Changes, Continuities, Contestations: Tracing the contours of the Kamathipura's precarious durability through livelihood practices and redevelopment efforts

People, Places and Infrastructure: Countering urban violence and promoting justice in Mumbai, Rio, and Durban

Ratoola Kundu
Shivani Satija

Maps: Nisha Kundar
March 25, 2016

Centre for Urban Policy and Governance
School of Habitat Studies
Tata Institute of Social Sciences
This work was carried out with financial support from the UK Government's Department for International Development and the International Development Research Centre, Canada. The opinions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect those of DFID or IDRC.
Acknowledgments

We are grateful for the support and guidance of many people and the resources of different institutions, and in particular our respondents from the field, whose patience, encouragement and valuable insights were critical to our case study, both at the level of the research as well as analysis. Ms. Preeti Patkar and Mr. Prakash Reddy offered important information on the local and political history of Kamathipura that was critical in understanding the context of our site. Their deep knowledge of the neighbourhood and the rest of the city helped locate Kamathipura. We appreciate their insights of Mr. Sanjay Kadam, a long term resident of Siddharth Nagar, who provided rich history of the livelihoods and use of space, as well as the local political history of the neighbourhood. Ms. Nirmala Thakur, who has been working on building awareness among sex workers around sexual health and empowerment for over 15 years played a pivotal role in the research by facilitating entry inside brothels and arranging meetings with sex workers, managers and madams. Given the extremely sensitive and difficult research context, her contribution has been most critical. Robin Chaurasiya and Bani ,co founders of an incredible NGO called Kranti which works with young girls who have grown up in Kamathipura and provides them multiple avenues for learning and showcasing their potential, helped us understand the complicated discourse that surrounds sex work. We also thank PUKAR, Sunil Gangavane, and research fellows for their help in conducting fieldwork.

We are thankful to Mr. Amin Patel, Member of Legislative Assembly, whose perspective helped understand the role of the state. We also thank Ms. Shahana Rizwan, Ward Corporator for her inputs. Mr. Yevle Deputy Engineer, MHADA provided us deep insight into the working and challenges of MHADA and their involvement in the neighbourhood. He also identified some resource persons who work on the ground and helped us understand the built environment. Mr. Dharshetkr and Ms. Sulakshana Mahajan’s deep and incisive understanding of the housing situation and policies of Mumbai was critical for our study. Police officials in the Nagpada police station were very helpful. Mr. Channa, Mr. Sunil Kadam and Mr.Dantoola, members of the Landlord Association of Kamathipura, as well Samaj Associations, allowed us to attend some of their meetings and helped us understand the challenges and complexities faced by the residents on a daily basis.

Our respondents from the community through their kind and generous support and insightful knowledge helped shape our understanding of a neighbourhood whose complexity and rich history is little understood. We have changed their names in the text to respect and protect their privacy.

We are most grateful to Apurva Gandhi and Devashree Ragde who worked as interns during the summer of 2015, and conducted detailed community mapping in Kamathipura, along with secondary and media research. Our team comprising Prof. Amita Bhide, Dr. Lalitha Kamath, Himanshu Burte, Shruthi Parthasarthy and Radhika Raj, provided important feedback and encouragement at various stages. Durgesh Solanki’s role in initiating fieldwork and identifying stakeholders was critical in constructing a base for our research. The secretarial staff at the School of Habitat Studies supported us at every step. Finally, IDRC’s support, at every step is deeply appreciated.
### Table of contents

Acknowledgments .................................................................................................................. iii

Table of contents .................................................................................................................. iv

List of Abbreviations .......................................................................................................... vii

List of Images and Maps ..................................................................................................... viii

1  Introduction to the case study .......................................................................................... 10
   1.1  Introduction ................................................................................................................ 10
   1.2  Rationale for the case study: .................................................................................... 13
   1.3  Theoretical and conceptual frameworks: ............................................................... 15
   1.4  Methodology ............................................................................................................. 18
   1.5  Structure of the case study: ..................................................................................... 21

2  The Rise and the Fall of the Red Light District ............................................................... 24
   2.1  Introduction ................................................................................................................ 24
   2.2  The Social And Moral Production of A “Red Light District” – Role of The Colonial State, Police And Zoning Regulations ......................................................... 26
   2.3  Local Elites, Fixers, Intermediaries in the Growth of Kamathipura ........................... 29
   2.4  The Post Colonial State, Deregulation, Illegalizing and Ghettoizing Sex Work 30
   2.5  The Post Colonial State’s Developmentalism – Aids Prevention Programs in Kamathipura and the Decline of the Sex Trade .............................................................. 31
   2.6  Liberalization, Rise of The Property Regime and Reregulationof Kamathipura 32
   2.7  Redevelopment, Moral Aestheticism and the Creation of Strong Community Based Resistance to Sex Work ................................................................. 34

3  Building lives and livlihoods through Incrementalism, Autoconstruction and Violence 39
   3.1. Spatiality and Temporality of Informal Work in Kamathipura .............................. 39
3.2. The Historical and Social Production of Kamathipura as a Peripheral Space of Marginalised Occupations .................................................................46
3.3. Livelihoods and the Contested Processes of Spatial Claim Making .................49
3.4. Autoconstruction, Incrementalism, Collaborations and Other Livelihood Practices 56
3.5. Informal Sovereigns and Associationism ..................................................58
3.6. The Role of Police in the Production and Maintenance of the Informal Economy .. 60
3.7. Big Men, Fixers, Brokers ...........................................................................62
3.8. Political Mobilisation ..................................................................................63
3.9. Flexibility and Making Use of the Space of Exception ..................................67
3.10. The Intersections of Poverty, Vulnerability, Inequality and Violence ...........67
3.11. Shifting from the Circuits Labour to Circuits of Land Based Economy ..........70

4 Redeveloping Kamathipura – Challenges, Opportunities and Resistances ......72
4.1. Introduction ...............................................................................................72
4.3. Kamathipura: Redevelopment Interrupted and its Dangerous Consequences......79
4.4. Incomplete State Interventions in Kamathipura ..........................................83
4.5. Private Efforts at Redeveloping Kamathipura .............................................96
4.6. Implications and Challenges to Redevelopment by Private Players ...............102

5 Coalitions, Alliances and Fragmentation in Remaking and Reclaiming Kamathipura .......................................................................................107
5.1. Introduction ...............................................................................................107
5.2. Role of Informal Sovereigns in Kamathipura’s Thriving Informal Economy .....107
5.3. Local and Regional Political Parties, Leadership and Shaping Agendas in Kamathipura .......................................................................................112
5.4. Of Coalitions, Oppositions and Deadlocks ................................................114
5.4.1. Police, madams, landlords and the sex trade coalition .........................115
5.4.2. The tenant–landlord rift and opposition to large scale redevelopment
116

5.5. Outcomes of Coalitions and Alliances .......................................................... 117

6 Margins of the Centre: The Insecurity and Injustice of Living and Working in Kamathipura ................................................................. 120

6.1. Socio spatial transformations ........................................................................ 120

6.1.1. The incremental approach to claiming spaces for livelihoods..... 120

6.1.2. The shrinking spaces of the sex work related economy ............ 121

6.2. The supportive neglect and gradual dilapidation of the built environment and unsuccessful attempts at renewal and redevelopment ........................................ 122

6.3. Trajectories of urban transformation ............................................................ 123

6.4. Urban violence and spatial (in)justices ......................................................... 124

6.4.1. Coercive Protection and the Intermediaries................................. 124

6.4.2. The State and forms of structural violence, control of potentially “dangerous classes” ................................................................. 126

6.4.3. Everyday violence and the routinisation of violence................. 127

6.5. Protest and social movements that use violence to claim rights ........ 127

6.6. Urban violence, identity and socio-spatial segregation ..................... 128

6.7. The changing State-Market Axis ................................................................. 130

6.8. Calculated informality of the State .............................................................. 130

6.8.1. Informality of the market and circuits of labour connecting Kamathipura to the city and beyond......................................................... 131

6.9. The non-state actors’ sovereignty in Kamathipura.............................. 133

6.10. The political economy of land and shifting state-market alignment post nineties 134

References ........................................................................................................ 136

Mapping References ....................................................................................... 141
## List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BMC</td>
<td>Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEST</td>
<td>Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>Bharatiya Janata Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>Communist Party of India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCR-</td>
<td>Development Control Regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSI</td>
<td>Floor Space Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPTA</td>
<td>Prevention of Trafficking Act of 1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBRRB</td>
<td>Maharashtra Building Repairs and Reconstruction Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHADA</td>
<td>Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>Member of Legislative Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIL</td>
<td>Public Interest Litigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDR</td>
<td>Transferable Development Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIL</td>
<td>Public Interest Litigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDR</td>
<td>Transferable Development Rights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Images and Maps

Figure 1 : Location of Kamathipura in relation to the growing city.................................11
Figure 2 : Lanes in Kamathipura .........................................................................................11
Figure 3: Residential towers overlooking dilapidated settlements in Kamathipura...........12
Figure 4: Kamathipura on a typical day .............................................................................25
Figure 5: Falkland Road .......................................................................................................26
Figure 6 : Historical location of Kamathipura....................................................................27
Figure 7: Brothels and residential spaces for sex workers and bar dancers with eating joints and mobile shops at the ground floor .................................................................34
Figure 8: Media reporting on intolerance towards sex workers ........................................35
Figure 9: Shoe shop operating in Dedh Gully ..................................................................40
Figure 10: Temporary Chor Bazaar in lane .......................................................................41
Figure 11: Kamathipura Cloth Market ...............................................................................42
Figure 12: Jeans being washed and dried in Stable Street................................................43
Figure 13: Jeans being washed and dried in Stable Street and on the other side are wood work and scrap shops........................................................................................................43
Figure 14: Street Use by different occupation groups in Kamathipura .............................44
Figure 15: A cross section of brothel where the use of space is mixed and complex .......51
Figure 16: Waghri workers living on the streets .................................................................55
Figure 17: Cessed buildings in Kamathipura .....................................................................81
Figure 18: Privately led redevelopment around Kamathipura .......................................82
Figure 19: Building redeveloped by BMC .........................................................................85
Figure 20 : Proposed redevelopment by MHADA ............................................................86
Figure 21: Public Amenities in Kamathipura ....................................................................90
Figure 22: Transect conducted of Lane 10 .......................................................................91
Figure 23: Transect conducted of Manaji Rajaji Road .......................................................91
Figure 24: Comparison of Plot Sizes ................................................................................94
Figure 25: Brothels and residential spaces for sex workers and bar dancers, and below there are eating joints and mobile shops.................................................................95
Figure 26: Orchid City Centre Mall on Bellasis Road (Google Image)...............................97
Figure 27: Layout of Kamathipura: Proposed Layout, DP Layout, and Existing Layout...99
Figure 28: Layout of Kamathipura: Proposed Layout, DP Layout, and Existing Layout.100
Figure 29: Rival layout of development plan by a private developer in Kamathipura ..... 102
Figure 30: Half constructed towers near Stable Street ........................................ 105
Figure 31: Telugu Samaj Association and Temple............................................. 112
Figure 32: Building collapse in Foras Road ...................................................... 118
1 Introduction to the case study

1.1 Introduction

This is a case study of Kamathipura, a dense, congested, old, compact and crumbling neighbourhood, and also one of Asia’s largest and oldest red light district located in the heart of the island city of Mumbai. While the island city has undergone rapid and radical transformations following the redevelopment of defunct mill lands in the post-industrial era, giving way to skyscrapers, malls, and entertainment complexes; Kamathipura has remained comparatively unchanged in built form and in reputation as an area synonymous with urban poverty, filth, crime, and immorality. Given the squalid conditions of the buildings, the lack of proper sanitation, frequent building collapses especially in monsoon, unauthorised constructions and the proliferation of illegal activities such as from prostitution, to sale of second hand and stolen goods, recycling, chemical dyeing, video parlours; Kamathipura it appears, has been deliberately bypassed by the advances of corporate capital and neglected by the State since its inception in the colonial era, perhaps because of its pathogenic and peripheral status in relation to the rest of the city.

The neighbourhood is bounded on the north by Jehangir Boman Behram Road (Belasis Road) , on the south by Maulana Shaukat Ali Road, on the east by Maulana Azad Road and on the west by Shuklaji Marg, while R.S. Nimakar Road (Foras Road), cuts through the north western corner in a diagonal fashion. The centrality of this sixteen lane neighbourhood stems from being within walking distance to Bombay Central station and bus depot and Grant Road station to the west of the area. Schools, colleges and public hospitals are also easily accessible from Kamathipura with JJ Hospital within walking distance to the east of the neighbourhood crossing Nagpada. Further east of the Hospital, beyond the Sandhurst Railway station lie the Old Dockyards of the city of Mumbai. The neighbourhood is predominantly mixed use in character with each lane almost specialising in particular occupations organised along community, caste and religious identities. The lack of any open spaces, four to five storey buildings packed together along narrow lanes, the sheer number of tenants and multiple commercial and industrial activities by day and by night in the area, gives Kamathipura the impression of being extremely overcrowded.
While the existing and erstwhile brothels are located predominantly on the north western corner (between Shuklaji marg, 14th lane and Foras road), the southern part between Parashuraman Pupala Marg and Maulana Shaukatali Road is characterised by government housing for sanitation workers (Siddharth Nagar) and unauthorized timber, steel and iron shops. The western periphery is residential and commercial in nature and inhabited predominantly by Muslims. The central portion of Kamathipura between Manaji Rajaji Road and ShankarRao Puppala Marg is
predominantly mixed use and houses several Hindu communities, namely Marwaris and Jains to the south and Telegu speaking and Marathi speaking groups in the north. While within the neighbourhood most buildings are 80 to 150 years old, Kamathipura is ringed in by an emerging landscape of towering new glass and concrete offices, residential skyscrapers and malls and hotels that seem to be looming over the neighbourhood, signalling its imminent transformation.

**Figure 3: Residential towers overlooking dilapidated settlements in Kamathipura**

The focus of the analysis is on understanding the processes through which Kamathipura has been produced as a space of informal work and affordable living for the urban poor, in the heart of the island city, through a series of calculated and politically decided exceptions to universal rules regarding the planning, governance and regulation of urban areas and population. This study also brings to light the drivers, processes and consequences of the intense contestation and conflict underlying the constant efforts to reimagine, reappropriate and sanitise Kamathipura on the one hand and on the other, the struggles to reclaim and maintain it as an exceptional space that stretches and bends to accommodate a range of urban groups such as the homeless *Waghri* community, Dalits, sex workers, the migrants labourers,
and transgenders, all of whom are excluded and cast away from the formal circuits of corporate capital accumulation.

1.2 Rationale for the case study:

At a time when the city of Mumbai is being restructured spatially, socially and economically due to the transition from a manufacturing based city to one that is largely dependent on urbanization as an economic driver, through conversion of mills to malls, luxury living, banks, hotels and offices; a huge proportion of the erstwhile blue collar working class is either exiting the island city or else shifting to the informal economic sector characterized by highly exploitative, subsistence oriented, and insecure work. While the built form of Kamathipura is largely unscathed by these transformations, we argue, invisible yet extremely significant social and spatial transformations are taking place at the street, building, neighbourhood and community levels. These transformations are linked to the larger political economy of urbanisation of the city and to the ways in which multiple communities and groups, and sometimes individual “big men” have historically controlled and asserted their relative informal power and influence over access to housing, tenures and rents, over informal work and illegal trades, and over political negotiations for resources and amenities within the neighbourhood, often in temporary alliances and sometimes in conflict with one another, the state and the market.

Kamathipura is one of the four case studies of a larger research project that seeks to understand the processes of socio-spatial transformations in the city of Mumbai, particularly post economic liberalization in the nineties. With globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation, cities have become the key sites of economic growth, and urbanisation is the strategy of capitalist accumulation par excellence. However, this has meant that cities are being restructured radically to suit the interests of particular investors and markets and that violence – structural, symbolic, every day and episodic is instrumental to the production of cities as spaces of accumulation. Cities have become increasingly more exclusionary through peripherilisation of the poor and criminalisation of certain livelihoods. As cities become divided into islands of the rich and peripheries of the poor, through forms of spatial injustice, an unevenness characterizes the urban condition through the creation of valorised and
devalorised spaces., The State is aligned with the market (or particular actors, institutions within them) and is driving these transformations that seek to unlock the value of urban land by dispossessing and displacing communities and groups who have historically occupied lucrative spaces of the city. For Harvey, 2003, removing people from their means of production through state legitimated violence produces a spatio-temporal fix that mediates the excesses of surplus labour. Over-accumulation and surplus production, which spells crisis for the capitalist economy, is thus temporarily spatially deflected by geographical expansion, and investing in new social and physical infrastructures, opening up new territories of investment and trading with new markets or non-capitalist societies.

The broader research argues that the trajectory of urban transformation varies from city to city and even within the city and thus a nuanced approach is required to understand the drivers, processes and outcomes of socio-spatial transformations. The inherently uneven nature of urban development in the city creates the ground for differentiated approaches to redevelopment. The urban poor are not simply victims of violent socio-spatial restructuring but have considerable agency in trying to mobilize, collectivise, influence, oppose, mediate, resist or subvert these changes; sometimes resorting to violence while more often, working in temporary collaborations to produce some stable regularities or predictability (Simone, 2004). Kamathipura poses a paradox – though centrally located within a rapidly changing city, it remains outwardly unchanged and continues to be treated as the margins of social, economic and political life of the city. Several concerted attempts by the State and the market (and in recent times by community groups within the neighbourhood) to systematically redevelop Kamathipura have failed miserably. Given that the island city is being dramatically reconfigured to respond to the requirements of accumulation of capital, what explains the perpetuation of Kamathipura in its current form? What are the consequences of a stalemate in the State’s developmental effort on the different groups of residents in the area? Who bears the costs of decrepit housing and lack of proper infrastructure and who benefits disproportionately from the status quo?
1.3 Theoretical and conceptual frameworks:

This case study analyses the conundrum through two distinct yet related facets – the social and territorial organisation of certain livelihoods, and the gradual and almost invisible and localised processes of spatial transformations in Kamathipura. While the colonial state and the police as well as native elites were instrumental in the segregation of sex workers into a separate or tolerated zone, the post colonialist state used deliberate tactics of deregulation and unmapping to maintain the space of exception and yet allow the proliferation of a range of formal to informal economic activities, small manufacturing and prostitution in particular. This was mediated by different coalitions of actors or fixers and often accompanied with armed violence or the threat of violence, the forced collection of protection money, and intimidation. As the informal economy flourished, such intermediaries became powerful agents in the locality, legitimated their positions through their linkages to local politicians, their ability to leverage the local government, and negotiate with parastatal organisations intervening in the area. During this time, Kamathipura’s ill repute as a vice district increased multifold spectacularly through the circulation of images, rumours, its imperviousness to redevelopment efforts, and the reinforcement of an imaginary that projected Kamathipura as more dangerous than the rest of the city.

Post the nineties however, the shift to a tertiary economy and the sudden creation of a surplus labour force removed from the means of production, and simultaneously the rise of a real estate driven urban economy, led to a reconfiguring of relations between circuits of labour and circuits of land. Strategically maintained as a devalued space in relation to its surroundings, so as to accommodate the surplus labour through devalued residential and work spaces; Kamathipura began to face the advance of corporate capital through the re-regulation of space and laws that sought to enable large scale cluster redevelopment by private players, thus circumventing existing structures of powerful intermediaries within the neighbourhood, while empowering new actors. The violence of the discourse of erasure, the threat of dispossession, and the lure of speculation over real estate that redevelopment suggests, act as tactics in fragmenting residents, or else facilitating new coalitions of actors while gradually but surely reconfiguring the socio-spatial arrangements and uses of buildings, streets and amenities on the ground.
The case study explores the ways in which the neighbourhood – Kamathipura, with its rich embedded history and diverse communities and multiplicity of uses of spaces for a plethora of livelihood strategies, resists, challenges, opposes, or negotiates and influences the processes of redevelopment. This case study posits that Kamathipura, though outwardly unchanging, is actually an extremely volatile neighbourhood. While the intensity of activities, livelihood strategies, transactional relationships and almost impenetrable densities can act as an insulation from large-scale top down restructuring efforts, the fear of imminent urban transformation ensures that collaborations or conjunctures are at best temporary, situational, unsteady and provisional – resulting in small or no gains in the long run (Simone, 2014).

The theoretical framework for the case study draws on the concept of calculated informality as a mode of urbanism (Roy, 2009 and Roy, 2011), where the planning regime works through de-regulation, unmapping and exceptions which endow the State with tremendous territorialized flexibility pointing to the deeply informalized nature of the State itself. In this case, the planning apparatus has skilfully de-regulated Kamathipura and through several calculated acts of exception, allowed unauthorised construction, permitted the flouting of the Development Plan, facilitated the selective application of the development control rules (DCR). These have resulted in the formlaisation of an informal system of tenure by recognizing the Pagdi system (created to circumvent the Rent Control Act of 1949 under which rents were frozen at the rate of rents in 1940). The seeming withdrawal of regulatory power therefore creates according to Roy a logic of resource allocation, accumulation and authority. Thus landlords enter into informal contractual relations with tenants, local toughs help in regulating the temporary cloth and shoe markets that take over streets and open spaces, and association of shop owners occupy land meant for social uses and convert it into commercial uses. However, the flexibility engendered through the deregulation unfortunately produces its own bottlenecks as it opens up the terrain for multiple claims that obstruct the State’s developmentalism.

However, ruling through exceptions do not only apply to the spatial dimension in Kamathipura but also spills over to the dimension of economic activities and local politics.

---

1 Some landlords managed to circumvent the system and forge informal systems of collecting higher rents – e.g. through the evolution of the informal Pagdi system, where in apartment units could be subleased or even informally “bought out” for a premium
According to Chatterjee, 2008 “...even though the claims made by different groups in political society are for governmental benefits, these cannot often be met by the standard application of rules and frequently require the declaration of an exception”. Thus, with informalization of the economy, the victims of primitive accumulation are cast away and excluded from the circuits of corporate capital and dominance of civil society. However, the State fears that this might lead to the formation of a dangerous class and thus the State strategically targets these population groups with a package of benefits which are negotiated in the realm of the political society\(^2\). The hegemony of corporate capital however, remains securely outside the bounds of political society. Thus, for groups such as the homeless Waghri community, or the vulnerable sex workers hailing from different states, access to governmental benefits is subject to the State’s developmentalism – such as targeted programs of rationing, housing, and health.

Sex work is considered illegal as per Immoral Prevention of Trafficking Act of 1956 (IPTA), and the State has seemingly withdrawn from the direct regulation and control of sex work in Kamathipura, and refuses to decriminalize sex work. However, the State allows the sex workers to access governmental health benefits under the identity of BPL (Below Poverty Line), or as woman headed households, or as widow headed households. This reveals the flexibility of the State in addressing the need economy, subjecting sex workers to the State’s developmentalism and intervention, albeit indirectly through the trope of public health (Kotiswaran, 2012). Thus sex work exemplifies according to Kotiswaran, the need economy, where people are working only for the sake of livelihood and are excluded from the circuits of accumulation. With the dominance of the urban middle classes engaged deeply in the growth of corporate capital, there is a withdrawal from political society and an increasing intolerance of the practices of the poor and marginalised populations. According to Chatterjee, 2008 marginalised groups must organise politically in order to continue to exert pressure on the State and thus developmentalism of the State operates through a series of political exceptions based upon a strategic understanding of the calculus of power relations. There are some social groups that are therefore completely ignored by the State and are disproportionately affected by redevelopment efforts. In the case of Kamathipura, we argue, that these are primarily the

\(^2\) Partha Chatterjee’s ‘political society’ consists of economically weaker sections like poor informal workers, migrants, small own account workers (non corporate capital), peasants, who are constantly negotiating with the State, market and others, for basic rights through various means and which are often in conflict with those of ‘civil society’ which consists of the urban elite.
sex workers, the transgender community, the pavement dwellers or houseless communities and the male migrants from Bihar, Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.

1.4 Methodology

This case study is based on an ethnographic study in Kamathipura, conducted from April 2014 to February 2016. Qualitative methods like in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and three case studies of occupational groups based on an intersectionality of poverty, inequality, vulnerability and gender have been used. Drawing from a critical feminist methodology, this study values located and partial knowledges and a plurality of perspectives. In addition to the above, mapping of communities, activities, and showing linkages between land uses, livelihoods and spaces was an integral part of the methodology, in order to understand the ways in which Kamathipura is lived and experienced. Our case study included the construction of an in-depth historical and political narrative of Kamathpura by piecing together field notes, observations, media articles, academic and historical accounts and available maps. This entailed an understanding of multiple memories that are created around certain critical junctures/events/faultlines(points of rupture that have shaped and reshaped relationships and dynamics in Kamathipura.

Analytically, the case study has been conducted at two levels:

The first level is that of the level of the neighbourhood. In this case we began with a clearly defined and spatially delimited neighbourhood comprising sixteen lanes. This allowed an understanding of the organisation and reorganisation of spaces and the arrangement of activities in the neighbourhood, as well as processes of transition of land uses. This entailed looking at the emergence and socio-spatial transformations of Kamathipura vis-à-vis the city, with special focus on the changing economic base of the city, the state and local government’s stand on Kamathipura and informal work taking place in Kamathipura. Thus, we have studied the neighbourhood redevelopment efforts and plans by different actors such as private developers, Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA), Maharashtra Building Repairs and Reconstruction Board (MBRRB), Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), landlords and tenants associations. We interacted with a set of diverse actors, from community leaders, NGO persons, state government officials, city officials, private
developers, and agents of developers. The role of policies, and of actors such as lawyers, politicians, brokers, and intermediary agents have been studied as critical to understanding forces that influence and both reshape and resist redevelopment efforts. The socio-spatial transformations were also contextualised with respect to the ways in which development regulations, rules and spatial norms were interpreted and negotiated thus producing informality. We analysed the impact of these transformations on the lives and livelihoods of the residents with special focus on the most vulnerable groups in the neighbourhood. A host of secondary data such as plans and government documents, feasibility studies, reports, media reports, and books were also consulted to understand spatial transformations. In addition, key persons such as Samaj community or identity based collectives) association heads, police personnel, planners, historians, long term residents, and local politicians were interviewed to piece together a historical narrative of Kamathipura and understand the current contestations over its redevelopment and transformation processes.

The second level is that of the community. However we use community in a very specific sense in our research to mean a strategy or ideology which is deployed by different social groups and actors to lay claim to spaces, resources, and housing. Therefore we have studied the organisation and spatial embeddedness of three distinct livelihood practices through the intersections of poverty, mobility, inequality and gender. We have examined acts and regulations that govern these occupations. In each of these livelihood practices we have tried to identify and understand the scale of operations, the spaces in which these occupations take place, forward and backward linkages, the people involved, the hierarchy within the occupational group, barriers and channels of entry, mobility patterns and exit strategies, and the relationships with other actors/occupations in Kamathipura. Interviews, oral histories and observations were crucial to understand the dynamics of these livelihoods and their relationship to spaces. Of particular importance is understanding the use of the streets as a site of multiple activities and work. Through these smaller case studies we also hope to understand whether and how criminalizing certain livelihoods reinforces precariousness of labour, housing, social ties and status and how exactly economic and political precariousness reinforce each other. The use of violence and street justice to control and facilitate a range of
illegal work is thus intrinsic to the study as is understanding the role of the state, market and deregulations by the State.

One of the important tools we have used in understanding the weight of history on Kamathipura’s current bearing, is the construction of a detailed time line using critical junctures/events or episodes in history. We focused on episodes that reorganised spaces, livelihood practices and the ways in which meanings that have been constructed around these have changed and transformed over time. Besides these well-known events, multiple crucial ‘local and less known events’, have been emerging through extensive and continuous fieldwork. This study thus analyses the past through the piecing together of multiple narratives and counter narratives, incorporating hegemonic constructions as well as subaltern re-telling of history.

Moreover, a gendered analysis of livelihoods was undertaken to understand the unique vulnerabilities that women living and working in Kamathuipura face. We traced the impacts of neighbourhood transformations on the tenuous claims and precarious livelihoods of highly vulnerable occupational groups like sex workers, beedi workers and shelterless women labour living and working in the lanes. These groups have been systematically targeted by violence and the State’s developmentalism, and are therefore constantly living in fear of being physically displaced, and continue to live and work at great health and bodily harm.

Given that the area is considered dangerous or unsafe for various reasons and that there was constant surveillance from a range of diffuse power structures in the area, we were extremely cautious while entering our field research site. Several ethical dilemmas from self-doubt, the awareness that as researchers, we might invite certain expectations from within the community, the fear of negatively influencing the dynamics in the field when we leave it, and the anxiety of extracting sensitive knowledges from very obviously marginalised occupational groups arose during the course of our study. In many places in the case study we therefore use code names to disguise the identity of our respondents.

We were also conscious of our biases when we first started work in the field. As researchers, we were aware of our burdens and biases that we carried to the field, and were conscious of the unequal power relations that exist while researching vulnerability. While in the beginning,
the sheer complexities of the field were daunting, it did allow us to understand the dynamics gradually and in a piecemeal and incremental manner.

A snowball sampling method was used to identify and interview respondents. Newspaper scans helped to identify some of the key respondents at the community and neighbourhood level.

1.5 Structure of the case study:

This case study is divided into six chapters. This chapter provides the background to the case and situates it in the theoretical and conceptual frameworks while outlining the methodology. Chapter Two traces the complex forces of the colonial State and the regulations that deliberately carved out a space for sex workers and sex work. The principle of social segregation, purity and pollution were intrinsic to this colonial production of space. However, we argue, that the zone of tolerance was maintained through the informal alliances between police-politicians-native elites-madams-land lords. Violence and biopolitics were thus inimical to the production and perpetuation of this space as it allowed for the control of bodies, livelihoods and behaviour.

Chapter Three deals with the informal economy in Kamathipura and how the post colonial State and other non-state actors connived and allowed it to flourish. Through the in depth study of economic activities and livelihood practices that are laid out along a continuum of formal-informal work, this chapter highlights the incremental and auto constructed nature of informal economy and the constant negotiating along caste, class, ethnic affiliations required to consolidate their tenuous claims to spaces for production in the city. These occupations, have in turn, reconfigured the space within Kamathipura into differentiated zones that engender different forms of social interactions. This chapter argues that increasingly, the city and the hegemony of the corporate economy are creating a huge surplus of informal labour that supports it in important ways but is rendered useless to the newly emerging economic sectors (Chatterjee, 2008). In many ways, informal work has flourished in Kamathipura with the connivance of a few institutions of the State. But more importantly, we argue, informal and illegal work has flourished in Kamathipura under the watchful eye of “informal sovereigns”.
Chapter Four discusses the contemporary efforts by the State at re-regulating Kamathipura through excessive surveillance, policing on the one hand and the rumours of redevelopment that seek to unleash the forces of real estate led development by private players, facilitated by the State, on the other. Thus the chapter locates the current moment as inextricably linked to speculative private property formation and the unleashing of land markets in the city within the history of failed attempts and incomplete interventions such as clearance, renewal and redevelopment of Kamathipura. Clearly calculated deregulation and dilution of city development norms and regulations have aided and abetted these programs of restructuring, erasing, or reconstructing Kamathipura. The chapter also hints at the growing moral aestheticism of urban middle class residents engaged in the corporate economy in aiding the current redevelopment agenda in Kamathipura, and the ways in which agents of the State connive with the market players in excluding tenants, evicting sex workers, clamping down on pavement dwellers and the destitute. Coalitions of residents also emerge as important drivers of the redevelopment agenda. The chapter highlights the developmentalism activities of the State and how the market and intermediary actors often step in when the State finds it difficult to extend its services.

Chapter Five deals with a discussion of the myriad forms of coalition building, alliance management and fragmentations within communities in Kamathipura that have either tried to uphold the right of residents to stay put in Kamathipura or else have worked at cross purposes and tried to curtail the claims of certain groups. It highlights the intensely contested nature of Kamathipura and the internal struggles to retain it as a safe haven for informal work and cheap housing for migrants in a strategic and increasingly lucrative location in the city, by resisting redevelopment efforts by private developers. However, the chapter also discusses the tenuousness of these struggles in the long term, the insecurity of tenure and the fact that for a lot of residents, it means having to live in unsanitary buildings that are dangerously on the verge of collapse. These actions are produced and reproduced through territorial fracturing and the production of a terrain of difference and differentiated values. It brings out the negotiated nature of living and working in Kamathipura. Importantly, it calls to question whether the resistances lead to spatial justice or the perpetuation of the dependence of marginalised groups on fragmented sovereignties, or political parties, or the State and
informal market mechanisms. Here we argue that the very territorial flexibility of the State that enables various informal economic activities to flourish has led to the existence of multiple claims on the ground that obstruct and hold hostage the possibilities of redevelopment.

In the Conclusion chapter, we discuss the case study in light of the conceptual frameworks that bind the larger project – socio-spatial transformations, state-market axis, urban violence and peace building and spatial justice, linking them through an analysis of the changing dimensions of poverty-inequality-vulnerability in Kamathipura.
2 The Rise and the Fall of the Red Light District

2.1 Introduction

“...O Kamatipura,
Tucking all seasons under your armpit
You squat in the mud here
I go beyond all the pleasures and pains of whoring and wait
For your lotus to bloom.
— A lotus in the mud”

By Namdeo Dhassal, Dalit poet from Kamathipura, from Namdeo Dhasal : Poet of the Underworld (Poems 1972-2006).

This chapter traces the rise and fall of Kamathipura as one of Mumbai’s and Asia’s largest and most ill-reputed red-light district, and the role of the colonial State in creating, maintaining and regulating this space within the city with the help of multiple “informal sovereigns” (Weinstein, 2014) who exerted tremendous influence in the area. We also highlight the complicated yet inextricable linkages between the city as whole and Kamathipura through the circuits of labour, production and moral regimes. By doing so, this chapter brings out the centrality of Kamathipura to the social, economic and political life of the city.

Entering Kamathipura from Belassis Road into Manaji Rajauji Road, the first impression is of an extremely decrepit and neglected neighbourhood with overflowing sewers, a sea of people milling around, a cacophony of noises from people selling their wares on the street, tea houses, pan shops, medical stores, video parlours, men and women sleeping on the pavement and heaps of uncollected garbage lying on the road. What sets the neighbourhood apart immediately is the presence of garishly made up women and girls standing along the edge of the streets with empty expressions on their faces, or talking on their mobile. Sometimes, a man on a bike will stop by one of them, have a conversation and then speed off. Sometimes, the conversation will lead to the payment of money and then the girl will indicate a door hidden behind a curtain in a nondescript building into which they will disappear. The police look on. The daily rhythm of life goes on as children go to school, come back from school,
women shop from the municipal market in Lane 8, brisk business goes on in the second hand mobile and electronic goods shops, prayers are offered at the many temples lining the streets of Kamathipura, young men labour away in the shops in the back of the buildings – sewing jeans, repairing shirts, making bags and slippers. This is Kamathipura during the day.

Figure 4: Kamathipura on a typical day

Come evening, the dynamics shift. There are more of the garishly made up women of all ages on the streets and street corners. There are more men stopping by them, haggling over prices or giving them money. These are men mostly from outside the neighbourhood. The population swells. There are more taxi drivers waiting to pick up couples and take them to hotels. There are many young men waiting in front of small restaurants for their daily dinner, as the tiny shops in which they work and spend the night are too small to allow them to cook their meals inside. The police mill around and ensure there are no brawls on the street, while choosing to look away when transactions take place. Restaurants and tea shops do a lot of business as customers fill in through the evening and late into the night. Local liquor stores or cheap bars too are filled with male customers. Strains of raunchy commercial film music fills the air as smells of cheap perfume, sweat and liquor and rotting food pierces the air late into the night. On some week nights, some of the inner lanes turn into markets - lane 8 and 9 transform into cloth markets attracting customers from all over the city for beautiful whole sale cloth, designer laces, motifs and scarves. Dedh Gully (the first lane which is refered to as one and half lane) at night turns into a bustling market of the cheapest shoes (often stolen from Mandirs/Gurdwaras/ and sourced cheaply from manufacturers which discard poor quality goods) attracting men, women and college goers from the far suburbs to bargain and purchase
the loot. By morning, there is a mountain of garbage on the road. There are men lying on the pavements in a drunken stupor. The young garishly made up women are not to be seen till the late morning, afternoon hours. Children go to school. Men go to work. Shops open up. Women go about doing their household chores in a flurry of movement. They are different from the ones who stand and occupy the streets during the evenings.

Figure 5: Falkland Road

![Image](source.jpg)

*Source:Prostitutes of Bombay by Mary Ellen Mark*

Although Kamathipura has reached iconic status as a living hell, a dangerous neighbourhood, an immoral area of ‘fallen women’, and an area prohibited for decent women and men, in popular imagination circulated through films, media and word of mouth, much of the daily routines in Kamathipura today are extremely mundane and similar to low income neighbourhoods in other parts of the city. How did Kamathipura earn this reputation?

### 2.2 The Social And Moral Production of A “Red Light District” – Role of The Colonial State, Police And Zoning Regulations

Kamathipura is strategically located in the heart of Mumbai’s island city, in close proximity to the erstwhile mills, central line railway stations and the once bustling docklands.

---

3 For instance, the United States State Department’s annual Crime and Safety Report, issued for Diplomats in India, consistently cites Kamathipura as an area within Mumbai which American Diplomats, tourists etc. should stay away from. Kamathipura has been picturised/refered to in several Hindi movies as a red light area – Chameli, Talaash,
Kamthipura’s reputation as a red light district is integrally linked to Mumbai’s historical rise as a port, particularly after it became a part of the British colony in 1668. Bombay became an important port which connected traders from China, Britain and East Africa (Tambe, 2009). Gradually, artisans like weavers and ship builders began to come to Bombay and by the end of the eighteenth century, the docks, ship building industry and markets of Bombay port area gained national and international fame. The port was an important halt for British soldiers, administrators, traders and also became an attractive hub for commercial sex trade which emerged to serve traders and the colonial staff. During this time, a large number of textile mills emerged in Bombay which resulted in an enormous influx of male migrants from surrounding areas in search of work, which continued to populate and densify Kamathipura for want of cheap housing elsewhere. Kamathipura, which was at the physical centre of these developments became a housing area, a bustling market and a pleasure district all in one. By the early twentieth century, Bombay earned notoriety for harbouring the most number of brothels as compared to the Indian and many international urban cities (Tambe, 2009:xx).

**Figure 6 : Historical location of Kamathipura**
Kamathipura was a low lying marshy area which was opened up for habitation after the construction of Hornby Vellard in 1784, just north of the existing limits of the colonial Fort area, yet sufficiently peripheral to it. In the late 1800s, the British colonial rulers in India sought to join the seven islands into one city through massive infrastructural projects. Construction workers from neighbouring Hyderabad, called “Kamathis” migrated to Bombay in search of work and settled in the low-lying, oft flooded marshlands on the outskirts of the city. Thus, Kamathipura derives its name from this community of construction workers who laboured to build the city and yet were treated as outsiders in a racially segregated and colonized city. With the emergence of the textile mills, many Kamathis became mill workers and thus became integrated into the industrial fabric of the city. Around 1870, the urban local body, headed by the colonial rulers but influenced deeply by the native elites, made attempts to redevelop part of the area by laying out a parallel street grid network of 16 lanes, allowing for cheap, 10 by 10 rooms in three to four storey apartment buildings for the industrial workers, although neglecting to provide basic social and public amenities and open spaces, resulting in a poorly planned and congested neighbourhood. These efforts were partly prompted by a pervading colonial discourse on sanitising and containing contagion and disease.

Around the same time, facing public pressure from native subjects (local elite as well as the respectable poor and morally upright middle class) the colonial rulers designated the area as a ‘tolerated zone’ for commercial sex work, pushing European sex workers out of more “respectable” middle class neighbourhoods and into Kamathipura. Historian Tambe notes, “Kamathipura was not the only area with a concentration of prostitutes, but it was significantly the area where European prostitutes first resided, and then were allocated. It was on the strength of this European dimension that Kamathipura was termed the ‘prostitutes’ zone’ by the administration (Home department 1920, Police-A). In fact, at the time, Indian brothel workers were far more dispersed across the city, and met with less public revulsion. There were no furious debates between police and residents over where to locate Indian prostitutes (Tambe, 2009). Native sex workers were found concentrated near mill areas such as Girangaon, or in lower caste small manufacturing neighbourhoods such as Kumbahadhada behind Kamathipura. In the colonial era, there was a diversity of commercial sex workers.
from East Europeans to Afghani women and Indian women, and a clear class and racial
division existed in commercial sex work, and currently this segregation operates along
regional lines today. Anglo-Indian and East European sex workers used to operate in
Kamathipura, and this earned the area the name ‘Safed (White) Galli’ now known as Cursesji
Shukla Road (Lewis, 2009). There were theatres, movie halls, dance halls, tea stalls,
restaurants, all of which made it an entertainment district of the city. By 1928, licenses were
issued for sex work and the area began to thrive as a pleasure and entertainment zone.

Between the late 1800s and 1920s, commercial sex work began to thrive in Kamathipura’s
chawls\(^4\) catering to the demands of an emerging industrial city dock workers, soldiers,
passing merchants, and single male migrants working in the mills with the active complicity
of the State, the landlords of the chawls, the police and local politicians. Alongside, a vibrant
(often bordering on illicit and informal) economy developed comprising theatres, dance halls,
gambling and liquor joints, tea stalls, hotels and restaurants, lodges, local perfume stores, drug
became inextricably associated as a space where those with ‘low moral and economic’ value
came to reside and a site where differences along race were blurred, unlike the rest of the city.
It was also a space where ‘all these degenerate influences were contained’’, a viewpoint that
was reinforced through the circulation of popular media and imagery of Kamathipura as the
vice laden, crime infested district of Mumbai.

2.3 Local Elites, Fixers, Intermediaries in the Growth of Kamathipura

Paradoxically, the centrally located neighbourhood of Kamathipura was also an extremely
economically vibrant neighbourhood that offered its residents myriad opportunities of eking
out a living in the city, largely under the radar of public institutions. This resulted in a
proletarian casual economy and a public culture centred on the street, which encompassed
ramshackle lodging houses, liquor shops, brothels, pawnshops, and sundry unregulated
activities. This secondary economy was not only the source of employment, housing, and
credit, but also catered to the sexual needs of predominately male migrants who had left their

\(^4\) A chawl is referred to the two-three storied buildings, with each floor consisting of row of single rooms sharing
common balcony on the premise that that the migrant low waged labourers will only be able to pay little rent.
These were built by private builders for mill workers.
families behind in villages (Bhide, 2014). These transactions and economic exchanges at the street level were supported and facilitated by a range of informal power brokers, or “fixers” at the local level specializing in the provision of extra-legal security mechanisms, using violence or the threat of violence to maintain peace and resolve conflicts arising out of the proximity of different groups and competing stakes. This period marked the rise of *Samaj* associations (identity collectives), bootlegging, drugs and smuggling; thus Kamathipura began to be associated with vice, crime and a ‘loose moral order’.

On the other hand, the powerful indigenous elites and the propertied classes in the city, who had a strong presence in the local government and controlled the textile mills, along with the colonial rulers were instrumental in shaping the city and in deciding the fate of Kamathipura as a “necessary evil”. The late Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, in a 1998 essay on the racial composition of the Bombay police force, highlights the nexus of power and influence that revolved around one of the most famous brothels of its time. Tambe, 2004, says: “*Police ranked European brothels into three tiers according to how well conducted they were: The first class consisted solely of European women living in private houses; the second, of women who solicited in streets; and the third, of women who were grouped along with Japanese and Baghdadi women in Kamathipura. Indian women figure implicitly as the bottom rung in this hierarchy, although they are not named as such.*” There were distinct lanes for *tawaiifs/​courtesans, mujrewalis* and sex workers as each group practiced different kinds of work and often belonged to specific ethnic and caste communities (Thatra, forthcoming).

Moreover, there were socially recognized yet unwritten rules of conduct that distinguished the red light areas from residential areas in Kamathipura.

### 2.4 The Post Colonial State, Deregulation, Illegalizing and Ghettoizing Sex Work

Post-independence, though commercial sex work was made illegal, it flourished in Kamathipura and led to the further ghettoization of sex work in certain pockets of the city such as Kamathipura. Women from neighbouring states were coerced or tricked into the trade and virtually imprisoned in Kamathipura, in tiny rooms with bars called “cages” till their will and desire to escape was broken. In the fifties, when the then chief minister, Morarji Desai,
began his crackdown on social vices, he was reportedly advised that Kamathipura’s undisturbed existence was essential to the sanity of society. Thus as a “tolerated area”, it escaped the crackdown. During the sixties and seventies, interventions by the state and non-state actors were largely geared at banning of sex work and the containment of sexual commerce rather than addressing the structures of poverty and inequality as well as the violence that produced and controlled commercial sex trade. In a continuation of the colonial strategies, the aim was to clearly create an “exceptional space” - a separate and well-defined zone for the practice to thrive, while allowing the government to adopt a higher moral ground of defending the interests of the larger public.

According to Shah, 2006 “(The Immoral Traffic [Prevention] Act, 1956) (ITPA) exists alongside Indian police acts and anti-solicitation and anti-nuisance laws that already bestow relatively broad powers on the police to fine, arrest and remove sex workers from public areas. These are further supplemented by informal policing practices such as the enforcement of unwritten curfews in and near low-income neighbourhoods in cities like Mumbai. Although ITPA is legislatively redundant in several ways, its main clauses are still used to restrict visible signs of sex work in public spaces, such as ‘solicitation’, which is so broadly defined here, and in most anti-prostitution legislation everywhere else, that it lends itself to abuses of power by local authorities. Nowhere in Indian law is the actual exchange of sexual services and money defined as illegal; rather, solicitation, living off of the earnings of a prostitute, and being under the age of 18 and living in a brothel, for example, are criminalised”. Thus, it may be said, that the regulatory regime not only criminalised sex work but also created conditions wherein informal actors (madams, pimps, traffickers, judiciary and even the police) were complicit in the trade and able to exercise control, through the use of violence, over the girls and women, who lost complete control over their earnings or their right to refuse to work in this manner.

2.5 The Post Colonial State’s Developmentalism – AIDS Prevention Programs in Kamathipura and the Decline of the Sex Trade

In the eighties, however, commercial sex work in Kamathipura began to suffer the onslaught of AIDS. Unfortunately, this was also the time when there were tremendous upheavals in
Mumbai’s political economy with the closure of the mills, mass unemployment amongst the youth, the steady rise of the builder-politician nexus in reaping benefits from the real estate industry, the break out of violent communal riots that segregated and ghettoized the city, including the neighbourhood of Kamathipura, and finally the rise of a violent and strong political party that believed in identity politics and in claiming the city for the sons-of-the-soil. With the closure of the mills and their redevelopment, the island city began to be emptied of its working class population, including many from Kamathipura who worked in the mills. It led to a steady increase in informalisation of labour as this surplus labour force had no skills or resources to do anything else. It was at this time that informal markets in second hand and even stolen shoes, bags, cloth, electronics began to emerge in Kamathipura’s bylanes catering to the impoverished sections of the city. The well paying customers of sex work vanished leaving the sex workers trapped in poverty.

The non-government sector and its inherent abolitionist agenda towards prostitution aided the gradual but steady decline of brothel-based sex work during this period, while it also led to an increase in the more visible and vulnerable forms of street based sex work. The public health outcry over AIDS gave the government an inroad into curbing sex work in Kamathipura through targeted health interventions. Though indicative of the benevolence of the government, these interventions were initially resisted bitterly by madams, pimps and customers (and landlords owning or operating brothels) and resulted in more violence against sex workers. The fear of the disease drove away customers and claimed the lives of many sex workers. Landlords became wary of the disease spreading in their premises and thus started looking for ways to evict the sex workers, the madams and the pimps.

2.6 Liberalization, Rise of The Property Regime and Reregulation of Kamathipura

Although large-scale, top down redevelopment of the neighbourhood is yet to take place, many buildings have been torn down and redeveloped into towers in and around the neighbourhood leading to waves of new residents and the exit of long-term residents. Many of the brothels inside the chawls have been bought over and transformed into small manufacturing units, which pay hefty rents in comparison to the rents paid by sex workers.
While some of the madams have been able to negotiate and broker substantial compensation packages for letting go of their user rights over space, the girls in the brothel have fared the worst with no place to stay, no compensation (most of them are sub tenants and have no identity proof or residential proof either) and increasingly spiralling rents in the neighbourhood in the few remaining brothels/hotels or rooms that can be rented on an hourly basis for sex work, owing to the huge rents that the small manufacturing units pay for the same spaces.

In the nineties, systematic police raids on sex workers were carried out with greater frequency in Kamathipura in the name of curbing human trafficking. The famous bar dancing occupation in the city was abolished leaving many of these women to seek sex work as an alternative (and only) livelihood strategy. The traditional mujrewalis have long since disappeared from the Congress House and Foras Road, areas with pressures of redevelopment and landlords evicting these activities in favour of more lucrative rentiers. The actions by the police were supported in part by landlords who now wanted to evict the tenants and especially the sex workers. It coincided with the rising price of land in the adjacent areas and redevelopment rumours in Kamathipura, as buildings and units began to be bought over slowly. There are now about 500-1000 sex workers remaining here, as compared to 2000 in 2010 and almost 50,000 in 1992, as a result of being driven out by landlords to make their buildings available for redevelopment (Singh, 2014) or higher rents as well as the overall stigma surrounding sex work and spaces where it operates. According to Shah, 2006, there were around 5000 to 10000 sex workers and their families who resided in the locality.

Thus, the role of the State, market and others has been critical in the production of this space as one of exception, through certain forms of legislations. Legal structures through exclusionary and prohibitive laws and policies, produced the ‘red light area’ wherein ‘immoral socio-spatial practices’ occur. Thus the ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’, ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’, ‘sanitised’ and ‘dirty’ and ‘formal’ and ‘informal’, spaces and practices are produced, naturalised and sustained.
2.7 Redevelopment, Moral Aestheticism and the Creation of Strong Community Based Resistance to Sex Work

Rumours of the eminent redevelopment of Kamathipura have contributed to the unsettledness, rifts and uneasiness in the neighbourhood and a clear segregation between the sex workers community and the “decent” lot. Shah, 2009 notes, “The criminalization of prostitution through the ITPA and the local Police Acts is experienced by residents of Kamathipura as routine raids, police sweeps, and extortion by representatives of the State for personal gain. Residents of Kamathipura are targeted because the sexual commerce there has been produced as a visible, factual, and therefore ‘known’ activity...the generalized sense throughout Mumbai that the district exists for the sole purpose of prostitution, residents have alternately experienced severe state-sponsored regulation, multiple levels of extortion, generalized indifference, and exoticized consumer interest.”

In the past, residents of Kamathipura in primarily low wage, low skill jobs, had ‘tolerated’ the sex workers in their neighbourhood empathising with the situation of “having to make ends meet”. For many of the low income residents, taking care of the children of sex workers while they worked was a paid activity till the NGOs came and started doing it for free. However, with the material and symbolic discourse shifting to the economic value of the land that is lying unlocked in Kamathipura, current residents are actively opposing commercial sex work
in the area, providing the state and market a new impetus for the redevelopment of Kamathipura and in “sanitising” the neighbourhood. In recent years, there have been a spate of resident group associations protesting against sex workers in Kamathipura alleging that the illegal activities and the tag of red light district has made social relations extremely problematic. Access to jobs, getting married, or getting into good schools, were hindered by the mere fact of citing Kamathipura as one’s residence, alleged irate residents (Interview with PUKAR Community Fellows who conducted a study on the perceptions of Kamathipura).

There are reports of signature campaigns by the community resident groups against sex workers, initiated by developers, which has been sent to the Chief Minister. There are also reports that the local police has responded to public and political pressure by further clamping down on sex work and restricting such activities “officially” to Lane number 11 (Mid Day). In particular, residents are extremely hostile towards the recent migrants who are performing sex work, as opposed to those who are long term inhabitants. Multiple voices across communities in Kamathipura point to this ascendance of the Bengalis and Bangladeshis in the red light area, and the “unsafe” environment it has created for “decent” women. This has also led to sharp divides within the sex workers community as there is a range of claims and entitlements based on this status of who is a more authentic resident of Kamathipura and therefore entitled to the spoils of redevelopment.

Figure 8: Media reporting on intolerance towards sex workers
In many ways the current sanitising efforts resemble a situation during colonial times when the middle class, “respectable poor” and elite native residents in and around Kamathipura had objected to the white prostitutes in their vicinity and put pressure on the police to evict them. In late nineteenth century, the Bohra community resisted the government’s move to move prostitutes from Duncan road to Cursetji Suklaji Street, where they resided, on account of being ‘respectable poor’. Petitions were put in from other areas such as Fort, Khetwadi, and Chowpaty, against their areas being taken over by prostitutes. However, at that time, landlords housing brothels and native prostitutes wrote in favour of the right of the European prostitutes to stay in the Kamathipura area as per the wishes of the colonial government (Tambe, 2000). This brings forth, how there are multiple interest groups that have been influencing the socio-spatial arrangements and economic activities in Kamathipura since the colonial times, and these often work at cross purposes thus subverting efforts by the State to comprehensively regulate and control the area.

2.3. Conclusions

Although red light districts are considered as separate from the ‘other’ areas in the city, the ‘other’ areas derive their legitimacy from the very spaces they are trying to maintain moral and physical separation from. According to Butler (1990) the juridical system operates discursively producing the very subject that it aims to represent, regulate and control. On prohibition, Foucault says, the act itself which prohibits certain practices, particularly deviant or transgressive sexual acts, results in making these acts real, waiting to be discovered, and experienced (Tambe, 2009: 19). However, these labels such as moral and immoral, or legal and illegal are simplistic, static and artificial and fail to capture the complex dynamism at play in Kamathipura, where various bodies, livelihoods and spaces co-exist and accommodate occupations of different shades of illegal and immoral, and all of which reject such simplistic labelling.

Kamathipura is in many ways the ‘constitutive outside’ (Roy, 2011) of the rest of the city. It is a space that is outside of and socially, economically, and morally different from the rest of Mumbai, yet, one that functions as its essential and integral part. The difference is one that has been created on purpose through the regime of territorial flexibility of the colonial State and then maintained through the planning and governance by the postcolonial State. As a zone of
exception, rules are bent, stretched or kept in abeyance, or at times selectively applied by the State (Roy, 2011) producing a space that is subjected to wholly different sets of rules than what the rest of the city is governed by or adheres to. The colonial State’s deliberate, supportive neglect of the area, produced the conditions for ‘informal sovereigns’, and local powers to seize the opportunities and make claims to the spoils of Kamathipura – this included from building substandard, cramped, unsanitary housing (that had no room for open spaces, drainage and sewer systems) for industrial workers. It included control over illicit activities including production and consumption of liquor, smuggling of goods, and commercial sex work. It created opportunities for the poor to survive in the city as Kamathipura offered cheap housing and a “safe space” where all kinds of economic work could take place without being persecuted by the State. The supportive neglect of Kamathipura meant that landlords had a carte blanche to illegally construct dwellings of substandard quality on their land without any heed to the requirements of the health, safety or wellbeing of its residents. Moreover, with the selective removal of the State from the workings of the neighbourhood, it created a space for contesting networks of localized toughs, goons, policemen who gave “protection” to these trades who have repurposed and reinterpreted rules to their benefit, perpetuating and consolidating the image of Kamathipura as a zone of exception.

Violence is thus embedded in the production of the space of Kamathipura, and in its regulation as well as transformation. At certain points, the State flexes its muscles through the use of legitimate means of violence (evictions, clearances, raids etc), while mostly, it is the nexus of policemen-madams-pimps – landlords and unspoken social rules that are embedded in the spatial logics of Kamathipura, that control the bodies, labour and earnings of sex workers. While most sex workers perpetuate this power equation, there are some who manage to subvert and resist as well, but at a huge social, economic and physical cost.

One of the key findings from this chapter is the steady shrinking of spaces of brothel based sex work in the island city, and the dispersal of sex workers across the metropolitan area. Emerging peripheral settlements, such as Vashi to the east, and Nallasopara to the west are reportedly the new hubs for sex, given the high concentration of working population there. Concurrent to this finding is the increasingly precarious and vulnerable situation of those women seeking sex work as a livelihood strategy, as they become outlawed, shamed by an
increasingly morally oriented civil society, and more prone to violence due to their increased visibility on the streets in the absence of the relative anonymity and cover that brothels allowed. The entertainment complex and secondary economy built around sex work, including theatre houses, kothes (dancing halls) of the mujrewalis, paan shops, restaurants, tailors, tea shops, medical stores and laundries, and store providing hot towels, soaps, the pawn shops, lottery stores and later on cinema halls, video parlours, lottery joints, liquor dens, all these began to disappear from the map with the dismantling of brothels and their conversion to small manufacturing units. Sex work per se however has not declined. In fact, now more than before, there are many more women lining the streets and street corners in and around Kamathipura leading to friction between them and the locals, and among themselves over the more lucrative territories for soliciting. It also bring to light the social and constructed nature of a red light district whose imaginary boundaries seemed to first have expanded and then contracted thus expelling sex workers and preparing the ground for redevelopment projects, in response to the needs of the corporate capital. Thus the State (especially particular institutions and functionaries), its planning regime and regulations, landlords and several other non–state actors have played an important part in first producing and then hastening the destruction of brothel based sex work. If the territorialized flexibility, bio politics, and a reinterpretation of principles of purity and pollution by the State enabled the segregation and differentiation of Kamathipura as the “immoral city” within Mumbai, then this very flexibility has allowed the State to later re-regulate the space and deem it fit for privatised forms of redevelopment that seeks to tear apart the inclusive socio-spatial fabric of Kamathipura.
3 Building lives and livelihoods through Incrementalism, Autoconstruction and Violence

3.1. Spatiality and Temporality of Informal Work in Kamathipura

At 3.00 am on Fridays and Sundays when the rest of the city is asleep, a lane in Kamathipura is bustling with activity. A famous and rather old shoe Market operates in Dedh gully and Pupala street. Dedh gully is a popular venue for this temporary shoe market and boys and men from all over the city and even far off metropolitan areas come to buy shoes (new shoes sourced from nearby manufacturers, second hand shoes often stolen from trains, temples, mosques. or collected from households) at throwaway prices. Almost 70 stalls line the lane and spill over to Parasuram Puppala Marg and Bapty Road as well. Residents of this lane use their own verandahs to accommodate the growing market. Most sellers are residents of Kamathipura while some are from outside from places as far as Virar and Kurla. They all pay a monthly fee to a registered association formed by the Rohidas community who have come from various parts of the state like Aurangabad, Nasik and Ahmednagar. This community oversees and regulates the market. This market, which used to be open every day, has now been forced to operate only twice a week after some residents protested. The temporary market dates back to the 1930s.
Figure 9: Shoe shop operating in Dedh Gully

On Sunday mornings, the open space on 12th Lane in Kamathipura accommodates another temporary market attracting buyers and sellers from across the city. These are usually second hand (often stolen goods) – from clothes, to electronic goods, to sports equipment and even some antiques. Given the dirt cheap prices - the urban poor communities, migrants, and scrap collectors come to this market as do small entrepreneurs to pick up parts to assemble goods. Many of the sellers here are the resident Waghrī community who collect old and used commodities and trade them for utensils. This market operates under the radar and is thus not completely legal. Sellers pay a “hafta” to local toughs. This market has been operating since 1984 (post riots) and it seems that communal tensions between the Waghrīs and the Muslim population have led to the splitting of a former market in which both communities could sell their wares. Sukhlaji Street in Kamathipura used to be known for cheap and smuggled goods controlled by the organised crime network till speculations around redevelopment changed the street completely.
Lane 9 in Kamathipura is home to the original Telegu speaking communities of Kamathipura. In the evenings, the lane bustles with women who come from all over the city to buy cloth at wholesale prices. Also available are beautiful laces, buttons, motifs, and zaris. There are shops which claim to make the copies of the best designer outfits at one tenth the price. The vendors are mostly men from Lane 9 and 8 and have been long term residents of Kamathipura. They too use the spaces in front of their houses to sell their wares and have formed an informal association to regulate the market and ensure that customers feel safe and comfortable shopping here.
Women from all over the city come to buy clothes from the Kamathipura Market in lane 9.

In lanes 5 (and parts of 4, 6 and 7) and all along Stable Street, there are several houses and *chawls* occupied by jeans dyeing units. There are huge drums of chemicals and water occupying the streets while coloured waste water stains the roads. Men, mostly migrant men from the north western states of Uttar Pradesh, and eastern states of Bihar, Bengal can be seen either sorting through piles of old jeans, or sewing and stitching them, or washing and dyeing them and hanging them to dry. Fights break out often between the native inhabitants and migrants as they are perceived as intruders and dangerous. The very act of dyeing jeans is seen as polluting and straining the stretched resources in Kamathipura, especially water. Several small and medium jeans wholesale stores can be found on lane 5 which are owned and controlled largely by the Muslim community residing in the peripheries of Kamathipura.
Moving from Bapty Road to Maulana Shaukat Ali road, one encounters a cluster of iron and steel shops engaged in retail and wholesale trade. The Bharat Lokhand Market and the Maharashtra Lokhand market are both fairly organised clusters but unauthorised as both have
come up on land parcels that used to be common land - Jewish cemetery, a Muslim cemetery and dargah land and in therefore exist in violation of the Development Plan. These large and dense cluster of shops attract sellers, buyers, daily wage labourers who move the goods and are thus firmly controlled by an informal network of contractors, middle men, small scale entrepreneurs etc.

Figure 14: Street Use by different occupation groups in Kamathipura

These are snap shots from Kamathipura’s complex arrangement of productive spaces that indicate the dense and flexible use of its spaces and the range of legal and illegal economic activities it accommodates, beyond commercial sex work, in the tight network of lanes, often controlled by local communities and informal power structures, as they straddle a range of formal to informal practices. This chapter highlights why these activities have emerged in Kamathipura in particular and how these economic activities are arranged in space, the ways in which they have made claims, negotiated, and consolidated their claims to space in an
already crowded Kamathipura. This chapter therefore argues, that these cast away economies, people and goods have flourished in Kamathipura because the State has maintained Kamathipura as a space of exceptions through its calculated informality and territorialised flexibility. The chapter describes the ways in which the poor assert their right to space through historically entrenched and contingent social and political processes that have constituted the making of Kamathipura. It also explores the importance of the role played by certain individuals and informal associations from a varying spectrum of political parties, ethnicities and religion, who have exerted their influence and control in the organisation of these trades.

While we emphasize that groups of people in Kamathipura are constantly engaged in keeping open the wide range of opportunities in occupations, services and circulation of goods, and experimenting and innovating to push beyond mere survival in the need economy, it is also clear that this incrementalism (Simone, 2004) or quiet encroachment of the ordinary (Bayat, 2000), or occupancy urbanism (Benjamin, 2008) may not lead to the consolidation of wealth, being treated as full citizens or regularisation given the extremely (i) tenuous nature of their enterprises and (ii) the very same territorial flexibility of the State. We locate livelihoods within the complex interplay of ‘migration, informality, housing and the daily negotiations of survival’ (Shah 2014:149). In other words, we examine the histories of the selected livelihoods, how people negotiate these on a daily basis both spatially and bodily, the range of vulnerabilities that structure these livelihoods, the violence that the State, market and others impose on these livelihoods, and ways in which people cope, resist, collectivise and mobilise.

With the mere threat of advance of real estate markets into Kamathipura, we argue, some of the livelihood practices, activities and enterprises and the value that people add to the neighbourhood, through their labour and work, are being violently effaced (Simone, 2014). As the political economy of land starts to change across the city and the state, marked by urban transformations and deindustrialisation, the diverse forms of labour and economic activities in Kamathipura have begun to come apart producing more hardships for some of the most vulnerable population groups.
3.2. The Historical and Social Production of Kamathipura as a Peripheral Space of Marginalised Occupations

Kamathipura as a space is at once complex, segregated but inextricably linked to the rest of the city. Multiple layers of social vulnerability and economic marginalisation are reflected in the existence of fringe identities (*dalit* BMC conservancy workers on the very edge, community of eunuchs in Lane 1, sex workers, dishoused populations, and Muslims) and marginalized occupations which often reinforce one another. Many livelihoods in Kamathipura operate in the realm of what is perceived as illegal, informal and even immoral such as sex work, hawking and selling of fake and second hand goods. Characterised by varying degrees of informality, these livelihoods have existed and operated in the face of constant threats by the State, market and opposition from sections of the society, and today, many of these face the threat of being wiped out completely by the processes of redevelopment. Overall Kamathipura as a space is seen as one which has accommodated these multiple fringe identities and occupations in the very heart of the city but through the complicity of the State. Redevelopment of this space will push these people into precarious conditions and will result in the physical peripheralisation and possible obliteration of these occupations.

In the previous chapter, we have discussed how the space of Kamathipura has been produced as a space of exception, where a different set of rules and norms were applicable, in order to segregate, contain and yet accommodate sex work. “The hypervisibility of the ‘red light’ district in most Presidency towns was an exceptional spatial representation of “public woman” whose work could be territorially defined as no other sphere of women’s work could be” (Nair, 2005: 300).

The centrally located neighbourhood of Kamathipura was also an extremely economically vibrant neighbourhood that offered its residents myriad opportunities of eking out a living in the city, largely under the radar of the urban local body or the police. This resulted in a proletarian casual economy and a public culture centred on the street, which encompassed ramshackle lodging houses, liquor shops, brothels, pawnshops, and sundry unregulated activities.
These transactions and economic exchanges at the street level were supported and facilitated by a range of informal power brokers, or “fixers” at the local level specializing in the provision of extra-legal security mechanisms, using violence or the threat of violence to maintain peace and resolve conflicts arising out of the proximity of different groups and competing stakes. Kidambi (2004) therefore notes that a parallel culture of power and influence emerged on the streets related to the “underground” economy of the majority of the labouring poor who lived on rent and were thus excluded from decision making structures in the city. This culture was partly embedded in the traditional power structures of communities, and partly in the multiple needs of migrants in the new city space, thus giving rise to informal networks of patronage. These new focal points of authority and influence included jobbers, rent-collectors, local landlords, Pathan money-lenders, the proprietors of taverns and tea-shops, brothels, gymnasia, and street-bosses of various kinds commonly known as ‘dadas’ (Bhide, 2014).

On the other hand, during the colonial era, the industrialist and the powerful propertied classes (especially the landlords) in the island city were as important as the colonial rulers in influencing the spatial arrangement of Kamathipura and the ways in which it would be occupied and used by various urban poor and marginalised communities. Given the strategic and central location of the neighbourhood, and the pressure to house incoming industrial workers, land owners gave their land to builders who subdivided it into the smallest plots and built tenement housing. According to Gupte, 2012, the construction quality was extremely poor and made of cheap materials, compromising on the foundation and sewer system, leading to an extremely poor built environment. To maximise the extraction of rents, rooms were subdivided and shared by multiple tenants. In addition, diversified strategies were used to enhance rents by renting out the ground floor to small shops while upper floors were used for residential purposes, including spaces under the stairwell. Buildings were built adjoining each other thus reducing cross ventilation and constricting light (Gupte, 2012). At the neighbourhood level, there was no thought given to the provision of open spaces as landlords tried to maximise profits by utilising available space for commercial and residential purposes. There was no provision water storage in the buildings and a rudimentary drainage system.
Another implication of this type of built environment and the presence of brothels in the area led to a process of increasing ghettoization of Kamathipura as middle class, or upper caste Hindu families, and wealthier families from other communities tended to stay away from the neighbourhood (Gupte, 2012). Matters were compounded when in the mid nineteenth century, Arthur Crawford, the first municipal commissioner, allotted plots of residential space for lower caste municipal sweepers to live there adding to the stigma of the space. The neighbourhood of Kamathipura is also considered the gateway to the dense Muslim dominated neighbourhoods of South Central Mumbai namely, Nagpada, Byculla, Bohri Mohalla, Dongri etc. which added to the segregated character of the neighbourhood. Slowly Kamathipura came to designate a ‘discarded’ space, where no ‘respectable’ persons would chose to reside (Tambe, 2009).

The social production of Kamathipura thus clearly points out to the multiple ways in which the State practiced territorialised flexibility to create a neighbourhood in which building norms could be flouted and livelihoods which were unwanted, undesirable and immoral were allowed to be practiced. The concentration of urban poor groups, the high rents, and the lack of space in the centre of the island city close to the mills, factories, and other sources of work, led to the proliferation of several shops, retail stores and small industrial units that catered to the need of the large industrial workforce. It also created a space that accommodated sex work and a secondary economy supporting it comprising pawn shops, liquor shops, lottery shops, theatre halls, mujra halls, cinemas, tea shops and restaurants that remained open late through the night. In the post-colonial period population groups have occupied more spaces in Kamathipura, particularly appropriating common spaces or land reserved for public purposes in order to construct unauthorised work spaces renting out for small shops or for shops selling scrap or storing goods among other things. In the recent past however, brothel spaces are being re-appropriated and converted to small manufacturing units leading to radical changes in the social and spatial arrangements within the neighbourhood and the associated circuits of the informal economy operating in the neighbourhood.
3.3. Livelihoods and the Contested Processes of Spatial Claim Making

In this section, we discuss how particular forms of economic activities are organised at the building, street and neighbourhood level and how they constantly negotiate the volatile conditions within the neighbourhood to retain their claims to space and at what cost.

Migration histories indicate that Kamathipura as a neighbourhood was created as a melting pot of various races, ethnicities and castes. Initially it was built to house the Kamathis from Southern India, who were construction workers employed by the colonial government. Soon however, it came to be associated with commercial sex work, especially brothel based sex work. Particular lanes and zones within certain lanes were thus earmarked for brothels where sex work would be tolerated and as discussed earlier, for different races and ethnicities of sex workers. According to the Census data of 1921, most of the Indian prostitutes came from Deccan, Hyderabad, Ratnagiri, Karnataka and Gujarat, and most (Hindu) belonged to low caste groups like Kunbis, Mahars and Dheds, as well as Devadasi groups like Kalavantins, Bhavins, Naikins and those that moved around singing and dancing, the Kolhatis, and children of slaves captured in war, the Bandis (Tambe, 2009:94). Many of these migrant women belonged to Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe groups and were landless labourers who arrived to the city looking for means of livelihood (Shah, 2014). Most of the European prostitutes came from Russia, followed by Japan, South America, Middle East, Africa, and Turkey displaced by war and colonisation. In the post-colonial era, international trafficking peaked and Kamathipura’s brothels housed women of Nepali and Bangladeshi origin. In the last two decades, women from Bengal, Bihar and Orissa have been migrating to Kamathipura for sex work.

In the previous chapter we discussed how the spatial imprint of brothel based sex work and the entertainment related economy that it spawned has been shrinking due to the closure of the brothels, and the slow process of redevelopment of individual buildings in and around Kamathipura. Bacchuseth ki wadi, on Foras Road, which was once famous for mujras, (dance performances by courtesans) was bought over by a private realty group and converted into a tower displacing the original kothewalis (owners of dance performance halls). With the decline of brothel based sex workers, certain other key economic activities have faced a
similar fate. Thus many perfume stores, tailoring shops, tea shops, cinema halls and theatres in the vicinity of Kamathipura such as in \textit{Pila House} (local name for Playhouse), have all been shut down or sold off to other owners who do not wish to operate them. In part, the conversion of brothels to small manufacturing units has also hastened the process of transformation in the neighbourhood. Now there are migrant men cramped into the erstwhile brothel spaces which were primarily inhabited by women. There are electronic gadget repair shops, garages, video parlours, and eateries in buildings that were partly used as brothels thus catering to a changing floating populace. These complex and layered usage of spaces in many ways provides some kind of protection and legitimacy to the people living and working there.

The space within the brothels, which provided a modicum of safety and invisibility for the sex workers, were also places that the women could come together as a collective, share their grief and joys, their daily chores and take care of each other when sick. The spaces within the brothels though extremely cramped and small, nonetheless offered a shelter, a place of work and a place of rest though heavily restricted mobility. The trap doors, secret hideaways, highly coded access and passage ways which are hidden from public view or layered by other regular uses, also provided security from sudden police raids because of the invisibility. This also ensured however that the women were constantly under surveillance and unable to escape as they were monitored by the madams or pimps and the other muscle men. Paradoxically, the brothel space has also allowed the State and the NGOs to target and penetrate the sex trade in order to carry out health, rescue and rehabilitation interventions. At the same time, brothels also became easy targets of policing and middle class activism as they were identifiable and numbered. For instance, in the 60s, the nuns in the convent school (St. Anthony’s School) for girls on Belasis road, made repeated complaints against brothels in the 14\textsuperscript{th} and 13\textsuperscript{th} lane saying they distracted the girls and were an immoral influence on the girls’ future (Zaidi and Borges, 2011). The sex workers, represented by Gangubai, also a sex worker and \textit{gharwalli}, fought strongly against the residents and nuns and lobbied with various state and central level Congress ministers for the right to stay put. Eventually they won (ibid).
Gangubai’s influence in spatial claim making processes points out to the powers wielded by madams in Kamathipura. They perform simultaneously the role of provider, protector and rent extractor based on their ability to assert their control over the space of the brothel and the bodies of the sex workers. Interestingly, though most of the madams do not own property, they have user rights over these spaces that they manage on behalf of the landlord, to whom they pay a sizeable rent (much beyond the cap imposed by the Rent Control Act). Since the law on prostitution can penalize the landlord for harbouring sex workers, the landlord’s name is deliberately kept under wraps. On the other hand, most of the sex workers lack identity proofs or residential addresses and thus have no claims as tenants. In the event of redevelopment, the madams thus may be in a position to negotiate a deal with the landlords in exchange of giving up their claims to the space while the sex workers are thrown out on the street.

At the street level however, sex work seems to not have declined. In fact, there are more women visible on the streets of Kamathipura now, often spilling into areas which were traditionally considered residential only, thus causing tremendous conflict and concern for the inhabitants. Based on observations and conversations with various stakeholders, an
understanding of everyday spatial practices of sex workers emerged. During the day, particularly afternoons and early evenings, sex workers collect at the edge of the streets especially on the street corners of 14th to the 11th lanes to solicit. There is a parking lot in the 11th lane, where they collect in larger numbers. These numbers increase significantly in the evenings, and at night, these bodies spill beyond the 14th and 11th lanes, right till the fruit and vegetable market (8th lane), where the middle class residents come to shop. Many of these sex workers live outside Kamathipura, in the far flung peripheries and come only to work here during the evenings and they leave in the mornings. However, according to narratives, till the 90s sex workers were not permitted to cross Manaji Rauji Street or pass through the central and eastern parts of Kamathipura which were areas where “regular” families lived. Claiming the streets, sex workers justify their actions by asserting that “because of us, the rest of the city is safe” (interview with sex workers), or else, that they have been around for more than 200 years and thus have rights to be in Kamathipura as any other group.

Within these processes of neighbourhood flux, sex workers are reclaiming Kamathipura’s as a space of work by occupying the streets and street corners more visibly. Following recent negotiations between resident groups and the Nagpada police, there is an unspoken arrangement that soliciting will be restricted to parts of lane 8 in Kamathipura. However, the deep and complex relationship between the police and sex workers, particularly the madams, ensure that even these strategic spatial arrangements can be stretched and moulded according to the situation at hand. The geography of sex work has thus altered in the city as a whole with brothel based sex work shifting to far out suburbs. Despite this, Kamathipura still remains and has gained even more notoriety as an area where sex workers from all over the city congregate and solicit sex work on the street.

Following Hubbard and Sanders, 2003 and Shah, 2014 we argue that sex workers possess a distinct agency in the way their everyday spatial practices shapes the space of Kamathipura. The changing geography of sex work in Kamathipura and the city, is therefore produced through the ongoing and recursive interactions between the top down spatialized strategies of the State and market and resident groups (producing ordered and disciplined spaces) and the lived reality and spatial practices of the sex workers that try to escape these definitions and use spaces to do so. This allows us to examine the dynamics and contestations in these spaces.
that are fluid, subject to moments of territorialisation and deterritorialization (Hubbard and Sanders, 2003).

The history of beedi work also goes back to the 1800s. Migrants from neighbouring Andhra, called “Kamathis” migrated to Bombay in search of work and settled in the low-lying, oft flooded marshlands on the outskirts of the city. Kamathipura derives its name from this lower caste community who became construction labourers in colonial Bombay, building the city brick by brick and yet were (and still continue to be) treated as outsiders in a racially segregated and colonized city. With the emergence of the textile mills, many Kamathis became mill workers and thus became integrated into the industrial fabric of the city. Some of the migrants were also from the Telegu speaking Padmashali or traditionally the weaver community. Their women folk were engaged in beedi making, a home based industry that supplemented incomes to keep the household going. These Telegu speaking communities inhabit the central part of Kamathipura in lanes 8 and 9 predominantly and consider themselves as original inhabitants of Kamathipura. During the closure of the mills in the eighties, beedi making became vital to the survival of this community as they struggled to make ends meet. While some of the original community left Kamathipura for their native place once mill work declined drastically, others took up alternative occupations and informal work, such as hawking clothes in order to earn their livelihoods. The women buy raw materials rom shops in Kamathipura and then sell the finished products to other shops. Besides this, they were found to be working mostly in and just outside their homes again along lanes 8 and 9. Many beedi workers are involved in selling clothes in the 9th market lane, though most continue to make beedis as well. The cloth market is an informal one which takes over an entire lane during the evening hours and draws customers from all over the city.

The Beedi workers claim their original status as one of the first occupants and inhabitants of Kamathipura and are thus mobilised as a collective and able to exert their influence over the allocation and appropriation of street space for setting up the lane market. Beedi workers, many of whom belonged to the families of the Kamathi construction workers, feel very strongly that they constructed the city of Bombay, and that their stake in this city and this neighbourhood was uncontested. According to one beedi worker, “Yeh Victoria terminal, sadakein, yeh sab hamne banayi hain, aur ab hamaara khayal nahi kisiko” (Interview with
Beedi worker) – a discursive way of ensuring their stakes to a rapidly changing space and economy. Traditionally, these groups were managed through caste panachayats or associations who exert considerable influence over the community. However, in the seventies and eighties, the group had spearheaded a campaign to pressurize the government to give them access to affordable housing with the help of the Communist Party of India. It was during this time, that Kamathipura had been stirred by the radical Dalit Panther movement as well which was about self–determination and overthrowing the rigid and oppressive caste system. The beedi workers continue to work in a community centre called Beedi Kaamgaar Sangathan in the 8th lane indicating the level of collective mobilization within the workers and their political allegiance. However, the workers movement was state wide and thus while beedi workers gained access to housing in Solapur, it also lead to the eventual fragmentation of the protests among the beedi workers especially with the closure of the mills. Spatially therefore, lane number 9 and 8 are the sites of contestations and new forms of claim making – both in terms of the right to stay put in Kamathipura and to exercise their right to livelihoods.

Another informal economy that is visible by its presence is the dyeing of jeans. The making and selling of second hand jeans is an occupation that has several communities engaged in its procurement, production and marketing. While the traditional Waghri community has been engaged in procuring second hand clothing and particularly jeans, there are middlemen who then buy these. The jeans are then sorted, mended, washed, dyed, all by groups of migrant male workers from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal and some from interiors of Maharashtra. The Muslim community runs these units and also controls the retailing of the finished products to markets across the city such as in Sion and Dadar. The Waghris and the Vedus who work in the recycling sector are unique in the fact that they have been homeless as communities for the past four decades, dwelling in makeshift arrangements in the inner streets, particularly lane 5, 7 and 10, while storing their valuables, utensils and other possessions in the stairwells or buildings in these lanes. This involves a carefully negotiated understanding between these communities and those residents living in the buildings over the use of spaces. Much like the sex workers and the Kamathis, the homeless communities of Waghris and Vedus, who are involved in waste economy of recycling of old clothes, claim the streets as their home and work place as original inhabitants of the neighbourhood.
In depth interviews revealed multi-generations of families living in these inner lanes in temporary huts often with relatives living across in the chawls. The MHADA redevelopment report prepared in the late 70s has also noted the existence of these groups for several decades. It is possible that they were rendered homeless when their huts were cleared to make a garden in 12th lane or else, their houses collapsed or were torn down for clearance in the late fifties, and because they did not have proof of occupancy or tenancy, they did not receive rehabilitation. There were some in the 10th lane, who claimed that a few families had encroached upon a plot and built temporary homes with the help of local toughs (Interview with pavement dweller in Lane 10). Others had received alternative rehabilitation in Vashi and had therefore refused to go, preferring to sleep on the road than grapple with an unknown territory on the fringes of the city.

Figure 16: Waghri workers living on the streets

Kamathipura and its dense network of lanes, for these groups, is home and their rightful space of work, asserted the homeless communities. The idea of locality, street and work are therefore discursively produced, and constantly renegotiated in the face of threats, displacement and violence, by these groups who may be kept on the margins of society
because of their lower caste and the nature of their work which others see as polluting. Another discursive element to their space making claims is the distinction they make with respect to other communities living and working in Kamathipura – therefore within sex workers, those from Bengal are treated as “outsiders”, within the jeans making community, the Waghris and Muslims claim original status while clearly marking out the migrant men in the dyeing units as “outsiders”.

3.4. Autoconstruction, Incrementalism, Collaborations and Other Livelihood Practices

Years of selective State neglect and the near absence of basic services have led to urban inhabitants building missing infrastructure, adding value to the built environment through small, piece by piece incremental improvements, and by constantly working to keep open the spaces or opportunities that allow them to move beyond mere survival. AbdouMaliq Simone’s conception of incremental modes of city building and consolidation of claims by the urban majority, comes close to explaining the multiple ways in which spaces are used and the many forms of work that thrive in Kamathipura. The lens of autoconstruction, which is seen as a set of social, spatial, symbolic and political mobilisations (Holston, 1991) by the urban majority who are left on their own to create viable urban economies and built environments. “…people as infrastructure describes a tentative and often precarious process of remaking the inner city, especially now that the policies and economies that once moored it to the surrounding city have mostly worn away.”(Simone, 2004) Auto-construction also refers to processes by which the city is being built by residents themselves in uncertain, shifting relationships with formal regimes of law, labour, property, and planning (Bhan, 2016). According to Simone, the urban majority living in the same place is engaged in making sense of the place, in building tenuous unstable collaborations, with one another through uneasy deals, alliances etc., in order to concretize and materialize a sense of citizenship, given that as mere residents they may not have legal guarantees that recognise their rights as full citizens. Thus claims to space, through the built environment is a strategy of citizenship claims. However, Simone, 2004 argues, that this occurs in a context where people are aware with the risks of making these claims, given the volatility of the inner city neighbourhoods. “State administrations and civil institutions
have lacked the political and economic power to assign the diversity of activities taking place within the city (buying, selling, residing, etc.) to bounded spaces of deployment, codes of articulation, or the purview of designated actors” (Simone, 2004).

In the case of Kamathipura, residents were engaged in multiple occupations, hedging their bets and distributing risks to investments by putting their hard earned money into different baskets or collaborative ventures. This became clear at the household level wherein several residents revealed that in addition to the formal jobs usually pursued by the male members of the family, women of the household engaged in a range of home based enterprises, such as beedi making. During our study of the cloth market in Lane 9 and the temporary shoe market in Dedh gully, it became clear to us that residents used their residence, the space in front of their buildings, the street, to sell goods and make extra money. Either they themselves sold cloth, or shoes or food, or else they rented the space out to others. By day, the men folk had “regular” jobs in government offices or in the private sector. For some of the sex workers we came across soliciting on the street, given the hard times and difficulty in finding paying customers and avoiding the police, many sex workers had jobs as maids or as daily wage labourers in order to keep the money coming in. A few of the older more established brothel based sex workers revealed how they had invested in tailoring shops, or a small paan shop in Kamathipura with their savings. We also came across male migrant workers who used the public resources in Kamathipura – the community toilet, the street, the open spaces etc. for various everyday activities – from cooking, to sleeping, to playing cards, to eating etc. in an extremely visible fashion. An entire secondary economy has sprung up to support the commercial sex work happening in the neighbourhood – thus residents have opened tea shops, barber shops, small eateries, liquor stores, lottery shops, provided child care services to the children of sex workers, doctors clinics etc. Thus, as the rest of the city undergoes transformations in its built form and economy, residents in Kamathipura are also in the process of building and rebuilding their immediate surroundings. It is hard to make out for an outsider the multiple activities and enterprises that abound in Kamathipura given the complex layering of these economic activities and the furtiveness with which some of these activities take place.
The idea of city making was built on understanding of incrementalism as opposed to sudden changes, and also on the notion of incompleteness, as completion means there is no scope for change or improvement. Kamathipura is a space like this, where the hopes and survival of the most vulnerable groups are built on the notion of gradual change and constant accommodation and adjustment. Kamathipura is the story of continuities more than change. Incrementalism is a strategy in the face of risks and uncertainties and the fact that it offers a cover from prying eyes because of its slow and gradual character. The housing in Kamathipura reveals this incrementalism in built form – with rooms being added or subdivided, with extensions sprouting up over time to accommodate more users and uses. Enterprises have also grown over time and has thus gradually enlarged its physical footprint in the neighbourhood. For instance, the jeans dyeing economy started small, but has now grown into a mini industry with 100 odd units in Stable Street alone. As one entrepreneur explained, “Business bada, vyapaari bada toh bhaara bada” (Interview with Muslim jeans retailer), indicating that with the business doing well and expanding, the rents have also increased in Kamathipura, thus making it now difficult to pursue the trade here. The slow and gradual incursion of small manufacturing industries into the erstwhile brothel spaces also reveals the incremental nature of enterprises and making do in Kamathipura.

3.5. Informal Sovereigns and Associationism

In the context of the near absence of the State to regulate the spaces of informal work in Kamathipura, several actors or agents that function outside and in between the State and the market emerge as vital and embedded in the socio-spatial fabric of Kamathipura. Multiple actors are present such as pimps, madams, managers, hafta (bribe) and rent collectors, the police (functioning both as an organ of the State as well as guided by personal benefits), private developers and their agents, and local leaders, some whom have been elected like the ward corporator, and others who are self-proclaimed. Thus, emerged a range of informal sovereigns who offered protection from the police, or from predatory agencies and rival groups through the deployment of muscle power and the threat of violence, or allowed an assertion of identity and a platform to voice demands. These agents also ensured the smooth circulation of goods and services that and kept this informal (illegal) economy afloat by
negotiating with the representatives of the State. These, different groups have differential control and access to spaces in Kamathipura, based on their positions and access to political and economic capital. Thus the space that is Kamathipura, constitutes an ever shifting terrain of power, access and control by various groups.

In the case of Kamathipura, the informal economy works through and is controlled and operated by shifting configurations of actors based on traditional identities as well as temporary opportunities and gains. This has created competing and contesting claims. As mentioned earlier, there are many caste and religion based associations in Kamathipura that play an important role in deciding about trade partnerships, negotiating deals, and spaces for work, etc. One of the most stable and dominant and active associations is the Akhil Padmashali Samaj. This Samaj is an association of people hailing from 48 villages according to Mr. Bhaskar Kochar, Managing Trustee, Akhil Padmashali Samaj. “We belong to different caste groups and families were involved in various traditional occupations like tailors, weavers and goldsmiths”, he said. The Samaj runs on donations, trust money and rents, and are active in various social aspects such as providing education, space for festivals, raising funds for music and performances and resolving conflicts the community.

However, given the proliferation of temporal and informal markets, we came across newer, more collaborative, yet unstable and nebulous configuration of actors. Informal unions exist among shop keepers such as the Kamathipura market association to help with collective bargaining, accessing goods and managing conflict as well as threat from rent seeking police. There are women’s associations, sometimes affiliated to political parties such as the Shiv Sena and the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena(MNS). These middle class associations are almost always steered by moral aims to ‘cleanse the space of immoral elements’, and ‘save the youth’ from the seductive grip of immorality. These groups are known to raid shops selling CDs of pornographic films, break up congregations of youth in the evenings, and keep the moral essence of the youth intact.

These fuzzy spaces of collaboration and associationism in Kamathipura allow articulation of demands and help people to them negotiate their rights in a context where the state has vacated these spaces. However these forms of associations and membership in them may also close off possibilities for other types of collaboration. A Vanjari respondent said, “Our
community halls are only open to Hindus, we do not give bookings to Muslims. They are fundamentalist and orthodox and don’t have education, they do not educate their girls. They also eat meat and we do not allow any non-vegetarian food in our community hall.” Thus, we argue, that forming collaborations are fraught with tensions and contradictions and require a spirit of risk taking. In Kamathipura, this is circumscribed by the weight of historical social relations, identities and the way the informal economy is embedded in the social space of Kamathipura.

3.6. The Role of Police in the Production and Maintenance of the Informal Economy

Although, the engagement of the State with Kamathipura has been one of selective neglect and intervention, surveillance both direct and indirect has remained consistent. Given the illegal nature of work in this locality, the enormous profits it generates, the massive unlocked land value and the fierce competitions over the use and control of space, the State’s presence through direct and indirect means is critical. Violence and intimidation by the police is a daily occurrence in Kamathipura, and has thus become routinised. Police raids to control sex work, as well as vending were frequently reported. According to one of the managers in a brothel that we interviewed, “Police raids have increased in the last few years and the amount of bribes that they demand have become unaffordable.” The police in some ways have been the only visible and sustained presence of the State in Kamathipura, a place which due to the large presence of sex workers and other stigmatised occupations in the neighbourhood, is collectively ostracised and looked down upon by the rest of the city. Thus, with the State having retreated from this zone of exceptions, only the police remained to maintain law and order in the neighbourhood. In many ways, given the calculated informality of the State in creating the neighbourhood where sex work can flourish even though it is illegal has placed the police in a difficult position. Some actively exploit the situation by extracting rents to facilitate the flow of illegal goods and services. Sex workers reported that they have to pay haftas of Rs. 1200 to Rs. 1500 to the police per month from their earnings in order to continue practicing their trade.
However, the police also have to respond to the pleas of other middle class residents who either complain of nuisance, or possible incidents of violence on the streets. Police also have to respond to NGOs in order to rescue trafficked girls and women and arrest the very pimps, madams or prostitutes from whom they take a regular *hafta*. Thus police and the dual role of rent seeker and protector that they play in Kamathipura, apply to other forms of informal work in which the most vulnerable urban groups operate. Therefore, the *Waghri* community spoke of ways in which the Police would conduct more brutal raids on the more visible out streets against hawkers and petty traders whereas, in the inner lanes, the Police would usually look the other way in exchange of payments. However the precariousness of these populations makes them particularly prone to police action which is emboldened and spurred on by the middle class residents who want immoral trades and ‘outsiders’ out of their neighbourhood. Within these parameters, the young migrant men, who are perceived as a threat by the residents (given how they are forced to eat, bathe and sleep on the pavements) are also prone to police actions and labelling as “criminals”, “thieves” etc.

Criminality, illegality, as well as enormous profitability are embodied in these female labouring bodies engaged in sex work, which are under constant surveillance. Although their work involves mobility, and invisibility, they are all accounted for by the pimps, managers, neighbours, and police. “*There is no escape. One can change brothels, and even rise to become a madam, but escaping this place is an impossibility,***” said Henna (name changed), a former sex worker who rose to become a madam and now works in an NGO. The kind of stifling surveillance that controls sex workers revealed itself during the interviews with sex workers. Accessing brothels was the most difficult part of our fieldwork. There are layers of entry and each layer is coded through open secrets and closed access. When we entered the brothel, two people were always on guard outside the gated door and managers and pimps were always present in the room during the interview. While exiting the building we were followed out of the building and we felt eyes of the adjacent shops, venders, residents on us. The intensity of surveillance could not be ignored. Moreover, the morbid public interest, international NGO intervention and obsessive media glare in this area has produced a ‘spectacle’ of Kamathipura, largely due its reputation of being Asia’s largest red light district
(Shah, 2006). The conflation of sexual trafficking and sexual labour is also a major reason for this moral surveillance by various actors.

Besides the police, there is intense surveillance in the neighbourhood through eyes on the street. “We know who comes in and goes out of the neighbourhood, who is new and who is an outsider. It is because of us that this neighbourhood is safe. *Hum yahan aate jaate nigraani rakhtein hai*,” said Padma (name changed), a Waghri woman living in lane 8. Brijesh from the NGO Pehchaan which works with the homeless community said, “*The state criminalises them (Waghri workers). But these are the people the police comes to when there is a crime, they are their informers. They are the people who are the first to help in a crisis. When 26/11 happened, it was these young men from the pavements who helped remove dead bodies and help in any way possible. But no newspaper mentioned them, no one cared.*” Members of the Waghri community also complained about being harassed by the police – and how they have learned to negotiate around those claims “*The police threaten to displace us. Sometimes, they say that they want to move us temporarily, then we leave our things near the neighbour’s houses. They do cooperate sometimes, sometimes they get really angry.*”

3.7. Big Men, Fixers, Brokers

Like in any other part of Mumbai, the role of dadas has been important in the functioning of the informal money and spatial economy in Kamathipura. Given that much of the economic transactions that occur in this area operate in the realm of the ‘illegal’, ‘immoral’ and ‘informal’, resulting in the emergence of an informal patronage network that was essential to sustain this ‘immoral economy’. These transactions and economic exchanges at the street level are supported and facilitated by a range of informal power brokers, or “fixers” at the local level specializing in the provision of extra-legal security mechanisms, using violence or the threat of violence to maintain peace and resolve conflicts arising out of the proximity of different groups and competing stakes.

From non-state actors such as pimps, managers, rent collectors, shop keepers, contractors, developers, and informal security providers, to state actors such as the police, and the local aides of political representatives, are all known to offer and collect bribes, to allow the
operation of livelihoods, and the use of space in certain ways. The control, use and exchange of space thus is critical and has brought forth a range of actors. Respondents said that the current political representatives such as the MLA were also local *dadas* and contractors, who then rose to power using patronage networks.

3.8. Political Mobilisation

The vulnerable occupational groups residing and working in Kamathipura could be understood using the analytical category of ‘political society’, which is constantly resisting and negotiating in various ways with the State for its right to exist and survive, and whose very existence and daily practice of claim making is ‘criminalised’. Roy, 2011 complicates this political agency of the poor, as it is often co-opted and instrumentalised by the State, Market and other powerful actors. This section explores the political agency of those living and working in Kamathipura, through their subversive and heterogenous spatial claim making practices, while recognising the intersections of poverty, inequality and vulnerability that structure these processes.

The degree of mobilisation among the different occupations groups in Kamathipura is highly differentiated. Through affiliations with an NGO, some workers like the Waghri community, have managed to construct a platform for demands, while others like sex worker community and jeans workers, which is highly heterogenous and fragmented and considered illegal and performed by outsiders, are not as unionised. The *beedi* workers in the past enjoyed the support of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) during the sixties and the seventies, an era of the workers’ and housing movement, but their union weakened over time with the closure of the mills and the shrinking of the workers’ movement in the city.

Unlike other cities in India like Kolkata, in Mumbai, sex workers are not unionised, due to fragmentation within the workers, and the constant eviction of these workers from their areas of practice. In Kamathipura, particularly, due to the impending plans to redevelop the neighbourhood, along with past displacements, brothel based work has declined significantly. The sheer lack of numbers makes it impossible to make collective demands (Shah, 2014).
Moreover, the fragmentation within the workers such as the old Kamathi (Telagu) migrant community that has been practicing sex workers for decades, do not get along with the recent Bangladeshi and Bengali migrants, whom they accuse of eating into their clientele.

Preeti Patkar spoke about the increasing tensions among sex workers in Kamathipura in the last decade that has resulted in rupture in any existing cohesive ties among them “…the changing demography, what happened was that when Bengali women started coming in the other women felt very threatened. Then there was also a class difference between them, the ones from Bengal were poorer, so others considered them to be dirty and not of the same class... Even in terms of pimps, there used to be pimps from Nepal and Karnataka, now there is all Bihari and Bengali pimps, so it is totally taken over Bengali and Bihari men.”(Interview with Priti Patkar, Prerna). Thus infighting, competition, surveillance from above and extreme poverty and insecurity stemming from lack of resources to police, or any social security has rendered unionisation of sex workers next to impossible in Kamathipura. This in turn affects the survival strategies as long established relationships with police, NGOs etc. start to fray under the infighting.

The notoriety of Kamathipura has thus led to more and more migrant women and men landing up in search of some form of work. Not only has this sparked off a wave of panic among residents, but it has also meant a more dangerous and competitive terrain for both the long established workers and the new entrants. For residents, a certain measure of sympathy existed for the sex workers who had been living in Kamathipura for many years. A resident said “…the original sex workers from his area- the Kamathis- they have all grown old and do not reveal themselves as their families are now doing well and don't want to reveal their past-they are not the problem. The problem is the outsiders, mostly Bangladeshis- who don't stay here, but come to work here... They all create problems, harass men and women and also indulge in crimes like chain snatching and picking of pockets. These need to leave”. Thus, there is a new wave of criminalisation of sex workers and fear brewing towards migrant communities as Kamathipura’s relationship to the rapidly transforming island city also undergoes subtle changes. Unfortunately, given the floating nature of these populations, no politician wishes to engage with them directly and thus the vicious cycle of violence, poverty, and illegal sex work continues to repeat itself.
NGOs play an important role in a neighbourhood like Kamathipura where the State has withdrawn from supporting basic urban services and is unable to cater to the huge demands and needs of the urban majority. These organisations can help build important bridges between communities, de-criminalise informal work and help to regularise some of the economic activities or build access to the State for communities that have none. Pehchaan (Identity) not only works towards documenting and strengthening rights to citizenship through ID cards etc, but also promotes the formation of collective identities and greater claims to citizenship by trying to remove the stigma attached to the homeless community. They are also trying to rally for shelter homes which are guaranteed by the State and the Supreme Court but are not implemented. Thus through this NGO, the Waghri and other communities residing and working on the streets, have been articulating their demands, and making their presence count, and actively thwarting eviction drives by the police and BMC.

The beedi workers were quite unionised in the seventies. “Kamathipura’s history is actually a history of the labour movement. During the seventies and eighties, both the beedi workers and mill workers fought for labour rights”, said Mr. Prakash Reddy, member of the Communist Party and the Beedi Kaamgaar Sangathan. In 1951, there were 120 registered strikes within the beedi sector. The unionisation at that time however, was aimed towards formalisation of work that focussed on minimum wage and recognition of work (Agarwala and Herring, 2009). Even construction worker held strikes. Both the construction workers and the beedi workers were affiliated with the CPI(M), but beedi workers worked with the party much more intensely. However, according to Agarwala and Herring, 2009, the unionisation had an unintended consequence, that of manufacturing sectors employing unskilled and more vulnerable workers who were not part of the union and were willing to work for lesser wages. This began to weaken the movement. The wider movements of construction and beedi workers began to decline as more informal workers, unorganised workers began to be employed. Post seventies, there was a significant decline in the beedi as well as construction worker unions. In the eighties however these movements saw a revival, in the context of a shift of strategy. While earlier attempts to unionise were along the lines of formalisation, the renewed attempts began to work within the ambit of informality and approaching slums rather than work sites. This was important as informal and unskilled workers are often subcontracted
and changed work sites. Moreover, this new strategy held the state rather than the employer accountable. This included the unions appealing directly to the state through welfare boards. This was the time when the women in Kamathipura protested in front of Indira Gandhi and marched to demand their basic rights in the Legislative Assembly.

However, beedi unions were not as successful in Maharashtra as compared to other states like Tamil Nadu (ibid). Moreover, the beedi workers in Mumbai, are home based workers rather than employed in factories, like other places in the state like Sholapur. Workers are fragmented in Mumbai and do not work for any particular employer, thus unionisation has weakened. However, in early 2000s the Mumbai Beedi Union was active in providing IDs, birth certificates, documents etc. It also helps raise awareness about education and scholarships. Women reported sitting outside the State Labour Department, Housing Department, and Legislative assembly and rolling beedis as a form of protest. The involvement of women is significant in these protests. However, housing still remains a huge concern for the community. However, since Maharashtra’s political leadership consists of elite and market interests, working class movements have been weakened tremendously. An 80 year old woman rolling beedis in Kamathipura told us that in the eighties or so, beedi making declined, “The government is putting too much tax, so it became unprofitable. Now they get beedis from outside.” The weakening of their collective strength and the lack of government support has made many resort to other work or supplement this with other work such as selling clothes. However, many continue to roll beedis. The failure of the State to be able to provide them with any form of social security is the biggest structural violence which has weakened them and rendered them almost destitute. The closure of the mills made them economically vulnerable and the lack of State support coupled with their caste status has plunged them into an extremely precarious condition.

In many ways therefore, we see a fragmenting of ties and community based associationism that traces the changing trajectories of the informal economy in Kamathipura and in turn also influences the informal economy. Kamathipura, once a hub of multiple workers’ rights movements including the mill workers, Dalits, and beedi workers, has now become a place of insecurities, suspicion and differences, according to Prakash Reddy.
3.9. Flexibility and Making Use of the Space of Exception

Informality in terms of the usage of space, as well as the livelihood strategies that are performed in this space, is one of the defining characteristics of Kamathipura. Roy, 2011 uses this term as a mode of spatial production and management by various powerful non state actors, only to be sanctioned by the state eventually. However, informality is not limited to the lives and livelihood practices of the urban poor, but also a regular, exploitative and predatory practice of the urban elite, as seen through the regular flouting of the DCR and building laws and violation of the DP in Kamathipura. Informality thus is not only a subject of state regulation, but is produced both by the State and the market (Roy, 2009) and others. In Kamathipura we see the gradual emergence of wafer thin residential towers, a new mall, and apartment buildings - many of which are half constructed due to lack of proper legal approvals, and yet they tower over the informal livelihoods and infrastructure of the poor, thus producing a highly differentiated landscape of land values that plays havoc with established patterns of informal work. The State is also seen as complicit in the bid to criminalise certain spaces and people in Kamathipura.

At the same time, the people who are practicing various livelihoods within the neighbourhood, carve their spatial and livelihood imprint, making use of the range of flexibilities. Sex work, beedi work, living on the streets, multiple use of built space, subleasing by tenants and the resultant proliferation of informal and illegal tenancies - all these economic practices are illegal in the eyes of the law, and yet thrive in its face. This intensity of activities, livelihood strategies, transactional relationships and almost impenetrable densities can act as an insulation from large-scale top down restructuring efforts and regular attempts at displacement of the urban poor. The range of flexibilities which are produced stands to benefit various actors at various points of time, and have allowed this space to function and the informal economy to flourish in the way that it does today.

3.10. The Intersections of Poverty, Vulnerability, Inequality and Violence

The intricate and intimate connections between space and livelihoods in Kamathipura, are acutely reflected in the spatial practices of all livelihood practices. The degrees of invisibility
verses visibility, functioning during day or night, and negotiating spaces with others such as members of the community as well as police, and navigating violence, stigma and discrimination, only begin to reveal the overwhelming vulnerabilities that these groups face, not just on a regular, but daily basis. Open spaces, the streets and pavements are sites for practicing livelihoods, contesting claims and most importantly, survival.

Most of the livelihoods practiced in Kamathipura, such as sex work, dyeing of jeans, selling of second hand clothes and scraps by the Waghri community and rolling beedis by beedi workers are structured by multiple, intersecting vulnerabilities such as physical vulnerability, characterised by lack of tenure security, vulnerability to disease, threat of violence both physical and sexual and the dangerous nature of that livelihood; social vulnerability and characterised by stigma and invisibility owing to the nature of work, caste based discrimination and lack of social security.

Sex workers, most of whom have been trafficked and brought to Mumbai from both within and outside the state, suffer from physical, economic and social vulnerabilities. In terms of physical vulnerability, they face not just the threat of as well as actual violence from the police, the pimps/managers, and the clients, they also face the threat of being physically displaced through the imminent processes of redevelopment. Due to the nature of this work, the criminalisation afforded to it, and the lack of any social security and health services, sex workers are constantly living in fear of being physically displaced, and continue to live and work at great health and bodily harm.

The selective intervention of the state in this space of exception is strongly reflected in the police presence and interference in Kamathipura’s sexual commerce. Preeti Patkar on the violence perpetrated against sex workers says, “Now, what has changed in the last several years is physical abuse... However, there is violence, but hard core physical violence is less than before. So other forms of violence like verbal violence, and normalisation of violence is there.” This is indicative of the changing nature of violence overall in the city, and in Kamathipura in particular. The shift from the obvious, physical violence may have declined, but other forms of violence such as psychological humiliation and discrimination (symbolic violence) and violence by the State in the form of neglect of people and spaces (structural violence) has increased.
Furthermore, Preeti Patkar spoke about the ways in which sex workers of different ages and backgrounds find work, thus shedding light on the degrees of vulnerability within this work.

“When you are young, you have the pimps operating, when you get a lot older, then negotiating work and space is a challenge. Because why will the brothel keeper give space to a person who is not bringing in money? So either you are bringing in money or you get out. When you see women soliciting, just notice, the farther she is soliciting means the less money she is fetching. Because now she has to make herself more visible. However, if she is selling and she is more in demand, she just has to sit in the brothel, the pimps get you clients. Thus like any other traders, in here also, they link up with agents, so women link up with pimps, to lekar aayega toh tera commission. So at the end of the day it is all commission. Everything is commission.” It appeared clear from our interviews and discussions with sex workers that age and background were significant markers of vulnerability among sex workers. Some women rose within the ranks and became ghar walis, or brothel managers. These did better with age. Some left the profession.

The Waghri, Vedu as well as the Marathi shelterless community resort to a range of livelihood practices, which is indicative of their deeply impoverished status. While some have been exchanging utensils for old clothes and selling these in chor bazaar for a long time, others resort to domestic work, sex work and selling drugs. Given a lack of stable livelihoods, it is obvious that these groups are economically vulnerable. They are also seen as immoral, illegal and often as potential criminals. Fear of these ‘othered’ and the immorality of their livelihoods are embodied in the working pavement dweller. These shelterless labourers who have been living on the pavement are faced with the risk of being physically and sexually assaulted, contracting disease, and being exposed to the elements. Many of them have Tuberculosis and other serious diseases, for which few receive treatment. All of them have faced threat of as well as actual displacement. Most of those who are displaced have come back and are continuing their claims to this space.

Jaya (name changed), a 30 year old woman and mother of two children lives in the pavement of 10th lane. She has tuberculosis and can barely work due to her bad health. Sometimes when she feels well enough, she cleans and swabs in people’s houses and earns some money. Before she got sick, she worked as a cleaner in one of the brothels in the 14th lane. Her mother
sometimes begs to make ends meet near the temple (a small shrine that this community has installed in the middle of the pavement, as a way of spatial claim making). Jaya said, “We will never leave this place, we have been here for generations and this is our home. The government gives us homes far away, but we cannot make a livelihood there, let the police come here and threaten us, we will not move.”

The changing landscape of the city, particularly the security obsession that has led to walling and gating in the private apartment residences, has affected the traditional recycling work done by these homeless communities. “The security guards don’t let us in, we can’t sell our utensils, business has gone down. Earlier, we could get work ourselves, through our contacts, now we often have to rely on people (in between agents) who get work for us, but we need to pay them a commission, which is difficult for us”, said Padma (name changed), one of the Waghri women we spoke to. The changing socio-spatial fabric of Kamathipura has produced new vulnerabilities amongst the urban poor. “These days, posh people have started living here, like in towers, and they consider us dirty, they will never give us jobs! Initially, we were treated well by neighbours, now they look at us as if we are bad people”.

Padma also said that they had been asked to move because a new municipal school was being built in Lane 5 in place of the older school. “We are regularly threatened by the contractors and builders of the school,” she said. Workers living on the pavements, are thus exposed to the constant fear of eviction and being actually ‘dishoused’.

3.11. Shifting from the Circuits Labour to Circuits of Land Based Economy

The informal economy in Kamathipura and the threats that several of these occupations are currently facing have to be located within the larger political economic shifts due to urban transformations in Mumbai. In the eighties, with the closure of the mills, the city moved to a service based economy from a manufacturing based economy, displacing many workers who were rendered jobless in the new corporate capital based economy. Moreover, land prices began to soar with the liberalisation of the economy in the 90s and the use of market based planning instruments to intervene in the city. According to Weinstein, 2008 “… demand for Mumbai real estate intensified about local investors and global speculators”. This was backed politically by the ascendance of a political right wing coalition at the State level and the city
level who had interests linked directly to the urban. This began to unravel and weaken the social and spatial ties between the Kamathipura neighbourhood and the rest of the city. Kamathipura, was thus no longer being viewed as a stigmatised space with one of the lowest land values in the island city that afforded shelter and work spaces to the poorest of the poor, but as a space which could generate enormous amounts of profit from the sale component of redeveloped buildings. Thus, the focus shifts from the use values of Kamathipura, particularly the different forms of labour of the need economy the place provides to prioritising exchange values – or the ways in which land in Kamathipura can be commodified, given its central location in the island city.

As small scale and large scale builders and developers began to covet Kamathipura, and the State government played an important role in opening up the land market, through the regulatory framework, leading to the possibility of land use conversions. While in the next chapter we discuss the politics of redevelopment, this chapter has highlighted how the spaces of Kamathipura has been used for multiple different kinds of occupations and the threats to livelihood and lives if the place ceases to be the way it is. The informal economy has been produced, strengthened and negotiated through the State’s territorial flexibility, its selective insertion into the space of Kamathipura, and its ability to create a zone of exception wherein regulations and rules are suspended in order to allow certain trades and enterprises to function. This has led to the rise of informal sovereigns, the fixers and brokers, and the agents or in certain cases the traditional associations who have taken over the space of the State in controlling, guiding and regulating the informal occupations. These ventures, enterprises are shaped by temporary collaborations across a range of actors and the built environment is a key terrain through which the work is negotiated.
4 Redeveloping Kamathipura – Challenges, Opportunities and Resistances

4.1. Introduction

Cities across the world are being transformed by forces of redevelopment. The older, dilapidated core areas particularly are being radically restructured. Informal settlements, old buildings, defunct warehouses and mills are being demolished to make way for swanky new malls, hotels, high end residential towers, car parks, office buildings etc. The older, often socially and economically vulnerable residents are being moved to the peripheral areas of the city, while new residents occupy the post-industrial spaces. It has been argued that this shift in the urban landscape is a process of neoliberal urbanisation, wherein the state and the market act together to displace, dispossess and evict the city’s poor, and open up land markets and productive spaces in the city for new infrastructures, processes of capital accumulation and consumption.

In the city of Mumbai on the Western coast of India, “redevelopment has emerged as the key instrument of change in a city where property prices are extremely high, available land area for development is highly restricted due to varied factors, and there are multiple and contesting pressures on space” (Bhide, 2014). The state government in collusion with a number of non-state actors has systematically removed large tracts of slums, and “chawl” housing in the island city area of Mumbai in the past two to three decades, accompanied by large scale evictions and violence. The state government has at the same time significantly deregulated the rigid socialistic framework of rules and regulations guiding land use development and building activities in the city, thus permitting and promoting the entry of private developers in the increasingly lucrative real estate sector. With almost 60 per cent of the city’s population living in informal settlements with insecure tenure and lack of basic services such as water and sanitation, Mumbai, the financial centre of India, is a study in contradictions, especially in the housing sector. While there is an absolute lack of affordable housing in the city, there are almost 19,000 dilapidated and old buildings in the heart of the city, and the number of unsold housing stock in the city (57,000 units in 2015) keeps increasing without any significant price correction to the already inflated property prices. The
commercialisation of slum redevelopment through state government policies, the conversion of mill lands to malls, the rush of global capital in the emerging real estate market and emerging construction industry, coupled with market based planning instruments and urban infrastructure (transport) projects, have opened up land markets in the central and peripheral areas of the city. Mumbai’s rapid transformation to a post-industrial city reflects the increasingly neoliberal visions of the city’s development spearheaded by the powerful industry elites.

This chapter argues, that redevelopment is not a singular top-down or uniform process of urban transformation and illustrates that the process of redevelopment is messy and unpredictable. The inherently uneven nature of urban development in the city creates the ground for differentiated approaches to redevelopment. Echoing the work of Doshi (2013), it is argued that “uneven displacement politics are central to the social production of land markets”, and that in turn, groups negotiate redevelopment in contradictory ways, supporting or contesting projects at varying moments (Doshi, 2013). More importantly, the multiple failed efforts by the state and the market at displacing the commercial sex workers and transforming Kamathipura into a high-end residential and commercial district, indicate a possible alternative trajectory of urban development and socio-spatial outcome, one that accommodates or affords (offers a place for) a range of livelihood practices and communities that are otherwise treated as informal, criminal, and even immoral. This also brings to fore the incredible and often inexplicable durability of Kamathipura as a neighbourhood. Weinstein (2014) has examined “the precarious state of stability” of the Dharavi slum (one of the largest informal settlements in Mumbai and Asia) in the face of adverse challenges put forth by multiple efforts at redeveloping Dharavi, thus questioning assumptions about the inevitably of accumulation by dispossession as an outcome of sweeping globalization of urban areas (Weinstein, 2014). Though there is a lot of writing on the politics of redevelopment of informal settlements, very little attention has been paid to low income, inner city neighbourhoods which are undergoing redevelopment and are being rapidly transformed into areas for middle and upper class urban residents. Here we critically analyse the contested processes and drivers of redevelopment in Kamathipura by situating it within the larger context of Mumbai’s current housing situation, dynamic land market and the bitter politics
around urban redevelopment. We pay particular attention to the ways in which differentiated values are created across the city through uneven urban development and the selective use of spatial planning instruments that generate high value areas versus low value areas, enabling the flow of real estate into particular areas of the city and the accumulation of capital through this speculative enterprise.

The chapter will then try to unravel the ways in which the neighbourhood – Kamathipura, with its rich embedded history and diverse population groups and multiplicity of uses of spaces for a plethora of livelihood strategies, resists, challenges, opposes, or negotiates and influences the processes of redevelopment. We posit that Kamathipura, though outwardly unchanging, is actually an extremely volatile neighbourhood, while the intensity of activities, livelihood strategies, transactional relationships and almost impenetrable densities can act as an insulation from large-scale top down restructuring efforts, the fear of imminent urban transformation ensures that collaborations or conjunctures are temporary and provisional (Simone, 2014). We conclude with an analysis of the outcomes of these contradictory processes and underline the importance of a) understanding contemporary processes of neoliberal urban development as uneven and variegated and b) Kamathipura as a neighbourhood, that in its unchanging nature holds up the possibility of alternative modes of urban development and opening up and making spaces of opportunities for a whole range of invisible but “majority” citizens.


Mumbai’s transformation from a group of seven islands in 1660s to a fortified port city in the 1800s, to an industrial centre in the early 1900s, and then finally to a bustling mega city and commercial centre linked to the global economy in the nineties, has been meteoric and problematic. While there are distinct departures from the colonial forms of urban development, there are enough continuities at play which suggest that the colonial strategies and practices, rules and regulations as well as institutional mechanisms have a tremendous influence on the city even today, although the interest groups and claimants to the city are a combination of existing and new actors. Inadequate housing amidst spiralling land and
housing values has remained a theme that has dominated the city from the colonial to the contemporary period, with new dynamics being added to the rentier forces and to exclusions.

By the end of the First World War, the housing situation of Bombay's labouring classes had attained crisis proportions. This resulted in spiralling of land values and rents, alongside low wages. The response of the colonial state to these shortages and exclusions was to set up new institutions like the Bombay Development Department (BDD) which undertook public housing on a rental basis, and to introduce town planning schemes. Further, mill owners were encouraged to construct housing for workers in the vicinity of the mills. These responses were inadequate for the overall demand and theme of housing shortage, in particular of the labouring classes who were then left to their own devices. These moves were accompanied by a deliberate attempt to purge the city of the urban poor by clearing slums and shifting polluting industries to the peripheries of the city. In addition, the colonial rulers changed the administration of land (Dossal, 2010) whereby the new system excluded many of the existing complex patterns of tenure and occupancy rights, and standardised them in a way such that property rights and the control over land in the city went into the hands of the colonial rulers or else the wealthy Parsi community.

In the post-colonial period, till the eighties, affordable housing remained severely in short supply given the increasing demand in an industrialising city. Post-independence, the city was flooded with both migrants from the hinterlands and political refugees of Partition attracted by the livelihood options the city presented. Regional level politics and national level ideologies played an important role in putting the state government firmly in control over the fate of the city. This meant a greater demand for affordable housing. Socialist thinking at the national level prompted the strict regulation over the monopolistic control over urban land, with an effort to redistribute land for affordable housing amongst the urban poor. Planning instruments too were geared at controlling building activity and restricting supply of buildable

---

5 In July 1919, it was reported that out of a population of 1,200,000, nearly 892,000 resided in one-room tenements and that there was a shortfall of 64,000 tenements in the city

6 Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act (ULCRA) of 1976 cumulatively impacted the geographically constrained land and housing market of the city and its outskirts
land by applying low Floor Space Index (FSI). The geographical constraints, coupled with strong public regulatory measures over urban land and housing, and the monopolistic control over land in the city ensured that speculation was sustained and housing remained out of the reach of the poor.

The Rent Control Act of 1949, which applied to buildings in the island city area, was retained in order to protect the renters from spiralling rents in the city, but led to rapid deterioration of older buildings. Landlords neglected their buildings which then became unsafe for housing workers. During this time, noting the grave condition of the old building under Rent Control Act, the state government formed another agency (MBRRB) to undertake repair and reconstruction of cessed buildings (almost 19,000 such buildings were identified) although work under this cash strapped authority was extremely slow. Some landlords managed to circumvent the system and forge informal systems of collecting higher rents – e.g. through the evolution of the informal Pagdi system, where in apartment units could be subleased or even informally “bought out” for a premium. Given the restrictive regulatory frameworks around land and housing, that began to push the price of land and labour up, spaces began to emerge within the frameworks as discretionary spaces, ambiguous in definition and open to multiple interpretations and manipulations through emerging networks of private actors, close to the state, as ways of circumventing these rules. Thus exceptions to the rules were much more common than the rules and their unambiguous and rigid implementation.

Redevelopment strategies in the eighties were thus evolved to formalise these ways of getting around the excessive control over urban land in Mumbai. The decline of the mills in Mumbai speeded up the process for liberalising land under pressure from ex-industrialists, builders and other interest groups. “Redevelopment enabled the perpetuation of the prevalent policy

---

7 On recommendations of the said Committee, Government of Maharashtra passed the Bombay Building Repairs and Reconstruction Act in the year 1969. Under the provisions of this Act, the Bombay Building Repairs and Reconstruction Board was formed in the year 1971. A repair cess was levied on old dilapidated tenanted buildings under the provisions of this Act. Thus, these buildings were called cessed buildings and were acquired by MHADA.

Till 1977, this board was directly functioning under the government. Subsequently this Act was merged with the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Act 1976 in December 1977.
regime, while granting the real estate industry the 'space' it required to grow” (Bhide, 2014). The entry of private players in provision of housing through redevelopment, of both slum settlements and old housing stock, through the vehicle of public-private partnerships, was further justified by the abysmal performance of public agencies (such as the MBRRB, MHADA), in the provision of affordable housing or housing for the economically weaker sections in the city. As the state stepped into the shoes of “facilitator”, private entrepreneurs were given the onus of building housing, getting approvals, mobilising consent of tenants. It has been argued that redevelopment thus opened up a new space economy in Mumbai that replaced the earlier era of labour economy, and with it, emerged a whole range of formal and informal actors, including those with links to organised crime (Weinstein, 2008) began to enter a highly lucrative and dynamic property development market. “They used their deep connections with political parties and the local elite to overcome regulatory barriers, and find ways around the high land prices” (Bhide, 2014).

As the pace of reconstruction of cessed buildings by MBRRB was found to be not sufficient so as to cover the entire cessed buildings in the Island City of Mumbai, it was felt by the Government, that the pace of redevelopment could be increased with the involvement of tenants/landlords/private developers. With this in view, the State Government introduced the policy of giving FSI 2.00 for redevelopment of cessed buildings in the year 1984. In the year 1991, the Government framed the Development Control Regulations (DCR) for Mumbai. Under these Regulations, the Rule no. 33(7) was formed for redevelopment of cessed buildings in the Island City of Mumbai and the provisions of the policy of 1984 were incorporated in it. This Rule was further amended (diluted) in 1999 through a special committee set up by the government that looked into ways of encouraging private sector participation. Basically the amendments gave private developers added benefits such as extra FSI, ensured that almost 50 per cent FSI would be under free sale component, while relaxing the consent clause. While the rule extracted a limit of 753 sq ft apartment for landlords, it also lay down a minimum of 220 sq ft for tenants in the same plot. In some cases, it may not be possible to utilize the entire permissible FSI on the same plot, because of height restrictions, fire-safety regulations, and other factors. In such cases, the No Objection Certificate holder is entitled to avail the benefit of “Transferable Development Rights” (TDR), to be used in the
suburbs or extended suburbs in accordance with the relevant regulations of DCR 1991, for Greater Mumbai. This provision ensures that the scheme remains feasible even where the incentive FSI cannot be fully utilized on the same plot.

The response to these amendments was a spate of redevelopment related construction activity in the island city which led to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) by several concerned citizens and environmentalist. Cessed buildings in good condition were torn down so that developers could avail the incentive FSI. Several tall buildings on extremely narrow and small plots were built as part of the redevelopment drive with little or no regard to open space and the constriction of public amenities and the pressure on infrastructure in the area. Unscrupulous developers falsified records of tenancies and showed many more “ghost tenants” on paper, or even subdivided existing tenancies to avail more incentive FSI for their structures. Goons and extra–legal forces were deployed in order to persuade, or coerce tenants to give their consent and violence was integral to the working of the new rule. A new politics of selective exclusion and inclusion emerged with the rule that enabled developers to gain control over the tenants who opposed the terms of redevelopment. It has also been reported that the redeveloped buildings created new forms of lived socio-spatial inequality – for instance entrances and lifts areas of the poorer tenants were separate from those of the new occupants or owners. Gradually, the older tenants, particularly those of modest means, were also priced out of the redeveloped buildings due to exorbitant maintenance costs, adding to the housing woes.

Redevelopment has attracted several new players into the real estate business. Currently, almost every large corporate house in Mumbai has a real estate arm; however it also operates through an elaborate network, where joint ventures are created and dismantled, where actors perform specialised roles in persuasion of residents and other users of space, where rights are defined in an uncertain space, and where lobbying is done with both the government and with regular construction work (Nainan, 2012). The shifts in the political culture are supportive of these transformations. However, these interventions themselves see the city as a site of resource generation via the property market; thus, they are facilitative of schemes that employ market linked spatial incentives such as those mentioned above (Bhide, 2014). Crime, black money, and corruption are rife in the
political economy of redevelopment. Weinstein (2008) observes that this has led to a nexus among crime, politics, and the real estate business.

Effectively, there is no limit, in the current scenario, to the amount of extra FSI that can be availed as incentive for redevelopment. This has had serious ramifications on the built environment and is in direct contravention to the Development Plan that guides land use and built environment development in the city, indicating the ways in which land has been commodified. Redevelopment has thus converted residents and the State, as well as politicians into entrepreneurs. Redevelopment is thus a key site where contestations, negotiations, and conflicts are being played out (Bhide, 2014).

In the next section, we examine the contestations between different redevelopment plans that have been drawn up, engaged with, supported and even resisted by multiple stakeholders with often contradictory agendas.

4.3. Kamathipura: Redevelopment Interrupted and its Dangerous Consequences

Located strategically in the heart of the island city of Mumbai, where redevelopment of erstwhile mill lands has created an extremely lucrative and buoyant property market, Kamathipura, a small, congested, crumbling and decrepit working class neighbourhood established as a red light district by the colonial rulers, poses a paradox. Several failed interventions and incomplete insertions into the space by the State to remove, comprehensively renew, partially repair, reconstruct and redevelop the neighbourhood, highlights the precarious and strange durability of the neighbourhood and also the fractured and contradictory nature of the State as a sovereign (Hansen and Stepputat 2005). Yet, the threat of impending redevelopment and the silent processes through which its existing socio-spatial arrangements are being ruptured, especially by private developers, fixers, agents of big developers and in recent times by morally driven resident’s coalition of landlords and local politicians, also point to ways in which the big plans of State led redevelopment are resisted, modified or appropriated on the ground with serious consequences for the most vulnerable groups of residents in the neighbourhood, namely the sex workers, the tenants, the migrant workers, the pavement dwellers. Thus while the very talk and rumour of redevelopment in Kamathipura has led to increasing efforts to sanitise the neighbourhood, and commodify the
land, it has also whittled away at the claims of various urban poor groups that have incrementally been building their claims to an ever increasingly exclusionary city.

The colonial and the post-colonial State have been responsible for the creation of Kamathipura as a zone of exception by allowing brothel based commercial sex work and other illegal and informal work to flourish in the 16 lane neighbourhood. There are complex interweaving of industrial work in residential premises leading to dense and congested built form. Colonial policies of housing lower caste, migrant workers in the periphery of the city along with other destitute and unwanted groups has led to a neighbourhood that is incredibly accommodating and inclusive and yet starved of space, especially open spaces as every inch, including streets, as well as spaces underneath stair cases of the old buildings, being divided, subdivided, sold, resold, tenanted, sub tenanted, used and reused for living and working purposes. The survey by MHADA in 1979 had revealed that 90 per cent of the residents were tenants, while approximately 6 per cent were landlords or owners. Sub-tenants, licencees and caretakers comprised a miniscule percentage and thus it may be that many had not reported their legal tenurial status during the survey. There are some plots/buildings which have been encroached upon by squatters.

The sheer complexity of multiple tenancies and claims, the extreme density and congestion, the influence of the Rent Control Act in deteriorating these buildings (with landlords losing interest due to the rent freeze), and the informal system of Pagdi that allows the transfer of the use and rights to property have created an extremely complex situation which the State itself finds impossible to fully penetrate and do away with, given the multiple claims it has opened up. Kamathipura has close to 658 buildings, more than 105 of which have collapsed over the years, and 55 have been categorized as dilapidated and dangerous. According to MHADA officials, over 90 per cent of these buildings are under A category have been declared cessed and in urgent need of repair. An estimated 15,160 families live in tightly packed building plots whose sizes range from 30 sq m to 250 sq m. This, officials said, makes redevelopment of individual buildings practically impossible — the entire cluster will need to be brought down and rebuilt (Desai, 2010).
Figure 17: Cessed buildings in Kamathipura
With liberalisation and the State enabling the entry of private players into redevelopment (through amendments to regulations such as DCR 33(7) for cessed buildings and DCR 33(9) for cluster redevelopment) there has been a deliberate effort to consistently shift, expand and weigh in favour of private developers through marketable instruments such as increasing FSI or allowing TDR in complicated cases such as Kamathipura where buildings are densely packed together on narrow streets, thus consuming the available FSI allowable in the area, or
simply by the sheer lived nature of the space which allows for multiple tenants and users and thus makes private development unprofitable.

However, the forces of private redevelopment arise from within Kamathipura itself as the land market and the promise of capital sways over the reluctant land lords in the area by finally uniting them in the common cause of a) proposing a cluster redevelopment plan b) uniting landlords c) negotiating the tenants claims d) “dealing with” the multiple claimants without proper entitlements, ranging from shop keepers, to sex workers without residence proofs, to people from Waghri community who use rooms as storage spaces for their livelihoods.

While plans are being discussed, tenants rallied, threatened or bought over; mechanisms of physical violence, threats, police raids, signature campaigns, and media campaigns are being used to criminalize sex workers, and evict them from Kamathipura, which has been their home for the past 200 years. As small manufacturing units make incursions into the spaces of erstwhile brothels, a moral regime has gripped Kamathipura wherein male migrant workers from Northern and Eastern states are being increasingly vilified, threatened, and denied entry to public spaces in Kamathipura. As the State led plans and work of the MHADA has come to a grinding halt, the lives of tenants are also threatened as they continue to live in dangerously unstable and unsanitary buildings, for fear they will be evicted and never return to Kamathipura, which has given them access to an inclusive, affordable and tolerant space of living and working in the city.

4.4. Incomplete State Interventions in Kamathipura

In 1957, the state government declared Kamathipura a “slum” and applied the Slum Clearance and Improvement Act in order to carry out improvement works in the neighbourhood. The urban local body received substantial assistance from the Centre towards this project. However, while a few buildings were demolished, a few new tenements rebuilt and infrastructure laid out, the project was abandoned midway due to vocal protests by the landlords of the neighbourhood who took grave objection to the neighbourhood being classified a “slum”, fearing that it would further bring down their property values. The money that had come in for assisting this redevelopment was allocated to the redevelopment of Dharavi according to some of the respondents in Kamathipura, who said that private landlords
had colluded with the state in removing the “slum” tag from Kamathipura. As a result, between 1957 and 1977, only 343 tenements and 46 shops were built by BMC. The selection of these tenements was also called into question by residents citing ad hoc attitude of the local government and patronising of interest groups in the area.

In 1977, and in 1980, a survey conducted by the BMC and MHADA on the condition of housing in Kamathipura revealed that 4.2 per cent of the buildings in the area had been demolished and about 493 families were languishing in transit camps across the city. There are several families and individuals living in the streets of Kamathipura as houseless population, often using a tenement unit as a locker room, but sleeping, cooking and doing other activities on the street. Another 71 per cent of the buildings were declared in need of urgent repairs and were purported to have a residual life of not more than 5 years. Many of these buildings, built almost a hundred years back, had no water supply in the building and therefore were extremely unsanitary and dirty. Every monsoon, it was common to hear of fatal building collapses in Kamathipura. Only about 10 per cent of the buildings were found to be in good condition and self-contained with provision of water supply and toilets, partly because some had been constructed in recent years as a part of BMC’s slum clearance program. Overall the area severely lacked any open spaces, basic sanitation and water supply too was partial in nature, and waste collection was ineffectual because of the narrow lanes, extreme overcrowding and multiple uses of the streets. The near absence of functioning public services such as water tanks and sewerage system have provided pretext for both the residents and the developers to hasten redevelopment in the area since this has led to conflict among residents and it has increased the hardships of people living or making a livelihood here.
In 1979, the minister of State for housing called a meeting with MHADA and BMC along with local representatives from the area and it was decided that a full scale and comprehensive urban renewal scheme was required for the area. Till then the Bombay Repairs and Reconstruction Board (formed in 1969) had been able to carry out minor repairs in 139 houses, and had demolished and rebuilt only 4 buildings. As part of the urban renewal scheme, which was to be funded by the World Bank, it was decided that a detailed survey was required, which would study the existing land use, the tenements, the shops, the socioeconomic profile of the population, the current activities in Kamathipura, size of tenements and ownership as well as occupancy status. The focus of the renewal was comprehensive in situ redevelopment and rehabilitation, rather than the clearance strategy of the past, reflecting a shift in the approach to housing by the State.
While the survey was conducted and proposals were drawn up by a special task force committee for Kamathipura, the entire plan was rejected for funding by World Bank, claiming that the project was too unique and thus could not be replicated. Local residents, especially tenants however say that the powerful landlords, as well as people who had small businesses in Kamathipura, again opposed the renewal project and colluded with state agents to have the project stalled.

In the absence of a concerted redevelopment effort by the State, smaller scale, individual building by building redevelopment took place in the intervening years. Communities living in
Kamathipura have also been trying to exert political pressure through the local Member of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and Member of Parliament (MPs) to redevelop their housing. According to residents, Ramakanth Patkar, general secretary of the state’s tenant association and a resident of Kamathipura held hunger strikes, agitations and was instrumental in getting 13 buildings in the area, including his own redeveloped by MHADA. Though he himself opposed redevelopment by private builders, there are many tenants and also landlords, who would much rather prefer their building be redeveloped in a more efficient manner by private developers, thus pointing out to the lack of consensus amongst the tenants on the topic of redevelopment.

In 2007, there were reports of MHADA showing a renewed interest in the area especially since it owned about 40 odd buildings in the area. Not only had a private developer expressed his interest, but the then local Corporator (now MLA), from Congress, Mr. Amin Patel was especially involved in putting together a large scale redevelopment project (Interview with Mr. Amin Patel). Thus a special task force comprising legal and technical experts was created. The state urban development ministry, headed by Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh, was briefed about the proposal, which also includes development of slums, chawls, small scale industrial units, hotels and shops in and around MHADA properties, with the co-operation of residents, industrialists, businessmen and NGOs. However, this plan too failed to go forward due to lack of interest by private investors, who shied away due to the complexities of tenancies and the rehabilitation of sex workers and shop keepers.

In 2010, there was a move to declare the redevelopment of Kamathipura as a special project of the State, giving unprecedented powers to a parastatal organisation to intervene in the area. The Maharashtra housing department approved the appointment of an Officer on Special Duty to survey the buildings in the 40-acre district to explore the feasibility of redeveloping them. "After the survey, we will notify it as a special project and would want MHADA to undertake the redevelopment," Minister of State for Housing Sachin Ahir told The Sunday Express. "We will decide later if it requires a joint venture with private developers. We are keen to improve conditions here, get rid of the red light tag and make it a respectable address" (Desai, 2010).
The BMC has been able to provide some public amenities in the area. By demolishing some of the older buildings and clearing informal housing in the neighbourhood, the local body was able to create an open space for a playground between 11th and 13th lane. In addition, the BMC built two municipal schools, one maternity home and an eye hospital. A separate colony for BMC’s own sanitation department workers, largely from the scheduled caste or Dalit community was constructed in the area opposite lane 1 called Siddharth Nagar. Several tenements and mixed use buildings were built on Bapty Road and Stable Street by the BMC to house the dishoused during the redevelopment process carried out in the sixties. However, post the eighties, the social fabric of Kamathipura was torn apart by the slow processes of privatisation of space and the increasing intolerance of activities considered “polluting” or out of place. This reflected the larger urban transformations across the city. Therefore, while the open space on 12th lane became closely monitored and guarded by local political parties not allowing itinerants to enter or use it, the Gandu Bageecha (which had been a popular location for male sex workers, and transgenders to solicit sex work) had been taken over by the State for some public water project and was thus out of bounds for the public. The eye hospital had once housed local NGOs working with the sex workers communities, but post repairs, the NGO had to relocate. The school in Lane 5 had been torn down and a tower was being built in its place. Locals said that developers had come in the middle of the night to make holes into the walls in order to show that the building was in need of structural repairs. Residents of Siddharth Nagar complained that they had been asked to relocate as their building needed to
go in for redevelopment and that it was beyond repairs. Residents claimed that builders and contractors, along with local politicians and the BMC were in a nexus together as far as redevelopment was concerned and would spare no tricks to prove buildings were beyond repairs.
This indicates that though in the sixties there was a deliberate effort to create space for social amenities, the eighties saw a complete reversal with the gradual shrinkage and privatisation of spaces in and around Kamathipura. Moreover, it also highlights how the State is deeply informalised in the ways it distinguishes between what is informal and formal by deciding what should be demolished/cleared/evicted/sanitised and what should be formalised or
regularised. Thus, while the informal huts of the Waghri communities were demolished to make way for the open space on 12th lane, giving rise to homeless communities, BMC was unable to evict the organised yet informal and unauthorised occupation of lands earmarked for public housing by the iron and steel markets and small manufacturers.

The territorial flexibility of the State is also brought out in the ways the State kept diluting its own norms and standards when it came to housing the urban poor in the original slum renewal plan of 1957 for Kamathipura. While towards the beginning tenements were of 249 sq. ft, over time, as central government funds were withdrawn from the project, smaller tenements of 160 and 180 sq. ft were being built by the urban local body leading to resentment and court cases from the community as they were in violation of the state’s own standards for affordable housing.

Figure 22: Transect conducted of Lane 10

Figure 23: Transect conducted of Manaji Rajaji Road

Transit accommodation is considered as one of the primary obstacles to redevelopment efforts by the State in Kamathipura. For one, since the majority of the residents work in or around Kamathipura, moving to a faraway transit camp during the period of redevelopment affects their livelihoods. Many residents also have small shops or manufacturing units in
Kamathipura and since a transit camp will not accommodate these livelihood spaces, it is impossible to convince residents to vacate the building. Some residents may not have full legal entitlements of tenancy, but may have lived in or used the building premises for many years, and for them transit accommodation or rehabilitation is not on the cards. Here, the very territorialised flexibility that allowed informal arrangements to flourish have led to multiple claims being opened that offer Lilliputian challenges to the process of redevelopment by the State (Roy, 2009). But most damaging of all is the fact that for many residents, redevelopment has been a long drawn out process due to lack of finances, court cases, delays, and therefore they have had to spend close to forty years in transit accommodation. This has led to widespread distrust and lack of confidence in the State’s ability to carry out redevelopment projects.

One of the arguments made by researchers studying urban transformations, is that the State is not a unified whole and neither is it the only agency with the legitimate powers to use violence. In fact, it is composed of disparate bodies and institutions that often contradict one another leading to incomplete interventions in society (Anwar, 2013 Weinstein, 2014). In the case of successive State led redevelopment efforts in Kamathipura, we see that the plans of one are often in contravention of the rules or regulations of the other, creating a paralysis in development or necessitating contravention of rules or the creation of exceptions. For instance, the renewal plan floated by MHADA was at cross purposes with the Development Plan that was to be implemented by BMC and required that modifications be made in the Development Plan as well as the DCR, through a set of specific exceptions to the rule, given the “unique” character of Kamathipura and the constraints on its redevelopment created by the Rent Control Act, the presence of both cessed and non-cessed buildings, the complex interweaving of residential and commercial/industrial uses, and activities and the prevalence of commercial sex work in the area. These changes, which included making relaxations in the FSI (from 1.66 to 3), changing road alignments, rezoning of areas from residential to mixed/commercial, therefore led to frictions between the BMC and MHADA.

In the previous chapter we argued how the production of Kamathipura as a zone of exception to allow sex work and other illegal industries to flourish in proximity to the centre of the colonial town, has led to the unique built environment of Kamathipura. Characterised by a
lack of open spaces, a grid of narrow roads, negligent public amenities, especially water, Kamathipura was associated with overcrowding and cheap and affordable housing. Plots are narrow, fully built up. Buildings share walls. Most buildings were made 100 to 150 years ago with scant attention to building standards, and material regulations. They have suffered years of neglect by landlords (especially for rent controlled buildings) and are thus dangerously dilapidated. Tenancy claims are multiple given the informal system of Pagdi which enables the landlord to sell the rights to the apartment for a significantly higher amount, and several informal systems of sub leases, care takers and licensees to circumvent the paltry frozen rents. Sometimes two households were crammed into a one room tenement though it wasn’t clear whether they could claim legal rights upon redevelopment. Also, the multiple tenants to a building, and diverse commercial and industrial uses that happen in residential buildings, points to the intense conflict of use and complexity of redevelopment processes. This complex pattern of tenancies and the multiplicity of uses, is created by the territorialised flexibility of the State and is also responsible for the obstacles that affect the redevelopment process as it opens up multiple claims to space.
Perhaps the most vocal and intense resistance to state led plans of redevelopment have come from various shops and establishments that are widespread in Kamathipura. Since the transit accommodation does not cater to this category of uses, shops owners have resisted efforts to displace them. Redevelopment efforts have thus failed to address the complex relationship
between housing and livelihoods in Kamathipura that have historical roots and are embedded in the social relations and power structures that constitute the neighbourhood.

Figure 25: Brothels and residential spaces for sex workers and bar dancers, and below there are eating joints and mobile shops

Another dimension along which the urban renewal plan received opposition was the insistence of the MHADA that it alone was capable of undertaking the renewal scheme and thus saw very little possibility of involving private developers in the project. Since the project involved a significant saleable component in order to cross subsidize the rehabilitation of all existing tenants, the developers felt side lined by the renewal scheme and were thus opposed to it. Thus the renewal project proposed by the state was scuttled, opposed and resisted by several stakeholders with contradictory interests in the process.

More importantly, landlords are not keen to redevelop as they lose out on the lucrative rents they fetch from the various economic activities that occur in the premises. The MHADA survey revealed how in the seventies, the larger sized plots housed brothels and landlords commanded almost 5 to 6 times the average rent from brothels. Land lords were also opposed to the idea that their tenants would receive apartments in the redeveloped buildings in which
they were also likely to live thus upsetting social and power equations in the hierarchical landlord and tenant relations.

4.5. Private Efforts at Redeveloping Kamathipura

Private efforts at redevelopment were few and far between during the sixties, seventies and eighties as it required a large parcel of land with clear titles in order to be profitable. For instance, a large piece of land on the junction of Maulana Azad Road and Boman Behram Road was redeveloped by a private trust into a composite development with 40 residential tenements and 19 shops, besides a separate building for an old age home (MHADA Feasibility Study). Gangubai Chawl on 11th Kamathipura Lane was among the first brothels to be torn down and reconstructed into a six-storey building by a private developer. ‘Normal’ households moved in to this redeveloped building displacing the original residents—the sex workers (Lewis, 2009).

In this period wherein the State led redevelopment projects were stalled due to a lack of clarity about the goals and objectives of redevelopment and the housing insecurities it generated, many buildings are being bought over surreptitiously by private speculators. Landlords too handed over their “development rights” to builders given the complex negotiations and procedures for redevelopment, the conflicts with tenants, the lack of clear deeds, titles and occupancy status given the informal Pagdi system that operates here, and the system of informal subleasing. With the speculation of redevelopment in the air, builders have been buying out individual units and leasing them to small industries—bag makers, shoe and mat makers—on 11-month leases earning rental money which is much higher than rents collected from premises used as brothels.

Post liberalisation, with the amendments in DCR33 (7) in 1999 allowing private developers, tenants, landlords to redevelop older dilapidated cessed buildings in the island city area, there has been a steady stream of private developers showing interest in the redevelopment potential in Kamathipura, where the majority of buildings are in the A category thus attracting an additional 50 per cent incentive FSI for sale beyond what is consumed for rehabilitating all occupiers. Though the ready reckoner prices for the neighbourhood remains depressed, areas adjacent to Kamathipura in the Grant road, Belasis road areas have appreciated greatly in the
recent past, making redevelopment in Kamathipura, with the extra FSI incentive, extremely lucrative for private developers, although its reputation as an “immoral area” might find few middle class buyers according to real estate agents in the area. In 2007-2008, Shahid Balwa of the DB Realty group, a private developer, showed interest in the area. At first he bought over 33000 sq. ft. of land in Bacchuseth ki wadi, a building notorious for mujras and dance girls, and he has redeveloped this into high end housing and a mall. The wadi had 280 tenants, of these 100 were kothewalis who regularly held mujras while the other 180 were households who were not engaged in the mujra work. For Balwa, the major stumbling block was that the two groups did not want to live in the same building post redevelopment, choosing to break with the past. Initially there was a plan to rehouse the dance girls in a section of the new housing, but most of the women were driven away through veiled threats or hesitant to live and practice their trade amongst the new middle class residents, with a strong sense of aesthetics and morality, who came to inhabit the new buildings in Bacchuseth ki wadi.

Figure 26: Orchid City Centre Mall on Bellasis Road (Google Image)
Shahid Balwa next proposed a full scale cluster redevelopment plan for the entire Kamathipura neighbourhood, covering 35 acres. This plan was sent to the Repair and Reconstruction Board for approvals. This particular cluster redevelopment plan in 2010 was basically designed to reconceive the entire neighbourhood and in this vision, there was no space for the sex workers at all. The glossy brochure promises to bring change in the way people live, work, play and enjoy leisure. It appeals to residents of Kamathipura to be a part of the change and bring about an aesthetic rebuilding of Kamathipura as a “world – class” living space in the heart of the island city. During this time, the DB Realty group also poured money into community functions, Ganapti mandals in order to win over the residents. Meetings were held lane wise to convince residents that the plan would take “Kamthipura to the next level” (tag line of the DB Realty group). The towers in Bacchus seth ki wadi served as a demonstration of what the DB Realty group could achieve. While the State government was pondering over the plan, and considering giving the project a special status, Shahid Balwa was apprehended on a huge corruption scam at the national level. The private redevelopment project therefore came to a standstill. With real estate market slowing down, and the investors fearing delays in the project, this particular project by DB Realty has been effectively shelved.
Figure 27: Layout of Kamathipura: Proposed Layout, DP Layout, and Existing Layout

This image is taken from the report “re-new Mumbai” by Arshad Balwa. Proposed layout shows the edges of the periphery to be fully developed, while the core is slated to become a large open space.
This image is taken from the report “re-new Mumbai” by Arshad Balwa.

In 2013, there was a renewed interest in redeveloping Kamathipura, but this time by an association of landlords from Kamathipura. For the first time, a few of the smaller Hindu and Telegu speaking landlords formed an association and proceeded to convince other landlords in the area to join in the redevelopment efforts. They consider themselves as the original residents of Kamathipura and take great pride in having contributed to the development of the city through the labour of their forefathers. These landlords are in the process of envisioning what the basic demands of the landlords are from the redevelopment process. Based on this,
they are convinced of the need to use DCR 33(7) to redevelop the area. They have hired a Project Management Consultant and are trying to float tenders so that developers can bid on the project. Most of the landlords are from the Telegu Samaj and at an association meeting, it became clear that the association had deliberately left out representatives from shop keepers, tenants, Muslim landlords, and commercial sex workers. According to the Kamathipura Landlords Association, redevelopment is the need of the hour, but the previous policies for it had not made it clear what landlords would benefit out of it and therefore, landlords had deliberately stalled or opposed the previous redevelopment plans made by the government. The Association has now decided to go forward with their plans under the Cluster Redevelopment policy, i.e. DCR 33 (9) and their proposal is being supported by local MLA Amin Patel of the Congress party, which has traditionally been in power in the ward. According to representatives of the association, DCR 33(7) provides the possibility of making space for amenities and open spaces which are absent in Kamathipura.

Fieldwork investigations however revealed that not all landlords are represented in this association and there are deep cleavages within the landlords in Kamathipura as well. In a parallel process, the Marwari and Jain communities, have floated another redevelopment project proposal and are in the process of getting consent rights or development rights from a section of the developers. A private developer in Kamathipura, who is the face of these efforts, has prepared a redevelopment proposal, using DCR 33(9) or a cluster redevelopment policy and has been promising landlords and tenants of a minimum tenement unit of Rs.1.5 crore, along with money for interim transit facilities, rehabilitation of shops, maintenance funds, and rents for the transit camp etc. while also managing to ensure a high saleable component for the private developers he represents. He is a fixer and has no formal training in drafting redevelopment projects. However, he is well connected and worked for the Shiv Sena in the violent era of communal and ethnic tensions in the eighties. His time as an office assistant in the office of a well-known architect in the city made him interested in the possibilities of the redevelopment process. The proposed name for the redeveloped community will be Balaji Nagar and neither Muslims nor sex workers have been seen as integral residents of this project as shared by him. However, he and his associates have been
unable to convince a number of the landlords in the area and the fate of this project hangs in balance.

Figure 29: Rival layout of development plan by a private developer in Kamathipura

4.6. Implications and Challenges to Redevelopment by Private Players

The gradual incursions into Kamathipura by private real estate capital and the rumours of redevelopment projects has led to a subtle shift in the character of Kamathipura as more and
more sex workers, brothels have been displaced, the tenancies bought over and other kinds of small industrial activities pushed into these spaces. With the decline in sex because of the scourge of AIDS, the sustained raids on brothels by the police, the decline of mills, the changing activities in Kamathipura, and the pollution caused by the smaller industrial units, clients have been dwindling, at least the moneyed clients. As the sex trade has suffered, unscrupulous builders have been pushing out the women and securing access to the buildings. Mostly, the madams or the brothel operators have made a bit of money from the sale of tenancy, but the sex workers who are mere floating tenants have got a raw deal and have been pushed out on to the street and face an uncertain and violent future.

The tenants have also started rallying against land lords and their excessive greed that prevents Kamathipura from getting redeveloped. The Rental Bill which proposes to bring about modifications in the Rental Act of 1999, is another point around which tenants, especially in the older parts of Mumbai, have been collectively mobilised in their opposition to the roll back of Rent Control. Tenants argue that the revised Rent Control Act will effectively dishouse them as many will be unable to pay the market rent. Moreover, by revising the Act, tenants argue that a few select land lords will reap benefits because of the history of Pagdi system in the island city. MHADA has also acknowledged that “landlords as a class have made enormous gains because a substantial number of tenancies have been transferred at a premium or “Pagdi” and also by utilizing extra floor space index, by change of user of the tenements and by sale of development rights” (MHADA, 1998). Tenants have thus approached the sitting MLA (Amin Patel of Congress) and the MP (Milind Deora), in order to lobby for their cause in the legislature. Tenants allege that the amendments to the Rent Control Act seeks to divide renters, and take away their right to buy back property from landlords after paying 100 months rent since buildings will exit the purview of MHADA Act once this becomes operational. Tenants in and around Kamathipura also point out to the injustice meted out by the amendment which will fill up the coffers of a few new wealthy and shrewd investors who have surreptitiously purchased tenanted buildings after 1999 as investments knowing that they are rent-controlled and at prices which reflected this fact.

There is little doubt that in all of this deal making and complex negotiations however, the weakest, the poorest and the most vulnerable in the community, the sex workers themselves,
the houseless population, the owners and workers in smaller shops, and the migrant men working in the manufacturing units, are deliberately excluded. The future of Kamathipura, as the landlords and middle class residents dream of it, clearly has no space for the surplus or floating population who engage in various informal occupations. In recent years, residents who have so far been tolerant of the sex workers, have turned hostile and are therefore spearheading campaigns to rid them from Kamathipura, a campaign that is quietly endorsed, funded and supported by private developers interested in gaining control over the buildings in Kamathipura. Middle class residents clearly distinguish themselves as the original and therefore rightful inhabitants of Kamathipura who should be rewarded for having braved the cramped and overcrowded neighbourhood. Their interest is not only based on consolidating their historic roots in Kamathipura, but also in being able to partake of the commodification of land through the privatisation of the property market in Kamathipura. These groups also make clear distinctions between the original sex workers, with whom they have shared a cordial relationship, and the new women arriving from other states such as Bihar and Bengal who they consider as having no stakes in the future of Kamathipura, as they live elsewhere but work in Kamathipura. The incidences of crime, theft and the lack of safety for women in Kamathipura in the recent times are attributed to these floating populations. In addition to a concerted effort at removing these sex workers from the area, citizens groups have also mobilized to fight other vices in the neighbourhood, such as gambling, liquor stores and video parlours. Asha Mamedi is one such community activist who is fighting for the sanitisation of the neighbourhood.

Although private developers are expected to bring in efficiency and much needed cash flows into these large scale projects, there are several obstacles to the process which arise from the complex socio-economic relations on the ground and the ways in which the territorialised flexibility of the State continues to create its own hurdles. Successive amendments to DCR 33 (7) have increased the FSI incentive on the saleable potion in order to attract developers to redevelop cessed buildings in the Island city. Not only has this created a highly uneven and differentiated playing ground and weakened the stakes of the State, it has also created its own problems of a sudden spurt in ghost tenants and multiple tenancies. In certain cases,
unscrupulous developers and land lords have also formed alliances with BMC and contractors to demolish buildings in good condition thereby evicting genuine claimants.

This has prompted a PIL that seeks to question the basis of incentivising redevelopment. The PIL has also pointed out to the contradictions between various policies regarding redevelopment, especially where they clash with building by laws. The PIL also emphasizes that without a proper impact assessment, cluster redevelopment projects may further burden areas in the island city in terms of infrastructure, amenities and accessible open spaces. Court cases have thus caused delays in privately led redevelopment. Several privately redeveloped building are half constructed in Kamathipura because they have received NOC from BMC but are now faced with a more rigid DCR and DP, that necessitates access and road widening, front setbacks, side setbacks for redeveloped buildings, which have greatly diminished the profitability quotient of these buildings. Thus the fate of these buildings hang in balance and the residents are either in transit camps or in rented accommodation for an indefinite period. This has led to wide spread fear amongst residents about the credibility of private developers to execute these projects in time.

**Figure 30: Half constructed towers near Stable Street**

Given the lucre of money and the sheen of respectability that the redevelopment projects promise, landlords and tenants in the area are divided, confused and once again, suspicious of the redevelopment agenda. New coalitions and fragmentations within the tightly knit
neighbourhood are evident. Deep distrust, the promise of bigger apartments, or the possibility of making a lot of money from the sale of redeveloped apartments has therefore started dividing the community along new lines of who can negotiate with the private builders and the tenants, who can work out deals with the sub tenants, and who has connection with the police and the NGOs to drive away the unwanted sex workers, houseless workers and other unwanted occupational groups.

In the next chapter we deal with the different kind of temporary coalitions and conjunctures that are formed in order to resist, modify and rework urban transformations taking place. This will highlight the locally contingent and politically driven processes that are constituted and negotiated through existing social relations and networks, the use or threat of violence and also by the exercise of individual charisma and leadership of local fixers and agents.
5 Coalitions, Alliances and Fragmentation in Remaking and Reclaiming Kamathipura

5.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with a discussion of the myriad forms of influence by charismatic individuals or leaders, big men or agents (who use a combination of their access to capital, muscle power and political power), coalition building, alliance management and fragmentations within communities in Kamathipura that have either tried to uphold the right of residents to stay put and access land, capital or political resources in Kamathipura, or else have worked at cross purposes and tried to curtail the claims of certain groups. It highlights the intensely contested nature of Kamathipura and the internal struggles to retain it as a safe haven for informal work and cheap housing for migrants in a strategic and increasingly lucrative location in the city by resisting redevelopment efforts by private developers. However, the chapter also discusses the tenuousness of these struggles in the long term, the insecurity of tenure and the fact that for a lot of residents, it means having to live in unsanitary buildings that are dangerously on the verge of collapse. These actions are produced and reproduced through territorial fracturing and the production of a terrain of difference and differentiated values. It brings out the negotiated nature of living and working in Kamathipura. Importantly, it calls to question whether the resistances lead to spatial justice, or the perpetuation of the dependence of marginalised groups on fragmented sovereignties, or political parties, or the State and informal market mechanisms. Here we argue that the very territorial flexibility of the State that enables various informal economic activities to flourish, has led to the existence of multiple claims on the ground that obstruct and hold hostage the possibilities of redevelopment.

5.2. Role of Informal Sovereigns in Kamathipura’s Thriving Informal Economy

Given the strategy of supportive neglect by the State in governing Kamathipura, we argue that a number of historically contingent informal sovereigns have emerged in Kamathipura controlling its built form, use of resources and the informal economy. These power structures
are however multiple and diffuse and not concentrated in one individual or institution per se. They are territorial and circumscribed, as well as open to contestations and oppositions. There is also no clear hierarchical structure but a loose, contingent and dynamic network of individuals and organisations that are in charge of controlling trade, territories and social interaction in Kamathipura. These sovereigns may vary in size, legal status and the degree to which they reference the State – some choose to remain illegible and invisible, under the radar, while others tend to move towards greater legibility, legal status and therefore closer to formal power structures of the State through the formation of societies or associations. However their working shows that the State is implicitly involved in bending or stretching rules, in looking the other way, or allowing exceptions in land use regulations etc.

One of the most important informal sovereign structure to leave an indelible mark on the socio-spatial arrangements in Kamathipura is that of the figure of private land owners and developers. Since the colonial times, these private developers have exercised great skill and strategy in building up Kamathipura as an extremely affordable yet dangerously overcrowded tenement housing for migrant workers in the island city. Jaideep Gupte, 2012 has written at length about the production of the urban fabric in these neighbourhoods dominated by tenement housing. They express the ingenuity developers have shown in building housing out of cheap materials on extremely small plots, and then maximising the potential for rents by making spatial arrangements for sub divisions and commercial establishments on ground floors. The colonial State has been complicit in the creation of this built form as it has allowed such construction and high densities to build up in Kamathipura, (and neighbouring Nagpada, Byculla, Bhendi Bazaar) given that the government institutions during the colonial era could not provide adequate housing for the industrial workers, and was also influenced by the industrial and land owning elites. In the present day, and through Kamathipura’s 200 years existence, landlords have played an extremely powerful role in the built form and its conversion as well by constantly regulating the kinds of activities (economic and social) that are possible within the building premises, overruling the State’s building bye laws and development control rules. Given their ability to strong arm tenants and negotiate with the State, landlords only concern has been the maximisation of rents or profit. Landlords have also devised the ingenuous informal system of Pagdi to circumvent the constraints placed by
Rent Control Act, and this has allowed them immense flexibility to conduct property transactions and receive rents equivalent to the market price even when Rent Control caps rent at extremely low levels. On the other hand, land lords have shirked from maintaining and repairing the dilapidated buildings claiming that they don’t receive enough rents to do so. They have stalled negotiations around redevelopment in the past claiming that they are unsatisfied with the size of units they will receive post redevelopment and the fact that they want to live separately from their tenants-turned- neighbours post redevelopment. Landlords have been instrumental in resisting the large scale redevelopment efforts by the State as they will lose a steady stream of income from the rents they receive from their premises.

They are also responsible for allowing brothel based commercial sex work to flourish in their premises. Landlords have also been important in introducing small manufacturing units and evicting sex workers through local goons and threats of violence. For the longest time, they remained invisible and the informal system of Pagdi also ensured that it was difficult to trace back to the actual landlord as many properties have changed hands several times. Given that commercial activities are occurring in residential spaces without licences the invisibility is a deliberate ploy. A new class of landlords has purchased tenanted buildings after the passing of the 1999 Act. These have been bought at a fraction of the Ready Reckoner open market prices reflecting the rent protection of the 1999 Act, which was expected to be permanent. The proposed amendments to the Rent Control Act would unduly benefit this new class of wealthy landlords, who have purchased these properties as investments knowing that they are rent-controlled and at prices which reflected this fact.

In recent times however, with the speculation around large scale redevelopment gaining ground, some landlords have surfaced and formed an association – the Kamathipura Landlords Association in order to mobilise and legally resort to self-redevelopment. However, not all landlords are part of this association and this stems from historical differences along caste and ethnic identities. This fragmentation and division within the small group of landlords also holds up redevelopment plans as per DCR 33 (9) regulations, at least 70 per cent of the landlords in an area have to formally consent to the cluster redevelopment plans. The rest of the 30 per cent can be bought over by MHADA at market rates through negotiations. Thus,
overall, they wield an enormous influence over the present infrastructure, condition of their buildings and of the larger built environment of Kamathipura and its future.

The informal economy in Kamathipura, especially in the trade around stolen and smuggled goods along Shukhlaji Street and the flourishing of the sex work, from the 1890s to 1960s, was closely controlled and protected by street gangs, *dadas* and later the underworld or organised crime networks. Particularly, the *pathan* gangs had a very strong presence in the area. Gang violence, turf fights, and brawls (even brandishing swords and guns) was not an uncommon sight in the battle over retaining control over lucrative territories where smuggling, commercial sex work, and the sale of drugs were the mainstay of an underground economy. Given that the colonial government had created Kamathipura as a zone of exception in order to contain and maintain control over sex work in the city, the post-colonial government too followed the policy by deliberately allowing these economic activities to persist in this territory where normal rules and regulations were suspended. However, the State would also conduct police raids or try to clear the area of slums and illegal work from time to time. This led to the emergence of informal sovereigns who offered protection from the police, or from predatory agencies and rival groups through the deployment of muscle power and the threat of violence. These agents also ensured the smooth circulation of goods and services which was important for the economy to exist through the system of “*ghus*” (bribes) and by negotiating with the urban local authority, local political leaders, the local police and sometimes networking at higher levels of the State. Post the riots (in the eighties and nineties) in which the organised crime networks had played an important role by inciting violence, supplying weapons, the State cracked down heavily on their activities and also pursued a more aggressive regulation of spaces and economies in Kamathipura which thus saw the power and presence of these informal sovereigns fade (Interview with police, Nagpada Station). In fighting and territorial wars too led to their eventual demise. Weinstein, 2008 however has argued that the trajectory of urban development in Mumbai, post the nineties, was driven by the real estate agenda and the organised crime networks played an important role in this highly lucrative setting as well.

The other important set of actors who wielded enormous influence in the social, economic and cultural life of Kamathipura were the various *Samaj* associations. Almost every lane,
especially in the central part of Kamathipura, has a *Samaj* association. These are essentially caste based organisations and played a central part in ensuring that migrants arriving in the city could mobilise their demands, follow their customs, build places of worship and leverage the collective strength in protecting their trade, occupational practices, and consolidate their identity and claims. Some of the important *Samaj* associations are the Akhil Padmashali Samaj Trust, the *Andhra Saraswat Parishad*, the *Telegu Vanjari Society*, the *Vedu Samaj*, *Kamathipura Vishwakarma Telegu Sangam*, and the *Marwari Jain Samaj* among many others. They have been influential in resolving community level conflicts, such as between tenants and land lords. Many of the office bearers of these *Samaj* associations also play the role of social workers and help to extend financial and community support to the less fortunate members of the community. Importantly they have been collectively mobilised by political leaders seeking votes given the cohesion within the *Samaj* members and their ability to get things done in the community – such as provide for spaces of worship, or negotiate spaces for a community hall from the Corporator or the MLA which is a major feat given the space crunch in the neighbourhood. These *Samaj* associations however also serve to perpetuate religious, caste based and ethnic differences between communities.

However, residents in Kamathipura may be associated with more than one association, especially if it means these alliances will help them move forward or secure resources in their enterprise or occupation. Thus there are associations that are formed by individuals doing the same kind of work – the market association for shop keepers in the municipal market, the association of retailers/shop keepers of steel and iron, the Jain Marwari jewellers association, the *Beedi* workers association. These can cut across ethnic groups and build loose networks around trade links that are not necessarily limited to the geographic boundaries of Kamathipura. As Simone, 2014 has pointed out, having affiliations to multiple association actually help to hedge bets, multiply opportunities and leverage connections in a context that is marked by informality, insecurities and uncertainties. Perhaps one of the most striking findings with respect to the organisation and operations of the commercial sex work in Kamathipura was that there are hardly any overarching organisation or collective mobilisation of the sex workers which also indicates the degrees to which they are controlled and kept in an insecure condition where they cannot participate in collective bargaining.
5.3. Local and Regional Political Parties, Leadership and Shaping Agendas in Kamathipura

Kamathipura (209 E) sits uncomfortably within the Mumbadevi Vidhan Sabha constituency which is part of the Mumbai South Lok Sabha constituency and comprises socioeconomically disparate neighbourhoods. Except for a period during 1961 to 68 (when the Corporator, G.L. Reddy was from the Communist Party) Kamathipura ward has been a stronghold for the Congress Party. The MLA elected representative from the area has typically been from the Congress party, except the period from 1997 to 2007 when Shiv Sena came to power in the area by fielding a strong Other Backward Class (OBC) candidate. This was also the period which coincided with a strong BJP-Shiv Sena alliance at the local level in the ULB, which led to an FSI incentive and market driven redevelopment approach in the island city and the gradual relaxation of DCR 33(7) in favour of the builder raj. This also marks the period post
the riots which had affected the central areas of Mumbai very strongly and the violence had led to the ghettoization of Muslim minority community.

A combination of individual charisma and embeddedness in the local associational networks has led to elected representatives or corporators who have been able to considerably influence development works in the neighbourhood in their individual capacity. One such person was Lingana Pujari who was elected to BMC a record number of times from 1947 (when he joined the Congress party at the insistence of Nehru) to 1972, when he was elected to the Legislative Council of Maharashtra. Coming from a poor family in Andhra Pradesh, Pujari scripted his rise in the political ladder through his acumen in social work, in resolving and brokering peace between Hindus and Muslims in the area, and the support he received from the dominant Padmashali textile workers groups and the Muslims in the neighbourhood. He maintained his position by bestowing several favours onto the community by giving them access to government jobs in BMC and Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST). He was also able to fend off the efforts to sabotage his rule by the influential Puppala and Tulla families in Kamathipura through his ability to offer concrete interventions in the area – especially focussing on public amenities, educational infrastructure, and community demands.

Amin Patel has served as corporator from 2007 to 2009 (elected to Legislative Council in 2009 and currently serving as MLA) and is affiliated to the Congress party. He too used his individual charisma and considerable personal wealth to carry out development works in Kamathipura. While with the help of MLA funds and the blessings of MP (Congress) Milind Deora, Amin Patel has carried out repair works for several buildings in the neighbourhood, he has also undertaken slightly larger projects by sanctioning the constructing storm water drains in some parts of Kamathipura, by arranging for better water pressure in Kamathipura (connecting it to the newly made Durgadevi water tank near Kumbharwada). As corporator, he has made inroads into the community life of Kamathipura by helping the Samaj or associations by providing them with community halls, issuing voter identity cards to sex workers, and ensuring proper solid waste collection takes place in the neighbourhood. He has also personally ensured that schools and hospitals are renovated and rebuilt in the area.

But, perhaps Amin Patel is best known for the initiative he has shown in putting together a proposal for the comprehensive redevelopment of the neighbourhood, following a detailed
study and by pursuing several important amendments to the DCR in the Maharashtra Assembly. He is also known to have openly supported the DB Realty project and worked hard at brokering a handsome deal for tenants in Kamathipura by arguing for bigger apartments (than the State stipulated amount) and a larger corpus of funds for maintenance. On the one hand, he also is seen to be pro developer lobby as he has pushed for amendments to the laws thus creating relaxations for consent by landlords in the case of cluster redevelopment project from 100 per cent to 70 per cent. According to some in the neighbourhood however, Amin Patel is a builder himself and is thus deeply embedded in the redevelopment issue. On the other hand, he seems to be protecting the rights of tenants by opposing the amendments to the Rent Control Act as he feels the amendments will leave man poor households in his constituency homeless. When the ward was reserved for a woman candidate, Amin Patel lent his support wholeheartedly and got Shahana Rizwan (Congress), a housewife from Andheri, elected to the position and thus continues to maintain close relationships at the micro level.

5.4. Of Coalitions, Oppositions and Deadlocks

Individuals aside, the redevelopment processes are enabled and resisted through the formation of varying contingent coalitions or constellations of actors (from multiple scales of governance), highlighting the deeply political and yet contingent nature of attempts to socially and spatially restructure the neighbourhood. These interventions in the space economy of Kamathipura are located in the larger political economic shifts in urban development trends in Mumbai since liberalization of the Indian economy, which seek to transform Mumbai into Shanghai through a process of “worlding” (Ong and Roy, 2011). These shifts were marked by a clear trajectory to commoditize land, bring in a market oriented approach to spatial planning interventions and unlock the value of the land in the city through large infrastructure projects or high end residential and commercial real estate projects. While these trends have led to the dispossession of the city’s urban poor and their displacement from central and therefore lucrative areas of the city, we argue, it has also prompted several coalitions or alliances to emerge and resist these larger trends.

The resistance to redevelopment from coalitions of shop keepers and small scale industries:
Historically, those using the space of Kamathipura for a range of livelihood practices, especially the commercial shop keepers and industrial unit owners, strongly opposed the renewal plans in 1957 funded by a central scheme. Reports indicate that tenants (especially industrial workers) and shop keepers in the area, who were used to paying a highly subsidized rent (as per the Rent Control Act 1949 where rents were frozen at the rate of rents in 1940), also put up resistance to the renewal scheme by BMC as they would have to pay standard rent (5 or 6 times the existing subsidized rent). There were several service industries that were operating in the non-conforming zone as per the BMC’s land use development plans. These industries would not be rehabilitated under the scheme and would be cleared from the area. The owners and workers in these industries therefore were strongly opposed to the slum clearance plans of the BMC and mobilised to block the slum clearance plans. These oppositions indicate the futility of grand top down plans which fail to understand the intricate uses and occupation of spaces on the ground for multiple purposes, including residential, commercial and industrial.

5.4.1. Police, madams, landlords and the sex trade coalition

As has been discussed in the previous chapters, the police was implicated in the processes of allowing brothel based sex work to flourish within the confines of Kamathipura, and that this demanded a system of bribes and information networks. As an extremely tenuous coalition, it was powerful enough to resist the successive waves of planned redevelopment because of the enormous rents that were being collected through the subletting of rooms for this work. It was also reported during the MHADA survey that tenements of the sex workers in lanes 13 and 14 were not only of a slightly bigger size than the tenements of migrant workers and other residents, but that sex workers paid a rent that was 5 or 6 times the average rents in other areas of Kamathipura. Since renewal would mean that such activities would no longer be tolerated (though the proposed renewal plan hoped to rehabilitate and give transit accommodation to sex workers within Kamathipura itself), the landlords also stood to lose out from the rental money in future. The sex workers themselves however, will not benefit from the redevelopment project as they have almost no legal proof of tenancy or ownership and therefore are not entitled to claiming rehabilitation in the redeveloped buildings.
5.4.2. The tenant–landlord rift and opposition to large scale redevelopment

Each of the successive large scale plans for redevelopment of Kamathipura, whether backed by the State or by the market developers, has faced stiff resistance from within the landlords (who will lose the rental money from various occupations that take place in the buildings). While the landlords have demanded greater compensation, and have objected to tenants becoming their neighbours post redevelopment (thus upsetting the tenant-landlord hierarchy), tenants on the other hand have been fighting redevelopment on grounds that they need bigger spaces and access to amenities and infrastructure at the neighbourhood level itself. There is a deep distrust for state led redevelopment projects given that some tenants have been living in transit camps for 40 years as MHADA has been unable to deliver new housing to rehabilitate the residents. There is also reportedly a nexus between corrupt officials at BMC/MRRB and contractors, and landlords which exploits the opportunities that the situation presents. For instance, landlords sometimes are able to evict tenants and get rid of their claims by getting BMC to demolish buildings that are not in a dilapidated condition. There have also been reports of undocumented tenants getting access to redeveloped housing instead of bonafide residents who are still languishing in transit camps across the city. This case study has also brought to focus that landlords do not constitute one single body and may be aligned according to different interests. There are landlords of different sizes and scale of operations

The strategies of redevelopment and the coalitions of actors and institutions involved in the processes of redevelopment are diverse, often acting in contradiction to one another. While theories of neoliberal urban development have focussed on the ways in which the State and the market collude to displace and dispossess the urban poor, the Kamathipura case study highlights the experiences of stakeholders other than the state and the market, focusing on the mobilizers, the fixers, in between agents who work in the realm in between the state and the market, and are yet working to reconfigure the neighbourhood, but on their own terms. By focusing on the agency of different stakeholders, their capacities to act and influence redevelopment processes rather than focussing on the state and market interventions or structure alone, it is clear that there is no one single, top down process of neoliberalism, but that it is messy, unpredictable and shaped by the different powers and capacities of the people who are directly affected by the process, including those ostensibly excluded by the process.
5.5. Outcomes of Coalitions and Alliances

However, to what extent new forms of claim making arising from complex alliances can be understood as a transformative politics that carries the potential for generating an inclusive urbanity (Anwar, 2013).

Sex work continues to thrive and survive in Kamathipura, though brothel based sex work may not be as rampant as it was fifty years ago. Migrant workers continue to fill the cheap accommodations and work spaces in Kamathipura and newer activities and uses creep in, filling up the spaces both spatially and temporally, creating deeper links to the neighbourhood, while being mindful that these are not permanent, solid, unchangeable relationships to the city, but a making do or starting point of claiming one’s right to the city and what it offers. This could be regarded as strategic, in a space where there are heterogeneous identities, agendas and interests, overlapping and intersecting across groups, which are always at risk of being disrupted and displaced, from various actors ranging from the State, market and its various combinations. The stakes are complex and interconnected, thus rendering any effort by certain actors such as the State, market or civil society, towards understanding these relations and at gaining exclusive influence, impossible. This creates possibilities for spaces of opposition, resistance and multiple but socially, spatially, economically and politically contingent outcomes on the ground.

The unsuccessful attempts by the State to carry out large scale redevelopment has led to, we argue, “differentiated classes of informal residents” (Wienstein, 2014) - along a calibrated scale of vulnerabilities. Thus the Waghri community seems to have become even more vulnerable with re-regulation of spaces, claims over the “right” use of road space, and an increasing intolerance of residents to the houseless community. A little higher up on the scale are the sex workers, some of whom manage to negotiate redevelopment while most are left to the mercy of the street.

Coalitions have thus reproduced and reinforced social identities and differences between communities. Some of these forces opposing redevelopment on various grounds have successfully managed to put a stay on the redevelopment processes thus averting displacement.
and dispossession. But this has also brought about a stalemate wherein residents continue to live in extremely dilapidated and dangerous structures.

The stalemate over redevelopment has fatal implications for those continuing to live and work in extremely dilapidated buildings. While the disagreements between landlords-tenants-MHADA-BMC rage on, poor people pay the price of these negotiations with their lives. And given the complexity of rules and regulations, the fragmentation of authorities regulating redevelopment, it is difficult to hold anyone accountable.

On 30 April, 2016, over a century old a cessed building collapsed in Foras Road killing three people and leaving six injured (Hindustan Times, 30 April, 2016). What follows is a bitter battle between MHADA and BMC, each blaming the other for the collapse. While MHADA blamed BMC for carrying out extensive excavation in close proximity to the collapsed building, which may have resulted in the collapse, BMC blames MHADA for neglecting its work of carrying out timely repairs. Residents of neighbouring buildings too have complained about MHADA neglecting their buildings and only working when pressured by the MLA. Executive Engineer Sanjay Jadhav claims that the building was not in a dilapidated state (Desai, 2016). The building was undergoing repair through the MLA funds.

Figure 32: Building collapse in Foras Road
# The Politics of Redevelopment in Kamathipura: coalitions and conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mode of redevelopment</strong></td>
<td>Rebuilding tenements</td>
<td>Slum tag, old buildings torn down</td>
<td>Urban renewal scheme, and single building redevelopment</td>
<td>DB realty scheme</td>
<td>Landlord’s associations, DCR 33(7), (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Details of infrastructure in the plan</strong></td>
<td>Infrastructure added</td>
<td>Building a few amenities, garden or open spaces</td>
<td>Comprehensive development of amenities, single building</td>
<td>Restructuring of Kamathipura roads, sewers, beautification</td>
<td>Proposal for a Balajinagar, cluster development, amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actors and instruments</strong></td>
<td>Elites, BMC and Landlords</td>
<td>State and central government, landlords, Pagdi, rent control</td>
<td>MHADA, World Bank, MRRB, BMC, private trust, politicians, like Amin Patel, Miind Deora, community leaders, brothel madams</td>
<td>Private player, MHADA, as facilitator, got a special Project tag, builders, shop keepers</td>
<td>Land lords, builder, tenants, agents, PMC, lawyers, developers, shop keepers, community association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plan outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Grid pattern streets, new houses, included sex workers</td>
<td>Stalled after a few buildings torn down and rebuilt</td>
<td>Stalled after survey several families in transit camp, included sex workers, exceptions to rules, rezoning</td>
<td>Abandoned, houses and tenancies bought, excluded and displaced sex workers, extra FSI, mall developed</td>
<td>Two factions, Telugus/small landlords versus Marwaris/Jains, excluded sex workers, and Muslims, extra FSI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 Margins of the Centre: The Insecurity and Injustice of Living and Working in Kamathipura

In the final section we lay out some of the implications of these complicated, contradictory and volatile negotiations for the inhabitants of Kamathipura and for rethinking the story of socio-spatial transformations in the city. We discuss the case study using the five analytical frameworks binding the larger project – socio-spatial transformation, urban violence, state-market axis, spatial (in)justice and the production of peace.

6.1. Socio-spatial transformations

From periphery to core to peripheralisation within the core:

During the colonial era, the red light district was created on the outskirts of the fort area in order to contain sex workers, particularly European women in a particular zone away from the native elites and middle classes. In addition, given the cheap and uninhabited land, it became a dumping ground to house poor male migrant construction workers. Thus it lay on the peripheries (social and spatial) of the colonial city. Over time however, the area was engulfed by the expanding geographical boundaries of the city and was thus uniquely located squarely in the heart of the city – well connected by public transport and close to places of work, schools, colleges and hospitals.

However, given the overall rapid transformation of the surrounding landscape from that of an industrial city to a post-industrial one, the social segregation and economic marginalisation of the neighbourhood has erected boundaries and a distinctly differentiated image or spectacle of Kamathipura that produces deep disconnections and social peripheralisation even while being physically located in the core of the city. As discussed in the previous chapters, the State’s flexibility in creating a zone of exception and then subsequently trying to re-regulate Kamathipura has led to its peripheralisation while at the same time enabling informal and illegal economic activities to thrive, albeit in a state of constant threat and precariousness.

6.1.1. The incremental approach to claiming spaces for livelihoods

In this case study, the livelihood dimension is intrinsically entrenched in the constitution of the neighbourhood and thus changing livelihood practices transforms the character, use and
claims to space and vice versa. While at the city level, the movement of industries and industrial employment and conversion of workers neighbourhoods to high end residential and service oriented areas has resulted in the emptying out of the Island City, in Kamathipura this has led to greater informalisation of occupations, more precarious claims to space and an increased threat of commodification of the neighbourhood with the advance of the real estate driven economy. The lack of regulation and the selective application of criminal laws in the case of the neighbourhood has fostered multiple negotiations and claims to space. Thus at the building level, tenants have subdivided rooms and leased them out to sub tenants. At the street level, several means of occupation such as scrap collection and recycling, timber recycling, dyeing of jeans, eateries, informal tailors shops etc. are to be found jostling with each other for some legitimate control over the use of the street.

Various groups hustle and also negotiate to adapt to changing trends in the economy – thus landlords often decide to evict original tenants in favour of more lucrative rents from small manufacturing. Several specialised street markets which are temporary in nature have incrementally built their claims to the streets in spite of objections and threats to the same. Homeless communities have acquired an incremental strategy of marking several pavements as their territory withstanding various attempts by the State and several members of the community to evict and remove them. However, the consolidation of claims to space is an acute and constant struggle – and is marked by tensions, conflicts and unstable collaborations, strange alliances, and mediation by middlemen, fixers and agents.

6.1.2. The shrinking spaces of the sex work related economy

Historically, the sex work related economy comprised theatres, cinemas, mujras, lotteries, restaurants and late night liquor shops, perfume stores and paan stores, laundry stores, tailoring stores etc. that was not only deeply entrenched within the 16 lanes of Kamathipura but spilled out and covered a much larger area. Post the 90s however, this spatial spread began to physically shrink as brothel based sex work declined due a combination of socio-economic factors - the onslaught of AIDS epidemic, decline of the mills, raids by the police and a new moral economy that sought to sanitise Kamathipura and recover its value as a “decent” residential area in the heart of Mumbai. As brothels were converted to more lucrative commercial uses, sex workers left Kamathipura and were dispersed across the whole of the
metropolitan area with particular concentration in far out suburbs of Vashi, Nallasopara, and Thane etc. However, the sheer weight of reputation and the enabling factors (tacit knowledge of the State, the police, the presence of NGOs and landlords still willing to rent out to sex workers) ensured that street based sex work increased in the neighbourhood making sex work much more visible, precarious and dangerous, and open to a new set of violent reaction from police and residents and new modes through which sex workers have to renegotiate a changed territory.

6.2. The supportive neglect and gradual dilapidation of the built environment and unsuccessful attempts at renewal and redevelopment

The special status attributed to the neighbourhood, as a space of exceptions, also led to an ambiguity over how the State should regulate and govern the space. This was evinced by the supportive neglect by the State – the lack of basic infrastructures, the flexibility shown in allowing brothel based sex work to continue, the inability to deal with unauthorised constructions and violations of building regulations and land uses. On the one hand this allowed various economic ventures and informal work to flourish. On the other hand, it has also paved the way for multiple tenancy claims, intense contestations, and populations left to deal with strong men, dadas and fixers as mediators helping to access resources or keep control over territories, produce some sense of stability (Simone, 2014) which unfortunately is aligned along established patron-client relationships and fashioned out of an extreme imbalance of power relations owing to their precarious position vis-a-vis the State. Simone, 2014 argues that the “intense densities and proximities inducing multiple and divergent uses have proved difficult to administer by municipal authorities but also provide a kind of insulation from unilateral large-scale restructuring since authorities can never be sure whose interests are being affected” (Simone, 2014). This necessarily produces extremely volatile spaces where relationships to landscapes, relationships, and activities are being constantly reconfigured and Kamathipura, in spite of its outward appearance of a place that seems to have been bypassed by large scale transformation, is such a volatile space of constant negotiations, contestations, claims and changes.
6.3. Trajectories of urban transformation

According to one point of view, the transformation of Kamathipura is evident and that it is a change that is irrevocably tied to the forces of capital accumulation and uneven urban development that across the city. This disintegration of the old city is symptomatic of the larger context of socio-urban change. In Jayaraman, 2012, “There is a co-relation between urban form and the texture of life in the city. A fine-grained urban form, like the amazingly robust one of Kamathipura, supports social interactions and synergies in ways that large-scale megastructures just don’t. This is being unsettled” (Jayaraman, 2012).

Kamathipura’s process of redevelopment is not merely the bringing down of a few buildings, it is changing Mumbai as it occurs. “What we are allowing to happen in Mumbai, and which I find is an extremely dangerous trend, is the amalgamation of property. It alters the DNA of the city—not only its physical structure, but also its social structure and the varied relationships which evolve over time,” Mehrotra says, pointing out that Mumbai is blindly adopting the paradigm of cities like Shanghai, China, which have completely altered as cities. “It is expressive of the impatience of capital. Cities should ideally redevelop using the original form as framework, upgrading it for needs”, (Jayaraman, 2012).

However, the predictions of Kamathipura being drastically changed and massive redevelopment projects erasing its identity as a red light district, have not been proven out on the ground. There is change however the change is subtle, gradual and a process where many forces seem to be shaping and influencing the direction of change. The nature of redevelopment projects has itself fragmented communities and created a sort of paralysis amongst opposing factions. In Kamathipura, the various configurations and alliances among the residents, landlords, caste groups, occupational groups, are reflective of the multiple interests, both intersecting, shifting and conflicting, in the face of continuous uncertainty, volatility and trust deficit.

The redevelopment talk, or the threat of redevelopment has clearly impacted the neighbourhood, particularly the relationships and power dynamics between different groups, the spaces and livelihood practices that the place has accommodated and helped to flourish. These space and livelihood practices have also pushed back against the singular ideas of
redevelopment that the State –market axis pushed onto the neighbourhood, leading to fragmentation of communities and conflicts of interests, new configurations of actors collaborating together etc. While in certain cases the talk around redevelopment has reinforced or crystalized some socio-political identities and inequalities (for e.g. fractures between the long-time sex workers hailing from Southern India versus the new sex workers), in certain cases it has been working to build new claims and identities tied to property ownership (the sudden increase in ghost tenants), the right to live and work in Kamathipura (claims of the houseless population), the right to claim a stake in the redevelopment process by leveraging one’s presence, contributions to the nebulous informal economy, and years of residence in the neighbourhood – for example, that of the Telegu Samaj’s landlords Association formulating plans for self-redevelopment.

6.4. Urban violence and spatial (in)justices

This has implications for how violence as an instrument – through surveillance, policing, raids, signature campaigns, through the roll back and privatisation of public spaces and amenities, stricter re-regulation and application of land use laws, and meting out of “rough justice” plays a part in reshaping the space and the ways in which people make claims to it or consolidate their rights to live and practice a livelihood.

6.4.1. Coercive Protection and the Intermediaries

Violence and the tropes of violence are embedded in the way inner city red light areas are produced, maintained, negotiated, imagined in popular perception and regulated in cities across the world. Violence enacted by non-state actors (local elites, land lords and politicians, big men/goons/fixers, associations of residents) to control and manipulate illegal and informal forms of labour is covertly sanctioned by the State through a form of coercive protectionism (Tambe, 2009) wherein those practicing illegal work or violating regulations are forced to take the help of intermediaries at the local level in exchange of protection money. This implicates a range of formal institutions (such as the police and judiciary, the urban local body) as well as the local goons producing a kind of a “informal moral economy” (Gandhi, 2012)…. Gandhi argues that “the circulation of goods and services, illegal or quasi-illegal, demands another kind of circulation: the regular payments of hafta to authorities, and the ghus or one-off
bribes for extraordinary favours or one-off infractions. Only when the movement of money stops does the circuit of commerce stop; the point is to keep the flow going, and so the imperative for all parties is to maintain a smooth circulation, to avoid the jams resulting from periodic disagreement or resentment or impropriety. A police constable, lowest in the police food chain, says that the important thing is to seamlessly insert oneself within existing networks of money and sanction – rates are fixed, and calculated precisely, to the point that one does not even need to ask for money. Rather, it is understood, as a kind of tacit knowledge” (Gandhi, 2012:62).

At certain points however, this tacit knowledge breaks down or undergoes ruptures allowing the State’s institutions to use violence as a legitimate resource in curbing “crime”. Thus in Kamathipura, sex work goes unabated and soliciting takes place on the streets in front of police men. On the other hand, the police also carry out raids at brothels through which they routinely catch and charge sex workers for soliciting. In the case of sex work, madams have traditionally played the role of intermediaries – bailing sex workers caught by police while at the same time exploiting them by appropriating most of their earnings. In current times, with the entry of NGOs, sex workers in Kamathipura are being bailed out by NGOs and being sent to remand homes. However, some sex workers recounted how there was a well-oiled machinery at play wherein minors, if caught, would be shown as adults with the complicity of the police and madams, and placed back into the brothels. Though overt violence and negligence by police towards sex workers has now transformed into a more sensitive approach (Interview with Priti Patkar), the raids have intensified in the past ten years and the landlords are to blame because they want the sex workers out. Moreover, raids are not just violent because of the use of force, but because they affect the livelihoods of these women by scaring away clients.

There is a distinct transformation in the kind of violence or threat of violence that is used to discipline and control sex workers. While in the nineteenth century, it would be the street gangs who controlled different kinds of territories and businesses in Kamathipura, in the late 20th century this moved into the domain of organised crime networks – such as the Muslim gangs, and the Pathan gangs who controlled a number of illicit trades. In the late nineties, the organised crime networks were violently wiped out through in fighting and police action.
Now, it is difficult to pin point and locate power structures that continue to discipline and control the trade as power is much more diffused and much more embedded in the locality. Yet, sex workers we interviewed, spoke of the fear and risks associating with trying to escape as there were eyes watching them at all the times. In Kamathipura, it could be as innocuous as a fruit seller at the corner of a lane. There are also informal associations that collect a designated *hafta* from the shop keepers and these associations negotiate on behalf of the shop keepers with other actors.

This again brings to the fore the fact that the State itself is informal; differentiated, and composed of contradictory organs/institutions. It, therefore works with and through informal agents and mechanisms. State is not totalizing – it cannot inscribe itself into the body politic, it must and does take the help of informal mediators and this influences and shapes the use of urban violence.

6.4.2. The State and forms of structural violence, control of potentially “dangerous classes”

The continued neglect of Kamathipura is visible through the lack of adequate sanitation facilities, solid waste management and water supply in several pockets of the neighbourhood. This is compounded by the extreme dilapidation of the buildings in Kamathipura and the inability of the State to intervene and prevent civilian deaths due to crumbling buildings. This supportive neglect has been interspersed on the other hand by selective, intrusive and violent interventions that have sought to remove itinerants, evict sex workers and houseless populations, label and shame the area as a red light area and as a slum, and to completely transform the area through redevelopment in spite of the more or less formal status of the neighbourhood. These interventions can be read as the State’s response to contain and mitigate the potentially disruptive effects of subaltern actions by people in the need economy, in this case, people who are not entirely entitled to full citizenship rights (because of lack of identity proof, of practicing illegal work, of occupying spaces informally etc). As Chatterjee, 2008 has argued, in a functioning bureaucracy, the State cannot afford to neglect the cast away population completely as they may turn into “dangerous classes” and therefore the State engages with them through negotiations around a package of targeted benefits, that often work at cross purposes to divide up any collective assertion of claims.
6.4.3. Everyday violence and the routinisation of violence

Violence is normalised, routinised and invisibilised in the way women, girls, trans-genders and even men are forced, coerced, controlled, threatened into submission, prevented and tricked from escaping the red light area by a powerful combination of madam-police-traffickers-landlords-pimps who extract rents/profit from this mode of commerce. For a range of sex workers – from those in the confines of the brothels to those operating out on the streets, violence is thus part of their everyday lives. The social (and spatial) marginalization of red light areas has deep negative economic and political implications for other vulnerable and marginalised groups (male migrant workers in small scale industries, homeless communities, lower castes who live or work in the area), drawn by the cheap housing and central location, literally cast away from the body politic of the city and the circuits of capital in the formal economy. As surplus labour, the violence of everyday life plays out through the systematic deprivation and consequent constant negotiation of basic amenities (housing, water, sanitation), and apathetic governance and administration that residents of Kamathipura are routinely subjected to. The socio-spatial transformations, and the privatisation of public spaces and increased surveillance and growing intolerance towards “immoral acts” are thus experienced as everyday acts of violence by the poorer and more vulnerable urban groups.

6.5. Protest and social movements that use violence to claim rights

Kamathipura has been a locus of mobilisation and building up of several identity based, collective forms of social movements, protest and resistances to the systematic violence that has been meted out different groups who inhabit, or work in Kamathipura. Thus, Beedi workers from Kamathipura have been extremely vocal and organised in their protest against the State government’s inability to house them properly or give them social benefits and security of livelihood and have been supported to a large extent by the CPI. This movement reached its peak during the textile mill workers strike against the mill owners and died down when the mill workers were quashed with the closure of the mills and their conversion to real estate. The radical and violent Dalit Panther movement spearheaded by poet Namdeo Dhassal and other leaders have emerged from in and around Kamathipura, in the seventies, given its socially peripheral status and continued marginalisation by the State as a neighbourhood for
the poor, the discarded and the polluting lower castes and morally polluted sex workers. Unfortunately, with the demise of the mills and the dispersal of mill workers cross the State in search of new work, and the transformation of the neighbourhood, the commodification of land, the demolition of chawls that had supported poor Dalits and Muslims, the forced removal of sex workers and the economy around them, the increasing marginalisation of the poor, the Dalit Panther movement also split up and one faction even aligned with the militant Shiv Sena who engineered some of the most brutal riots against ethnic minorities in the city in the eighties.

6.6. Urban violence, identity and socio-spatial segregation

Identities have been reinforced and used to justify or legitimise violent confrontations, clashes and conflicts between different groups in the neighbourhood that have led to greater social segregation. The riots of 1984 and then of 1992/93, have clearly ruptured relations between Hindus and Muslims and led to the social and spatial segregation of Muslims to the peripheries of the neighbourhood and within the larger city, their ghettoization and further marginalisation. They have not been included in discussions around redevelopment. The possibility of unlocking the land values has led to a sharp division between tenants and landlords, and between new migrants and the more established migrants fuelling new narratives of violence. Alleged criminal traits of new migrants are being constructed and circulated to disqualify their claims to the spoils of redevelopment. By attributing traits of criminality and propensity for violence to certain new migrants, the middle class Hindu residents hope to not only cleanse Kamathipura but also to eventually raise its real estate value.

The more established sex workers who have lived in Kamathipura also create a clear distinction between themselves and the sex workers who come from other places to solicit clients in Kamathipura by alleging that this has led to more competition, conflict with residents and has upset the long standing relationships between them, the madams and the local police. Local residents have picked up on this animosity and amplified this by claiming that the environment in Kamathipura has gone from bad to worse and is no longer safe for decent men and women and thus demand that all sex workers need to be removed from the
neighbourhood. Thus, while it may seem that the State has in a roundabout manner accommodated several forms of labour and activities it considers illegal, it has not automatically translated into a just space or an empowering inclusive space for many communities in Kamathipura, particularly sex workers. In fact, it has rendered sex workers even more vulnerable to various forms and cycles of poverty, vulnerability and violence.

If Kamathipura represents the last refuge in the central city area for cheap, affordable housing and livelihood for newly arriving migrants, it is also an impossibly uneven, unjust and exploitative space – the condition of housing is pathetic and may prove even fatal if the houses collapse, not many buildings are connected to water pipes, there are open drains and garbage is not collected regularly, sanitation is poor due to lack of water and public or private toilets, buildings are narrow, dingy and of poor construction with hardly any light or air coming in. Most migrants are thus cramped into extremely dangerous and unhygienic living and working quarters leading to reported chronic illnesses. Moreover, with the changing social and spatial fabric, increasingly the residents are becoming hostile to the new migrants leading to frequent clashes and skirmishes – for instance the shoe market in Dedh gully was recently under attack from residents claiming it caused disturbances in the neighbourhood and made it more unsafe due to the sheer number of people coming from outside. Migrants working in the scrap shops, jeans dyeing shops etc. are often berated by residents for bathing in the open or for allegedly casting a bad influence on the neighbourhood.

Though attempts at large-scale redevelopment have been partially successful, the rumours have justified the dismantling of several traditional livelihoods in the area and have led to deepening distrust and divides between community groups in the area such as between the Marwaris and the Telagu speaking community, the Hindus versus the Muslims, the landlords versus the tenants. The presence of every political party, from the Congress to Shiv Sena, to BJP, RPI and CPI, in the lanes of the neighbourhood suggests that political parties are also carving out the neighbourhood on grounds of caste, religious and ethnic identities and preying upon the multiple marginalities that residents here face, while accepting a portion of the rents collected to offer protection from demolitions, evictions, raids etc. Social identities are therefore key to how the neighbourhood is divided up and governed through creation of various territories and the threat of violence acts as an instrument in maintaining some
manufactured and tenuous peace in the neighbourhood. Claims to identities also imply closeness to certain networks of political power, wealth, and ability to get close to the big men and thus, some individuals are able to exploit this in accumulating capital - for example by buying up buildings, evicting tenants and introducing new tenants who pay more, by claiming protection money and by running businesses under the radar of the government. Thus, for some groups, their claims have been strengthened while for some, their claims weakened as they have been excluded socially and spatially from these plans.

Studying violence thus is complicated by the multiple scales at which it operates and the shifting configurations of actors in a volatile neighbourhood alike Kamathipura. Thus, within each contingent situation, it is important perhaps to locate the oppressors and the oppressed (for instance though sex workers are considered as victims it is clear that within them some sex workers have clearly established a far greater share of control over their territory of operations and thus act as gate keepers of new entrants, the madams or gharwalis exert power over other girls who are mere subtenants etc), the processes and the outcomes.

6.7. The changing State-Market Axis

The larger project argues that socio-spatial transformations have been guided by the interests, values and objectives of specific powerful formations in every society and therefore are contingent upon the political economy of the time. Varying configurations of actors are allied with or embedded in the colonial or postcolonial State, or particular sections of society with political weight, or business and market interests and thus drive, influence, moderate, appropriate and benefit from the forms of socio-spatial transformations on the ground.

6.8. Calculated informality of the State

Kamathipura case study clearly brings out the selective intervention and systematic neglect by the State in this space and in dealing with a range of informal activities and semi legal spaces, occupations and marginalised groups of people. There is a “carefully orchestrated flexibility” (Gururani, 2013) that the agencies of the State government apply in ‘tolerating’ certain spaces and occupations, and shows the State’s ambivalence in approaching these illegal livelihoods
and spaces. The selective exercise of criminal laws and the practice to look in the other direction while several forms of “illegal” activities take place indicates the careful production of a highly uneven and differentiated space through exceptions and a juridical regime where the sovereign does not treats its subjects uniformly. This is brought out through the study of the red light area. The State uses informal mechanisms and a calculated exception or measured flexibility to intervene in Kamathipura – for example, the State has permitted and eventually legalised the informal practice of “Pagdi” wherein tenancies (which are inheritable) are transferred to new tenants/owners, for a handsome sum of money at the market rate, in order to bypass the constraints set in place by the Rent Control Act which has frozen rents and prompted landlords to systematically neglect their buildings. This peculiar regularisation of an informal practice shows how the State wishes to pander to the interests of both the organised tenants in the city and the powerful landlords lobby in the city.

The complicity of the State in facilitating illegal sex work in Kamathipura also shows its calculated informality through which the State controls bodies and maintains a moral discipline by creating a space of exception in the city where sex work is permitted, contained, policed and monitored. The State has at different points of time tried to intervene through large scale projects and has strategically used the “slum” tag or “social” tag to do so. The State has also shown selective restraint in cracking down on unauthorised constructions and activities that violate land use regulations while brutally evicting other weaker and less organised groups. Wherever suitable, the State has also been selectively pandering to the builders lobby at times (by increasing FSI of redeveloped buildings in cramped island city) and pandering also to tenants organisation (by arbitrarily increasing size of redeveloped apartment/unit) to which they are entitled.

6.8.1. Informality of the market and circuits of labour connecting Kamathipura to the city and beyond

In the absence of employment in formal sectors, or denied access to the capital accumulating sectors of the economy, non-State actors have fostered Kamathipura as a space that has actively encouraged a range of formal to informal occupations and economic activities that border on the illegal with the complicity of the State. The strategic location, historical connections to the port and the mill lands, the low rents, accommodating social fabric,
availability of cheap and able workers, and the special status accorded to the red light area where the State chooses to relax or make exceptions to its land use regulations has created a protective cover and appropriate conditions for commercial activities to thrive in the inner city. As Simone, 2014 has pointed out, these are volatile and contested areas of “accommodations, uneasy deals, and residents actively seeking to engage in provisional collaborations” that help them to survive, differentiate themselves, and stay ahead. The spatial arrangements, governance and social fabric of Kamathipura has thus fostered processes of “auto-construction” – wherein the majority of urban residents, rather than being peripheralised and marginalised, try to construct viable urban economies and built environment themselves. Thus, we see in Kamathipura how people have demonstrated abilities to seize opportunities for little initiatives, have found ways to make money and sometimes members of the household pursue different strategies of making money through formal and informal channels. Livelihoods are therefore not static, but are dynamic and shifting with the times and contingent upon the needs and demands. People respond strategically as well and hustle possibly two jobs at the same time. Or else, they try and organise, mobilise themselves along primordial identities such as caste and ethnic identities in order to consolidate their claims to livelihood and spaces of livelihood.

The complex and constantly shifting spatial arrangement and fluid coalitions makes it impossible for any big player – such as a big developer like D.B. Realty with substantial capital, muscle power and political connections – to completely intervene and remake the area (Simone, 2014). The built environment of Kamathipura itself has become a particular instrument for making political claims – residents are always trying to make a little bit more claim to in-between spaces, to the street to practice their occupation (the sex workers, the temporary shoe and cloth markets, the jeans dyers, the scrap collectors) and this entrepreneurial action has had to be supported by alliances, short term pooling of information and other resources, trade-offs, and negotiations with State and other non-state actors. These initiatives, schemes, livelihood practices are not without accompanying risks and as Simone, 2004 indicates, and our case study of different livelihood practices in Kamathipura suggests, speculative activities are central to these livelihood strategies of the urban majority. Moreover these local economies, enabled through intricate networks of relationships, the porosity of
lower levels of bureaucracy and the flexible use of space (Benjamin, 2008), are also subject to
and also connected to the larger economy outside the locality. Weinstein, 2014 has argued that
it is this deep entrenchment within the larger political economy of the city that enables
residents of neighbourhoods such as Dharavi to stay put in the face of large scale
redevelopment efforts. The same can be said of Kamathipura – the circuits of labour, of
occupations and livelihoods clearly deter large scale redevelopment of the area which
threatens to wipe away these small but significant activities and avenues of income
generation.

6.9. The non-state actors’ sovereignty in Kamathipura

This case study highlights that the impact of globalizing or neoliberal forces of transformation
are not as totalising as they are made to be. To a great extent poor people are being displaced
and dispossessed, moved to the peripheries of cities and cast away from the circuits of
accumulation of corporate capital. But here we see that there are non-state actors, individuals,
coalitions of actors who are able to influence, moderate, and resist the totalising effects
producing tenuous stabilities and subverting large scale redevelopment projects by the state
and the market.

This is because Kamathipura is a site where the “formal State’s reach is partial and power
often rests in the hands of brokers, a dynamic that certain political theorists such as Thomas
Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, 2005 have recognized as a locus of political authority”
(Anwar, 2013). However, “these ever-present strongmen’s sovereignty is recognized mostly
within the borders of their own territorial influence, and their authority is frequently contested
and renegotiated” (ibid). In Kamathipura, coalition of landlords-police-madams control and
regulate the sex work and thus oppose the redevelopment plans. On the other hand, a strong
but contingent coalition between tenants backed by political parties also pose a threat to the
coalition of Hindu landlords association who are proposing redevelopment in Kamathipura.
However these sovereignties are at best temporary and fragmented and do not stick or become
institutionalised over time. Smaller builders often play a shadowy role by facilitating the
brokering of Pagdi deals or the eviction of tenants and buying up of apartments for small
manufacturing. These players thus compete, negotiate and collaborate to control and mobilize
resources, facilitate informal economic activities or commodify land. Thus “alternative forms of power and authority shape urban life and compete with and complement state authority” (Anwar, 2013) – here the tenants challenge State authority, shop keepers challenge State authority and even factions of sex workers have resisted the State’s and the markets attempts to remove them from Kamathipura. We argue that these multiple claims, especially to the built form and the use and exchange rights over the built form, has stemmed from (ironically) the very territorialised flexibility that the State has displayed in governing a place as complex as Kamathipura.

6.10. The political economy of land and shifting state-market alignment post nineties

The particularities of the case study have to be read along with the political economic changes happening at multiple levels – city, state and nation. Post the nineties, deindustrialisation and the commodification of erstwhile mill lands for real estate development in the island city were accompanied by an entrepreneurial approach to urban governance and the rapid shift away from socialist spatial planning approaches to clearly market based instruments of urban planning and development. This was supported by the coming into power of Shiv Sena – a political party at the State level, which was opposed to ethnic migrants from other States and minorities, had strong ties to builders and the mafia, used their deep penetration in the neighbourhoods and violence to gain control over the shifting landscape. Moreover, the local policy agenda had changed to one that supported the entry of private players in capital accumulation, particularly through the extraction of surplus value by unlocking land for high end residential and commercial uses.

In Kamathipura, these changes at the city and State, have had an enormous impact though the exact nature of transformations in Kamathipura were moderated and influenced by the particularities of local conjunctures or coalitions. Large scale redevelopment in Kamathipura was thus a major agenda of the State government as it sought to bring in private developers by the amendments to the Development Control Regulations – DCR 33(7) AND (9). Moreover, in order to incentivise private developer led redevelopments in the island city, the State made significant relaxations to the size of dwellings that tenants would receive post redevelopment.
At the same time, the land market in the island city was soaring and Kamathipura lay strategically in the middle of this boom. Given that the interests had shifted to unlocking land values rather than generating employment or the production of goods, Kamathipura posed a challenge for redevelopment given the economies that operated in the area and the ways in which it afforded residence for a host of poor urban communities.

Liberalisation post the nineties thus led to the re-regulation of Kamathipura, with increased surveillance and regulation over the space, the users of these spaces and the various economic activities. The aspirations for living in a “world class neighbourhood” was further fuelled by images, advertising, and positioning by the private developers that influenced residents within Kamathipura. This was a powerful instrument of causing fragmentation within the community and ensuring that any form of collective mobilisation to resist redevelopment processes was significantly weakened.
References


Bhan, G (2016). In the Publics’ Interest – Evictions, Inequality and Citizenship in Contemporary Delhi. Orient Blackswan


Feasibility Report on Urban Renewal Scheme for Kamathipura (July, 1981). Prepared by Housing, Urban Renewal and Ecology Board of Bombay Metropolitan Region, Development Authority in collaboration with MHADA


Tambe, A (2009). *Codes of Misconduct: Regulating Prostitution in Late Colonial Bombay*. University of Minnesota
Thatra, G (Forthcoming). Contentious (socio-spatial) relations: *Tawaifs* and Congress House in contemporary Bombay/Mumbai. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*


Mapping References

**Figure 1**: Location of Kamathipura in relation to the growing city  
*base map* – historical maps

**Figure 2**: Lanes in Kamathipura  

**Figure 6**: Historical location of Mumbai  

**Figure 14**: Street Use by different occupation groups in Kamathipura  
*base map* – Primary mapping done by Devashree Ragde and Apurva Gandhi

**Figure 20**: Proposed redevelopment by MHADA  
Feasibility Report on Urban Renewal Scheme for Kamathipura (July, 1981). Prepared by Housing, Urban Renewal and Ecology Board of Bombay Metropolitan Region, Development Authority in collaboration with MHADA

**Figure 21**: Public Amenities in Kamathipura  
*base map* – Primary mapping done by Devashree Ragde and Apurva Gandhi

**Figure 22**: Transect conducted of Lane 10  
*Transect* done by Devashree Ragde and Apurva Gandhi

**Figure 23**: Transect conducted of Lane 10  
*Transect* done by Devashree Ragde and Apurva Gandhi

**Figure 27**: Layout of Kamathipura: Proposed Layout, DP Layout, and Existing Layout  
**Figure 28**: Layout of Kamathipura: Proposed Layout, DP Layout, and Existing Layout

Taken from Balwa, A. “re-New Mumbai”, Available
http://www.slideshare.net/Arshadbalwa/re-new-mumbai-by-arshad
balwa?utm_source=slideshow02&utm_medium=ssemail&utm_campaign=share_slideshow_lo
ggedout

**Figure 29**: Rival layout of development plan by a private developer in Kamathipura

Taken from a private developer’s office in Lane 7 in Kamathipura