Dharavi, located to the north of Mumbai’s island city is the largest slum in Asia covering 220ha. Due to the exponential growth of Mumbai, the informal settlement of Dharavi shall be transformed into modern business and housing districts. Therefore it was intended to sell the land in its current state, leaving the new owners to invest in infrastructure and buildings, and implying the relocation of the current inhabitants and their businesses. This project arises at an inverse approach by paying respect to the existing social fabric. First, the public shall invest in the infrastructure such as sanitation, electricity, roads and public transport and then each neighborhood will be rehabilitated within its ancestral location and at the expense of the present dwellers, protect the current residents from the need to relocate. This project has been commended due to its unique and robust strategy, which is based on a sound and astonishingly mature in situ analysis.

Due to the size of Dharavi and existing open grounds, we suggest to invert the regular process. Thus, rehabilitation can run without public money and without financing costs. The opportunity for inhabitants to purchase additional floor space at subsidized rates reduces the area for housing evicts slum-dwellers and results in new slums elsewhere. In our opinion, Mumbai should maintain Dharavi as home for its present residents. History proved that unsuitable housing excites slum-dwellers and results in new slums elsewhere.

Quantum change and transferability
Our strategy modifies Mumbai’s applicable law for slum sanitation especially for Dharavi the huge slum on high-value land. Instead of redesigning the area, sanitation is understood as transformation, as one step in an ongoing development process. High public interest makes Dharavi’s sanitation seminal for future slum sanitation projects. This process can be adapted to other comparable settlements.

Ethical standards and social equity
By our strategy, responsibility to redesign Dharavi is not given to only a few investors. Funded by the money generated in advance Dharavi’s existing communities will be owner/builders of their own future environment. In cooperation with local NGOs they form cooperative housing societies and engage their architect. A step-by-step transformation reduces accommodation in transit camps to a minimum and makes a mutual learning process of the communities possible. The citizens of Dharavi are meant to be the subjects driving the transformation process, not objects of a development plan. Thereby existing communities as well as socioeconomic networks can be maintained and strengthened.

Ecological quality and energy conservation
The redevelopment strategy supports Dharavi as mixed zone and manufacturing location and keeps suitable livelihoods to all previous inhabitants. Thereby the project prevents an increased number of commuters within the traffic-choked city of Mumbai. Furthermore, the project prevents displacement and proximate squatting on environmental zones within the city.

Economic performance and compatibility
By our intention, Dharavi’s sanitation will be a public project. The right to build some of the buildings for sale on the open market can be auctioned in advance. Thereby the major part of the required capital will be generated. Thus sanitation can run without public money and without financing costs. The opportunity for inhabitants to purchase additional floor space at subsidized rates reduces the area for housing evicts slum-dwellers and results in new slums elsewhere.

Contextual and aesthetic impact
The building structure breaks with predominate standards of social housing. Private and public space is intensively linked. On the one hand access-landscapes within buildings provide yards dedicated to households, on the other hand a hierarchy of yards links the building’s interior with the urban surrounding. These linkages serve existing intensive and dynamic usages of living and working spaces.

Project data

Type of project: Architecture (research/development)
Estimated start of construction: Not applicable

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Comment of the Holcim Awards jury Asia Pacific
This project deals with informal settlements in Dharavi north of Mumbai, the biggest slum in Asia covering an area of approximately 220ha and housing some 600,000 inhabitants. Due to the exponential growth of Mumbai, the informal settlements of Dharavi shall be transformed into modern business and housing districts. Therefore it was intended to sell the land in its current state, leaving the new owners to invest in infrastructure and buildings, and implying the relocation of the current inhabitants and their businesses. This project arises at an inverse approach by paying respect to the existing social fabric. First, the public shall invest in the infrastructure such as sanitation, electricity, roads and public transport and then each neighborhood will be rehabilitated within its ancestral location and at the expense of the present dwellers, protect the current residents from the need to relocate. This project has been commended due to its unique and robust strategy, which is based on a sound and astonishingly mature in situ analysis.

Situation:
Mumbai, probably the most densely populated city worldwide, has a cosmopolitan and diverse society, created by migrants from all over India. Half of its population lives in informal settlements due to an enormous deficit of affordable housing. But on its way to a world class city, in Mumbai – like in any other city - these slums should disappear from the cityscape.

Dharavi is also the basis of their survival with 80% of its varied communities characterized by their different origins. Dharavi is located to the north of Mumbai’s island city is the largest slum in Asia covering 220ha. Due to any central planning, 800,000 inhabitants created their own environment. But due to Mumbai’s urban growth, Dharavi the former swamp became a high value site in the heart of the city. Many Each Indian architect came up with a plan to auction Dharavi to international investors. First responsible to construct flats for the inhabitants, they can make their profit by additional buildings on more than half of the land area. However the extreme densification makes it impossible to create an adequate environment for Dharavi’s citizens. In our opinion, Mumbai should maintain Dharavi as home for its present residents. History proved that unsuitable housing excites slum-dwellers and results in new slums elsewhere.

Strategy:
Due to the size of Dharavi and existing open grounds, we suggest to invert the regular process. Thus, rehabilitation can run without public money and without financing costs. The opportunity for inhabitants to purchase additional floor space at subsidized rates reduces the area for housing evicts slum-dwellers and results in new slums elsewhere. In our opinion, Mumbai should maintain Dharavi as home for its present residents. History proved that unsuitable housing excites slum-dwellers and results in new slums elsewhere.

Initiative for the transformation:
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Evaluation of the situation:
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Relevance to target issues by author
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