Gusti Ayu Made Suartika · Julie Nichols
Editors

Reframing the Vernacular: Politics, Semiotics, and Representation

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Editors
Gusti Ayu Made Suartika
Masters Program in Architecture
and Development & Planning
Udayana University
Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia

Julie Nichols
School of Art, Architecture and Design,
Vernacular Knowledge Research Group
University of South Australia
Adelaide, SA, Australia

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Foreword

Vernacular architecture is contextual and particular in respect to place, geography and culture. Vernacular buildings and settlements involve uses of local resources, respond to local climate and produce regional and local identities. Rapid development, uncontrolled growth, urbanization and other forces of change have profound impacts on vernacular architecture. The challenges that face vernacular architecture are many. They range from commodification of culture through the use of vernacular building forms and appropriations of traditional materials by the tourist industry to mindless imitations of vernacular building elements so as to invent national or regional identities. As we become more global we also face the challenge of how to conserve, preserve and sustain local vernacular building practices and unique regional architectural and settlement characteristics. Within this context of continuity and change, discourses pertaining to the role and uses of vernacular architecture in terms of political contexts, meaning, and representation have not been adequately addressed as “themes” within contemporary conversations on vernacular architecture.

The First International Conference on Cultural Communication and Space (ICCCS) and the Ninth International Conference on Vernacular Settlements (ISVS) held at the Department of Architecture, Udayana University in Bali, Indonesia, November 28–29, 2018, brought together scholars and professionals from a wide variety of disciplines to participate in an international dialogue involving these less developed themes. Framed within the context of “vernacularity” and “culture” the conference attracted a wide range of scholars and professionals from a variety of disciplines to collectively focus on two areas. The first was our understanding of vernacularity in the context of “globalization, cross-disciplinarity, and development.” The second was to discuss how “vernacularity has been treated, used, employed, manipulated, practiced, maintained, learned, reconstructed, preserved and conserved, at the level of individual and community experience.”

Papers presented by participants in the conference addressed topics categorized into the following sub-themes:

- Transformation in the vernacular built environment
- Vernacular architecture and representation
- The meaning of home
- Symbolic intervention and interpretation of vernacularity
- The semiotics of place
- The politics of ethnicity and settlement
- Global tourism and its impacts on vernacular settlement
- Vernacular built form and aesthetics
- Technology and construction in vernacular built forms
- Vernacular language – writing and oral traditions

This book is a collection of papers from the conference. The scholarly writings and research investigations that make up this book represent a rich tapestry of case studies, points of view, arguments and readings that examine and reframe the complexities the vernacular within the frameworks of politics, semiotics, and representation. Together, the chapters in this book present a multi-disciplinary and international discourse about the place, relevance, perceptions, transformations and contemporary usefulness of vernacular built environments.

Department of Architecture
Texas Tech University
Lubbock, TX, USA

Joseph Aranha
joseph.aranha@ttu.edu

Preface

The word *vernacular* is widely circulated. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word as “the language or dialect spoken by ordinary people in a particular country or region”, or in regard to the built environment, vernacular implies “architecture concerned with domestic and functional rather than monumental buildings”. The use of the word vernacular has also been extended generically to embrace vernacular music, vernacular sport, vernacular crafts, vernacular literature, vernacular art, vernacular modernism, etc. In so doing, a variety of academic disciplines have become involved, to include architecture, anthropology, linguistics, cultural studies, and other regions of academic endeavour. Paradoxically, language itself also reveals other problems – some cultures do not have a word for *vernacular* and interpret implied meanings differently. We cannot even assume that an agreed cross-cultural meaning exists – some languages do not have the word *vernacular* in their dictionaries.

So *vernacular* has an immense range of meanings and contexts. Possibly, its widest use is in the area of vernacular architecture, a subject already explored in great depth. The purpose of this conference is to investigate three lesser developed themes: The first is the *political* context of vernacular subjects (such as architecture). The second addresses *meaning* in the vernacular. The third deals with how the vernacular is presented and *represented.* But we also know that these three regions overlap in complex ways and address a wide variety of themes. We seek to address such complexity by focussing on the interstices *between* subjects rather than on individual subjects such as architecture, culture, language, art, or design.

The word *vernacular* also conveys a state of being native, original, and contextual to geography and places. In many locations, it embraces entire environments, their art, culture, and the very existence of indigenous societies. How the word is to be comprehended is a moot point, but how a vernacular existence is to be understood and accommodated by postmodernity is a herculean task involving debate at an archaeology of levels. Hence, “vernacularity” is also part of the global equation. It has been a source of political and social conflict and dispute for decades over issues such as the survival of indigenous communities in places like Australia. The commodification of people and places, the strategy of global tourism, has deep impacts on vernacular life, its customs, traditions, aspirations, and sensibilities. Accepting the inevitability of globalisation and its universal impacts on local cultures, we need to go no further than the conference venue in Bali to witness its effects. Here, we can observe the erosion of traditions, the designation of traditional villages as tourist destinations, the establishment of World Heritage Sites, and overall the redeployment of urban meaning to focus on the global over the local.

Given the complexity of the above situation, it is the prime goal of this conference to reflect this context and to invite participants from a wide variety of disciplines to participate in an international dialogue on “vernacularity” and culture. The conference therefore seeks to concentrate on two major domains. First, it attempts to reframe our understanding of vernacularity by addressing the subject in the context of globalisation, cross-disciplinarity, and development. Second, it discusses the phenomenon of how vernacularity has been treated, used, employed, manipulated, practiced, maintained, learned, reconstructed, preserved, and conserved at the level of individual and community experience. We therefore invite scholars from a wide variety of knowledge fields to participate in enriching and engaging discussions as to how both agendas can be addressed.

This international gathering has been initiated collaboratively by the Centre for Cultural Communication and Space (CCCS), the Research Centre for Smart City, Tropical Engineering-Architecture Program, and Master’s Program in Architecture of Udayana University, the University of South Australia and its Vernacular Knowledge Research Group (VKRG), and the International Society for Vernacular Settlement (ISVS). This event is also following the successful conduct of the 8th ISVS International Conference by the Department of Architecture of Hasanudin University in Makassar, Sulawesi, in 2016.

This international conference involved four keynote speakers including Emeritus Professor Anthony Reid (Australian National University, Australia), Emeritus Professor John Lang (University of New South Wales, Australia), Professor Abidin Kusno (York University, Canada), and Professor Ramesh Biswas (Austria). It has produced publications in the form of conference proceedings and journal articles. This scholarly work published by Springer represents the first category.

Denpasar, Indonesia
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Gusti Ayu Made Suartika
Julie Nichols

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Chapter 1
Reframing the Vernacular and Other Tales

Abidin Kusno

Abstract To reframe the vernacular to address issues around politics, semiotics and representation is to demand multiple actors on opposite sites to address their interests and concerns over the physical environment and its contradictory forces. This chapter consists of two parts. The first part teases out five spheres of inquiry: power of the state, forces of capitalism, practices of everyday life, the propensity of religion and ecology, and the reconstitution of identity. It shows how these spheres shape multiple actors who in turn shape their interaction producing thus the vernacular as the site of contestation. The second part uses Indonesian history as an illustrative example of how the vernacular could be studied politically as a site of contestation.

Keywords State · Commodity · Everyday · History · Politics · Contestation · Popular · Official · Kampung · Colonial · Postcolonial

It seems clear to everyone that Indonesia (if Bali can be its representative) has a rich building heritage. And it perhaps feels more Indonesian to say that the rich building heritage includes the vernacular environment is (always) with us along with its wisdom and potential for surviving into the future. It follows that we tend to think that the vernacular is not only always with us, but is always the same: the same object with the same interested people who think the same thoughts. As such we tend to ignore that the vernacular is a product of time and place in a context of power relations that are not unchanging.

This paper starts with some of the things I have learned about the term "vernacular" and how it might be productively analyzed through a set of inquiries. Then, something about locating it in a time and space, in a context, which then is about periodization. And if we talk about periodization, we are talking about a break, a shift or a rupture in giving meaning to the "vernacular." And finally, there is the

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A. Kusno (✉)
Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada
e-mail: akusno15@yorku.ca

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question of how to give a political frame to the vernacular. This means to address the term in a context of a struggle for recognition, inclusion and survival.

1.1 Coming to Term with the Vernacular: Five Spheres of Inquiry

From my research, I couldn’t find the use of the term “vernacular” in Indonesian architectural writings before the 2000s [1]. The term was never used until quite recently. None of the workshops or conferences on Indonesian architecture in the 1980s and 1990s used the term vernacular [2]. The most commonly used term was “traditional” such as in traditional houses (*rumah tradisional*). It may be interesting to ask why the term vernacular was only starting to be used in the 2000s and not earlier, when the object that the term refers to is largely the same: “traditional houses,” “living houses” and so on. Perhaps there is something about the new millennium that has given rise to the use of the term vernacular?

1.1.1 The Politics of the State

I suspect the emergence of the “vernacular” (in place of the traditional) in Indonesia today is associated with the feeling about the arrival of a new time. The notion of “tradition” or the “traditional” is seen as belonging to the previous era when politics and culture of the state intersected. As I will discuss in further detail, both colonial and postcolonial states sought to prolong its occupancy of power through identification, mediation and appropriation of the “traditional” [3]. Particular built forms, identified as “traditional” were preserved for colonial project of modernity and postcolonial nation-state building. This cultural politics of the state underscores the constructed nature of traditional/vernacular built environment in the service of political and economic interests. The collapse of Suharto’s regime (1966–1998) has resulted in the devolution of power and funding to the provinces, which in turn has given rise to the reassertion of local identities and new claims of traditionality. It is not clear if the new era of decentralization promotes the use of the term “vernacular” to differentiate the new era from the old time, but politics continues to play a role in the production of architecture and the meaning invested in it.

1.1.2 Commodification

Be that as it may, today we see more and more architects and architecture historians using the term vernacular. Some are quick to differentiate the “vernacular” from the “traditional”. They think that the vernacular is more capable of dealing with time, with change, and more open to innovation, whereas the traditional refers only to a timeless heritage subjected to preservation. They feel that the vernacular overcomes the impasse of the binary opposition of the modern and the traditional. For them, tradition + innovation = vernacular. This I think is where architects are involved in the continuous "invention of tradition". They work with local governments to re-tool what has been identified as vernacular environment from the perspective of branding, heritage industries and competition in global economy [4]. This also suggests that the speeding up of time in capitalist modernization has not only led to the destruction of vernacular environment, instead the latter survives in and through commodification and consumption generated by international tourism. In this sense, the preservation of vernacular built forms (or the adaptation of them for contemporary use) is secured by the condition that is different from that under which the buildings were originally constructed. The reconstruction of the vernacular carries simultaneous creative destruction and construction associated with capitalist globalization.

1.1.3 Memory and Practices of Everyday Life

The two sets of force fields identified above, that is, the authority of the state and the power of capitalism constitute a "form of dominance" that both destroy and reconstruct the vernacular. On the other hand, the increasing acknowledgement of the term vernacular is due to the question of how power works to exclude subalterns or marginalized populations. Postcolonial studies, for instance, asks questions about whose vernacular are being embraced, for whom knowledge or culture is produced and who benefits or suffers from its application. Yet, if the built environment represents power and its socio-political structure, it also carries with it fissures or contradictions that can be exploited by the disaffected.

The vernacular environment can be conceived as a constructed life of (once) marginalized communities (e.g. indigenous people) as a refuge from the violence of the public domain dominated by settlers' ways of life. The preservation of urban and cultural landscape is in part an effort to make place for memories against displacement and discrimination (See Hayden, Jacobs). In such cases, the vernacular is linked more to the present struggle than to any past associated with a handling down of a tradition from the past to the present. The evocation of place and memory situates the vernacular in a site of contestation. Such reframing of the vernacular has broadened the field to cover the uneven geography of the urban which once only known to planning and international development. The realities of marginalization in the everyday life of people in "shanty towns," "irregular settlements", and *kampung* have become issues that matter to the field of vernacular architecture.

For those who embrace this expanded field of the vernacular, it seems to be for at least three reasons. First, the vernacular serves to acknowledge the non-monumental, the popular, the ordinary or the informal as a legitimate expression of architecture. Second, it democratizes architecture by acknowledging the agency of (non-architecture) people in building their own built environment. Third, it accepts changes in built form and sees the incremental, the trial and error techniques in building a house, as creativity in design culture. But we could also add a wealth of critical concepts developed in postcolonial urban studies such as "informality," "occupancy urbanism," "gray space," "quiet rebellion," "subaltern urbanism," and "spaces of insurgency" to account for the ways in which people are engaged in politics through their everyday life. In this sense, the vernacular is a counter current, an action term capable of presenting new demands and opportunities to ask "who gets what, when and how". The built environment in its vernacular expression thus can be framed as a material representation of political practices aimed at unsettling power arrangement.

1.1.4 The Sphere of the Spiritual and the Ecological

The vernacular is most productive (which means politically useful) when it is constructed out of multiple oppositions: the high and the low, the monumental and the everyday; the center and the periphery. There is however a continuing debate about whether the everyday is ever fully colonized and always already within the framework of the dominant, or it is irreducible to domination and that it can be located somewhere outside the structure of power, and from there it stages counter practices. For this position, the category of the everyday includes embodied experiences, the sensory, the tactile, the spontaneous, and the improvisatory that resist the spectacle industries. In other words, the vernacular in its enduring routine of the everyday life is governed by a different logic that is irreducible to commodification, such as the spiritual, the ethical, the ecological- terms that are conceptualized as somewhat capable of evading the control of capital and the state by virtue of its real or imaginary power.

In the context of struggle against injustices, degradation and exploitation, for instances, the spiritual and the ecological is often mobilized on the basis of restoring unity. Here, the ecological and spiritual concepts represent values that could be mobilized for democratic actions against exploitation of environment. For instance, the resistance against reclamation of Tanjung Benoa mobilizes the eco-spiritual ethics of Balinese Hinduism which sees the Island of Bali as "a land of spiritualism where all inhabitants, alive or unanimated, live side by side in harmony" [5, p. 163]. And on this basis, the reclamation of Benoa Bay represents an imposition of ecological injustice. The issue is not about sharing the economic benefit but that the economic gain should be brought about by spirituality (not by any business or developmental logic). Here, the spiritual and the ecological are recollected and mobilized in the context of asymmetries of power. They represent a mode of agency that is both deeply-human and extra-human and thus irreducible to the worldly dominant power and yet they become tangible by collective struggles.

1.1.5 Reinventing Self and Rewriting History

While the vernacular is most productive when it engages with the struggle of the present, its utility is also due to a deep psychic of those (such as Indonesians) who are yearning for rootedness or place-ness that is tied to the construction of selfhood. This factor invites us to look at the vernacular in terms of identity and difference. The notion of vernacular allows a line to be drawn between the self and the other, the insider and the outsider, indigeneity and alien. This alterity, as Ranajit Guha, subaltern studies historian once pointed out, takes its position within a relationship of power. The Latin *verna* "is the memory of an ancient subjugation which includes a home-born slave" [6]. Guha also notes that in India "'vernacular' established itself as a distancing and supremacist sign which marked out its referents, the indigenous languages and cultures, as categorically inferior to those of the West and of England in particular". And in the system of colonial education, "the initial moment of vernacular history was already incorporated in a hegemonic and masterful view of the past that was not the verna's own" [6, p. 300].

Guha's critique is similar to that of Josef Prijotomo, the Indonesian architectural theorist. For Prijotomo, the notion of vernacular stigmatizes certain built environment as it holds others (the architectural, the cultured, or foreign influenced) up as the norm [7]. In this sense, the term reproduces colonialism as the European would be placed at the apex of an architectural hierarchy and the vernacular at the bottom. For Prijotomo, the concept of vernacular suggests an inferior status as it reproduces recolonization of one's own language by another group speaking a different language. What Prijotomo suggests is that the notion of vernacular makes sense only if we acknowledge the condition of coloniality in our contemporary time. We could also add that the term vernacular homogenizes the diverse structure of subordination and so any undertaking (by anti-colonial nationalist) to retrieve the vernacular as an idealization of pre-colonial society and culture takes the risk of dissolving diversity into a single (national) past.

Such critique recalls Indonesia's own colonial history, but the vernacular also serves as a heuristic device for a search for a layer of culture (or civilization) considered as "authentic," "indigenous," or "local" that is assumed to lie underneath layers of external influence. In architectural discussion, we thus heard about the foreign (represented by the "land-based" architecture of walls and stones derived from the tradition of the West, the Indic and the Sinic) and how it is different from the indigenous spatial conception, the "water-based" civilization, the Austronesian living houses and the local cosmopolitanism of *"nusantara."* The vernacular thus has developed in tandem with the identification of (local) agency, as in "genius loci" which is inseparable from a more problematic question of origins, and authenticity.

What I have indicated so far is that despite the various receptions, the term vernacular is understood as a relational term, and that it makes sense only within a matrix of power relations. In this sense, when the vernacular is understood as "different culture," "culture at the margin/periphery," or "oppositional culture," it could also be appropriated by dominant culture to represent a form of dominance. And, similarly, no dominant culture can exhaust the vernacular.

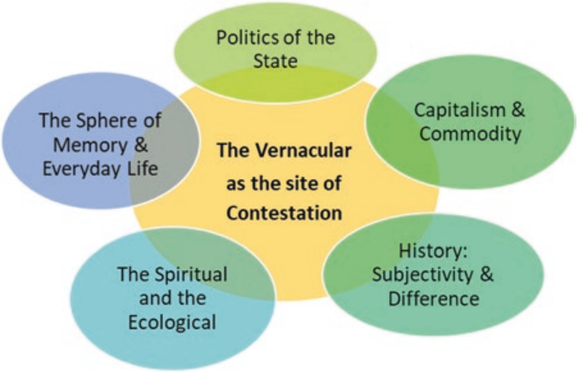
Politics of the State
The Sphere of Memory & Everyday Life
Capitalism & Commodity
The Vernacular as the site of Contestation
The Spiritual and the Ecological
History: Subjectivity & Difference

Fig. 1.1 Reframing the vernacular

What I am proposing here is to see the vernacular as a site of contestation that the vernacular is not singular, that it operates within a constellation of power relations, as represented by a matrix of five spheres of inquiry (Fig. 1.1). It follows that in this matrix the vernacular gains substance only in certain social formation at particular moment in time. In the following section, by way of illustrating the working of some components in the matrix, I narrate a political history of Indonesian architecture where the vernacular serves as a site of contestation.

1.2 A Tale of Two Vernaculars

1.2.1 Colonial Vernacularism

Vernacularism could be said as dating back to the nineteenth century examples of imperialism and have been widely discussed to characterize a strategy of colonization leading up to WWII. For Indonesia, during the first half of the twentieth century, some Dutch architects (such as Henri Maclaine Pont, Thomas Karsten and Vincent van Romondt) were drawn to "traditional architecture" that they found in the colony. They sought to use the construction methods and styles of some of the houses the selected in the archipelago to create a new architectural form [8]. By doing so, they were also in some ways responding to the political climate of the "ethical policy" launched by colonial government. I can only indicate the sharp edge of what I understand by Dutch "ethical policy." That is the opening, from the 1920s onwards, of a new political agenda by the colonial government to maintain the occupancy of power. The agenda was to encourage the participation of the colonized in developing a distinctive form of cultural modernity, a synthesis of (for our case) the achievement of the "east" and the "west" in architecture. The strategy was to produce "architecture of association" by incorporating elements of indigenous (especially expressive) architectural forms. There have been many studies on these architectural forms, but I would like to emphasize three points, the last of which is most important and yet has not been explored:

- First, Dutch architects in the early twentieth century had already staged a series of heated debates about "vernacularism" in terms of what part of traditional structures could be counted as "architecture," what sources were "indigenous" and what counted as "foreign" influences. In other words, they were already talking about categories, identity and identification in their account of Indonesian past and future architectural strategies [9].
- Second, this architectural debate has the effect of creating a category of the high or official vernacular one that passed the architectural evaluation.
- Third, around the same time when this was happening, a different kind of vernacular built form, known as *kampung*, was also coming into the attention of both Dutch and Indonesians. The *kampung* apparently featured quite importantly in Indonesian anti-colonial literature in the 1920s (during what Takashi Shiraishi called the Age in Motion-*zaman pergerakan*). For example, in the collection of stories by Indonesian radical, Mas Marco Kortodikromo, *kampung* was described against the modernity of colonial city (by which Mas Marco was also fascinated), but he mobilized *kampung* to criticize colonial neglects. For Mas Marco, *kampung* was as important as other architecture identified by architects. *Kampung* was where most people (*rakyat*) lived, and its presence revealed the reluctance of colonial government to tackle housing issues for the *rakyat*.

We could say that Mas Marco was mobilizing "popular" vernacular settlements to address colonial injustices. We could say therefore that, back then in colonial time, there was already contestation about issues of "whose vernacular"? The stage had already been set for us to see the vernacular as a site of contestation.

Let me now move on to a brief period between Dutch colonialism and Indonesian Independence that is the period of Japanese military occupation (1942–1945). We tend to ignore or forget this brief period of colonialism, but the *kampung* environment (or should we now call it the "popular vernacular") was a central framework for Japanese occupancy of power. Unlike the Dutch, Japan saw in *kampung* a medium for communicating its intention to win popular authority. Japan's direct involvement in the organization of the Indonesian *kampung* neighborhoods and the militarization of everyday life was a strategy of rule that was starkly different from the "indirect rule" of Dutch colonialism. The need for war mobilization demanded Japan to win popular authority by enacting everyday practices of *gotong royong* (mutual-help) and *ronda* (night-watch) in the *kampung*. The Japanese military glorified *kampung* as the embodiment of Indonesian identity while staging some newly constructed model *kampung* as the future of liberated Indonesia. To gain popular support, the Japanese military government sought to reverse the Dutch "high vernacularism" by focusing on the *kampung* vernacular as the signifier of *rakyat*, the Indonesian people.

1.2.2 Postcolonial Re-turn: Modernist Popular Vernacularism

The depth of the Japanese reversal of the representation of power is up for further research, but I think it was profound. Sukarno, the first President, liked to talk about the dark age of Dutch colonialism in contrast to the time of light (which unconsciously echoed the propaganda of Japan as "the light of Asia"). As soon as the transfer of sovereignty in 1950, the first Housing Congress was held, and it was organized around the "*kampung* question" and the "healthy houses for the *rakyat*." *Kampung* was immediately a popular subject for it represented the *rakyat*, but I don't mean that *kampung* itself was favored. It was in fact despised by the political elites. For instance, Vice-President Mohamad Hatta (in 1952) had said, "most people live in a place that looks more like a cow sheds than a house. Such kind of housing is simply not appropriate for an independent and respectful nation" [10]. But the same Hatta also instructed that "the house of people should be made of materials from Indonesia" [11]. What the nationalists did was to establish a common sense that the *kampung* was a symbol of (Dutch) colonial neglect and that *kampung* folks were the embodiment of people-nation, and so what was needed for the new nation was modern housing. And the Indonesian nationalists aimed not for a short political agenda (as in the case of the military Japan), but for a long occupancy of power. The nationalists saw in housing, a project for building people-nation.

We have here a reworking of popular vernacularism to gain popular authority in the context of decolonization. The value of Indonesian nationalism of Sukarno era was clearly not that of the old aristocracy symbolized by the official vernacular architecture of *pendopo* or *kraton* favored by Dutch architects. The postcolonial state was "revolutionary" in that sense that it rejected the high vernacularism of the Dutch colonial era, and by doing so it organized itself around popular vernacularism through a concern about people's housing. Yet, as indicated above, Indonesian nationalism also gave no hope to vernacular *kampung*. The postcolonial state was a modernist state which sought to mobilize homegrown resources, from materials to practices of *gotong royong*, but the aim was to build "a new house for every household." We can call this effort an expression of "modernist popular vernacularism."

1.2.3 The New Order's Reversal

Let me move forward to the New Order of Suharto (1965–1998). For Indonesians over 30 years of rule was clearly a complex era because at least some parts, a large piece or tiny bit, of all of us was somewhere inside the New Order project. We embraced development, we wanted progress, we wanted to move up, and for those who lived in Jakarta, they or their parents would want them to leave behind *kampung*, to be part of real estate civilization, to become "middle class," to become Indonesian. Behind this aspiration, was a deep transformation of self, of culture and society.

For Suharto there was no serious political project, which was not also about dismantling Sukarno's version of socialist modernity. The political project of Suharto (which grew out of the tragedy of 1965) was organized in opposition to popular revolt. Its violent ascendancy to power had made it difficult to build legitimacy, without major contradiction, on "popular vernacularism" of a socialist blend. It was also clear that the state just could not afford to build a house for each household. What the New Order did was to allow the *kampung* grow to take advantage of its labour supply while preventing it from becoming a political force. This was done by a "cleaning" of *kampung* through a program to eliminate "communist influence" through education, campaign and surveillance. The working class (or better semi-proletariat or workers from informal sectors) would be "permitted" to build their own self-help *kampung*/urban vernacular dwellings through "*gotong royong*" and neighborhood organization as far as they did not pose a political threat to the state. This measure has dislodged *kampung* people from its political subjectivity. It follows that the kampung could be conveniently removed/evicted to make way for development projects. This strategy of rule has turned popular vernacularism (embodied in *kampung*) into the other "heterotopic" space to be feared, controlled and exploited. It has an impact on the subsequent fate of *kampung*, as demonstrated in the continuous criminalization, marginalization and eviction of kampong throughout the history of postcolonial cities.

What happened to buildings under "high vernacularism," those associated with what we know today as the non-*kampung* "traditional architecture" which fascinated Dutch architects but ignored by the early nationalist elites? The high traditional architecture continued to be recognized, according to the government, as a "fine heritage" for they "have a very sophisticated structural system." They however were put in the past as heritage for "all these buildings are constructed of timber, bamboo and *ijuk* (whereas) the current trend is for families to move out of these buildings into smaller new houses rather than maintain the large community structure" [11, p. 16]. As early as 1967, in conjunction with the year of international tourism, this "fine building heritage" was preserved as touristic object (*obyek wisata*) for "cultural wonder." By the 1970s, the Indonesian government was quite clear in their architectural strategy: "preservation of existing traditional structures and the building of new ones" [11, p. 16].

In postcolonial Suharto, the Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature (TMII), built in 1975, was an example of this state preservation effort. It museumized traditional structures, as an object for display. The curating of high "traditional customary houses" (the *rumah adat*) to represent the 27 provinces (then included East Timor) in a park created a material for public education and tourism. It also served the need of the state to imagine its territory and diversity in the name of pre-colonial national tradition. Through TMII, the state reinvented the "high vernacular" as a collection of timeless "fine building heritage" to complement the New Order project of development.

The official vernacularism of TMII generated interests in traditional architecture among architects. I still remember in the mid-1980s there were series of conferences on "Indonesian architecture" ranging from those that celebrated cultural heritage to those that were critical to the spectacle of traditional forms. Meanwhile outside the conference room, the government promoted imageries of the high vernaculars especially the aristocratic roof of Joglo to be used for government and commercial buildings. As a political symbolism of Suharto regime, Joglo sought to take society backwards, as if the new generation of Indonesians belonged to the old authority. Yet, as in the colonial era, official vernacularism while regressive was essentially a project of "development." By representing authority and hierarchy via pre-colonial symbolism, the state sought to stabilize its domain, to overcome the social contradiction of development and to prevent popular revolt. This political formation however was inherently unstable but with the help from the military, it achieved some stability and order for few decades. The vernacular was in the grip of the state.

1.3 Reframing the Vernacular

What I have presented is a story about vernacular buildings as it is told through a political perspective. If this framing has some value it suggests that the discussion of vernacular architecture (in Indonesia) should not occlude popular settlements, such as *kampung,* and the larger urban context within which they are located. The field thus would have to be expanded as suggested in the matrix of relationship (Fig. 1.1) to capture the forces that operate in and through the vernacular. Our conceptual framework no doubt is informed by our own subjectivity or positionality. The setting up of two types of vernacular building, each traceable to a class position is deliberate but I hope it serves the objective of framing the vernacular as a site of contestation.

We should thus ask what does it mean when the vernacular includes a reference that is filled with tension, as in the uneven creation, maintenance and transformation of categories, the official and the popular? On the one hand, there is an acknowledgement and thus acceptance of the vernacular as an important part of our built environment. But on the other hand, due to politics, the acceptance has become conditional as some limitation on what counts as vernacular is tied to the question of whose vernacular?

As far as the story is concerned, I have suggested that the Dutch colonial ethical policy introduced high vernacularism whereas Japan's military occupation displaced this Dutch political representation by registering the importance of popular vernacularism. The postcolonial nationalists of the Sukarno era reworked further Japan's popular vernacularism through social housing initiatives. And the New Order of Suharto registered its own epoch by shaping both official and popular vernacularisms to fit its political and economic projects. In the end both the official and the popular are rooted in a past and might dwell unevenly in a future. So, by way of ending let me speculate their political potential, and in doing so, I will draw on some other components in the matrix of relations, especially those concern ambiguities, contradictions and resistances.

Let me go back briefly to the time of Suharto. It is important to note that the political arrangement of New Order's vernacularism had never been coherent. As indicated above, it moved between cultivation and exploitation, containment and dispossession in its relations with the popular vernacular. This contradictory impulse has found its most visible expression in all the capitalist modernization projects in the city where super modernist towers are located side by side or face to face with the *kampung.* This has made the city an arena of spectacle as much as a site of contestation that ranges from "quiet resistance" to open conflict situations especially when the government decided to remove *kampung* from its location for development projects.

But could the *kampung,* as the embodiment of the popular vernacular, survive the passage of capitalist time? Such question triggers memories that have not been forgotten. In 1983 in Yogyakarta (at the height of the military regime), the local government intended to evict a *kampung* along Kali (river) Code. In response, Romo

Mangunwijaya, an architect, who was also a catholic priest and a community activist, organized a kind of "quite resistance" by "upgrading" the *kampung* along the banks of Kali Code with colorful painting. We can consider what Romo Mangun did was a kind of semiotic mobilization to stop the government from evicting the poor from their habitat.

Today, we can see a loud echo of Romo Mangun's tactics. The Kampung Pelangi (the rainbow village) in South Semarang for instance has recently caught the attention of tourists (thanks to social media) when the local government set aside a budget to encourage *kampung* folks to paint their dwellings in at least three colors. This "urban agenda" immediately gained support from communities and business sectors who contributed further to the budget to cover many more *kampungs* with many more colors. This participatory movement is to save *kampung* and to generate revenue from tourism seem to enact the power of "popular vernacularism" but it also enjoys the sort of patronage unavailable in Romo Mangun's time.

Kampung Pelang idemands a different way of thinking about the vernacular as the site of contestation as the oppressed (*tertindas*) is now rewarded or celebrated for its marginality. Kampung Pelangi clearly stands in a particular relation to the way capital and politics work in Indonesia today. The *kampung* has been incorporated into the circuit of capital through tourist industries. It participates in the power arrangement created by the government, but what has happened to Kampung Pelangi is not short of a strategic engagement in a battlefield for the popular vernacular to win a war.

The Kampung Pelangi reworks Romo Mangun's earlier popular vernacularism, but it also represents a new movement. The agents of the vernacular are no longer the government, the architects, the cultural experts or the international organizations who have an office up there or out there. The agents of the vernacular today include *komunitas,* a multitude of young community organizers, local intellectuals and entrepreneurial activists as well as radicals (who recalls the early twentieth century Mas Marco Kartodikromo of colonial Indonesia) who discover and identify popular vernaculars as carrying potential for social change. The government is working with the multitudes to reframe the vernacular but how such democratization of the vernacular allows us to talk about domination, marginalization, exclusion and resistance, which I think is what makes the study of the vernacular both interesting and important.

References

1. Maybe I need to find more documents, but the earliest I have is from 1989 in the writing by Budi Sukada on architectural typology. Sukada used the term vernacular to refer to the architectural strategy of Mario Botta. The term was only taken up seriously in 2002 through an international conference called "Vernacular Settlement in the New Millennium: Resistance and Resilience of Local Knowledge in Built Environment" organized by University of Indonesia under the leadership of Gunawan Tjahjono who studies at UC Berkeley where Nezar Alsayyad, Dell Upton and Paul Groth were by then already major players in the shaping of discourses around vernacular architecture.
2. The popularity of "vernacular" architecture is tied to the intense economic growth that took place in the West following the end of WWII which has led to the production of society of mass consumption. In the aftermath of the failure of 1968 movements, critics on the left in the

West began to address the domination of industrial mass production and consumer culture. It gave meaning to Bernard Rudofsky's exhibition "architecture without architects" which could be said as an effort to criticize the homogenization of built form by the "international style" architecture. Paul Oliver played a key role in popularizing the term. He visited Indonesia in the 1980s to find contributors for his multi-volume studies of vernacular architecture.

3. Existing studies on politics of architecture have shown how the vernacular was exploited for national identity as well as for reinforcing, as in the case of Fascism, the myth of Aryan superiority.
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6. Guha, R.: The Authority of Vernacular Pasts. Meanjin 51(2), 299 (1992).
7. See: Prijotomo… Resistance to foreign term by some Indonesian architects deserves attention. For instance, the notion of "architecture." Despite the familiarity of the term for students of architecture, the very definition of architecture (as defined by Vitruvius) has never been quite accepted. Debates continue until today about the difficulties with the term "architecture." Consider how Romo Mangunwijaya replaced architecture with an Indic term: "Wastu Citra"; consider how Josef Prijotomo rejected Vitruvian framework by proposing the concept of "liyan" (the other); consider how Yuswadi Salya and Ardi Moersid kept reminding students about architecture is not represented by its physicality, instead it is the embodiment of mysteriumfascinans; Consider also how Robi Sularto, a philosopher of Balinese architecture believed that the architecture in Bali is "born," not built. Consider how various attempts have been made to localize architecture by various terms: "ethnic architecture"; "regional architecture"; *"arsitektur nusantara"*; *"arsitektur klasik Indonesia"*; *"arsitektur Pancasila"* and so on. Behind this struggle was an attempt to define identity and difference, and to deal with the presences of or influences from outside: the colonial, the Indic or the Sinic. There are thus interests in finding the true, the authentic typical "traditional" architecture that assumed to lie underneath layers of supranational influences.
8. Wright, G.: The politics of design in French colonial urbanism. University of Chicago Press, Chicago (1991).
9. For a documentation of the debates, see Sudradjat, I.: A Study of Indonesian Architectural History. p. 25–35. PhD Dissertation, Department of Architecture, University of Sydney (1991).
10. "Sering2 saja berkata, bahwa sebagian besar dari pada rumah2 rakjat lebih menyerupai kendang sapi daripada kediaman manusia. Perumahan sematjam itu tidak lajak bagi suatubangsa jang merdeka dan tahu diri". As cited in Hadinoto, K. 5 Tahun Djawatan Perumahan Rakjat.
11. Hatta (1952): "Rumah rakjat hendak dibuat dari bahan dan material jang dihasilkan oleh bumi Indonesia".As cited in Hadinoto, K. 5 Tahun Djawatan Perumahan Rakjat.

Chapter 2
Landfill Vernacular

John Devlin

Abstract This paper makes the case for *Landfill Vernacular* – the hybrid style of construction that combines locally-sourced natural materials with objects reclaimed from waste, as demonstrated at Bantar Gebang landfill in West Java, Indonesia. This technique is used to build small homes and workplaces for the people working in the informal recycling industry. Utilising photographs and referencing existing literature the paper argues that within these humble dwellings reside the seeds of a potential contribution to making urban housing more affordable, particularly in informal settlements. The background for this research discusses the housing challenges facing low-income communities, with an emphasis on the situation in Jakarta. Next, the conditions in the waste picker villages at the landfill are described, and then argues that the neighbourhoods and buildings there represent an emerging vernacular. Next the paper introduces BGBJ, the social enterprise that the author has been involved with for the last 4 years. This project has attracted hundreds of international and domestic visitors and is currently establishing an upcycling workshop in the landfill to assist construction projects. The discussion involves the potential of waste as a construction material and expands on the opportunities to: (a) educate the next generation of vernacular builders, and (b) improve the quality of reclaimed material available for building. The conclusions drawn from the research suggest that landfill vernacular can be developed into a technique suitable to help other groups in need, such as refugees from natural or manmade disasters.

Keywords Vernacular · Landfill · Social enterprise

J. Devlin (✉)
UniSA, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia
e-mail: John.devlin@postgrads.unisa.edu.au

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2.1 The Need for Affordable Housing

Shelter fulfils one of our most basic needs. Despite the rapid technological progress of the last century individuals and families still require a roof over their heads, protection from the elements, and a place to safely store their possessions. A home is one of the most valuable assets a person can have access to. Unfortunately for millions of people around the world this simple refuge is either absent or inadequate.

Many governments, for a variety of reasons, fail to provide low-income families with adequate housing and neighbourhood infrastructure. In these cases, communities must help themselves to construct buildings suitable for living and working. Charles Abrams [1] points out that this has been the case for most families in the past, particularly in rural areas where villagers could organize unpaid, reciprocal help and source free materials locally. However, in urban habitats it has been much more difficult to achieve the same degree of success with self-help construction.

Traditional rural lifestyles became harder to maintain during the second half of last century, causing many families to either fully or partially relocate to the city in search of an income. After independence, rural-to-urban migration was a significant driver of urban population growth in Indonesia. For example, Jakarta's population quadrupled in size to 9.1 million between 1975 and 1995 [2]. The current population of the city is thought to be around 12 million but due to circular migration and informal settlement it is hard to estimate accurately how many people occupy the city.

Self-help housing in Indonesia is commonly represented by the *kampung*, a type of settlement that is characterized by informality, irregularity, illegality, flexibility and resilience [3]. As of 2012, kampung houses accounted for approximately 74% of total housing stock in Jakarta [4]. The kampung is often the place where new migrants can go to find accommodation and work, usually tapping into an existing social network that links back to ancestral villages. *Kampung* neighbourhoods and other informal settlement provide vital grounds for developing social capital, essential for those living precariously.

UN-Habitat's 2003 report "The Challenge of Slums" claims that government policies and planning in Indonesia have been wholly inadequate for the needs of the poor and represents an abdication of duty (p. 212). According to Tunas and Peresthu [4], the Indonesian government invests only 1.5% of its budget on public housing, most of which is aimed at lower middle-class housing, leaving the situation in the *kampungs* unattended. They predict if this trend continues then the country's slum population will reach 27 million people in the year 2020. Considering this, it seems that low income families in cities like Jakarta must find their own solutions to the housing crisis or create new networks and responses.

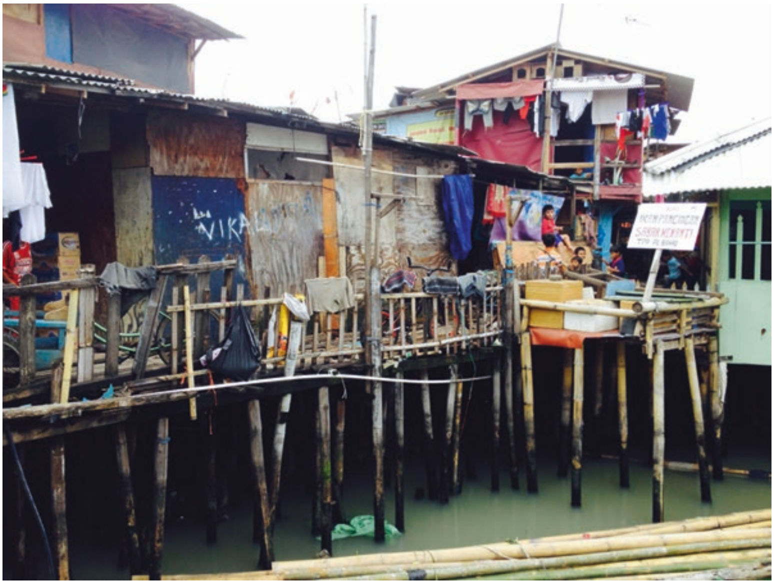

Fig. 2.1 Luar Betang – a kampung near Sunda Kelapa, the original port of North Jakarta

2.2 Living in Contested Spaces

Whilst the private sector plays a major role in providing for the middle- and high-end of the market, development of low-income housing in Jakarta has been neglected since the inception of the city [5]. Tunas and Peresthu [3] explain that people unable to enter the formal housing market started occupying areas that developers did not touch, such alongside railway tracks and rivers, under highway bridges and coastal or marshy areas (see Fig. 2.1). As the city has grown these once marginalised spaces have become more desirable to developers and have turned into a scene of conflict between different classes of citizens. During the 80s and 90s Jakarta invested heavily in toll-roads that served the middle-class families leaving the city for gated communities in the suburbs. However, due to terrible traffic congestion many are now returning the city to live in supposed "green" superblocks closer to work, education and leisure. The past 20 years has seen a 50% decrease in the size of kampung land area [2], pushing families to outlying areas and shifting the burden of commuting onto those without private transport. Kusno [6] indicates that the informal settlements are now seen by the government and middle-class residents as sources of pollution and crime, giving them a handy excuse to demolish kampung neighbourhoods.

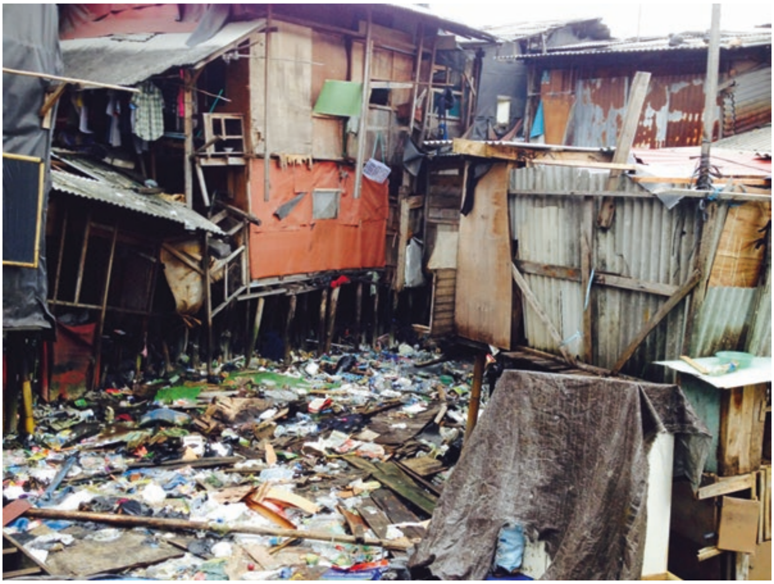

Fig. 2.2 Image from Luar Betang showing the result of no waste collection service

Agenda 21 of the Rio Earth Summit [7] stressed the importance of providing all citizens with shelter, but part of achieving this requires the ability to secure the land and rights to the city. Low-income families in informal settlements must deal with the anxiety of insecure tenure because either the home or land is often owned by someone else, or their legitimate rights are hard to prove. Without security occupants are understandably unwilling to invest in their dwellings and other publicly used facilities. Building on illegally occupied land has several negative implications for the inhabitants including unsafe water and sanitation, fire hazards, flooding, little or no solid waste collection (Fig. 2.2), and a lack of legal address for access to government education, health care or registering to vote [8].

2.3 Bantar Gebang: The Main Landfill of Jakarta

Despite the drawbacks of living in informal settlement people continue to inhabit these areas because of a sense of community, access to work, and lack of better alternatives. With population growth expected to continue it seems likely that informal settlements will remain an important part of the urban landscape. The Bantar Gebang landfill, located a few miles outside of the Jakarta city limits in the neighbouring city of Bekasi, is a current example of people occupying contested space. Since 1986 the landfill has grown to become one of the biggest in SE Southeast Asia. Receiving between 6000 and 8000 tonnes of municipal solid waste every day the landfill now covers over 108 hectares, with its environmental and economic impact manifesting over a much wider area (Fig. 2.3).

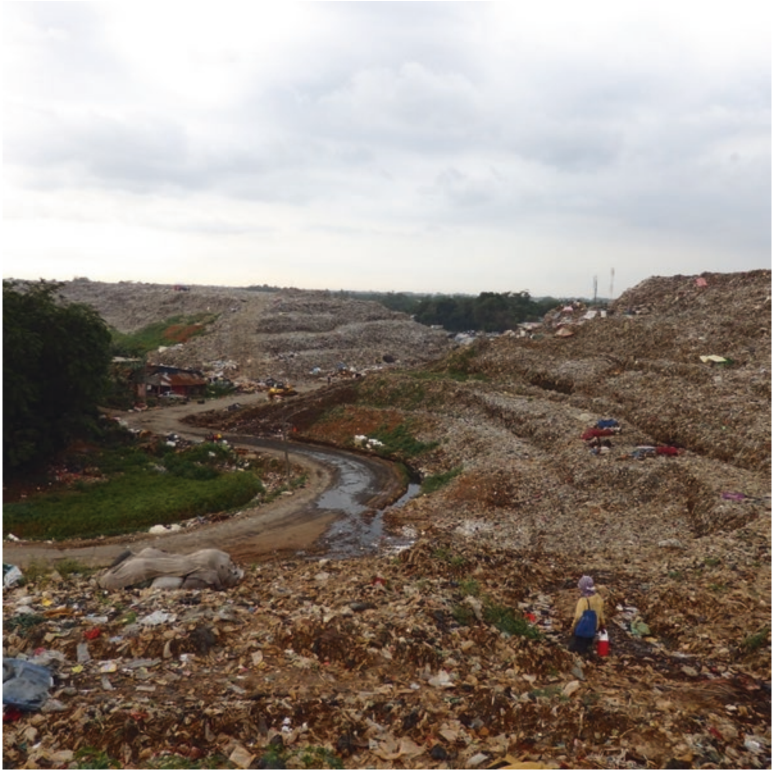

Fig. 2.3 Zone 3, Bantar Gebang landfill. BGBJ Hostel/Hub can be seen on the left in middle of the scene

Since the opening of the waste disposal facility, thousands of people have been attracted to the area in search of work. These people often arrive with few assets or qualifications. Newly arrived workers usually join a waste picking gang through the introduction of a friend and have their accommodation provided for by their boss. This scenario allows them to reside close to work and bring reclaimed material home for other family members to help with the processing. Many families choose to enter waste picking because it offers a reliable source of income, the potential for a jackpot discovery, and a flexible work day [9, 10] (Fig. 2.4).

However, living in close proximity to a landfill brings with it several negative impacts for health and well-being. Air quality is often poor, an air monitor gave readings worse than any other major city that day. This isn't surprising as it is common for the recycling companies to burn large piles of unrecyclable material, creating huge clouds of toxic smoke that drifts into the residential areas and stick to everybody's clothes. Some of the dwellings seem quite neglected and despite the occupant's attempts to make repairs many could do with renovations. Up to 12 families can share the same sanitation facilities which drain into nearby streams and lack privacy, clean water, and hard surfaces. Leachate seeps from the landfill to contami-