed distinct strategies of integrating and finding a role within the broad frame of economy in order to increase their effectiveness in acquiring shelter. These survival strategies are developed within structural limitations, but according to existing norms, laws and practices that constitute social life. They can be culturally specific, mutually

exclusive. Such revelations have wider ramifications on wider policy making with valuable lessons for each countries.

This study proposes a comparative analysis of two decades of research on slums and favelas management in São Paulo/Brazil and Kolkata/India. Previous research in Brazil centred on understanding the impact of developmentalist and entrepreneurial approach to favela improvements characterized by lack of participation of both user and wider society (Pasternak & Ottaviano, 2014), legalization (Fernandes, 1999); urban and poverty reduction (Fiori, Riley & Ramirez, 2001; Fiori & Brandao, 2010). In India, the focus has been on the role of state from direct provider to enabler and impact of neoliberal approach on slum dwellers (Sengupta, 2007, 2010; Mukhija, 2004; Risbud, 2002). Recently research on reforms and affordability has been common (Sengupta, 2013). Moreover, both Brazil and India have been at the forefront of global awareness on squatters/slums through high profile media including Hollywood movies such as City of God and Slum Dog Millionaire. The media interest has helped put these settlements in mental map of millions of people. It also exposed us to the complex layers of squatters' lives that are deeply connected to how and where they live. On this basis and in conjunction with the policy experiments the two countries have witnessed over the last twenty years, this study aims to point an overview of slums and favelas reality after two decades of intense intervention.