Introduction:
The site for my graduation project focuses on a vast informal settlement that sits at the very heart of Mumbai’s financial district. Nestled between the World Trade Centre on one end, and Mumbai - and India’s - most expensive residential real estate on the other, the site is in many ways the most emblematic of the schizophrenic relationship that exists between the rich and the poor found in Mumbai, or for the matter, found almost anywhere in the developing world. As Mike Davis has so poignantly pointed out, Mumbai is the global capital of slumming with estimates of more than 10 million people currently living in informal settlements. The contradiction of course is that Mumbai is also India’s richest city, contributing more than forty percent of the nations income tax revenues. This strange dichotomy, coupled with the state’s complete failure to actively and effectively deal with the country’s rapid urbanization have led to a situation where vast sections of society are constantly being marginalized and excluded from the rest of the so-called ‘formal city’. Thus, as India propels forward, it is at the same time witnessing an ever-increasing gulf between the rich and the poor, which has in turn led me to pursue and challenge the way we perceive and intervene in informal settlements.

1. Aim of the Thesis:
As the title suggests, the main aim of the project is to conceive of strategies that could integrate the vast informal settlements of Mumbai as valid and integral parts of the city, using the site chosen as a potential model, and design as one of the tools by which this integration could be increased. Thus, it is in many ways an attempt to explore the uneasy relationship between the informal and formal in Mumbai, where informal settlements are in spite of their large numbers thought of as islands within the city. Thus, even though Mumbai benefits in many ways from these informal settlements (in terms of labour, manufacturing, small-scale industries, etc), there is a very clear and definite lack of integration of these communities with the rest of the city.

Recognizing the above existing situation, I believe that policies regarding informal settlements must go beyond mere ‘slum upgrading’ and/or providing just affordable housing. Any scheme that deals with informal settlements of such scales must instead move towards achieving a more holistic integration of these communities with their larger contexts. This integration is thought of at 4 levels:
A) Spatial Integration: To recognize informal settlements not only as isolated islands of poverty, but as valid forms of urbanism that have a right to access the same levels of social and physical infrastructure that are provided to the rest of the city.

B) Economic Integration: To recognize that informal settlements are not only places of sub-standard housing, but are communities full of commerce, manufacturing and employment, making them substantial - and integral - contributors to the city’s economy. Thus, any scheme regarding informal settlements must not only protect the economies that exist there, but actually facilitate for their growth (i.e income creation).

C) Political Integration: To enable residents of such communities to exercise their democratic rights as official citizens of the city, which includes their right to have a say in the development of their own communities.

D) Social Integration: This is largely thought of as an outcome of the above three processes.

2. Method:
In order to achieve the aims that I had set out to achieve at the beginning of the project, my main research question dealt with grasping a better knowledge and understanding of the role of design in helping bring about increased socio-spatial integration. This research took two forms:

1. **Theoretical Research**
   - 1. Historical Approaches to Informal Urbanization (Global)
   - 2. Historical Approaches to Informal Urbanization (India)
   - 3. Current Housing Policies in Mumbai
   - 4. Case Studies (Global and Local)
   - 5. Proposed Housing Policies in India

2. **Empirical Research**
   - 1. Mapping (Photographs)
   - 2. Mapping (Maps, Plans)
   - 3. Interviews with local residents
   - 4. Interviews with experts (architects, developers)
   - 5. Site Documentation (Housing typologies, amenities)

**Research Question:** What role can design play in bringing about increased socio-spatial integration?

**Theoretical Research:**
I believe that my task as an architect is to elaborate and describe the crucial role that design and designers can play in improving the quality of life and opportunities in such areas. In order to achieve this, it became important for me to research not only the reasons for informal urbanization (as a worldwide phenomenon), but also to understand and learn from previous examples about the changing nature of design interventions over the last five to six decades. This historical study of the various approaches and attitudes to informal urbanization, beginning from the slum demolition and relocation schemes of the early 1950s in India and elsewhere, to the current popularity of urban acupuncture projects in South America, have played a crucial role in helping me define a possible way forward for Mumbai’s case.

**Empirical research:**
However, while a theoretical approach significantly broadened my knowledge of the issues involved and exposed me to various design approaches, a lot of my understanding of the site and its ground realities came out of intense site visits in the month of February when I visited Mumbai. Empirical research gained in the form of observations, mappings and interviews played an equally crucial role
in helping me define my architectural response to the given problem. One of my key ambitions was to accurately map the existing context in order to develop and propose certain strategies and programs that are born out of a direct response to the site. Easier said than done, this became an uphill task as obtaining information in a city like Mumbai is very often difficult with the government reluctant to distribute and share any information in the form of data or maps. Thus, much of my time was spent in mapping the site with photographs, and then compiling and coordinating them with satellite imagery of the site, from where I had to manually draw the entire site and its surrounding context. However, this manual task of drawing maps ended up helping me ‘observe’ the site in greater detail, thus allowing my design to be more contextual and local in approach.

Relationship between Research and Design:
I believe that the project exhibits a very clear relationship between research and design, and the strategies proposed have in many ways been conceived of as a result of months of research, mappings and case studies. Through the clear and supportive guidance of all three of my mentors I believe that I have been successful in achieving my main aims that had been established at the P2 stage.

Relationship between the Project and wider Social Context:
Much of the debate regarding informal urbanization in Mumbai is limited to academic institutions, without it ever becoming a part of a larger debate about such issues of development. One of my aims after I graduate from TU Delft would be to see how I could take these ideas forward as I certainly believe that they are worthy enough of joining the current debate regarding informal urbanization in the city of Mumbai. I think that the relevance of the results of my project could lie in helping further the discussion to go beyond the current slum rehabilitation approach, and instead move towards the idea of integration, that is integration at all levels: spatial, economical, political and social. With one billion people already residing in slums, and with estimates of that number set to triple in the next 40 years, it is necessary that we set the bar a bit higher, and begin to look at these issues in a more holistic, collaborative and democratic manner.