INFORMAL URBANISM AS RESILIENT ASSEMBLAGES

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ABSTRACT
One way of characterizing the Asian city in contrast to the West, or cities of the global South to the global North, lies in the kind and degree of informal urbanism – including everything from informal buildings and settlements to the informal economies, regulations, street markets, public transport and floating populations. Such informal practices, buildings, people and settlements are integral to many ways in which such urbanism works – economically, socially, environmentally and aesthetically. Yet they are also often integrated with illegality, corruption and poverty. With a focus on streetscapes and informal settlements this paper will seek to unfold and re-think this informal/formal conception using two interconnected theoretical frameworks. First is assemblage theory derived from the work of Deleuze and Guattari with its distinctions between rhizomic and tree-like practices, between smooth and striated space. Second is theory on complex adaptive systems where dynamic and unpredictable patterns of self-organization emerge with certain levels of resilience or vulnerability. Such approaches are fundamentally interdisciplinary and cut across the territories of geography, planning, urban design, cultural studies and area studies. The task is to understand cities as multi-scalar assemblages and to explore the ways in which urban informality is linked to their growth, productivity and creativity. The paper concludes with some brief snapshots of urban informality drawn from Southeast Asian cities.

INTRODUCTION

I want to start with two images of cities at very different scales. Figure 1 was taken in Bangkok a few years ago. While the sewing machine is old we all know that this pedal powered machine has stood the test of time – mobile, sustainable, adaptable. We can also read into this image that a corporation formally owns or rents the modern building and that this use of the sidewalk is informal (although there may be some money changing hands). This may be, for some, simply an image of poverty or underdevelopment, but it is much more one of entrepreneurial flexibility, adaptation and creativity.
Figure 2 shows this formal/informal juxtaposition at a larger scale where an informal settlement lines the coast of Colaba in Mumbai with the formal city on higher ground. Again it is possible to read this as simply poverty and underdevelopment, or even as a development opportunity. Yet it is now very clear that such settlements are functionally integrated parts of many cities and cannot be erased without simply moving the informality somewhere else. Informal settlements have been the most pervasive single form of new urban development over the past half century, housing around a quarter of the global urban population (UN 2006). Understanding the complexity and resilience of informal urbanism is one of the great urban challenges of our time. It may be relevant
to add that this photo was taken at dusk on November 26, 2008, a couple of hours before a team of heavily armed men in rubber boats slipped into Mumbai through this settlement. The informal settlers informed the police who took no notice.

The concept of the informal sector comes originally from economics where it describes that part of the economy that is not captured by economic measures – informal markets, domestic production and so on. The informal and formal sectors are not separate, both are always present with reciprocal relations in all economies. The informal/formal framework is not simply a way of categorizing cities or parts of cities since all cities embody a mix of formal and informal processes. While cities may be more or less formal in character, it is not simply a continuum on which we might locate whole cities. Urban informality is not synonymous with slums or squatting, yet it is a fertile framework for understanding and re-thinking development issues. My concerns, from a background in urban design, are mostly with the ways in which urban informality plays out at the level of everyday urban life with a focus on informal morphologies – the forms of informality.

While there are many highly insightful studies of both informal settlements and urban informality in general (Davis 2006; Neuwirth 2006; Huchzermeyer & Karam 2006, Roy & Alsayyad 2004) the complexities of informality remain under-researched and under-theorized (Soliman 2010). A range of writers from Turner to Brugman and Brand onwards have embraced the productivity of informal urbanism yet we do not have any well developed theories of how such urbanism works. The informal is often rendered invisible to the gaze of the formal city (Shatkin 2004) and its streets do not appear on maps.

The relations between formality and informality can be seen in the historical sense as one in which informality precedes formality. The traditional village and the medieval city have an urban morphology produced informally by micro adaptation over time. It is well to remember that the medieval cores of many European cities that now operate as brands for global tourism are the upgraded remnants of informal settlements. Yet there is also the quite contrary understanding where the formal city comes first and informality is a practice of infiltration within the formal framework. This is what Bayat (1997) in his wonderful phrase calls the ‘quiet encroachment of the ordinary’. In this sense informality is most clearly defined as those practices that operate outside the control of the state. Yet it does not follow that informality can be construed simply as the other to the formal city, nor is it easily identified with underdevelopment, illegality or poverty. Many of the most developed cities are infused with high levels of informality in some sectors of the city and the economy and some of these are the more productive sectors - particularly what is known as the creative economy and creative clusters (Brugman). To portray informality as underdevelopment is also to misconstrue it as somehow marginal to the development process. It has long been established by Perlman (1976) among others just how essential informal settlements have become to the economic development of developing cities – the idea of
marginality is a dangerous myth. Informal settlements have been the most pervasive form of new urban development globally over the past 50 years - most rural to urban migration has been housed in this way.

One of the key tasks in rethinking this informal/formal relation is to overcome the tendency to give priority to the formal as if informality is a response or reaction to formality. In the context of land markets, Marx (2009: 337) has argued that conceptualizing informality as simply the derivative ‘other’ to a dominant formality precludes us from seeing the potency of informality ‘in its own terms’. ‘The aim in seeing informal land markets in their own terms has been to create the possibility of analysing the power or agency that such markets might have in their own right’ (Marx 2009: 348). My interest in this regard includes the morphologies and spatialities of informality – the ways in which informal urbanism flourishes in the spatial interstices of the city and produces urban phenomena with a potent impact on the streetscape and urban image.

I want to refer mostly to the two kinds of urban informality introduced in the images: informal practices within public space such as trading, parking, hawking, begging and advertising; and the informal urban morphologies of construction and settlement, whether on public or private land. These forms of urban informality are fundamentally integrated with an informal economy and an informal politics. Informal controls are imposed over informal practices: informal fines, fees and bribes are paid, votes are bought, blind eyes are turned. Informal houses, shops and factories are built and inhabited by informal residents and staff. Informal land tenure and home ownership systems evolve, informal rents are paid, informal electricity and water is tapped. Informal governance operates within the framework of formal governance. The task of understanding and re-thinking this informal/formal framework is a primary intellectual challenge for development studies, urban studies, urban design, architecture and urban planning. This challenge is multi-disciplinary and multi-scale, we cannot address it through the particular disciplines of sociology, economics, urban planning, geography or architecture. It requires approaches and concepts that can incorporate the dynamism of urban change with a detailed understanding of urban morphology and representation. In this regard I want to propose two complementary theoretical frameworks.

ASSEMBLAGES

The first of these is ‘assemblage’ theory, as developed particularly by DeLanda (2006) based on the book ‘A Thousand Plateaus’ by Deleuze & Guattari (1987). The term ‘assemblage’ here is a translation of the french ‘agencement’ which is akin to a ‘layout’, ‘arrangement’ or ‘alignment’ – it suggests at once a dynamic process and a certain spatiality. I have suggested (Dovey 2010) that assemblage is a useful way of re-thinking theories of ‘place’ in terms of process, identity
formation and becoming and MacFarlane (forthcoming) suggests something similar for cities. An assemblage is a whole that is formed from the interconnectivity and flows between constituent parts - a socio-spatial cluster of interconnections between parts wherein the identities and functions of both parts and wholes emerge from the flows between them. It is not a set of pre-determined parts that are organized to work in a particular way, yet it is ‘a whole of some sort that expresses some identity and claims a territory’ (Wise 2005: 77). The assemblage is at once both material and representational and defies any reduction to essence, to textual analysis or to materiality. To take an urban example, a street is not a thing nor is it just a collection of discrete things. The buildings, trees, cars, sidewalks, goods, people, signs, etc. all come together to become the street, but it is the connections between them that are crucial - the relations of buildings to sidewalk to roadway; the flows of traffic, people and goods; the interconnections of public to private space, and of the street to the city. An assemblage is also dynamic – trees and people grow and die, buildings are constructed and demolished. It is the flows of life, traffic, goods and money that give the street its intensity and its sense of place. From this view all cities and parts of cities are assemblages.

A key dimension of an assemblage is an axis of territorialization/deterritorialization that describes the ways social and spatial boundaries are inscribed and erased, the ways identities are formed, expressed and transformed. Territorialization is a synthetic process wherein wholes form from parts, identities from differences. Territory is a stabilized assemblage, a zone of order, a sense of home that keeps chaos and difference at bay (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 310-12). Territories are often identified by the root sta: to stand – the state, statute, statue, establishment or institution. In Deleuzian terms territories are ‘striated’ spaces in contrast to the instabilities of ‘smooth’ space. The focus, however, is on the process of territorialization (invasions of urban interstices, construction of houses, inscription of boundaries). Deterritorialization is the movement by which territories are eroded (hawkers are removed, squatter settlements are demolished, nations are invaded). Deterritorialized elements are then recombined into new assemblages through a process of reterritorialization.

Assemblage theory is a useful framework for understanding the relationship of formal to informal practices in the city because a range of twofold concepts that resonate with informality/formality are deployed in ‘A Thousand Plateaus’ as a means to understand assemblages – rhizome/tree, smooth/striated, supple/rigid, network/hierarchy, minor/major (Deleuze & Guattari 1987; Dovey 2010: 22-4). Informal practices are rhizomic in contrast with the tree-like strictures of urban regulation and planning; they involve minor adaptations and tactics in contrast to the major strategies of master planning; they involve informal network connectivity in contrast to hierarchical control. These twofold pairs form a large part of the conceptual toolkit in the work of Deleuze & Guattari, pairs of binary concepts defined in terms of each other where the focus is on the
dynamism between them. They cannot be seen as separate nor as dialectic pairs but rather as overlapping and resonating together in assemblages. Assemblage theory is a theory of socio-spatial change, a theory of societies that is also a theory of cities (DeLanda 2006). Importantly - for the task of understanding urban informality – it incorporates informality as fundamental to understanding the productivity of cities and turns away from any notion that informality as an aberration or problem that can or should be erased.

Assemblage theory is essentially a form of philosophy, it involves a huge amount of jargon and requires a good knowledge of philosophy and social theory in order to even understand it. Such theory has largely been applied to the city through the related cluster known as actor network theory (Latour 2005; Farias & Bender 2010). To apply such a conceptual framework to urban research is a further task. With this in mind (and at the risk of multiplying this complexity) I want to suggest that assemblage theory can be usefully linked to the cluster of theories on complex adaptive systems and resilience.

COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS

Theories of complex adaptive systems (CAS) are more widely known and used, but with few exceptions (Rihani 2002; Baser & Morgan 2008) rarely applied within development studies or informal settlements. This is work that grows out of a mix of theories of cybernetics, chaos, complexity and resilience (Gunderson & Holling 2002; Walker & Salt 2006; Levin 1999). A key linkage between assemblage and CAS is the work of anthropologist Bateson (2000) who was both a major figure in early cybernetics and a key source for assemblage theory. Complex adaptive systems theory is an attempt to understand the dynamics of complex systems where the behaviour of the system depends on unpredictable interactions between parts. While a car or mobile phone is a complicated system, it is not complex in this sense because its parts work together in a generally predictable manner. A complex system is one where the parts are both independent (unpredictable) and interdependent - the parts adapt to each other in relatively unpredictable ways, they organize themselves or self-organize. Once a car or mobile phone is plugged into an urban network it becomes part of a CAS that includes both city and people. The detailed outcomes of such a system cannot be determined in advance but rather ‘emerge’ from practices of adaptation and self-organization. Over time a regime with certain characteristics emerges and settles down. At an urban scale of the city, district, neighbourhood or street, the emergent properties of the urban system have something in common with place identity and urban character. This emergent regime is always a mix of both formal and informal properties and practices. Unpredictability is in part a result of the fact that minor changes in one part or level of the system can have pervasive effects throughout the system; and major plans for wholesale transformation can be stymied by deep-seated resilience.
The ‘resilience’ of a CAS is defined as its capacity to adapt to change without slipping into a new ‘regime’ or ‘identity’ (Walker & Salt 2006). Resilience in this sense is not a static quality but a dynamic capacity to move between a range of adaptive states without crossing a threshold of no return. Yet beyond such a threshold change can escalate until the system settles into a new regime. There are many urban examples including Jacobs’ (1965) theory of the self-destruction of diversity where escalating feedback cycles can destroy the social and formal mix of productive urban neighbourhoods. Jacobs was railing against the monofunctional, top-down, tree-like thinking of modernist master planning; and in pointing out the importance of sidewalk life, pedestrian connectivity, diversity etc. she was valorizing urban informality, complexity and adaptation as integral parts of an urban assemblage. Informal settlements and informal street markets often settle into forms of resilient yet dynamic stability - negotiated settlements between informal and formal forces.

Resilience theory offers a way of understanding how such processes might be managed with a focus on certain ‘key slow variables’ which have potential to push the system across a threshold into a new regime or identity. In urban terms such key slow variables may include land and rental value, economic vitality, gentrification, traffic speed and volume, building height and density, social mix, crime and public transport. As any of these variables changes incrementally, all the other parts of the system adapt. As land rent increases so does the pressure to displace informal urban practices. As informal settlements are demolished displaced residents emerge elsewhere (Durand-Lasserve 2006). As informal settlers are granted formal tenure they may adapt by selling and moving to another informal settlement. If street hawkers are moved along or organized into formalized trading zones they may emerge in another part of the network. As increased traffic renders sidewalk trading and social exchange impossible, the trading and the exchange adapts.

The characteristics of a system that can increase its resilience to regime change are mostly linked to diversity and redundancy. The diversity of the system involves a diversity of possible adaptations to change. Redundancy is the capacity of the system to perform in many different ways – to adapt to change by moving forms, functions and flows around, different parts can perform a multiplicity of functions. The tendency to strive for optimum efficiency of the system, often the goal of formal planning, can reduce its resilience because it leads to a loss of redundancy. It follows that hybridity, porosity (Benjamin and Lacis 1978) and smooth space are forms of resilience. A large part of what we call urban informality consists of this relatively elastic adaptability of forms, functions and spatial practices.
Complex-adaptive systems are conceived as enmeshed in cycles of change at multiple scales with four main phases of growth, conservation, release and re-organization (Walker & Salt 2006; Gunderson & Holling 2002). This cycle draws from the economic theory of creative destruction originally derived from Schumpeter and particularly influential in Marxist geography (Harvey 1982) - capital produces cycles of creative innovation that destroys existing structures and territories (cities, industries, neighbourhoods) in order to create new ones. Growth involves a major phase of development – the initial informal invasion of unused interstitial urban land may be a good example. The conservation phase comes when these gains are significant enough to be conserved; more permanent buildings are constructed, political liaisons established for protection; infrastructure is upgraded and the system becomes more or less resilient to change.

Conservation can lead to stagnancy and loss of adaptability. The release phase (if it comes) is that brief period when the forces for change overwhelm the place and it crosses a threshold and slips into a new regime. In the case of the informal settlement this may be when the settlement is demolished and residents are displaced. Re-organization is a creative period when a new order begins to appear. This may be the formal city that replaces the informal, or it may be the way the residents are either re-housed or re-house themselves. The settlement may also spiral downwards and stabilize as a dangerous and resilient slum; or it may be incrementally upgraded towards a more formal neighbourhood.

A key issue lies in how to define the system. For Gunderson and Holling (2002) all such systems and their cycles of change are enmeshed in multi-scalar hierarchies which called ‘panarchies’ where every system becomes part of systems at higher scales. These are hierarchies of scale rather than control since all systems are mutually interactive. At the smallest scale a street trader operates within the space/time system of a particular street or network with its available locations, codes, fees, customers and prices. This system can stabilize but it can also cycle through phases of growth, conservation, removal and re-organization. This is the scale of public/private interfaces and face-to-face contact. In informal settlements this is the scale of room-by–room accretions and their social and access networks. At a larger scale we find the broader patterns of street and traffic networks and the interface between the formal and informal city. The resilience of the system and its emergent properties can only be understood through a multi-scalar approach. Systems can adapt to change by initiating or preventing change at lower and higher levels of the system. Demolition programs may be initiated at the level of the state; resistance may include sitting in front of a bulldozer, lobbying state politicians and organizing a transnational response through websites.

While I find such complex adaptive systems theory to be a useful framework for understanding urban informality in these ways, I also find the term ‘system’ rather limited. It carries connotations of predictability and systematic control as in the work of Habermas (1984) where the ‘system’ is...
identified with the top-down controls of the state and the market and is conceived in opposition to the lifeworld. Such connotations would leave us identifying the system with formality, yet the complex adaptive processes that so characterize urban development are anything but systematic in these senses. I suggest that the ‘complex adaptive assemblage’ is a more accurate and useful label. The synergies of formal and informal practices, the emergent character that is often identified with Asian cities – the intensity and proliferation of streetlife, signage and streetfood is fundamentally about the ways the informal/formal has been negotiated. Informal settlements on the other hand are a global morphology produced (to oversimplify) by sustained rural to urban migration under conditions of a weak state. There is nothing to be defended in the condition of urban slums – overcrowded and unsafe housing with insecure tenure. Yet it is important to distinguish the informality from the poverty in which it is enmeshed. The high levels of informality are fundamental to the ways in which these assemblages work, and a better understanding of them as dynamic urban assemblages is fundamental to any potential for upgrading. I want to move now to discuss a few tentative steps towards the application of such theory in Asian cities in my own work and with colleagues.

BAN PANTHOM

Ban Ph tomb is a dense, diverse and complex inner urban neighbourhood of Bangkok that is subject to continuous pressure for change arising from traffic, modernization, commerce, tourism and rural-to-urban migration (Dovey & Polakit 2006). One of the key characteristics is its instability: the identity of the place is defined by its slippages, by the fluidity of forms, practices and meanings. A variety of proprietors, residents, hawkers and others use and appropriate public space for a broad range of functions, desires and practices (Figure 3). The use and meaning of public space are subject to both local and global flows of time and space with shifting meanings of private/public and legal/illegal. This ‘slipperiness’ is linked to intense demand for the use of space, but also to negotiable forms of governance and urban planning. This is a place where functional categories blur as hotels become housing and brothels, public space becomes domesticated and private space becomes public; where a clinic or a car workshop during the day becomes a restaurant at night; where a hawker trolley morphs into a permanent renovation. The urban place identity emerges as a dynamic tension between rhizomic practices of everyday life and hierarchical systems of spatial control; between informal and formal processes. Everywhere there are striations, territories, rules and regulations; and everywhere they are transgressed. Yet this is a home and community for a rich mix of people and a vast range of productive leisure and consumption activities. The levels of informality are not uniform, increasing both with night and depth within the labyrinthine spatial structure. It is often the deeper layers of this urban assemblage that are the most livable, most resilient and least legal.
The second example is a study of an informal settlement in Yogyakarta undertaken in collaboration with Wing Raharjo (Dovey & Raharjo 2010). Here the complexities are rich and the adaptive transformations are dynamic. Forms of tenure within this settlement range from owner-built squatter housing, to owner-built on rented land, to full house/land tenure and house/land rental. In no sense can it be construed as a squatter settlement but nor is it a simple slum since internal densities and construction standards range from slums to middle-class housing. Parts of the settlements are enmeshed in practices of speculation, upgrading and land encroachment while other parts become stuck in poverty traps. The worst slums and the least secure tenure can be on formally owned but rented land, and the greatest improvements in both tenure and housing quality are found in new encroachments. The settlement has proven highly adaptive – to a major flood and to opportunities for upgrading, political support and new encroachments along the riverbank. Complex processes of land speculation take place without formal ownership since informal tenure becomes the norm.

The state cannot easily remove or upgrade such a settlement, many parts of which are on private land and they cannot legalize the squatting without stimulating further encroachments. The result is a complex adaptive assemblage that becomes resilient to major change. For those who want...
informal settlements erased or quickly upgraded into formal settlements this can be frustrating. For those who live there this is the way everyday life is sustained. Informality is the means by which these people gain a house and (eventually) gain tenure.

Figure 4: Sidomulyo, Yogyakarta

MAEKLONG MARKET

Next I want to look at the Maeklong seafood and vegetable market south of Bangkok. This is a permeable field of temporary market stalls sheltered by umbrellas and awnings, not fundamentally different to such public markets anywhere else in the world. This is a complex adaptive assemblage that changes with the time of day and the season but it also adapts in another way because part of the market is constructed on top of an old railway line. Eight times a day when the train comes through, the market stalls are wheeled or pulled back from the line for a couple of minutes while the train passes and then the market resumes within a minute or so of the train passing. This fascinating piece of adaptive urbanism, best viewed on video, has become a popular internet spectacle which can be found easily by googling ‘Maeklong market’. This is no makeshift or temporary operation and has worked this way for about 30 years. It is a formal operation in the sense that the train timetable is pre-determined and everybody knows what will happen and when; but it is also informal urbanism in the sense that nobody is in charge of the operation. An informal tower has been built as a lookout, the message passes down the line when the train is coming and everyone adapts.

It is important to understand that the market vendors are not squatters, the railway authority rents out the train line when it is not needed for trains. It does not, however, appear to be resilient and the change comes from two key variables. The first is increasing tourism from those who have seen this spectacle on the net and have come to see it for themselves. There is no safe place from which to view it and any attempt to meet the tourist market would severely impact on the
Maeklong market. The second force for change is that the railway authority plans to upgrade the rail line and connect it into the national network. Any increase in frequency of trains would render the use of the tracks less viable. In the case of both tourism and transport, change at a higher level of the assemblage produces new adaptations at the lower level.

URBAN INTERSTICES

The final application of such thinking is a research project in process with Ross King looking at the larger scale assemblages of informal settlements and the ways they mesh and intersect with the formal city. The first part of this research involves an exploration of the ways in which informal settlements infiltrate the formal city. We have identified a set of eight formal or diagrammatic types of informal settlement based on the ways in which the informal/formal connection is assembled (Dovey & King, forthcoming). These include what we have defined as waterfronts (land/water margins), escarpments (vertical margins), easements (infrastructural buffer zones), sidewalks (pedestrian space), accretions (outgrowths of formal buildings), backstages (hidden informality), enclosures (compounds) and districts (often former swamps or unused marginal land). In each case the contingencies of landscape and urban morphology produce urban interstices within which informal urbanism sprouts. These are slices, patches or margins of urban land that have a quality of ‘smoothness’ that renders them available for appropriations that have proven resilient over time.

As this research proceeds we are particularly interested in the formal and representational aspects of urban informality at these intersections between the formal and informal city. How does the image of informal settlements in developing cities impact on the public gaze and as forms of political discourse? How do informal settlements emerge within different urban niches with different degrees of visibility? What are the spatial relations of formal to informal cities? How
does the morphology of makeshift house types in problematic contexts mesh with political and economic ideals. What transformational strategies are adopted to manage such imagery and, how is this mediated by the political economy of place branding, upgrading and eviction?

DISCUSSION

All of these cases show just how intermeshed informal and formal processes are in all urban assemblages – even those that may appear highly formal or informal. There is no conclusion to this paper beyond a claim that an understanding of urban informality can benefit from the intellectual and conceptual toolkit of complex adaptive assemblages. This is not systems thinking as we have known it, nor is it simply deconstruction, aesthetic critique, morphological analysis or political economy. Importantly it is multi-disciplinary, multi-scale and anti-reductionist. The complexity and adaptability of the city cannot be understood from singular points of view nor reduced to architectural, urban design, urban planning or geographical analysis. In many ways such thinking is not new. It is now many years since Christopher Alexander (1965) wrote the seminal paper ‘A City is Not a Tree’ – a fundamental insight that continues to inform and transform urban thinking after nearly half a century. Key to this insight was that informal lateral connections between parts are crucial to the ways in which the city works. He might have been describing a complex adaptive assemblage.

Urban informality is too often either demonised as the virus that must be removed or romanticized as the revenge of the poor. There is nothing essentially good or bad about urban informality, the crucial research questions lie in the myriad ways in which the formal and informal intersect. Much crime, violence and corruption is informal and the informal sector can also operate in synergies with state and market oppression (Roy, 2004: 159). The informal economy can drain the tax base necessary for effective regime change at a higher level. To understand urban assemblages, to design or regulate effectively within them, requires a complex understanding of the factors that drive regime change. We may wish to control the forces for change or we may wish to drive the system into a new and better regime. There is nothing essentially good about urban resilience - corruption and poverty can be highly resilient to change. Yet the question of environmentally resilient cities is also of the highest importance (Newman et al 2009). In this regard I would suggest that informal settlements have one of the lowest carbon footprints of any form of urbanism on the planet – they often utilize recycled materials at high densities with low-rise morphologies, close to employment with low car dependence. There may be a great deal we can learn from informal urbanism in this regard as we proceed to upgrade rather than erase.
REFERENCES:


Acknowledgements:
All photographs by Kim Dovey. Maps for Figure 4 by University of Melbourne students (Dovey & Raharjo 2010)

Endnotes:

1 The use of the concept of ‘assemblage’ in the literature is often broader than that deployed here, particularly it encompasses the work of Latour (2006) and actor-network theory (Farias & Bender 2010).

2 The concept of the ‘plateau’ in ‘A Thousand Plateaus’ is derived from Bateson’s work where plateaus are levels of provisional stability established by cultures.

3 The word ‘panarchy’ combines the Greek god of fields and fertility with the ideas of an all encompassing connectivity and a certain disorder.

4 This work is based on the PhD fieldwork of Kasama Polakit. See: Polakit, K. ‘Bangkok Streetlife: urbanism, culture, and communities’, PhD Dissertation, University of Melbourne, 2006.
This work is based on 2007 fieldwork conducted with a group of University of Melbourne and Universitas Islam Indonesia students, later extended as part of the PhD dissertation of Wiryono Raharjo. See: Raharjo, W. ‘Speculative Settlements: built forms and tenure ambiguity in the Javanese Kampung’, PhD Dissertation, University of Melbourne, 2010.

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