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Looking for a way out: The dynamics of slum life, poverty, and everyday resistance in Katherine Boo's *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*

Nada Soliman [1]✉

This article looks into the implications of urban informality in Katherine Boo's *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Slum* (2012) as represented in slum life and urban poverty. It aims to investigate the impact of urban poverty on the everyday practices of slum dwellers and their endeavors to escape the trap of poverty in an attempt to highlight the human dimension of the slum. The article seeks to unravel multi-layers of the interaction between people and poverty and the differing models of resistance to poverty and social exclusion depicted in the nonfiction narrative. The article examines slum life from a descriptive sociological perspective with a detailed description of how people survive in poverty. The study of the culture of slums entails an analysis of the survival techniques and everyday practices of slum dwellers, the relations and patterns of behavior among the different categories of people inhabiting a slum, and the outcomes of the interplay between place, culture, and power relations in such communities. This is implemented through an eclectic sociological approach that comprises theories of space, culture, and resistance as proposed by James Scott, Theodore W. Schultz, and Henri Lefebvre.

[1] Faculty of Arts, English Department, Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt. ✉email: nadasoliman5@gmail.com; nadasoliman5@cu.edu.eg

Introduction

> The slumdwellers I'd already come to know in India were neither mythic nor pathetic. They were certainly not passive. Across the country, in communities decidedly short on saviors, they were improvising, often ingeniously, in pursuit of the new economic possibilities of the twenty-first century. Official statistics offered some indication of how such families were faring. But in India, like many places in the world, including my own country, statistics about the poor sometimes have a tenuous relation to lived experience. ***Katherine Boo, Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Slum***

Katherine Boo is a renowned American investigative journalist and a Pulitzer Prize winner whose influential work on documenting poverty in disadvantaged areas has received international acclaim. Her early career of investigative journalism mainly tackled poverty in the United States before she moved to India with her husband and started working closely with a diverse community of slum dwellers in Mumbai. Her National Book Award-winning and New York Times bestseller *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Slum* (2012) investigates how life looks like under poverty and multifaceted corruption in Annawadi – a Mumbai slum. As a work of nonfiction rendering real people, Boo's writing project depicts valuable personal accounts of poverty to explore a central inquiry: who gets out of poverty and who doesn't? and why? Seeking an answer, the narrative unravels the challenges of living in Annawadi at times of rapid economic growth and flourishing globalisation in India and grants Boo's characters the voice to speak for themselves about their daily struggles to secure a living under poverty.

In an author's note, Boo lays out the timeframe of writing her book, which started in November 2007 and ended in March 2011. She dedicated nearly four years to gathering material from video recordings, face-to-face interviews, audiotapes to written notes, and her own remarks and comments on people's social interactions. In one of her interviews, Boo asserts that her writing stands against dominant sentimental and sensational poverty narratives which only display a passive image of the urban poor. Overall, in her debut book, Boo ensures the powerful presence of the poor depicted as people with capacities challenged nearly on a daily basis for their survival in a 21st-century growing economy like India. She delves deep into the dilemmas of the people with whom she had to establish a relationship to gain their trust. Boo asserts that in order to be able to write about the poor, it is essential to spend more time with them to see and feel, to a reasonable extent, the impact of poverty on their social conditions and life choices.

This article traces the impact of poverty on slum dwellers and the subtle forms of resistance adopted by the poor in Annawadi to overcome poverty and break the cycle of oppression and social exclusion by dedicating greater emphasis to the lived experience of slum dwellers. It argues that the type of resistance developed by the inhabitants of the Mumbai slum does not conform to confrontational opposition to dominant regimes of oppression and corruption. Instead, it comprises an informal mode of resistance that deviates from open defiance to hegemonic systems and materializes in daily improvised practices to escape the poverty trap. The article draws on James C. Scott's theory of everyday forms of resistance and Henri Lefebvre's concept of appropriation and reappropriation of space as guiding principles to pursue an analysis of poverty as a lived experience in an urban slum; "poverty that is 'mediated by human experience'" (Scott, 1985, p. 42).

A review of the literature

In previous studies on Boo's text, corruption is perceived as the main stumbling block facing the poor in Annawadi—both internally and externally. "The story of Annawadi sheds a light on how poverty and precarity beget corruption, and how the need to survive often entails a curbing of morality" (Milkyway Media, 2018). While this may be true in certain cases, focusing solely on corruption and the moral choices of Annawadians does not suffice to convey the complexity of the human side of the struggle against poverty and eventually leads to laying the blame on the victim. Bharati Mukherjee draws on the urban challenges of living in Annawadi through a descriptive summary of Boo's text to reveal the complexity of the social strata in the Indian society: "Boo's take on India and the people she obviously loves (in an exasperated way) shows that the country's ancient social structures run more like the joint family than a class system. The great terror is not incarceration but exclusion, or, finally, banishment" (2012). Franny Nudelman (2015) describes Boo's "immersive reporting" as "a technique that produces intensities for the reporter that reflect and magnify the reader's own bewilderment in the face of conflict and change", an integral part of new journalism and novelistic narrative journalism" (p. 180). Erica Bornstein (2014) offers an ethnographic reading of Boo's text by comparing nonfiction writing to ethnography: "Boo's writing is unfettered by citation politics, and her work sings … It does not speak to theory, cite it, or claim to invent it … it is liberated in a way that ethnography rarely is. Ethnography, in contrast to literary nonfiction, uses examples from the lives of informants to make specific theoretical points clear" (p. 182). Another comprehensive review of Boo's nonfiction concluded that "Boo has constructed the tale of a globalising city, where those who live off its discards are themselves discarded. Yet, it is also a story of enterprise as much as tragedy, of corruption that eats the poor and power that corrupts even the poor" (Sharma, 2012). Boo's panoramic investigation of slum life in Annawadi sets forth the daily social, economic, and moral challenges which Annawadians encounter, however, such an investigation tends to overlook the fact that the response of the poor to urban challenges such as poverty and social exclusion is an act of resistance per se. Boo's work presents an overwhelming share of details with no explicit naming of everyday resistance or mapping of the resistance strategies adopted by the poor. Sharma adds, Boo "brings in too many elements" in her narrative about life in Annawadi (Sharma, 2012). Hence, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* makes no attempt to distinguish between the root causes of poverty and the multiplicity and unconventionality of the reactions to such causes. Contrary to common perceptions of corruption and inequality as external forming factors of poverty in slums, this article explores the ways in which the poor respond to poverty, corruption and inequality and succeed in disrupting totalising notions of poverty as a formal culture. This is feasible through focusing on the actual lived experience of the slum community and the survival/resistance mechanisms adopted by its people.

Everyday forms of informal resistance in Annawadi

In *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (1985), James C. Scott analyzes the social structure of the peasantry class in Malaysia and India and their everyday survival tactics as a model of resistance to the power of the upper class. According to Scott, everyday forms of resistance are individual self-help acts that lack collectivity in decision-making and rely on individual initiatives. This form of resistance comprises several "low-profile techniques" (1985, p. xvi) that are not exclusive to the peasantry and can be globally adopted by the urban poor to subvert the dominant power structures imposed by the modern capitalist discourses at play in India's emerging economy. What Scott refers to as "weapons of the weak" involves "foot dragging,

dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth" (1985, p. 30). Such techniques, according to Scott, "require little or no coordination or planning; they often represent a form of individual self-help; and they typically avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms" (p. 29). While the "weapons" Scott refers to are most relevant to peasant resistance, it is argued that tactics of other urban subordinate groups such as slum dwellers conform to the criteria of everyday forms of resistance. The poor living in Annawadi reinforce their presence through improvised tactics and patterns of everyday informal resistance including illegal squatting on urban lands near central urban locations, parallel informal economy and employment structures, hope to overcome poverty, assimilation to formal power relations, and investment in human capital. In addition, the passive resistance of subordinate classes in Annawadi highlights the active role played by the poor to fight back against oppression and exclusion through an analysis of "their consciousness-the meaning they give to their acts" (p. 38).

The challenges of poverty and slum life in India

The investigation of the functional resistance to poverty by the slum dwellers of Annawadi involves addressing pressing issues related to what causes their dilemmas and how they respond to economic deprivation and the lack of opportunity. It also concerns itself with the forms of resistance adopted by the poor facing poverty and exclusion. Such questions are essential to understand how the poor empower themselves against urban threats of social prejudice and injustice. Examples of the economic and social consequences to living in a squatter settlement in a country with a wealthy economy like India can be seen in unemployment, social stigma, and the absence of infrastructure and medical health. It will be later explored that some minority groups, e.g. Indian Muslims, experience twofold marginalization for their religious beliefs and social background. The reality is exacerbated for such groups as they struggle both inside and outside the slum to sustain their needs. This conception of a multiplicity of factors that correlate to poverty also helps formulate a better understanding of the experience of poverty from the perspective of the poor.

To explore the gap between those who get to fulfill their needs and benefit from the growing economy in India and those who remain suffering poverty and isolation is one of the aims of this article. Accordingly, part of the insights on urban poverty in India in this article can be recapitulated in Boo's following inquiries about Annawadi: "What is the infrastructure of opportunity in this society? Whose capabilities are given wing by the market and a government's economic and social policy? Whose capabilities are squandered? By what means might that ribby child grow up to be less poor?" (2012, pp. 247–248). Thus, the preceding queries allow more space for investigating the active role of the poor in overcoming poverty and claiming their space in an ever-changing urban environment. It can be argued that Boo's narrative draws on Amartya Sen's capability approach[1]. However, the scope of this article is limited to stating the unspoken in Boo's nonfiction narrative regarding the improvised techniques of daily resistance through descriptive analysis. While the descriptive approach partially reflects Boo's viewpoint, this article attempts to create an authorial distance from the primary text to emphasize the unconventional modes of resistance embedded in the narrative.

Poverty in India engulfs two-thirds of the population who live on less than 2 dollars a day with other people surviving on less than 1.5 dollars a day (Poverty in India, 2018). Around half a billion Indians live in abject poverty and rely on informal jobs with extremely low income and no financial stability. All in synchronicity with India's rise as one of the world's fastest emerging economies and the tenth-largest industrial power in the world. While India is categorized to obtain a briskly growing economy, the country still accommodates one-third of the planet's poverty (Kumar, 2010, para. 1). Malnutrition, child labor, illiteracy and high mortality rates, especially for children, are striking examples of the daunting impact of poverty on the disadvantaged population in India. Some families would kill their children at birth, especially females as they cannot provide for them or afford proper medical care (Ahmad, 2010). The presence of dysfunctional institutions of law and justice in India confirms the prevalence of corruption as a means of exploitation of the poor; the corrupt exercise of power over Annawadians is adopted by other power structures represented in the police, public medical care providers, and the Indian judiciary system.

It is common to see a poor slum surrounded by luxurious places and tall buildings covering up the unappealing scene of the slum in Mumbai or any of the megacities of the Global South–a term adopted by the World Bank "to include all nations classified by the World Bank as low- and middle-income that are in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean" (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 2013, p. 13). In *Comparative Politics: Domestic Responses to Global Challenges*, Charles Hauss quotes the Indian author Arundhati Roy who refers to India as "a land of contrasts" with "a schizophrenic nature" (2015, p. 323). Despite the economic and urban development of the country as a consequence to globalised modernisation, the majority of the population continues to live in poverty. Hauss adds, "Depending on how you count, India is one of the most backward or one of the most promising countries on earth. Despite the real estate boom and the size of the luxury goods market, Boo tells us more about the way most Indians live in a country where poverty is such a fact of life" (2015, p. 325). She notes, "Abdul and his neighbors were squatting on land that belonged to the Airports Authority of India…squatter settlements looked like villages that had been airdropped into gaps between elegant modernities" (2012, p. xii). The contrasting nature of India persists owing to the wide diversity of its social structure centered on the caste system. The fact that different castes include disparate social and economic standards of their members causes more diversity or rather, contradiction. Therefore, it is unreasonable to imagine that such diverse population of poverty-stricken families would have an identical reaction to poverty.

The social dynamics of poverty in Annawadi

Annawadi is a 1991 Mumbai slum located between the Mumbai International Airport and the luxury airport hotels such as the Intercontinental and Hyatt. The land on which almost three thousand Indians had squatted belonged to the international airport and hence, a constant fear of displacement from the land threatened them. "Only a coconut-tree-lined thoroughfare separated the slum from the entrance to the international terminal" (Boo, 2012, p. xii). Despite their illegal settlement on a piece of land owned by the airport, no authority had stopped them from living there. They were aware they could be removed by the government any minute for the airport expansion. Three thousand people inhabited as few as 335 huts – mainly tin-roofed shacks surrounded by swampy ways in the absence of infrastructure. Migrants from all over India, mainly Hindus, moved to Annawadi hoping for better living conditions thinking the slum's proximity to the airport and the luxury hotels nearby would ensure them a prosperous future. The everyday forms of resistance adopted by the poor inhabitants of Annawadi materialize in the dynamic presence they obtain as a direct outcome of opposing poverty and inequality. The dominant presence of the waste

pickers and scavengers in Annawadi is revealed as an acquired quality of the poor which defines their active presence. Hence, the location of Annawadi reflects the determination of the poor to become part of the picture and not to miss out on economic development.

Depicted as a place where both fear and hope intermingle, the diversity of the Annawadi slum community, mainly Hindus and a Muslim minority who grapple with each other for a living conveys a sense of collective anxiety as a result of internal conflicts over scarce opportunities. A representative of the Hindu majority is Asha Waghekar, the female slumlord of Annawadi who resents non-Hindu residents. The central character in Boo's narrative is Abdul Hakim Husain, or Abdul, a teenage Muslim boy who could be sixteen or nineteen years old – his parents did not keep a record or remember dates. He is responsible for the family garbage business after his father Karam Husain suffered damaged lungs incurred by garbage work. As the eldest son, his parents decided he "didn't have the mind for school, anyway" and pushed him to the garbage market at the age of six (Boo, 2012, p. xiii). Abdul had no other life experience but garbage trade, "For nearly all the waking hours of nearly all the years he could remember, he'd been buying and selling to recyclers the things that richer people threw away" (Boo, 2012, p. ix). Therefore, the poor are propelled by a constant fear of missing out on an opportunity to work hard day and night.

Poverty in Annawadi is the driving force pushing the people living there to look for a way out and a better future. It materializes in unemployment, poor sanitation, and the lack of access to roads and transportation—the most pressing challenges faced by Annawadians. Every social interaction taking place inside the slum or on its borders has to do with the main purpose of escaping poverty. "Poverty, like slums, is a multifaceted concept" (UN-Habitat, 2003, p. 2). Hence, the debilitating nature of poverty as a social disease is given a new dimension as the stimulus for the poor to change their socio-economic reality. The question is how does poverty look like in an urban slum like Annawadi? It is delineated in the pressing needs of the poor and the means through which they attempt to fulfill them. In most cases, the people of Annawadi do more than just survive. The fact that they endure the economic, social, and political disadvantages of their urban reality and manage to overcome them to generate economic profit is an act of resistance per se. Notwithstanding the proximity of location to globalised centers of capital like the airport, the location of Annawadi does not provide economic prosperity to slum dwellers for the same reasons which forced them to migrate to the slum in the first place, that is, social inequality and lack of economic opportunities for the poor. As such, their salvation or rather survival relies solely on individual efforts and creativity in the fight against poverty and exclusion.

Abdul's family lived in a "trash-strewn, tin-roofed shack where the family of eleven resided" (Boo, 2012, p. ix) and relied mainly on the garbage business to secure a living, hoping to leave Annawadi to another place where they have their own house. Tuberculosis caused by garbage work destroyed Karam Husain's lungs and made Abdul the breadwinner of the family. The Husains' social position in the slum was not as established as their garbage work. As a Muslim minority, Boo highlights that when it comes to Abdul's family: "Some people in this slum wished his family ill because of the old Hindu-Muslim resentments. Others resented his family for the modern reason, economic envy" (Boo, 2012, p. x). Social divisions emanating from inner conflicts over economic opportunities allow resistance only on an individual level. Accordingly, poverty in Annawadi had a separating effect on the inhabitants of the airport slum; instead of standing united against the lack of opportunities and social exclusion, Annawadians had to fight separate battles in favor of personal gain.

Fatima Shaikh, or the One Leg as the people of Annawadi call her, has been the Husains' neighbor since the day they arrived in Annawadi; a sheet only divided Fatima's shack from Abdul's. She was born to Hindu parents with a physical disability which limited her chances for marriage. She eventually got married to a poor unattractive Muslim man, "'half-dead. Who else wanted her?'", her mother stated, and he changed her name from Sita to Fatima (Boo, 2012, p. xvi). The One Leg hated the Husains and would often start conflicts with Abdul's mother. Her feelings of anger were primarily triggered by her disability, which provoked rejection rather than empathy by the public. In addition, the relatively blooming garbage business of the Husains instigated her hostile attitude towards them. Assuming that Fatima had not been a poor woman living in a tin-roofed shack in a slum, she would have received more inclusive treatment if she had lived in a rich society where different aids are made available for people with disabilities. Correspondingly, Fatima's vulnerability is magnified by the environment in which she lives as a result of a weakening combination of poverty and physical disability.

The analysis of the dynamics of poverty in Annawadi calls forth questions about how people feel about themselves while living in poverty. This investigation also explores how the poor feel about each other in poor communities. As stated earlier, life in Annawadi is comprised of a fusion of fear and hope; therefore, Abdul embraces contrasted feelings about leading a safe existence in Annawadi while growing his family's garbage business. "He simply recognized Annawadi as a place booby-trapped with contentions, new and ancient, over which he was determined not to trip. For Annawadi was also magnificently positioned for a trafficker in rich people's garbage" (Boo, 2012, p. xii). As a result, "Doing waste work that many Indians found contemptible, Abdul had lifted his large family above subsistence" (p. x). Bitter rivalry from Fatima's side towards the Husains aggravates when she, the One Leg, sets herself on fire after a fight with Abdul's mother and goes to the police, accusing the Husains of the burning. Another example of the destructive and dividing effect of poverty on the social dynamics of the slum is Fatima's friend, Cynthia, who "had despised Abdul's family ever since her own family garbage business failed" (p. xxi). Her attempts to mobilize action against the Husains, at first to get them arrested and to eventually testify against them in the court, reflect the intensity of the conflicts between people from different backgrounds caused by "economic envy" (p. x). Regardless of the opportunities ensured by the location of Annawadi, fear of destruction whether by internal or external factors is inevitable. Hence, the financial security of the Husains is not socially reinforced, which exacerbates their sense of fear and insecurity. This fear is delineated in the Husains' sensitivity towards any conflict whether with begrudging neighbors or with the police together with their overall keenness on attracting less attention in Annawadi.

The fear of running into troubles haunting Annawadians, particularly the Husains, nearly generates a desire for invisibility as a survival tactic by attracting less attention. Fatima's awareness of the critical social situation of the Husains as a religious minority with a growing business in a Hindu-dominated community and the widespread corruption in Mumbai increases their vulnerability. Her accusations against Abdul along with two of his family members as the ones who sat her on fire put the destiny of the Husains at stake. Boo calls attention to the strained relationship between Abdul's family and Mumbai's police officers: "Abdul's family knew many of the officers at the local station, just enough to fear them all. When they learned that a family in the slum was making money, they visited every other day to extort some" (2012, p. xviii). Hence, state power, represented in the police authority, ensures surveillance on the economic activity of the poor to prevent the accumulation of capital in poor locations.

This is the main reason why the poor continue to live in poverty regardless of the economic development in the surrounding centers of capital. The Husains were already subject to exploitation by the police, a fact which had always made Abdul believe that a modest existence in Annawadi was the best option to avoid public attention. He wished to blame his parents for not being as "paranoid and alert" to avoid confrontations with their neighbors as he was (p. 108). Living in constant fear and paranoia is an unsettling situation that restrains Annawadians from stability and obstructs their progress in trying to overcome poverty. Furthermore, it highlights the association between attention or visibility and the increasing vulnerability of the poor. Thus, the subtlety of their resistance appears in their tendency to lead a socially reserved existence and work in silence.

Asha is a depiction of an overly ambitious woman who dreams of being Annawadi's first female slumlord and gaining political power, which would lead to her social mobility from living in Annawadi to being a member of the middle class. Having a taste for power, Asha lives with an agenda to lift herself and her family out of poverty: "Let others thread the marigolds. Let others sort the trash. For the overcity people who wished to exploit Annawadi, and the undercity people who wished to survive it, she wanted to be the woman-to-see" (2012, p. 17). As such, Asha acts as a mediator between the rich people with exploitative agendas and the poor residents of the slum seeking survival and economic stability. She raises her daughter Manju to grow up as ambitious as her mother and prepares her to stand out through education and learning English—the language of global capital. Asha's resistance to poverty and marginalization materializes in her appropriation of the corrupt system and assimilation of the power of political corruption to move upward in society.

The exhausting effect of rivalry and competition owing to poverty is typified by Fatima's urge to "prompt a police case" against the Husains and get the family in trouble, which leads to a no-win situation. While Fatima loses her life because of corruption in the medical care system, Zehrunisa, Abdul's mother, has to pay almost all the family's savings to corrupt policemen to save her family members from prison. Fatima and Cynthia were not the only people who had animus towards the Husains. Asha, with the relative power she has among Annawadians, envied Abdul's family: "Asha found Zehrunisa intolerably smug. Just three years back, in a killing monsoon, the Husains had no roof over their heads…But now she and her morose son Abdul were rumored to be making money. 'Dirty Muslim money, haram ka paisa,' was how Asha put it" (2012, p. 27). Asha's words should be taken at face value to convey jealousy more than repulsion as what irritates her the most is the profit the Husains seem to make. Thereby, the Husains' account of poverty involves an intersectionality of social and religious relations which further problematizes their stay in Annawadi and highlights the social dynamics governing poverty life. Even though their economic transition over the past three years conveys upward mobility, living in Annawadi for the Husains means not only putting up with poverty and limited opportunities but also tolerating religious persecution and community violence.

Certain families in Annawadi had the conviction that they were doing socially and financially better than others because they were lucky enough not to catch a certain disease or get in an accident. As Abdul's view of such conviction reveals, "It seemed to him that in Annawadi, fortunes derived not just from what people did, or how well they did it, but from the accidents and catastrophes they dodged. A decent life was the train that hadn't hit you, the slumlord you hadn't offended, the malaria you hadn't caught" (2012, p. xx). For an outsider, the definition of a 'decent life' in Annawadi is to a great extent pathetic as people are mainly grateful for not catching a disease or getting killed in an accident —staying alive is a stroke of luck. The relief emanating from avoiding accidents highlights the state of constant fear and anticipation of danger as a result of competition and the lack of economic resources in which the poor live. Their inability to afford medical treatment in case of accidents amplifies their fear and caution not to catch any disease. As such, fear becomes the price of urban mobility which the poor pay for moving to the airport slum. However, Annawadians are willing to pay the price of adapting to fear, hoping to win the battle against poverty.

Despite this fear and anticipation of things going wrong depicting slum life, staying alert for Annawadians does not prevent the inevitability of catching diseases, or living in a health hazard by a contaminated lake. Life in Annawadi is an everyday struggle for its inhabitants who did not voluntarily choose to live there but saw an opportunity for economic growth due to its strategic location near a thriving capitalist market when they first settled in. However, in Annawadi, "Sewage and sickness looked like life" (2012, p. 5). A swamp area, Annawadi overlooked a sewage lake that stretched as a barrier between the slum and the airport, where most of the waste generated by the airport was dumped. The lake represented a health hazard to Annawadians for air and water pollution; "Most of its residents are an injury or an illness away from utter financial ruin" (Hauss, 2015, p. 324). Poor sanitation aggravates the serious health situation in Annawadi as the majority of the slum dwellers gather waste for a living. Touching on the economic circumstances of Annawadians since the slum formation in 1991, Boo asserts that official Indian standards announced almost no one in Annawadi was considered poor. "Rather, the Annawadians were among roughly one hundred million Indians freed from poverty since 1991, when, around the same moment as the small slum's founding, the central government embraced economic liberalization" (2012, p. 6). Such declaration about Annawadians comes as part of a national allegory of economic achievement in the age of modern capitalism and global markets, "a narrative still unfolding", Boo argues (p. 6). However, this narrative significantly contradicts the reality of the poor in Annawadi which unfolds in Boo's narrative, as she points out the disparity between official reports and the lived experience: "statistics about the poor sometimes have a tenuous relation to lived experience" (p. 249).

UN-Habitat's report (2003) on slums and poverty indicates that two main reasons behind the disappointing rates of global poverty reduction are: "too little economic growth in many of the poorest countries and persistent inequalities that inhibited the poor from participating in the growth that did occur" (p. 30). Lack of formal employment creates a state whereby only the fittest survive. In turn, the sense of competition intensifies among the slum dwellers, further destabilizing life inside the slum. Boo explains:

> Poor people didn't unite; they competed ferociously amongst themselves for gains as slender as they were provisional. And this undercity strife created only the faintest ripple in the fabric of the society at large. The gates of the rich, occasionally rattled, remained un-breached. The politicians held forth on the middle class. The poor took down one another, and the world's great, unequal cities soldiered on in relative peace. (2012, p. 237)

Stretching over the western outskirts of Mumbai, India's financial capital, Annawadi is living proof of the economic and social inequality in India. In this case, the socio-economic logic of the slum implies a state of urban chaos where no one feels safe about the future, especially if their neighbors are making more money. The absence of social equality considering the flourishing economy of India aggravates the exclusion of the poor and, consequently, internal disputes.

A socio-financial threat is what Abdul's neighbors in Annawadi felt about his family's business and constantly attempted to tighten the noose on the Husains. However, the attention directed to the Husains' economic situation in Annawadi raises a question about the extent to which they are not considered poor "by official Indian standards" (Boo, 2012, p. 6). There is a hierarchy of poverty in Annawadi just like in garbage work. The less poor, like Abdul and his family, feel they are in a better place than their neighbors who are in absolute poverty and are not making as much money. Boo's explanation of such disparity is indicative of the dreadful impact of poverty on the people of Annawadi:

> a few residents trapped rats and frogs and fried them for dinner. A few ate the scrub grass at the sewage lake's edge. And these individuals, miserable souls, thereby made an inestimable contribution to their neighbors. They gave those slumdwellers who didn't fry rats and eat weeds, like Abdul, a felt sense of their upward mobility. (p. 6)

This statement unravels the harsh realities of poverty in Annawadi and what the human side of poverty looks like upon careful examination. The disparity between people frying rats for dinner and others, a few miles away, enjoying gourmet food at the Hyatt or the Intercontinental reveals why the poor stay in poverty due to social inequality. There is a grim irony in Boo's explanation of the logic of the poor in Annawadi judging the welfare of some people compared to others, while both parties continue to live in poverty.

The aforementioned statement about official Indian living standards and the alleviation of poverty in Annawadi in concurrence with the outset of India's economic modernisation stands in stark contrast with reality as "only six of the slum's three thousand residents had permanent jobs. (The rest, like 85 percent of Indian workers, were part of the informal, unorganized economy)" (Boo, 2012, p. 6). Hence, Annawadians' fear of starvation and death remained a byproduct of slum life in Mumbai. The one percent of the slum population obtaining formal jobs did not in fact enjoy better living conditions; rather, their desperate attempts to secure their low-quality jobs which led to health compromises and other forms of human exploitation indicate the scarcity of sources of economic stability. In addition, securing formal jobs for those who manage to obtain them in Annawadi requires physical wellbeing— an aspect that is hard to maintain while living in poverty. This, accordingly, translates itself into a state of uncertainty and economic insecurity as a secured job remains conditional on the physical ability of workers. Hence, Annawadians are aware of the fact that their bodies are all they have to offer in the global capitalist market of Mumbai—their only capital. Therefore, physical disability for slum dwellers means low chances for economic growth and would lead to starvation if one could not manage to turn their disability into profit.

The value of the body as investment in human capital

In 1960, Theodore W. Schultz expounded a theory of human capital as an integral part of a nation's growing economy, emphasizing that "people are an important part of the wealth of nations" (1961, p. 2). Schultz identifies human capital as a medium for economic investment that significantly contributes to economic growth, with particular emphasis on health and education. "By investing in themselves, people can enlarge the range of choice available to them" (p. 2). Moreover, Henri Lefebvre argues that "Reappropriation of space and the body are equally parts of any revolutionary project" (1996, p. 24). Investment in human capital as such materializes in Boo's narrative as a coping mechanism, a formative aspect of slum life and an act of informal resistance to urban poverty and social exclusion. This is feasible through their "…acquisition of knowledge and skill that have economic value" (Schultz, 1961, p. 3). Key to this proposition is the success of Abdul's family in surviving life in Annawadi owing to his skills of sorting garbage. This is equally true in the case of Manju, Asha's daughter, who, as shall be referred to later, benefits from her education by working as an English teacher. Throughout their journey of moving to Annawadi, building the airport slum, and creating a profitable career out of garbage, Annawadians are compelled to invest in their human capital to overcome poverty. Schliephake highlights how "urban centers that function as nodal structures within a global network create hazardous spaces of waste and pollution as direct outcomes of economic growth, and how local dwellers have to live with the effects of these spaces, improvising, in turn, economic structures of their own in order to transform their own lives" (2017, p. 29). The informal economy of Annawadi, centered around physical labor and informal employment, stresses the high value of physical health and education for economic stability and represents a form of everyday resistance to the lack of formal jobs.

The value of a healthy body as human capital is mirrored in Raja Kamble who is fortunate enough to get "the grail of every poor person in Mumbai: a permanent job" (Boo, 2012, p. 24). That job was to clean public toilets and Mr. Kamble was both grateful and proud of his job which moved him up the social ladder in Annawadi. "Mr. Kamble had been one of Annawadi's great successes—a man deemed worthy of titles like ji or mister—until the day he collapsed while cleaning a shitter" (p. 24). Mr. Kamble's satisfaction with his job, regardless of its nature, is a manifestation of the determination of the poor to make use of the simplest opportunities to grow. However, it would not have been possible for him to get the job had he been physically incapable. Notwithstanding the short-term benefits of his job, the nature of Mr. Kamble's work had taken its toll on his health over the years with the absence of medical care, lowering, in turn, his chances to compete in the labour market. As Boo writes, "The dream of Raja Kamble…was of medical rebirth. A new valve to fix his heart and he'd survive to finish raising his children" (p. xvii). His inability to invest in human capital, his body, translates into lower chances of survival, especially when faced with the logic of corruption. "A dying man should pay a lot to live", Asha states (p. 153).

Another example of the connection between the potential for investment in human capital and resistance is evident in Fatima's struggle for survival in Annawadi. Feelings of inferiority and inability permanently haunting her existence highlight her position in the community of Annawadi as a less capable individual who lacks the most important tool for survival in an impoverished community—a healthy body. Living in a swamp city, healthy individuals are more likely to secure a living than others with physical or mental disabilities. Fatima "also wanted to transcend the affliction by which others had named her. She wanted to be respected and reckoned attractive. Annawadians considered such desires inappropriate for a cripple" (Boo, 2012, p. xvii). It can be inferred that Annawadians as such speak the language of human capital as investment, knowing it is their key to survival. Hence, Mr. Kamble's death for not getting the heart valve he needed echoes Fatima's death caused by medical negligence. While Schultz's vision of human capital frames education and health as assets for a better life, "By investing in themselves, people can enlarge the range of choice available to them" (1961, p. 2), looking at the daily struggles of Annawadians points out tremendous gaps between theory and practice. In the case of Mr. Kamble and Fatima, analyzing the correlation between investment in human capital and survival only highlights their struggle and presents additional evidence of the overlap between physical human capital and economic survival.

Assimilation of power relations: corruption and informal resistance

The preceding investigation of slum life under poverty in Annawadi conveys an outlook of life in the slum divided between hope, fear, constant vigilance, and competition for survival. Fierce competition in slums like Annawadi generates from social and economic inequality and further highlights the value of the body in impoverished communities as the main source of income. The following analysis of the significance of the locality of Annawadi as a stretch of urban space with conceivable economic potentials and development opportunities features the mode of resistance developed by Annawadians to break the cycle of poverty. Referring to subordinate groups' resistance to inequality, Scott explains: "The symbols, the norms, the ideological forms they create constitute the indispensable background to their behavior. However partial or imperfect their understanding of the situation, they are gifted with intentions and values and purposefulness that condition their acts" (1985, p. 38). Furthermore, this form of resistance refutes propositions designed to blame the poor, as no one chooses to be poor or stay in poverty unless they are denied the tools for change. Hence, an entirely unique set of techniques, most of which are spontaneous reactions to everyday struggles and conflicts, is developed to resist the inflicted economic situation.

The culture of resistance in Annawadi adopted by the poor represents the logic of the everyday practices of resistance as suggested by James C. Scott. This logic can be traced in the ways the poor choose to react to inequality and economic and political corruption on a day-to-day basis. Zehrunisa's opposition to spending all the family's savings in bribes to save her family contributes to her attempt to save the family's business without giving up their dream of moving to a better place. Asha's determination to find economic benefit in every conflict she is asked to settle in Annawadi is her definition of resistance to poverty and marginalization in Annawadi. Each of the characters in this airport slum is equally determined to move out of the trap of poverty and catch the opportunity arising from modernisation and economic development. However, what impacted the lives of the poor was the ugly side of modernisation:

> Instead, powerless individuals blamed other powerless individuals for what they lacked. Sometimes they tried to destroy one another. Sometimes, like Fatima, they destroyed themselves in the process. When they were fortunate, like Asha, they improved their lots by beggaring the life chances of other poor people. What was unfolding in Mumbai was unfolding elsewhere, too. In the age of global market capitalism, hopes and grievances were narrowly conceived, which blunted a sense of common predicament. (Boo, 2012, p. 237)

The state of division and fierce competition among Annawadians is a direct outcome of the persistence of poverty in the age of global capital and modernisation. As explained earlier, inequality and corruption are two main reasons for the dominance of urban poverty in countries with growing economies.

The strategic location of Annawadi near the centers of global modernity and economic expansion was the main attraction for the Indian poor who moved in "because of the sense of possibility there, as wealth encroached on every side" (Boo, 2012, p. 251). It was also a materialization of their resistance to exclusion through moving closer to locations of urban modernity: "It was a continual coming-and-going of migrants from all over India" (Boo, p. xi). As such, migration for Annawadians denotes a form of informal resistance to social and economic exclusion through moving closer to locations of a thriving economy. However, location rarely provided a real opportunity for the slum residents to exit poverty or integrate with the rich surroundings. Moreover, corrupt politicians who were supported by people from inside the slum, such as Asha, controlled the dynamics of social life in Annawadi. Alice O'Connor argues that manifestations of poverty are "unemployment, low wages, labor exploitation, political disfranchisement, and … the social disruptions associated with large-scale urbanization and industrial capitalism" (2001, p. 18). As such, the roots of urban poverty persisted in Annawadi, enforcing, accordingly, urban experiences of exclusion and inequality for the poor.

Despite the perpetual movement of the slum dwellers seeking a better life and aspiring to get their share of India's economic growth, their movement is always terminated by corruption. Corruption in Annawadi is one of the main reasons the slum dwellers continue to live in poverty and segregation. "Corruption undermines development wherever it occurs" (UN-Habitat, 2003, p. 179). However, corruption is deeply anchored in capitalism and is considered, as John Girling argues, "a derivative of capitalism" (2022, p. xi). By the same token, the answer to questions like "Why is India still so poor? … Why is the pace of social and economic change disrupting the way Indians live their lives—rich and poor, Hindu and Muslim, urban and rural alike?" (Hauss, 2015, p. 325) is the domination of corruption as a side effect of modern capitalism. Internal dynamics of corruption in Annawadi occur as an outcome of exploitation of the poor by the less poor or by those in a position of power like Asha. As explained later, Asha's ties with corrupt politicians who targeted Annawadians for political exploitation created an opportunity for her to evolve into a powerful individual. Hence, investigating the lives of Annawadians from a humanistic perspective reflects the actual lived experiences of the poor and their diverse reactions to poverty and corruption.

Asha's obsession with power and her aim to fight against poverty and move upward to become a member of the middle class translated into indifference toward the suffering of her neighbors and a stronger determination to make the most of any financial opportunity. Her sense of self-investment materializes in her assimilation to the power of corruption surrounding Annawadi for personal gain: "Her own aspirations centered on anti-poverty initiatives, not garbage" (Boo, 2012, p. 27). Unlike the Husains who sought wealth in a garbage career, Asha followed a different route as a way to fulfill her hope for a better life. Asha's corrupt power originated from her connections with aid organizations and anti-poverty initiatives. Her neighbors approached her for financial help, ready to pay her if they could. Asha's affiliation with anti-poverty initiatives designed to help poor women in Annawadi get loans with the support of the government allowed her to work from within the system and profit from the corruption of the government. This, in addition, becomes her self-developed tactic to fight poverty as she is known to seek a financial angle in any situation. When foreign journalists visited Mumbai to report the progress of the initiatives, "Asha's job was to gather random female neighbors to smile demurely while the officials went on about how their collective had lifted them from poverty" (p. 28). Asha often confirmed the efficiency of the poverty alleviation efforts to the visitors of Annawadi when, in fact, only a few women benefited from such initiatives.

Asha, like other members of the society of Annawadi, is part of that fierce competition over economic opportunities, notwithstanding the moral choices and the final results of her actions. As such, for Asha, opportunity resides solely in corruption; it is her means of combating poverty and exploitation by exploiting the less empowered poor in Annawadi: "'The big people think that because we are poor we don't understand much,' she said to her children. Asha understood plenty" (Boo, 2012, p. 28). Asha's logic behind utilizing corruption to break the cycle of poverty is

explained as follows: "In the West, and among some in the Indian elite, this word, corruption, had purely negative connotations; it was seen as blocking India's modern, global ambitions. But for the poor of a country where corruption thieved a great deal of opportunity, corruption was one of the genuine opportunities that remained" (p. 28). Hence, the persistence of urban poverty is a direct result of the unequal distribution of wealth and corruption. Therefore, in Asha's view, the poor could benefit from corruption the same way the rich do. Asha's connections with corrupt politicians involved trading sex for power; however, such connections failed her when her services were no longer needed. Even though Asha's choice to be part of the corrupt system allowed her to achieve power and fame inside the slum, these gains were temporary and did not survive the stronger tides of corruption outside Annawadi.

Thriving corruption in Annawadi is closely connected to the poor being in a constant state of need for employment, housing, facilities, clean water, or medical care. As Boo states, "For every two people in Annawadi inching up, there was one in a catastrophic plunge" (2012, p. 24). Corruption in poor communities like Annawadi entails exchanging bribes for services in police stations and public hospitals. This, in turn, "negatively affects the poor, who typically do not have the resources with which to pay bribes, while they are more likely to be required to pay 'speed money' or to be subject to harassment because of their vulnerability" (UN-Habitat, 2003, p. 180). Two examples of the victimization of the poor by those in power are Fatima and Abdul. Fatima's self-inflicted burning accident led to her exposure to a corrupt medical care system and eventually to her death as a result of medical negligence. Abdul's family had to pay the price of their son's freedom by offering bribes to officers at the police station to release him. In both cases, paying money does not necessarily guarantee proper medical care or justice in Mumbai.

Fatima, unknowingly, jeopardizes her life by burning herself, thus seeking public medical help and revenge from Abdul's family for their attempt to renovate their space and install a shelf on the wall separating the two shacks. Her intentions behind accusing Abdul were to drag the Husains into trouble and, hence, destroy their business when their son gets arrested. Trying to benefit from a corrupt system by inflicting financial loss on the Husains through persecution, Fatima, instead, falls victim to the corruption of the medical care system. Pathetic as it is, she had always felt less of a human being for her physical disability before her accident. Unlike most Annawadians who rely on their physical strength to combat poverty, Fatima involves herself in extramarital sex, not only for money but to make up for her disability by feeling desired by men. She had been admitted to Cooper Hospital, "the large hospital serving the poor of Mumbai's western suburbs" where she started "to feel like a person who counted" (Boo, 2012, p. 100). The quality of the medical service offered to the poor reveals the devastating reality of poverty in Mumbai, mainly in the presence of corruption. Delving deep into the lives of the poor in the slum uncovers "the human face of poverty" featuring "the millions who were beyond the reach of economic growth" (O'Connor, 2001, p. 157). Fatima, and the millions of poor people in India who depended on Cooper Hospital, had to recognize that such a place, with no food or medicine amenities, considered the poor as undercitizens coming from undercities with nothing much to expect. A slum dweller would hope not to die or develop a physical disability that would prevent him/her from working. Living in a place exposed to many diseases, the poor residents of slums go to public hospitals with little hope and great doubt they will receive proper medical treatment. Moreover, they expect to pay doctors and nurses, who "avoided physical contact with the patients", in return for basic amenities like food, water, and medicine (Boo, 2012, p. 103). The financial distress and insecurity of the poor increase their vulnerability when facing corruption in life-threatening conditions like Fatima's. The eventual death of Fatima caused by untreated injuries leading to the deterioration of her health is reported by the hospital as follows: "Burns that covered 35 percent of Fatima's body upon admission to Cooper became 95 percent at her death —a certain fatality, an unsalvageable case", denying any responsibility towards her death (p. 114).

The culture of resistance vs. the culture of poverty

During the 1950s and afterwards, anthropologist Oscar Lewis (1966) popularized what has been known since then as the culture of poverty. Coming out as a set of findings based on his fieldwork on post-war Mexico, Lewis introduced a model for perceiving poverty as an innate trait in the poor which is reinforced all the time through certain cultural practices and reactions. In "The Culture of Poverty", Lewis contends that:

> The culture of poverty is not just a matter of deprivation or disorganization, a term signifying the absence of something. It is a culture in the traditional anthropological sense in that it provides human beings with a design for living, with a ready-made set of solutions for human problems, and so serves a significant adaptive function. (1966, p. 19)

This totalising view of poverty as a static form of existence where people give in to the challenges of their economic situation is overturned in Boo's narrative. Given the social and financial situatedness of Annawadians, it becomes repeatedly evident that a uniform definition of poverty and a stereotypical conception of the low-income communities are challenged by the diversity of the personal accounts of poverty in Annawadi. Boo aims to highlight the human capacities, talents, and skills of the people in Annawadi who live a daily struggle against poverty. An investigation of the personal accounts of poverty quoted in the narrative proves the active role of the poor in reacting to economic deprivation and social marginalization in terms of seeking a better life. Thus, the manifestation of the committed behavior of the poor in their attempts to fight poverty allows for the emergence of an opposing culture of resistance, one that defies the classic culture of poverty.

It is key to investigate the value of the act of squatting over lands near urban centers as a form of social mobility against poverty. According to UN-Habitat, "Slums have the most intolerable of urban housing conditions, which frequently include: insecurity of tenure; lack of basic services, especially water and sanitation; inadequate and sometimes unsafe building structures; overcrowding; and location on hazardous land" (2003, p. vi). Concurrently, the piece of land on which Annawadi has been founded was "an area with little unclaimed space, a sodden, snake-filled bit of brush-land across the street from the international terminal seemed the least-bad place to live" (Boo, 2012, p. 5). Being on the lookout for proximity to modern locations like the International Airport where economic development is centered is the reason behind the establishment of Annawadi in 1991 by a group of laborers. Even with the uninhabitable state of the land, the first settlers in Annawadi worked very hard to make it fit to acquire, "digging up dirt in drier places and packing it into the mud. After a month, their bamboo poles stopped flopping over when they were stuck in the ground. Draping empty cement sacks over the poles for cover, they had a settlement" (p. 5). This determination is what Henri Lefebvre refers to as the "power of appropriation and appropriation" of space in which the presence of the poor is manifested. Hence, land acquisition, and later renovation, by the poor is an act of resistance per se (1996, p. 187). While "the only land accessible to slum dwellers is often

fragile, dangerous or polluted – land that no one else wants" (UN-Habitat, 2003, p. vi), the founders of Annawadi looked for economic potential in urban decay and imperfection by transforming the swamp area into a slum city. The physical characteristics of the area still did not significantly change, however, its close location to the airport was promising enough for Annawadians to start a life.

Annawadi, like other slums, is an emblem of the impact of social inequality and the concentration of wealth in limited centers of capitalist modernity. Squatting illegally over lands that belong to Indian authorities, the people of Annawadi represent an endangered population as they may be removed at any time due to ongoing airport expansion projects. Afflicted by a geographically challenging locality epitomized in inhabiting a deteriorated land surrounded by a swamp lake causing most diseases infecting Annawadians, the slum dwellers persevere and pursue informal works like collecting waste and selling it to nearby recycling plants. As stated earlier, only six of the three thousand people living in Annawadi had permanent jobs. Therefore, seeking financial income through informal employment is an expression of resistance to the lack of opportunities in Mumbai. The perpetual movement of the poor into and out of Annawadi is a practice of a basic instinct for survival and a manner of resistance against starvation and death. Like other slums, alternatives for Annawadians to sustain their living may include stealing or trading sex for money as the social stigma of living in a slum deprives slum dwellers from occupying jobs with fixed income.

Emulating a capitalist business structure, the garbage business in Annawadi encompasses a hierarchy of jobs. Scavengers, the lowest in rank, go waste-picking all over the area surrounding the International Airport and return with their catch to Annawadi to sell it to sorters, like Abdul, who are perceived to be in a higher position. Those who sort garbage exchange recyclable waste with small recycling plants near the slum for money. Appropriating the means of production available, his own labor, Abdul works tirelessly day and night to fulfill his family's dream of growing their business and leaving Annawadi. He becomes an "expert, over the years, at minimizing distraction" (Boo, 2012, p. xi), so envious neighbors like Cynthia find it "painful to watch the Husains' income grow as her family's foundered. She thought that Zehrunisa had been lucky, having a sorting machine like Abdul come out of her body" (pp. 210, 211). Likewise, Zehrunisa believed she was supporting her family by "producing a workforce for the future" (p. xv), highlighting, in turn, the value of the body as human capital in poor communities. Enduring the garbage work he hated throughout the years, hoping for a better economic situation, is how Abdul chooses to resist poverty. His appropriation and reappropriation of garbage and his sorting skills, representing his family's capital, portray his selflessness and dedication.

As Christopher Schliephake explains, "Annawadians 'make a virtue out of necessity, collecting the garbage that seams their neighborhood and turning it, literally, into money in the hope for a better future'" (2017, p. 27). Here, poverty acquires a transformative dimension in the way Annawadians manage to survive the challenges of slum life. In Annawadi, if people do not wake up every day and go out in search of some valuable trash to return home with, they will starve to death. Abdul's Mother, Zehrunisa, "was the haggler in the family, raining vibrant abuse upon scavengers who asked too much for their trash" (Boo, 2012, p. xiii). Her protectiveness towards her family is paired with verbal violence and austerity towards external threats represented in the scavengers' attempts to extract more money from the family. Taking up haggling as a survival technique explains Zehrunisa's motivation: "'Had I sat quietly in the house, the way my mother did, all these children would have starved'" (p. xv).

Two main expressions of the culture of resistance to poverty, corruption, and social inequality in Annawadi are observed in the human capacities of hope and competition, a hope for a better life amidst a modern world of growing economy which translates into attempts to invest in human capital and a fierce competition that drives everyone to look for an opportunity to escape poverty. As Asef Bayat states, "The 'everyday forms of resistance' perspective has undoubtedly contributed to recovering the Third World poor from 'passivity', 'fatalism' and 'hopeless- ness'-essentialist features of the 'culture of poverty' with its emphasis on identifying the 'marginal man' as a 'cultural type'" (1997, p. 56). Observing the patterns of everyday resistance of Annawadians indicates the evasiveness and subtlety of the resistance of the poor as Scott explains that such patterns "require little or no coordination or planning; they often represent a form of individual self-help; and they typically avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms" (1985, p. 29). In addition, "everyday resistance is informal, often covert, and concerned largely with immediate, de facto gains" (p. 33). Defying exclusionary politics and economic depravity, the inhabitants of Annawadi go up against poverty, corrupt politics, and the judicial system in what can be discerned as spontaneous innovative reactions that transcend a mere survival mode. In the case of Annawadi, resistance to poverty by the poor is a soft power that is incorporated from within the capitalist system, taking up an assimilative, non-confrontational approach. Hence, improvisation is a key term in the analysis of the human capacities of poverty resistance by Annawadians. This improvised mode of resistance transpires in the appropriation, rather than domination, of urban space through illegal squatting and the persistent reappropriation of space, as stated by Lefebvre, through renovation and hope for improved livelihood.

A closer look into the poor life of Annawadians points out that the forms of resistance adopted by Annawadians do not conform to conventional organized resistance per se. Instead, the relentless appropriation and reappropriation of the land and the remnants of capital surrounding Annawadi, materializing in the trash generated by locations of capital, is the constituent element of their resistance. Fighting against poverty, exclusion, corruption, and unemployment, the slum dwellers of Annawadi incorporate survival techniques embedded in everyday practices to express resistance. Scott argues that "when they become a consistent pattern (even though uncoordinated, let alone organized) we are dealing with resistance" (1985, p. 296).

Conclusion

The above discussion redefines poverty in slums not as an expression of fixed values and circumstances, but as a changeable reality according to the lived experience of each member in poor communities like Annawadi. It rather takes into consideration economic inequality as the root of urban poverty, corruption, and social exclusion. In addition, poverty statistics and urban development indicators can only serve as background information to poverty knowledge as the actual nature of urban poverty resides in the depiction of the human side of poverty as a lived experience. Hence, the analysis of slum life in Annawadi introduces an alternative to relying on distant written data and statistics.

Guided by Lefebvre's and Scott's premises, approaching the social dynamics and the modes of resistance of the slum dwellers in Annawadi, the present study proves the formation of an everyday passive form of resistance through which they attempt to break the cycle of poverty. The humanistic approach to poverty acknowledges the lived experiences and the daily struggles of individuals as opposed to another materialistic side mainly recording housing conditions, employment rates, and economic

growth statistics. Abdul's relentless attempts to avoid trouble and grow the garbage business of the family, Asha's determination to strengthen ties with corrupt politicians and provide her daughter with proper education, and Zehrunisa's endurance of injustice and persecution to free her husband and son from imprisonment are representations of human capacities of power and resilience. Treated as undercitizens squatting over an undercity, the power developed by Annawadians is a subaltern power; one emerging from improvised survival tactics and coping strategies that allow for passive resistance from within the system.

Data availability

All data analyzed are contained in the article.

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Note

1 Amartya Sen's capability approach is a framework for the evaluation of individual welfare, and as such can provide the theoretical basis for inequality, poverty, and policy analyses. The capability approach assesses people's welfare in terms of their *functionings* and *capabilities*, which are defined as an individual's actual and potential activities and states of being respectively. From *Amartya Sen's Capability Approach: Theoretical Insights and Empirical Applications* (1st ed., p. 9), by W. Kuklys, 2005.

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Additional information

Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to Nada Soliman.