



– Institute’s Colloquium –

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The art of accommodation – Negotiating urban renewal in Mumbai’s city centre

To this day, the central neighbourhoods of Mumbai are dominated by chawls, a particular type of multistorey residential building that was constructed for the indigenous population during the era of British colonial rule. Since the introduction of neoliberal reforms and the restructuring of India’s housing sector according to the demands of global capitalism in the early 1990s, chawls have been targeted for redevelopment. Private builders receive incentives by the state to demolish these old buildings and rebuild them as skyscrapers for elite sections of the society. At the same time, builders are legally obliged to provide old chawl-residents with apartments in the newly constructed skyscrapers free of cost. This legal arrangement is supposed to inhibit mass displacement of chawl-residents from their homes. The model of chawl-redevelopment thus represents a unique attempt at combining seemingly contradictory interests and ideologies and does not neatly fit into established forms of urban renewal in India and other countries of the Global South. As former chawl-residents are rehoused in new high-rise towers next to new residents who buy luxurious apartments according to market rates, chawl-redevelopment leads to new spatial arrangements and peculiar forms of cohabitation. New buildings emerging from processes of chawl-redevelopment offer a home to groups of residents that differ fundamentally in terms of income, ethnicity, religion, caste and class. Chawl-redevelopment is thus about accommodation in multiple ways: While state authorities aim at housing different groups of residents in a densely populated urban environment they also have to consider their various claims and demands. In this process, notions of middle-classness and respectability become redefined as residents navigate changing spatial environments and engage with new aesthetic standards of housing.

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4-6 p.m.

Institute of Ethnology

Stuttstraße 21, Raum STU 105 (2.10)

Everybody is welcome!