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Research article

Two Dimensions of Existence of the ‘Slum’ in the Global City: A Comparative Case Study of Informal Settlements in Nairobi and Mumbai

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Abstract

The cities of the Global South have been predominantly approached as dual cities being embedded within the formal/informal dichotomy. This article provides an analysis of the power dynamics of formal and informal, using an example of public space in two informal settlements: Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dharavi in Mumbai, India. Based on my middle-term ethnographic research conducted in both settlements, I argue that the former binarism of coloniser and colonised has been transformed into the post-independence binarism of formal and informal. I interpret my ethnographic data by using Frantz Fanon’s theory about space and psychology of colonialism. I associate the formal sphere with Fanonian whiteness and the informal sphere with Fanonian blackness. From this perspective, I interpret the development of informal settlements as forcible formalisation. In such a process, by being pushed by the demands of the formality, local patterns of the informality are largely omitted and the elite-designed solutions frequently fail or – even worse – lead to the deterioration of the inhabitants’ situation.

Keywords: *slum, Global South, Kibera, Dharavi, Frantz Fanon, global urbanism, post-colonialism, informal order*

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The colonial world is a world divided into compartments. . . . Yet, if we will examine closely this system of compartments, we will at least be able to reveal the lines of force it implies. This approach to the colonial world, its ordering and geographical layout allow us to mark out the lines on which a decolonized society will be reorganized.

Frantz Fanon (1963): The Wretched of the Earth, 37-38

Introduction

'In Kibera everyone has a chill-spot. People can spontaneously form a group at the corner on the street and share their troubles. This is the most secure way to survive in poverty. You hardly find this anywhere else', explained Kevo, an artist from Kibera, one of the largest informal settlements in Nairobi. When saying 'anywhere else' he pointed to the high-rises surrounding Kibera. In other words, Kevo was characterising the difference between the public space of formal and informal spheres of the city. While the informal one is shared and regulated by the inhabitants themselves, the formal one, similarly to its Western counterpart, renders such activities as chill-spots impossible.

Similarly to other disciplines of social science, urban studies also recently underwent a shift towards more decentralised knowledge production as a reaction to the postcolonial critique of the universal character of social relations. Over the last two decades a significant amount of scholarship has arisen challenging the universal understanding of urbanism originally produced in European and North American cities (Myers 2014: 105). The decentring production of knowledge on global urbanism thus includes the move from the over-reliance on Western cities that tend to be interpreted as 'ordinary cities'. Despite analysing cities in developing regions in a comparison of its Western counterparts, the current wave of global urbanism applies various ways of analysis while aware of the diversity in which the urban is produced and lived within a globalised world.

This board of scholarship aims to understand the urban across its many formations and it searches for knowledge that is open, diverse and non-singular (Robinson 2021). Therefore many urban theorists seek to challenge the cosmic scale of planetary urbanism by putting an emphasis on the everyday practices of human social reproduction and space-production. Comparative case studies providing the point of view from various angles – frequently bottom-up – thus has become one of the features of today's urban studies (Perera 2016; Roy 2011).

A considerable shift has also taken place in scholarship analysing the informal settlements of Global South cities. The informal settlements have been pre-

dominantly approached within developmental and civilisational discourses replicating the Western-centric understanding of cities and thus depicting informal settlements in the comparison of how the ordinary cities should look. Such an approach led to the labelling of informal settlements as symbols of the Global South's failure as represented in Davis's influential book *The Planet of Slums* (Davis 2006). Many scholars have opposed the term slum as very vague and simplistic based on the oriental and exotic imaginaries of urban degeneration. Indeed, many academics have pointed to the fact that the catastrophic representation of informal settlements and their criminalisation has frequently been used by the elites to control the urban population (Wacquant 1997; Gilbert 2007; Arabindoo 2011).

Such a generalised and stereotyped representation has been challenged by various scholars investigating the city's informality not as a universal phenomenon but rather as being composed of the vast diversity of communities and their livelihoods. Singular and comparative case studies have thus become one of the features of present-day urban studies aiming to decentralise the knowledge production. However, these authors differ on how they define the informality and thus provide a variety of conceptualisations of the formal and informal dichotomies. For instance, Hart argues that the formal/informal dualism has at least three constructions. First, the informal may be the variable content of form, the street vendors selling cigarettes thus invisibly complete the chain between large companies and customers. Second, it might be the negation of formal institutions, whether in the form of squatting, tax evasion or the world drug business. Third, it may be the residue of what is generally understood as representing the formal (Hart 1985). Lefebvre interprets the city as situated halfway between what he calls the near order and the far order. While the near order is created by the relations of individuals in groups of variable size which are more or less organised, the far order represents a society regulated by powerful actors such as institutions (Church and State). The far order persuades through and by the near order, which conforms its compelling power (Lefebvre 1996: 101). Similarly to Lefebvre, Perera distinguishes between two types of space. The first one he calls 'the abstract space' defined by forms, structures and processes that are established by wealthy actors who are powerful enough to both shape and erase the spaces and histories of others. However, as Perera argues, ordinary people do not passively submit themselves to these abstract spaces and they produce their own 'people's spaces' (Perera 2016: 3).

This difference between formal and informal is the focus of the ethnographic research I conducted in two informal settlements – Kibera in Nairobi and Dharavi in Mumbai. I interpret my ethnographic data primarily by using Frantz Fanon's theory about space psychology of colonialism. Fanon's colonial world

was a world cut in two – black and white (Fanon 1963: 28). In this article, I associate the formal sphere with Fanonian whiteness and the informal one with Fanonian blackness. In doing so, I aim to reveal the dynamics of the spatial management of the city's informality and explore its psychological impacts on the inhabitants of both formal and informal neighbourhoods.

Fanon and those who build on his work point to the ways in which the colonial system systematically divided everything that is white from everything that is black. This happens physically and spatially, but also – and perhaps more importantly – it occurs at moral and psychological levels too (Derek 2004). I apply Fanon's understanding of the colonial city as divided into compartments along the black and white to the post-colonial division of the formal and informal. The white, formalised part of the city is associated with 'The Civilisation' which means developed, organised, safe, clean or moral, while the black, informal part is identified in opposition to the formal – underdeveloped, unorganised, dangerous, immoral and full of filth. From this perspective, the management of the city's informality is not only about material and economic uplifting. It is a process which touches all aspects of human life – a process where the informal individual is forcibly formalised. Many activities that sustain the lives of the inhabitants of the informal settlements, such as formation of chill-spots in Kibera, are rendered unwanted and immoral through the eyes of the city's formality. I pay special attention to the difference between the shared public space of informality and the individual public space of the formality. Many development approaches intended to help the poor are inevitably tied to regulations and rules of the formality and thus break the social ties of the informality. In the end, however, the implementation of ideas originally designed to help the inhabitants of informal settlements often leads to worsening their situation.

The article engages with three bodies of literature. First and foremost, this text is a contribution to the scholarship that aims to shed more light on urban space from the perspective of its residents and uses the local knowledge and practices for the analysis of dominant discourses embedded in the 'Global South' paradigm. As During argues, the 'Global South' paradigm has to be replaced by the analysis that will not divide the world geographically and politically, but rather will take into consideration the capitalist precarity as well as local emancipation movements (During 2020). Sheppard et al. call for the provincialisation of global urbanism to identify and empower new ways of enunciation from which to speak back against, and thereby challenge the mainstream global urbanism (Sheppard, Leitner & Maringanti 2013). The authors draw on Chakrabarty's two conceptualisations of histories of capital: 'History 1' and 'History 2'. History 1 presents the history of Western Europe and North America as the global norm against which everything is to be judged. History 2 represents

the histories outside this paradigm having been frequently judged as failing in achieving History 1. However, in Chakrabarty's words, History 2 actually represents powerful alternatives drawing the strength to resist becoming 'forms of [globalizing capitalism's] own life-processes' (Chakrabarty 2000: 63) and provides 'more effective narratives of human belonging' (Chakrabarty 2000: 70). In this article, I interpret socio-spatial processes produced by the residents of Kibera as forming the active resistance to the city's so-called formality and thus representing an example of the so-called History 2.

Second, the study engages with the literature that seeks to understand how the informality in the cities of the so-called 'Global South' is studied and approached by dominant discourses, including the popular ones. There is a significant body of literature that points to the visual representation of informal settlements: For instance, Roy argues that the Global city is worlded (Spivak 1985) through the icon of a slum and refers to the Oscar-winning movie *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) which she depicts as 'poverty pornography' (Roy 2011: 225). There are scholars who research the connection of criminality and informality, such as Ridda, who investigate the specific relations between exploitation, colonisation and the underworld within the connection of the postcolonial city and the discourse on crime (Ridda 2020). A significant body of literature theorises the developmental discourse, such as Murray Li, who interprets the development as 'the will to improve' situated in Foucault's understanding of governmentality (Li 2007: 5). In the case study of the Nubian and Kenya Slum Upgrading Project in Kibera, Balaton-Chrimes depicts the development as a 'profoundly political space in which subjectivities are shaped through recognition, misrecognition and non-recognition' (Balaton-Chrimes 2017: 4). Another approach adopted by various scholars is concerned with the concept of illegibility. For instance, Wacquant points to the representation of a ghetto as a place of disorder and deficiency and argues that based on direct observation, the ghetto is revealed to be far from disorganised, but rather 'organized according to different principles' (Wacquant 1997: 346). I associate myself with this approach concerning the concept of illegibility, where the viewer's subjective feeling of disorder is directly associated with overall human and moral degradation.

Third, the article investigates the spatial dimension of Frantz Fanon's work while applying his theories to the current situation of postcolonial cities. There is a broad agreement among scholars who accept Fanon's spatial narrative. Bhabha sees Fanon's understanding of violence as being rooted in the very definition of colonial space (Bhabha 1994: 43). Said stresses Fanon's understanding of subject-object distinction primarily from the geographical perspective, not the historical (Said 1999). Varma discusses Fanon as evocating colonial cartography through contrasting the economy of black and light (Varma 2012: 41). She

argues that Fanon's writings shed light on the forbidden zones of the others and reveal that the articulation of western values such as urbanity, civility or order was possible only through dehumanising the natives (Varma 2012: 9). According to Kipfer, Fanon treated the colonial system as a spatial organisation and the everyday racism as primarily spatial relations. He also understood decolonisation as reappropriating and transforming spatial relations in the colonial city (Kipfer 2007: 701). Pile argues that for Fanon, the colonial system not only sets the skin hierarchies through the visibility of the body, but also territorialises the body. The black/white skin colour is not only imposed from the outside, but is also rooted in the movements of people (Pile 2000). In the text, I primarily agree with Bhabha's interpretation of Fanon's colonial space as marked by 'Manichean delirium' as splitting the colonial space of both consciousness and society, in which 'the Negro' is trapped in his inferiority while the white man in his superiority (Bhabha 1994: 43). I am particularly interested in Fanon's understanding of collective unconsciousness (Fanon 2008: 145) and his concept of the 'internalized inferiority' (Fanon 2008: 4) as shaping both the consciousness and the space of Nairobi and Mumbai.

The article will proceed in five steps. First, it interprets the history of both Nairobi and Mumbai through Fanon's understanding of the colonial world as divided into compartments. Second, the text provides an ethnographic analysis of everyday life both in Kibera and Dharavi with a special emphasis on shared public space. Third, the article investigates the spatial dimension of formalising the informality at the city level on two selected examples of redevelopment programmes – Kibera Soweto East and the Dharavi Redevelopment Program. The fourth section provides an analysis of the formalisation processes at the individual level, primarily using Fanon's concepts of collective unconsciousness and internalised inferiority. Finally, I conclude the article with the analysis of the local response of inhabitants from Kibera who aim to secure their public space through its destigmatisation and call for a paradigm shift where slums will no longer be seen on the basis of disorder and deficiency but rather depicted as an alternative to the normative (Western) urbanism.

My methodology can largely be described as an inductive comparative case study. I define several social elements from the respective cases, and analyse its function within the public space in both the informal and formal sphere of the city. These social elements were selected inductively, that is, they resulted from my middle-length ethnographic research in Kibera and Dharavi, where I spent more than five months (in Kibera) and almost one month (in Dharavi). In both settlements, I conducted in-depth interviews, focus groups and participant observation. In Kibera I did more than 70 interviews, gathered about 100 pages of notes and filmed more than 150 hours of material. In Dharavi, I did interviews

with more than 30 people and gathered about 50 pages of notes. Only through this experience was I able to distil two particular social phenomena that proved key for the construction of formality/informality: In Dharavi, I analyse the multidimensional use of space as the key instrument of community life. It allows its inhabitants to use one space for housing, production and distribution at the same time. However, this is unthinkable within the formal sphere of the city in which housing, production and distribution are usually divided into separated sectors. In Kibera, I analyse social units which local inhabitants call ‘chill-spots’. A chill-spot basically means when two or more people sit down in a public space and spend time together by talking, exchanging information or sharing ideas. Such behaviour, which is a crucial aspect of social life in Kibera, is also hardly possible in the formal sphere.

Constructing the informality

Spatial data on informal settlements are frequently generalised, outdated and not available. As a result, very limited knowledge exists about informal settlements in terms of their comparison across the so-called Global South. According to the data provided by the World Bank, in 2020 49% of the population was living in informal settlements in India. In Kenya, it was 51% (World Bank 2020). It is generally agreed that the major reason for the global spread of informal settlements is the rapid urbanisation and labour migration. Both India and Kenya experience similar patterns in terms of the urban population's growth. In India, the urban population grew from 31% in 2010 to 35% in 2022, the Kenyan urban population increased from 21% in 2010 to 25% in 2022 (World Bank 2022). There are a few quantitative studies comparing various social and spatial aspects of informal settlements worldwide. For instance, Kuffer's study proves that informal settlements across different African and Asian cities share certain locational characteristics. They are frequently found in places with good accessibility nearby main roads or close to the city centre; however, at the same time they are located on the land that is less attractive for formal development due to the risk of flooding (Kuffer et al. 2018). Indeed, this is the case of both Kibera and Dharavi. Both settlements are located nearby the city centre and at the same time parts of both settlements spread over areas that are officially restricted for any formal construction – both settlements are located nearby a river, Dharavi itself is also threatened by the rising sea level.

Kibera, wrongly characterised by many as ‘the biggest slum in Africa’, is one of the largest informal settlements in Nairobi. The population of Nairobi exceeds 4.3 million people according to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census (KNBS 2019) and 60% of the city's population lives in informal settlements on only 2.5% of the administrative area of the city (Kuffer et al. 2018). According to

the most accurate estimation from 2009, the size of Kibera's population is about 200,000 people (Desgroppes & Taupin 2011). The growth of the population is mostly attributed to its proximity to the Central Business District and the industrial area. The majority of the inhabitants thus work as casual labourers as well as small scale entrepreneurs (Kiyu 2014: 99). The settlement spreads over an area of 2.38 square kilometres and is located about seven kilometres from the city centre (Desgroppes & Taupin 2011). Ethnically, the population of Kibera is diverse, representing the majority of Kenya's largest ethnic groups. The settlement is broken into 13 villages whose borders are informally defined by natural border makers such as walking paths, streams or railway lines (Ekdale 2011).

In 2022, Mumbai reached a population of almost 21 million people and thus represents the most densely populated city in India (World Population Review 2022). It is estimated that more than 40% of the population lives in informal settlements that spread over 11% of the area of the city (Kuffer et al. 2018). Similarly to Kibera, Dharavi has also frequently been labelled the 'largest slum in Asia'. The area of the settlement is three square kilometres and houses upwards of a million residents (Saglio-Yatzimirski 2013). Given its historical roots when the colonial government indirectly founded Dharavi by segregating polluting industries to the edges of the city, the settlement has maintained its original function and today represents probably the largest centre of informal industry in Mumbai. A significant number of the inhabitants is thus engaged in running small-scale manufactories focusing primarily on leather tanning, garment manufacturing, pottery and the newly added recycling industry (Wienstein 2014: 3-4). According to Sharma, people migrated to Dharavi from various rural regions all around India during different stages of Indian history and thus represent the diverse mixture of Indian ethnic as well as religious groups (Sharma 2000: 3-32). Another specificity of the organisation of Dharavi is related to India's traditional caste system, especially to the so-called untouchable communities which constitute approximately half of the population of Dharavi (Saglio-Yatzimirski 2013).

Both Nairobi and Mumbai were established as centres of the British colonial administration. While Mumbai with its two-thousand-year history developed into the largest commercial and industrial city in India under the British administration by 1900, Nairobi owes its very existence to the colonial regime which founded the city as the administration centre while constructing the Uganda Railway in 1899. In 1907 the city already had a population of 11,000 inhabitants and was officially accepted as the capital city of British East Africa. (Ekdale 2011).

The understanding of Nairobi as an 'oasis of western civilisation' in what the colonisers perceived as an alienated environment created a foundation for the colonial logic of rule and urban planning, most visible through creating racialised urban zones (Varma 2012: 78). Despite the large number of African workers, the

colonial administration intended to keep Nairobi a home for non-African residents. The natives were segregated on the edges of the city in so-called 'native zones' (Ekdale 2011).

This is the urban situation that Fanon characterises as the colonial world divided into compartments – cut in two – and 'inhabited by two different species' (Fanon 1963: 40). He distinguishes between the settlers' town and the town belonging to the colonised people. The first one Fanon characterises as a strongly built town, made of stone and steel: 'The settlers' feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones. The settlers' town is well-fed town, an easy-going town; its belly is always full of good things. The settlers' town is a town of white people, of foreigners.' Contrarily to the settlers' town, the native town Fanon characterises as 'a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where or how . . . The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light' (Fanon 1963: 39).

In Fanon's analysis, the two parts of the city are spatially and ideologically organised to enable the whole set of various representations which depict the native quarters as backward and thus enable the projection of Eurocentric urbanism and a civilising mission.

For instance, from the beginning of the colonial urbanisation the authorities displayed what Coquéry-Vidrovitch calls a 'sanitation syndrome'. The zoning system was justified as a strategy to separate 'diseased natives' from healthy Europeans. Those 'healthy neighbourhoods' were perceived as the only one 'true city' compared to native areas, frequently called 'villages', although those 'villages' were true urban districts with the majority of the town's population (Coquéry-Vidrovitch 2012). Despite the fact that the Europeans never constituted more than ten percent of Nairobi's population, colonial administration strictly controlled the city through legislation and residential zoning restrictions in order to keep the core of the city white (Varma 2012: 80).

The sanitation syndrome was also common in colonial Mumbai. For instance, the plague of 1896 resulted in the implementation of hygiene and safety criteria in the city planning, such as widening roads or improving house conditions which, however, took place only in neighbourhoods occupied by privileged classes of society. There was almost no investment to develop lower class neighbourhoods. In fact, many poor workers were pushed to live on the edges to ensure the health security of white colonisers (Sharma 2000: 4-10).

Kibera was founded in 1904 when Nubian soldiers who had served in the British East African Army settled nearby newly erected Nairobi. In 1912 they were granted official permission to settle in the area rent-free as an unofficial pension

for their special duties in the army. The area occupied by Nubian soldiers was originally a forest, in the Nubian language 'Kibra', which is how Kibera got its name. Soon after, the Nubians started to rent out the remaining land to the vast number of African workers migrating to the growing city (Ekdale 2011).

Dharavi, originally a fishing village, started to turn into the centre of informal economy hand in hand with the industrialisation of Mumbai and due to the labour migration. At the end of the 19th century the colonial administration decided to segregate polluting industries such as leather and pottery to the peripheries of Bombay. Since then Dharavi turned into the centre of those industries, which continues to today with the newly added recycling industry (Saglio-Yatzimirski 2013: 52-53).

When the colonial government lost control over the movement of people in Nairobi after independence, the city experienced rapid rural-city migration. Despite the city and its way of living being depicted as a typical form of western modernity, its reshaping after independence was perceived as determining the nation's development. As Varma argues, 'Nairobi became the postcolonial project par excellence – it was where the visible, material symbols of colonial rule were to be reinvested with African meanings, and where people of different ethnicities and tribal affiliations would become national citizens' (Varma 2012: 84).

Fanon interpreted the whole colonial system as created and sustained by violence and argued that it could also be destroyed only by violence. Simultaneously he understood the fight for the liberation as the reappropriation and thus transformation of colonial space. As Kipfer argues, Fanon describes the war of movement of national liberation as 'claim to the city' (Kipfer 2007: 713). According to Fanon, if we closely examine the Manichean system of compartments, we will be able to reveal the lines on which the postcolonial society will be reorganised (Fanon 1963: 37-38). However, he strongly emphasised the 'lumpenproletariat' to be the main force behind any revolution and warned against middle class representatives taking over the power in the country for their acceptance of the colonisers' views (Fanon 1963: 130).

It might be argued that the post-independence development of both Nairobi and Mumbai followed Fanon's pessimistic prediction rather than the optimistic one. In Nairobi, the spatial transformation took place in the form of replacing white rule by black rule; however, the civil society remained divided on the basis of tribal and racial differences, keeping older hierarchies and inequalities. Those who had been the beneficiaries of the colonial system defended their privileged positions and kept the colonial form of governance (Varma 2012: 84-85). Mumbai experienced a similar development. The already developed areas remained occupied by middle and upper classes representatives and the number of informal settlements all around the city was significantly growing. There was vacant land

in both cities but no one intended to invest into housing for the poor. Instead, land owned by the municipality or the government was reserved for the future construction of public facilities such as hospitals, parks or schools, and private owners decided to keep their tracks of land vacant in the hope that land prices would escalate and bring larger profits in the future. Over time, these empty plots turned into informal settlements (Sharma 2000: 11).

Fanon's notion about the 'frontier lines' modelled around the former black and white compartments is thus very relevant for the analysis of the present-day postcolonial city. It might be argued that the frontier line is still there but now sets the border between the formal and informal parts of the city. If there used to be the white civilised man on one side and the uncivilised negro on the other side, now it is the middle-class gentlemen who is constantly disturbed and threatened by a dirty slum-dweller with a hunger gaze.

Both Kibera and Dharavi were born at the same time as their surrounding cities, experienced the colonial as well as the post-independence period and have always been embedded within discourses that have constantly imposed various forms of hegemony onto them. For tens of years, both settlements have been approached as sites of all kinds of human tragedies, and thus justified as targets of various forms of control, including forcible resettlement and eradication.

However, over the last two decades there has been a growing body of literature that is critical of stereotyped perceptions of the city's informality. In 2007 Gilbert warned against the reintroduction of the word 'slum' in the UN's initiative 'Cities Without Slums' launched in 1999. He argued that the term slum is not an absolute, but a relative concept, embedded in the discourse of politics rather than of science. It is its negative and universal associations that make the term dangerous and easily misused as part of a justification for various forms of control of population (Gilbert 2007). Following Gilbert's criticism, there is a significant body of literature that theorises the usage of the word slum as well as its visual manifestations and representations. For instance, Jones and Sanyal critically point to the spectacle narratives of slums which function as a worlding device that produces a partial knowledge about global urban poverty (Jones & Sanyal 2015). Roy argues that the Global City is worlded through the icon of the slum (Roy 2011). Jones argues that what primarily matters is how we recognise the slum and which set of representations we use. Defining slums primarily on the basis of deficits 'preserve[s] the idea of the slum as the antithesis of modernity and its inhabitants as "social anomalies"'. At the end, Jones argues that there is a need for new imaginative texts that will provide new vocabulary, explore different angles and provide new voices that can challenge the current dystopian narrative of slums (Jones 2011).

The informal order

In the book *People's Spaces*, Perera focuses on 'the production of lives spaces by those who do not have the power to produce abstract spaces and erase other spaces' and refers to self-established settlements inhabited by the majority of the population in the cities of the Global South (Perera 2016: 3). He argues that to see and understand the ordinary practices of people inhabiting those emerging spaces is a completely different discipline than just collecting new data within already existing intellectual or theoretical paradigms. To be able to see we first have to acknowledge that the local knowledge 'is different and more diverse than the formal' (Perera 2016: 5). Academics are frequently able to see and interpret problems that are legible to them, such as lack of housing, and thus develop a formal solution within mainstream understanding (Perera 2016: 9). However, such approaches might be strongly influenced by the viewer's point of view and thus be revealed as misleading. To minimise the misunderstanding, Perera encourages us to adopt our intellectual framework to local conditions and engage in our observation the producer and users' perspective (Perera 2016: 7).

When I was entering Kibera for the first time, I had no clue that one day I would be aspiring to a PhD with a dissertation on the postcolonial identities of slums and that Kibera would become a focal point of my interest for many years. I first encountered Kibera as a filmmaker in 2016 when I was asked by a development worker to make a film about the strength of people living in slums in Nairobi. Even though the initial thought of a film might seem extremely romantic and could easily become a target of postcolonial critique, it opened the field for me as well as giving me a very firm position and viewpoint to look at Kibera primarily from the perspective of its residents. What I also consider as important for my ethnographic experience is the fact that during my first encounter with Kibera I did not have any theoretical background in mind, nor any specific plan of my research that directed my attention. I was simply trying to unfold the everyday reality of life in Kibera with a special attention on how the inhabitants aim to overcome the systemic limitation connected with living in a slum.

My first research activity in Kibera could be depicted by Gusterson's world as 'deep hanging out' (Gusterson 2008: 93); indeed, at that time I did not know that I was already conducting a very important part of my fieldwork. Most of the time I was primarily sitting and talking with other residents of Kibera. Sometimes I was amazed by the time and space flexibility people from Kibera had. When I walked on the street I was frequently involved (sometimes voluntarily, sometimes not) in a group conversation of people sitting on a street corner. With time, I have realised that this is a key element of social life in Kibera, something that is inevitable – that people in Kibera meet, sit and talk

anytime and anywhere. The longer I was in Kibera, the more I was able to see small informal pubs hidden between barracks, tables randomly set on the street used by people to play games, or informal cinemas with old TVs and DVD players. However, I still considered this as something just normal attached to this informal world and as something not worth further attention.

Gusterson argues that ‘sometimes what opens the village doors can be quite unpredictable, especially to an outsider’ (Gusterson 2008: 96). To me it was the art exhibition of Maasai Mbili, a collective of artists from Kibera. Kevo Stero, one of its core members, introduced his happening called the ‘Jobless Corner Campus (JCC)’ at the exhibition’s opening. Kevo introduced the JCC as a fake NGO whose aim is to destigmatise people spending their time in chill-spots in Kibera who are frequently accused of being pure idlers. According to Kevo, everyone in Kibera has his or her own chill-spot. A chill-spot can be anything – stairs, a bench or a couple of chairs around someone’s shop. Some chill-spots last one afternoon, some remain in the same place for several years visited by the same people every day. As Kevo argues, ‘to have a chill-spot is the most secure way for survival in Kibera. If I am doing badly, I can go to my chill-spot to meet other people who will support me. The same is expected from me tomorrow.’ However, from the dominant discourse perspective, people spending time in chill-spots are generally stigmatised as pure idlers, or even worse, as groups of alcoholics waiting along the street to rob someone.

To destigmatise chill-spots, the JCC automatically offers all people in Kibera’s chill-spots the title of ‘professional idler’. At the exhibition’s opening, Kevo officially introduced the JCC by following words:

[the] JCC is a non-profit local organisation whose concern is to fight for the rights of idleness and idlers in Kibera. . . . Basically Idling and just talking is a social development approach that facilitates a community driven development processes with a view to enabling people to talk-actively and participate in sharpening their spiritual destiny. Idling enables communities to come together within their own developed personal structures in order to address issues and problems they face.

Kevo’s idea is not pure irony. By founding a fake NGO he actually creates a locally based conceptualisation of the Western institution that projects its values on life in informal settlements. In his opening speech for the exhibition he claimed that the JCC is an international organisation welcoming all idlers from all around the world. He argued that chill-spots exist everywhere, including the parliament or in academia: ‘Socialization is a basic human need and its denial could be depicted as an abuse of human rights.’ In fact, Kevo pointed to the

preface of formality where everything is nested within a paradigm of economic growth and one's ability to work.

After the exhibition, I saw Kibera in a different light. I realised that what I used to see as random and chaotic groupings within the slum was actually a very well organised network of informal activities in which the chill-spots function as its core units. Perera argues, that 'even to see local practices for what they are, we need a language, i.e., an instrument of mediation, between the consciousness and the world that consciousness inhabits' (Perera 2016: 7). Kevo's conceptualisation of idleness in informal settlements provided me this instrument of mediation to interpret the everyday life in the city's informality as well as to distinguish the two abovementioned types of consciousness – the outside, formal one and the local, informal one.

Within the period of a year, my former film location slowly turned into the field of my academic research. During my second and third visit to Kibera I already had the idea for my PhD research which I decided to dedicate to the special function of public space in informal settlements.

For many, the day in Kibera starts with the search for a part-time job. There is a common phrase 'to sit on the stone' which refers to waiting on the street for someone who will come with a job offer. Chill-spots formed along the street thus function as 'waiting rooms' where one can talk and share ideas with other people while waiting. My respondents especially favoured the fact that one can enter the chill-spot with no money in their pocket and use it as an important starting point.

With time I have realised that this informal grouping is an integral part of everyday life in Kibera and that chill-spots just manifest a much larger network that touches all aspects of life including all generations of the inhabitants – from children to the elderly. The network functions on the basis of informal leadership – once someone gets experience, he or she passes it on to the others. My respondents frequently pointed to some members of the community by saying that 'this is our respected leader'. In such a way, the inhabitants of Kibera supplement many services which are granted in the formality and are frequently missing in the informality. It is the way people supplement education, the bank system (through microfinance groups) or insurance (through the mutual assistance between neighbours).

During my first visit to Kibera I met Omosh, owner of a small shop at the edge of Kibera. Five years ago, trained as a chef's assistant, he moved to Nairobi with a desire to find a job in an official restaurant in the city. However, after several weeks of trying, Omosh was not able to find a job and due to the high rents in the city had to move to Kibera. Initially, he interpreted his move to Kibera as a big failure. He said that at the beginning he hated the place and did not want to

have anything in common with the people around him. He rented a house and was running his shop at the edge of Kibera because he was afraid to go deeper into the slum. He was constantly struggling to sustain himself because he did not have enough customers. One day he found that his shop was robbed. That day, Omosh says, he hit rock bottom. After that moment he realised that in order to do well he should reset his mindset towards Kibera and accept the environment as it is.

The second time I met Omosh was a year later. He was still running his shop and argued that he was doing much better. Since accepting Kibera he had gotten in touch with his neighbours who became his customers. In the evening, Omosh usually set up a speaker in front of his shop and played music for passersby. Almost every afternoon I walked around his shop I saw a group of young people surrounding Omosh's shop, enjoying music and drinking soda. In other words, Omosh created his own chill-spot. From time to time, he collected money from his friends and cooked a big meal for them. Soon after, word of Omosh's cooking skills spread across Kibera and since then Omosh gets an offer monthly to do catering for various events such as birthday parties.

Omosh's story depicts the sustainable function that chill-spots in Kibera have. However, while talking about Kibera to the middle and upper class representatives, for instance, during my flights to Kenya, the vast majority depicted Kibera as a no-go zone. Even the residents from Ayani or Jahmuri neighbourhoods just next to Kibera prefer shopping in a distant supermarket rather than entering the market in Kibera located nearby their houses. When they explained the reasons for their fear, the majority talked about those groups of idlers sitting along the street, watching everyone entering the slum and thinking about how to rob someone. In other words – they provided a description of what chill-spots mean to the middle and upper class representatives: the dark spots on the beauty of the city.

Jordan traces the current meaning of idleness back to the eighteenth century and argues that within the increasingly economic and work-oriented society idleness has been defined in opposition to industriousness. If industriousness is understood not only as central to wealth and power but as a glue that holds the whole society together, then idleness must be understood as a threat to the whole social order (Jordan 2003: 14). In such an environment, one of the tools the middle class adopted to establish its dominant position was associating the labour-class with idleness (Jordan 2003: 19). Further on, Jordan also argues that the discourse of idleness has been important to the British imperial project and its command over non-white people. Associating the white world with industriousness and the darker world with idleness helped the imperial project to order and control (Jordan 2003: 21).

Based on my research and direct observation, the association of slum inhabitants and idleness has much to do with the hegemonic relations within the city, rather than with the reality. Concerning chill-spots in Kibera, there is a different understanding depending on the viewer's position. Drawing on Perere, within a context of 'people's spaces' chill-spots have a vital role essential for the everyday life of the inhabitants, within a context of 'abstract spaces' chill-spots are the first targets either to be erased or formalised in order to achieve a properly functioning capitalised urban space.

During my research I kept thinking about whether such kinds of processes exist elsewhere in other cities of the Global South. In 2018 I decided to conduct a month-long research in Dharavi.

In Dharavi, I found similar responses to those I gathered in Kibera. People favoured the way they cooperate in order to launch various businesses in the informal economic sector. The inhabitants referred to Dharavi as a place crucial for the existence of Mumbai as a whole by accommodating a vast amount of labour necessary for the city's infrastructure, feeding the city's population by food production or cleaning its streets via the recycling industry. However, they were frequently dissatisfied with the negative public perception which characterises the environment as well as the residents as chaotic, disorganised and dirty.

There are a large number of scholars who emphasise Dharavi's informal economy as a unique system that functions on the basis of the multi-dimensional use of space (Sharma 2000; Saglio-Yatzimirski 2013). One house in Dharavi typically has the triple function as a home, manufactory and shop. However, such a system might seem to be complete chaos for the outsider. Perera argues that it is the illegibility from the viewer's perspective that has been projected back onto the settlement in various forms of negative associations that connect Dharavi with danger and filth and thus marginalise its potential (Perera 2016: 142).

Formalising the informality

According to urban architect Christopher Alexander, an ideal type of city is characterised by its wholeness. Since we are those who inhabit the space of the city, everything that happens here will happen to us. If the process fails to produce the wholeness, we suffer (Alexander 1987). Habraken understands the geometry of the city as having always been the hallmark of architectural skill. He refers to the continuous geometry of fields that varies from place to place but at the same time allows us to create formal arrangements of a different nature (Habraken 1987). When we apply both authors' perspectives to the postcolonial city a question arises – what kind of role does the city's informality play in its wholeness? Is it the disruptor of the geometry? Or is it the formality which disrupts the wholeness of the informality?

From this perspective, an analysis of the spatial dimensions of the formality and the informality of the postcolonial city is a fascinating task. In my view, each sphere of the city produces its own kind of wholeness and those two types of wholeness constantly overlap. In Alexander's statement 'if the process fails to produce the wholeness, we suffer' (Alexander 1987: 19); a question arises as to whom he refers with the word 'we'. In fact, in his view there is only one society inhabiting the city. However, we can hardly apply this theory to the postcolonial city strictly separating 'us' from the 'others'. The dynamics of the postcolonial city thus radically challenge the Western paradigm of urbanism.

The environments of both Kibera and Dharavi produce a wholeness based on constant human creativity and interaction. It is an environment based on human cooperation where the movement in the informal public space is not only about passing by and walking through regulated entries, but it is an experience that involves all the senses. As Edensor argues, it seems that the individual walking on the Indian street is constantly challenged by various activities, sensations and sights which render a state at variance to the restrained and distanced distraction of the Western street (Ederson 1998). However, as Chakrabarty points out, the hustle of the Indian street seems to be tainted by orientalism. For instance, he mentions various authors referring to Indians defecating anywhere or spitting on people from the balcony. According to Chakrabarty, the depiction of the Indian street as full of dirt is part of the language of modernity (frequently associated with the Western), its civic consciousness and depiction of public health, or even an order of aesthetics through which the city could be regulated. Such language has been adopted by the imperial rulers and it is also the language of modern governments (Chakrabarty 1991).

Zappula et al. depict formalised parts of the city as symbols of cultural manifestation. Cities are thus the manifestation of symbolic worldviews and theories while the symbol of the formal city is usually associated with regular geometry which is mostly missing in the city's informal parts (Zappula, Suau & Fikfak 2014). Edensor analyses the Western street as having been transformed by the imperatives of modernist planning and consumer capitalism into functional spaces maximising consumption and facilitating transit (Ederson 1998: 202). The formalised urban space thus manifests the imaginary life in a city based on Western individualism. Places for housing, distribution or production are segregated into separated sectors. The public space is tied to many regulations whose main objective is to provide an effective trajectory between the sectors. Shops are placed indoors in spaces designed for shops or are set in the public space at official spots. Places for socialisation are localised officially in restaurants, coffee places, bars or parks. When we encounter the informality from this perspective, everything here seems opposite to the demands of the formality.

According to Fanon every colonised nation – a nation in which an inferiority complex was created through the death of its own cultural originality – redefines itself in relation to the language of the coloniser. The more one adopts the language of the coloniser the whiter it will be (Fanon 2008: 18). If Fanon's Manichean world has persisted until the present, now within the dynamics of formality and informality, then the geometry of the formality manifests the foundations of the desired culture of The Civilisation. Its spatial organisation forms the 'grammar' of that language of life characterised by the Western-centric and work-oriented way of life. The formalisation of informality could be understood as a whitening process – a process where the individual is both forced and desires to become formalised. In the following part of this section I provide a brief analysis of two redevelopment projects, one in Kibera and the second in Dharavi, which could be depicted as highly significant examples of forcible formalisation.

According to Boano et al., the narrative of Dharavi serves to drive the pressures of government and market to turn Mumbai into a world-class city as expressed through the neoliberal Vision Mumbai (Boano, Lamarca & Hunter 2011). One of Vision Mumbai's aspirations was to reduce the number of people living in slums from the current 50-60 percent to 10-20 percent by increasing housing affordability (Vision Mumbai 2003).

The most discussed development project in Dharavi is the so-called Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP). Given the strategic location of Dharavi and the government and private sector's goal to achieve the status of world-class city, the DRP was introduced as integrated special planning in 2004. The project was conceived as state facilitated public-private partnership, formulated by the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) and designed by architect Mukesh Mehta. Mehta's aim was to divide the area of Dharavi into five sectors to be allocated to five private developers. The density of population was supposed to be resolved by the maximum increase of high-rise buildings (Boano, Lamarca & Hunter 2011: 299).

The project has been under negotiation since 2004 and, except for the tender process, has never been officially launched because of the heavy criticism by external experts as well as Dharavi residents themselves (Patel & Arputham 2008). The DRP is mainly criticised for being dismissive of the diverse needs and vibrant economy of the people for whom the project has been conceived (Boano, Lamarca & Hunter 2011: 300).

According to the plan, one of the key strategies to deal with the density of population was the increase in Floor Space Index (FSI); however, without clarity to which extent. As Patel and Arputham state, the higher the FSI, the more likely the residents will be rehoused in high-rise blocks which also means the lesser

provision per person for public amenities, including open spaces, footpaths, schools and hospitals (Patel & Arputham 2008: 247).

Despite the fact that the inhabitants appreciate the improvements to their environment, most of the residents are sceptical concerning the plan's ability to improve their lives. Mostly they fear losing their livelihoods because of the plan to divide the slum into five sectors which is completely opposite to the current multidimensional use of space in Dharavi where one house is simultaneously used as a home, manufactory and shop (Perera 2016: 146-147). Perera criticises Mehta for his belief in the environmental determinism and his trust that 'transforming the built environment can cause social change'. He critically points to the elaboration of Mehta's assistant that living in high-rises will lift the slum-dwellers up to the middle class. In other words, the DRP fails to understand Dharavi from the perspective of its residents but rather depicts the environment from the perspective of its potential. Mehta thus developed an abstract space for Dharavi (Perera 2016: 145).

The Kibera Soweto East Project was launched in the same year as the DRP under the Kenyan Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP) – a partnership between the Kenyan government and UN-HABITAT (Fernandez & Calas 2011). The goal of the project was to relocate thousands of Kibera residents and thus rehabilitate the area, where the project sponsors would provide new permanent housing, equipped with better services.

In 2009, five years after the official launch of the project, the residents perceived the project as a top-down approach without enabling the community to participate in the project's planning. According to the UN-HABITAT research a few days before the relocation, 31% of interviewed families were fearful that they would not benefit from the project due to corruption, 27% feared not being able to pay for the new house, 19% feared the lengthy and obscure process and 17% expressed their desire to build their own house rather than be relocated (Fernandez & Calas 2011).

According to Farnander and Calas's assessment in 2011, instead of a bottom-up approach as was initially claimed by KENSUP, the programme turned into the typical forcible relocation. An apartment rental in 2011 was about 3000 KShs which means almost six times higher than the rent the residents had paid in Kibera. The Slum Upgrading Department admitted that it was more the middle class representatives and university students who were currently investing in newly built apartments. Given the lack of space for informal economies, all areas intended for recreation such as gardens were taken up by informal activities, even little spaces between the buildings or verandas of apartments turned into kiosks. However, due to the lack of space and high rent prices, many people ended up jobless due to losing the original customers they had in the slum (Fernandez & Calas 2011).

In the evaluation done by Agayi and Sergaroglu Sag in 2020 the KENSUP project implementation was successful in terms of turning the plan into the physical reality of constructing new houses. However, strong cultural and social bounds among neighbours and relatives were cut off by the relocation. Their informal activities were hit badly by moving them from their established areas of business. The study also establishes that more than half of the families to whom these houses were allocated had either sold, rented or deserted them. In the end, the overall result of the evaluation is that the redevelopment project worsened the lives of the residents (Agayi & Serdaroglu Sag 2020).

As Zappula et al. argue, 'Top-down projects are based on the planning capacity of envisioning the future or forecasting scenarios in which the community will live' (Zappula, Suau & Fikfak 2014: 261). Given the spatial organisation of both the DRP and Soweto East Kibera we can read them as scenarios predicting the future of residents of Dharavi and Kibera. High-rise buildings and no public space designed for the informal activities of the residents immediately predict a future of the formalised life where one has employment and travels to work which is located in a place separate from one's home. However, given the lack of job opportunities such a vision is revealed to be a utopia, at least for the majority of the resettled residents. If the formal city puts limitations on the life of an individual residing in a slum, then the resettlement means a double-limitation: One is cut-off from his informal life but the formal one is unreachable.

The scheme of the redevelopment programme denies the existence of chill-spots in Kibera. As people have proved by turning almost all empty plots into informal kiosks, there is a desire to generate a 'people's space' within a context of the formal, 'abstract space'. However, given the formalised status of the newly erected high-rise buildings, the inhabitants enjoy much less freedom. If they do something that opposes the scenario of the redevelopment programme, it immediately becomes a disruptor of the order of things, something that is in conflict with the law. If a chill-spot was a norm in Kibera, it is a disruptor within the context of a formalised neighbourhood. As a result, given the spatial dimension, people from informality feel less secure once being moved to the formality because they lose much of their social capital as well as opportunities to sustain themselves.

Drawing on Perera, both the DRP and Kibera Soweto East might be depicted as projecting a narrative of an abstract space both onto the people's spaces of Dharavi and Kibera. Li interprets the development as the 'will to improve' that she situates in the field of power, the Foucault-termed government understood as an attempt to shape human behaviour by calculated means. Its main concern is the well-being of population, and the improvement of such conditions as health, wealth or longevity. The government thus operates through the desires, habits, aspirations and beliefs of the population (Li 2007: 5).

Both the DRP and Kibera Soweto East First are functioning on the basis of two distinct processes. First, it is the interpretation of the informal settlement on the basis of negative perceptions and their illegibility that gives a foundation to how both projects are planned. Both of them approach the environment within the mainstream understanding and their main objective is not to provide a sustainable solution to the inhabitants, but to 'solve the problems of slums' – make those terrains formal and legible. As a result, they fail to satisfy the organic needs of the inhabitants. In fact, by focusing only on the legible aspects of both settlements such as housing, infrastructure or sanitation, both projects are unable to see that there are also other important ongoing activities that must be kept in order to achieve a sustainable future for the residents. Second, both programmes operate through the desires of the inhabitants – not only to generally do better in their lives, but primarily through their desires to become part of the 'better world' and wash the stigma of slum away from them.

Two dimensions of existence

Frantz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) argues that 'the black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man. A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro' (Fanon 2008: 17). Given the current division of the postcolonial city, we might argue that a resident from an informal settlement also has two dimensions. One while being in the informality, the second one while encountering the formality.

Based on my research, many respondents referred to their double feeling towards Kibera. On one hand they emphasised the organic social life in Kibera and argued that one can hardly find its core values outside the settlement. They stressed such activities as a vibrant social life, the mutual assistance between neighbours and the overall togetherness as core aspects of communal life in Kibera. Some residents associated Kibera with The Motherland. Such answers were given to me primarily by the representatives of the younger generation. However, even the same respondents referred to Kibera simultaneously in an opposite way, describing the environment and its people as a site of human degradation. For instance, they pointed to 'flying toilets' and depicted inhabitants of Kibera as able to defecate anywhere in a plastic bag and throw it in the river or on the street. Among the young generation, there was also an obvious tendency to associate Kibera with a high crime rate while enjoying the ethos of being 'gangsters in the ghetto'. When talking about politics, Kibera and its inhabitants were frequently linked to 'being very good at throwing stones to the police'. Respondents representing the older generation were linking Kibera to even more negative characteristics. They noted that other inhabitants are uneducated and violent. While talking about the future of the settlement, they were very pes-

simistic about the inhabitants' ability to develop themselves. They argued that the main problem behind the failure of development in Kibera is primarily the low civilisational status of its inhabitants and the uplifting of the environment will take place only if people change. In other words, the residents frequently accepted the dominant narrative of slums and its emphasis on the environmental social determinism. They voluntarily accepted the forcible formalisation of an individual as a core aspect of the development.

The important thought underlying *Black Skin, White Masks* is the internalisation of the black man's inferiority through the acceptance of European culture which associates the colonised nation with impurity. As a defence against such a burden, the colonised man wants to escape his own blackness through imitating the European civilisation on all levels of life (McCulloch 1983: 65-66). Fanon draws on Jung's term collective unconsciousness and argues that European civilisation is characterised by the presence of an archetype, existing in the heart of Jung's collective unconscious, which Fanon describes as 'an expression of bad instincts, the darkness inherent in every ego, of the uncivilized savage, the Negro who slumbers on every white man' (Fanon 2008: 187). However, Fanon is critical of Jung's universal assumption that such an archetype is common to all societies by arguing that 'He wanted go back to the childhood of the world, but he made a remarkable mistake: He went back only to the childhood of Europe' (Fanon 1952: 146). Further on, Fanon argues that the collective unconscious is independent from cerebral heredity and is rather a result of the unreflected imposition of culture (Fanon 2008: 191). As a result, through the unreflected imposition of culture the black man has taken over all the archetypes belonging to the European through adopting its collective unconscious. The black remains black but with white collective unconscious. If the European mind associated the Negro with evil, so does the black man as a result of colonisation.

If we apply Fanon's theory to the current narrative of the city's informality, we can observe similar ongoing processes. If there is an archetype of the Negro who slumbers every man in the European collective unconscious, then there is an archetype of an uncontrolled slum-dweller in the collective unconscious of the formal city: This is the slum. The urban jungle – the no-go zone. It is a place of darkness in the minds of those who successfully achieved whiteness. It is a place where one can easily get robbed and raped. The informality, represented through the icon of the slum, symbolises the failure of the national post-independence development – it is a black mirror of The Civilisation.

Based on my ethnographic experience, the inhabitants of an informal settlement socialise on two levels – first, within the informal community, second, within the city and global level. As presented in this paper, those two dimensions constantly overlap. It is inevitable that an individual will get in touch with

the dominant and primarily negative narrative about informality and will end up internalising negative stereotypes that have been imposed on him. In Pile's analysis of Fanon:

The colonial situation puts a mirror up to the face of the black man and the reflection tells that he is inferior and other. Because colonised peoples recognise themselves as other (to themselves) and because white people are apparently superior and ideal, they are compelled to enact a script which is not their own, to behave according to values and norms which are not theirs; to perform according to standards as if they were their own. . . . By identifying with – and desiring – the position and power of the white man, the black man ends up by seeing himself as 'non-white', non-Master and 'nowhere'. In this way, black man is both alienated from himself and absolutely depersonalised (Pile 2000: 263-264).

The identification of the black man with the position and power of the white man is similar to the identification of an inhabitant of informality with the power and status of formality. During my research I have found many respondents who were living in a constant comparison with the 'better world' outside the slum and thus rendered themselves as the unwanted others.

Fanon stresses the importance of the European family (or family in a pre-industrial society) as the core unit that prepares an individual for life in society (McCulloch 1983: 67). In Europe, the family meets the standards of the fashion in which the world presents itself to the child. The normal child raised by normal parents will become a normal person. This is where Fanon sees the close connection between the structure of the family and the nation compared to Africa where the connection has been lost due to colonialism. The normal black child raised by normal black parents immediately loses its normality in the contact with the white world (Fanon 2008: 141-142).

Using Fanon's words, to be raised in the city's formality means to be raised towards the world which is presented as normal and to be raised in the informality means to lose the normality once one meets the formality. The inhabitant of an informal settlement is constantly labelled and approached as the 'slum dweller' whose life is thus determined by a constant comparison with the inhabitant of the formal sphere. It is a process which Fanon describes as 'whenever he comes into contact with someone else, the question of value, of merit, arises' (Fanon 2008/1952: 211). Given the spatial dimension, to come into contact with someone else means crossing the border of the slum and entering the formal city – the only real one which, however, renders the slum inhabitant as its stranger.

When talking about the physical experience while walking through formalised neighbourhoods, respondents from both Kibera and Dharavi provided me with similar answers. First of all, they leave the territory of slums and enter 'the city' only if they have to. When one crosses the border of the slum is it because of some necessary needs such as going to the market, visiting the hospital, communication with authorities or traveling to the countryside. Most respondents characterised their feelings while walking through the formal city as full of self-doubt, over-thinking ('how other people look at me'), the feeling of doing 'something wrong' or fear of being arrested.

Despite the fact that the domination of the white man formally ended both in Kenya and India more than half a century ago, its whiteness has persisted in all the structures of the society, most permanently in the cities – in its geometry, officiality and legality. If there used to be the white town and black native zone, then today there is the real city and the slum. While people from Kibera talk about wealthy neighbourhoods as a 'mzungu place' (Mzungu in Swahili refers to a European), people from Dharavi talk about people from the city's better-off areas as 'gated communities' (given the most common formal housing unit which means several high-rises surrounded by a wall with a gate). The slum-dweller is fixed in the city as Fanon's Negro is in the white world:

I move slowly in the world, accustomed now to seek no longer for upheaval. I progress by crawling. And already I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am fixed. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality. I am laid bare. I feel, I see in those white faces that it is not a new man who has come in, but a new kind of many, a new genus. Why, it's a Negro! (Fanon 2008: 116).

Conclusion: The right to idle

Despite the fact that Kibera and Dharavi are completely different environments they share one important aspect – the way they are perceived and marginalised by the dominant discourses both in Mumbai and Nairobi. In both case studies we can observe how the colonial construction of reality based on the hegemony of coloniser above the colonised has shaped the colonial as well as postcolonial urbanism.

The post-independence social order is functioning on similar principles now within the dichotomy of formal and informal spheres of the city. The paradigm of white colonial cities based on western principles of individualism and economic growth has prevailed until this presence. In such a paradigm when something differs from norms of the white city it is perceived as failing to achieve the formal city's demands.

By 2050 it is projected that more than half of the world's population will live in cities. So the population of those residing in informal settlements will also increase. This makes the city's informality a very significant feature of the future of cities around the world and thus cannot be defined only in comparison to the city's formality but rather depicted as a new urban paradigm.

In such a paradigm, it will be necessary to search for new vocabulary and concepts that will enable us to further analyse and understand the ongoing processes of informality. In such a process, we cannot limit ourselves to just direct observation based on already existing theories. We have to put the most emphasis on the local production of knowledge by the inhabitants of informality themselves and search for their own theorisation and conceptualisation.

Those locally based concepts and theories might contribute in four ways. First, it enables us to read the informality from the perspective of its inhabitants and thus reveal aspects that might be invisible to us. Second, they provide critical feedback on the mainstream understanding of the informality. Third, it provides a direct connection to its practical implementation. Fourth, such an approach facilitates the liberation and healing processes from the abovementioned oppression.

Kevo Stero's conceptualisation of idleness and chill-spots in Kibera provides us with an example. First, it points the importance of the shared public space that facilitates the mutual assistance between the inhabitants. Second, it provides a critical assessment of the normative urbanism and its understanding of public space whose implementation on the informality breaks social ties within the community. Third, the approach practically encourages the maintenance of the shared public space as an important aspect of sustainable development. Fourth, destigmatising chill-spots might facilitate the emancipation of informality and thus lead to the liberation from the formal oppression.



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