The 65 years of communist China's history can be divided into two phases—the revolutionary phase and the reformist phase. In the former phase, all national resources were highly centralized, whereas in the latter phase they were redistributed throughout society. Every period of such redistribution—of land, housing, revenues and nationally owned resources—has proven to be a stimulus for reform in a serious historical crisis. The revolution that centralized power and turned private ownership into public ownership took place from above and very rapidly, whereas the reverse transformation that is turning public ownership into private is occurring only slowly. However, just as the former movement would not have found popular support without an authoritative revolutionary leader, the latter transformation could also collapse without strong reformers. The incremental progress of reform from Deng to Xi is both a democratic transition driven by strongmen and a complement to the strategy of fostering autonomous development.

13 years after joining the WTO, China is now close to qualifying for full market economy status. To achieve this end, China needs to complete its process of self-adjustment, which includes restructuring its economy and legal system. This process is being pushed by external forces, but it is also a result of improvements in the country's superstructure being driven by its rapidly developing economic base. In 2006, the government officially changed the term Five Year Plan to Five Year Planning. This one-word difference is indicative of the decision taken by the Chinese government to reposition itself within the market economy and to transform its quantitative control of the national market into a strategy of dynamic adjustment combining strategic deployment and macro-control as a means of adapting to a mutually inclusive global political and economical environment. At the same time, China's GDP has become the second-highest in the world and the sense the country now has of its own strength is seeing the focus of government expanding beyond the national economy to include social, ecological and cultural issues. In the cases of ecology and social policy, a more active form of government is required, while the fields of the economy and culture would seem to require more passive government. How China manages to balance these seemingly contradictory demands will become evident over the coming decade.

Since being coined in the 1970s by anthropologist Keith Hart, the concept of informality has referred to a diverse set of phenomena and practices operating at different scales. It has been used by scholars and institutions alike to characterize a range of heterogeneous practices. In fact, the distinction between “formal” and “informal” practices may be largely conceptual and impossible to identify empirically with any degree of precision. To invoke a metaphor from linguistic anthropology, the concept of informality is a shifter or a deictic category, highly mobile and applicable to a practice by means of locating it within a particular time-space configuration, simultaneously demarcating and locating the formal by contrast.

As a number of scholars have observed, so-called informal practices can be comprehensive, use institutions and rely upon non-state norms for regulation, implementation and valorization. This contradiction is specifically present in the idea of informal markets. Markets, by their very nature, presume the institutionalization of relations of trust required to complete market exchanges and transactions in the absence of contractual relations governed by judicial institutions. In the Indian context, the bazaar signifies such a pre-modern site of personalized exchange. A significant body of scholarly literature on the bazaar emphasizes kinship, caste, ethnic and religious community as dominant idioms of market organization. This historical and anthropological literature focuses on elaborating the textures of meanings that constitute market practices in order to discover organizational protocols rather than privileging the functional role of rational calculation by abstract, rights-bearing subjects engaging in exchange.

Early usage of the concept of informality such as in Hart’s work on Ghana contrasts pre-colonial forms of organization and labour with emergent forms of governance in the post-colonial period of former colonial societies. In this context, informal activity exists in a continuum with post-colonial migrations of “traditional” populations into modernizing cities in Asia, Latin America and Africa. Informality thus also signifies pre-colonial cultural practices that continue to operate in modern urban centres. These cultural protocols and meanings are given form in spatial practices at odds with modern planning norms seeking to sanitize and cordon off space for specific uses. As a result, the proliferation of street vending and similar forms of occupation of public spaces, which are ubiquitous in most postcolonial cities, constitute concrete sites where “informal” practices become visible and targets for intervention by state authorities and other regulatory agents.

Work on markets as concrete sites and built environments has largely remained the domain of architects, for whom markets are directly connected to consumption
locus of debt formation or as an aesthetic problem. Informality is treated as an instrument for the expansion of micro-enterprises and a mechanism for organizing governance and to the corresponding rise of uncertainty in the practice of governance.

We suggest that the contemporary discourse on informality, as distinct from earlier, postcolonial and culturally inflected understandings of informality, can be located within this complex relation between the governance of populations and that of territory. In addition, we suggest that the problem of locating informal practices precisely is an artefact of dominant discourses of government and we ask if an alternative, structural understanding of informality itself is possible. Here, we are interested in moving beyond reifying informality as a “logic” that informs other spheres such as practices of governing and planning, and focusing instead on the logic by which a set of practices are identified as informal and problematized. This logic, we believe, is connected to the naturalization of the market as the dominant mechanism for organizing governance and to the corresponding rise of uncertainty as a problem for governance.

In her book on market expansion in Egypt, anthropologist Julia Elyachar explains how neoliberal governance offers micro-enterprise projects as solutions to intractable problems of poverty as the state withdraws from welfare provision. Under the tutelage and advocacy of international organizations, micro enterprises, deploying existing networks amongst Egyptian craftsmen as “social capital,” attempt to transform the small-scale enterprises of traditional communities into new instruments of debt and capital generation. The analysis of this type of “formalization” represents an important step in the development of our understanding of how informality comes to be treated as “problem” for governance in the contemporary world. Following Elyachar, it can be argued that such poverty-alleviation projects, which build on the social and cultural networks of the poor, are one strategy for identifying and “formalizing” networks otherwise outside the purview of the state in order to create and circulate new forms of debt-based capital. Based on this example, we argue that informality does not exist a priori as a logic to be discovered and codified by scholarship but rather emerges as networks, structures and institutions whose relationship to the state is an uncertain one — outside of existing laws of enterprise formation, taxation and spatial practice are “formalized” through a variety of interventions. In turn, the logic of formalization, within which ‘informality’ is identified and applied to a variety of structures, spaces, networks and institutions, is intimately connected to the rise of market governance and of uncertainty in the practice of governance. Thus, in contemporary discourse — whether informality is treated as an instrument for the expansion of micro-enterprises and a locus of debt formation or as an aesthetic problem — informal worlds are precisely those sites that demand intervention and ordering since they pose the threat of uncertainty to market-based governance. A key feature of such governance, in turn, is the existence of a knowable and governable “public” whose transactions can be measured and rewarded or punished as the case may be.

The focus on informality, we argue, has shifted from identifying practices within a moral framework of modernization to identifying practices that threaten order and governability because they cannot be accurately measured and thus not valued according to standardized regimes of value associated with state-governed markets. Ambiguous notions of value in turn pose a threat to measured order and rules of valuation. In the physical space of informal markets dominated by consumers who are typically priced out of such state-governed and taxed markets, such practices range from the occupation of spaces reserved for other uses — such as pavements and bridges — to the sale of pirated or counterfeit goods and the proliferation of betting and gambling activities that often take place on the margins of these markets.

Sympathetic understandings of informal practices involving, for instance, land settlement, infrastructure provision, or the distribution of resources position these practices as filling gaps in availability by repurposing common resources, commandeering underutilized private resources or creating new methods of exchange. Such practices then encounter regulatory and governmental interventions in a variety of ways.

In this essay we focus on two major forms of intervention — representational interventions and regulatory interventions. Representational interventions are ones that posit these practices as disorderly, chaotic, anarchic, unruly and ungovernable. Corresponding to these representations are forms of governable subjectivity made possible by imagining society as a public collective of exchanging, contracting actors and a private sphere within which differences of belief and practice are contained. A second form of intervention involves bringing to bear new forms of regulation that price and fix the values of these practices within state-governed regimes of value and taxation. Both forms of intervention rely on aesthetic judgements about desirable order and desiring subjects. But the very need for such interventions on a global scale is itself tied to the emergence of the market as an abstract, ethico-political space and its ascendance as a natural mechanism for organizing governance in the post-World War II period. In other words, regulatory interventions — whether spatio-legal regulation or regulations of abstract rights tied to the products of human labour — are themselves an artefact of the rise of the market as a mechanism for organizing governance.

In practical terms, some of the most visible interventions involve the production of desirable order and desirable forms of subjectivity through the design of space and commodities, largely based on the belief in the capacity of forms to determine systemic organization and behaviour. Physical market sites — where the design of both commodities and space are highly visible and communicative — are therefore sites of intense contestation.

Crucially, formalizing processes that intervene in spaces and practices permissible within demarcated limits depend on the idea that informal practices are those that cause turbulence and volatility and introduce uncertainty within orderly spaces or
THE SABARMATI RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AS ERASURE OF THE SABARMATI RIVER.
within systems of value-generation such as self-regulating markets driven by predictable processes of demand and supply. This representation of causality in turn has a genealogy related to the simultaneous emergence of the concepts of informality and the market as the natural site for organizing governance on a global scale. In his lectures at the College de France in the 1970s, Michel Foucault traces the rise of self-regulating markets as the natural site for organizing governance in his remarks on the Chicago School of Economics. This form of governance in turn depended on gauging and valuing the uncertainty inherent in large, contract-based modern societies in terms of the rationality of the demands of heterogeneous populations with their own private beliefs and freedoms.

Thus, the rise of what we commonly understand as neoliberalism as a form of government has depended on constantly regarding as suspicious the practices of what Partha Chatterjee terms the “governed” and on the concurrent development of technologies for gauging different regimes of value and putting them in place through regulation and governance. Formal and informal then are the recto and verso of processes of governing value through a focus on eliminating uncertainty — the informal is not so much the cause of uncertainty in contemporary practices of democratic governance as a sign of anxiety about the unknown and the uncertain, about that which is absent, that which cannot be gauged, and a space for cultivating technologies for dealing with unknowability. Perhaps for this reason, informality is being applied to an ever-expanding and shifting universe of practices.

Our argument here is based on ethnographic research conducted in two cities in western India — Ahmedabad and Mumbai — where we have observed processes of urban spatial and social transformation over nearly a decade. While our research was focused broadly on the development, production and understandings of infrastructure, it included specific engagement with the development of trading infrastructure in cities marked by the violent and forced displacement of large numbers of vulnerable citizens and spatial redevelopment to accommodate real estate investment and new forms of urban organization. Our vantage point offers us a unique understanding of the ways in which processes are marked as “informal” and eliminated through displacement and enclosure into parametrically ordered spaces. New forms of enclosure and space-making are increasingly being guided by parametric logics and design practices the politics of which are complex and emergent. Our use of “parametric” is specific, as is evident in our case studies. For us, parametric architecture refers to forms of architecture generated by algorithms and formulae that optimize the interaction between given and imposed parameters — such as the eviction and resettlement of residents from historically occupied settlements and the denomination of new forms of exchange value for land.

Ahmedabad
The Sabarmati riverbed has functioned as a civic and ecological maidan commons throughout Ahmedabad’s history, supporting the livelihoods of many launderers, cloth washers, dyers and printers, petty traders, carpenters and farmers. Three generations ago, many poor families residing along the river grew melons and pumpkins there to sell in Ahmedabad’s produce markets. However, by 2004, eighteen highly polluting industries had made the river ecologically incapable of supporting crops. Other labourers borrowed from low-interest banks to buy donkeys, seeking economic subsistence in the river’s sand, which they would carry to nearby construction sites. Access to this resource has since been cut off by the damming and flooding of the nine-kilometre stretch of the Sabarmati River that runs through Ahmedabad. Furthermore, the closing of the city’s sixty-four textile mills resulted in lay-offs for the majority of Ahmedabad’s workforce. It is estimated that 75-80 per cent of the city’s working population, many of them women, depend on open markets and street vending as major sources of sustenance. Many of Ahmedabad’s poor have also settled along the river as a result of state-sponsored evictions and the subsequent denial of access to rehabilitation and relocation processes mandated by law.

The history of Ahmedabad’s Gujari Bazaar includes many years of use of the riverbed as a commons, dispossession by the recent Sabarmati Riverfront Development Project (SRFPD) and the struggle of bazaar traders to participate in Ahmedabad’s urban transformations. Founded by Ahmed Shah three years following the city’s establishment in 1414 c.e., this lively market developed into a self-governed space for the weekly exchange of primary products among low-income residents in the region. Having first used the maidan in front of Bhadra Gate, the traders’ association began leasing 2,600 square yards (2,170 square metres) of maidan on the Sabarmati River in 1905 for a mere 151 rupees per year. The market was legendary for its capacity to furnish an entire lower-income family’s home in just one visit. Up to 200,000 customers and 2,400 traders met on any given Sunday, buying and selling, among other things, cooking utensils, clothes, furniture, books, hardware, electronics, antiques and handicarts. With women making up 40 per cent of traders, and another 40 per cent self-identifying as Dalit, the Gujari Bazaar has been representative of socially and economically progressive attitudes in Ahmedabad.

Traders’ co-dependence has provided stability throughout the city’s history of communal riots. While Ahmed Shah originally organized the market to operate in accordance with the weekly call to prayer at the Jama Masjid, traders’ decision in 1944 to regulate themselves through the Ahmedabad Gujari Association prioritized economic over communal affiliation. The 600-year history of trader solidarity and cooperative dependence on customers and weekly access to the Sabarmati riverbed highlights the efficacy of this socio-spatial structure. With such relationships of material exchange, which were previously based in the city’s commons, now being reconfigured as competitive binaries between communities — be they elite/poor, with/without land tenure, upper-caste/Dalit or Hindu/Muslim — the tipping points and consequences of social and economic exclusion are becoming increasingly violent.

A second strength of the Gujari Bazaar’s socio-spatial structure was its openness: it could accommodate more than 1,000 ad-hoc traders each week, who set up in drier areas on wet days or sit themselves around other channels in the riverbed to provide seamless functionality within a monsoon-fed river landscape. By enclosing, policing and charging high rents for a section of the waterfront, the SRFPD abrogated the market’s flexibility. The project’s designers have expressed interest in replacing the self-organized petty trade of the Gujari Bazaar with a “world-class” conference
A UTENSIL TRADER Sells FROM THE HISTORIC CITY WALL, NOVEMBER 2010.

A wooden utensils trader sets up between Ellis Bridge and Victoria Garden.

Men gather under the canopy of a sanctified tree below Ellis Bridge, later surrounded by idols and a plinth. The Gujari Bazaar extends from grade, along the bridge’s shade to the riverbed below.

Remains of the Gujari Bazaar in January 2014, following years of illegal demolitions by the Ahmedabad Corporation and dumping of debris due to the adjacent Sabarmati Riverfront Development Project. Traders continue despite dramatic topographic changes, a reduction by half in occupiable area and without a rehabilitation plan.

A boy sells roosters at the edge of the bazaar. Not members of the traders association, these illicit livelihoods are also dependent on the margins of exchange sites.

Multiple generations of families of hardware and knife traders have associated with the Gujari Bazaar, living carriers of the city’s six hundred year intangible cultural heritage.
Construction activity related to the Sabarmati Riverfront Development Project intentionally staged its materials movements and the dumping of debris on the site of the Gujari Bazaar in imaging and reshaping the riverbed towards ‘world-class’ city form. Prior to occupying the new market attained only through public interest litigation, traders continued to meet amidst ongoing construction activity.

High modernist design typifies the construction of a convention center and parking lots on the site, rationalizing the riverbed and the media and governance of exchange activity occurring there. The new site for the Gujari Bazaar during completion of construction in January 2013.

Traders organize on and around construction materials, selling durable and second-hand goods, books, clothing and tools to mostly working poor customers.

Traders allot selling areas beneath Ellis Bridge during construction activity. Following completion of the Sabarmati Riverfront Development Project, they will not have access to the riverbed nor its banks.
centre and antiques trade in a sanitized market in line with the self-image of those aspiring to be part of a world-class city.

Ahmedabad’s administrators have interpreted informal uses of the commons as transgressive of their totalizing authority, confirming sociologist Amita Baviskar and geographer Vinay Gidwani’s claim that the “destruction of common resources and the communities that depend on them is a long-standing outcome (some would argue prerequisite) of capitalist expansion” in India. While this commodification of common resources is lauded as emancipatory for the imagined beneficiaries, this erasure of the commons devastates urban populations living with thin survival margins. The Sabarmati riverbed, along with Ahmedabad’s streets, garbage dumps, open markets and other sites liminal to authority, has become an ecological and civic commons occupied by the working poor in resistance to their own dispossession.

The liberalization of India’s economic policies that began in 1991 has seen Indian architects become central players in the homogenization of urban form as a means of projecting efficiency and competence in order to appeal to the investment of what architect Rahul Mehrotra describes as “impatient capital”. Economic liberalization has also catalyzed Ahmedabad’s shift towards entrepreneurial urban governance, giving rise to city imagineering practices including city branding, the staging of mega-events, and the construction of flagship urban projects to move discourse away from the blatant anti-Muslim rhetoric and violence of Hindutva politics and towards reassuring images of the state as generative of economic and developmental progress. Implementation of these projects through the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission has encouraged Ahmedabad’s administrators to evict slum dwellers in order to open up riverfront land to gentrification and associated speculation. Through the seemingly irrefutable rhetoric of the sanitary, predictable and efficient modernization of Ahmedabad, a nexus of landowners, builders, designers and city administrators has profited tremendously while the non-compliant urban poor have been criminalized for pursuing survival practices in the face of state-imposed restrictions. The spatial products of this gentrification mirror one another: on the one hand, they include infrastructure-intensive, gated enclaves with public spaces programmed for leisure and consumption and, on the other, peripheral relocation sites with minimal infrastructural services and lack of access to previous livelihood and community networks. This trend toward entrepreneurial governance and its associated spatial products can be seen extending to other places in Gujarat as well as across metropolitan India.

In 2010, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation began the illegal demolition of the Gujarati Bazaar without providing notice or rehabilitation plans to the 1,400-strong traders’ association, 1,000 ad-hoc traders, or the extended livelihood networks of craftsmen, daily-wage supply chain labourers and their collective family dependents. The traders’ association responded by initiating the design of a rehabilitation plan for the market and drew on the support of faculty members, students and researchers from the Indian Institute of Management and National Institute of Design to present this community-based design process before the Gujarat High Court in order to demonstrate the feasibility of their inclusion in the design process and a technologically modernized form of trading activity. As a result, the association was able to halt demolition until the SRFP design team could provide an in-situ rehabilitation plan. However, since the completion of construction and the recent occupancy of the modernized Gujarati Bazaar in 2014, preliminary observations suggest that power within the traders association has been consolidated and that the organization of the market is also being shaped by the presence of several wholesale traders operating from the new market site. Those traders not absorbed by the new site and consolidated leadership still meet to sell their goods at the previous Ellis Bridge site, just north of the new parking lot planned for a new convention centre. For the traders at this ghost market, it is still an open question whether they will subject themselves to the terms of the shifts within the traders association, relocate elsewhere, or adopt other livelihoods altogether.

Mumbai

In sea-locked Mumbai, urban renewal policies provide legal grounds for opening up land to different uses. In this process, it is people who form the currency of exchange as they are displaced from desired to less desired land, which results in a range of outcomes and experiences. A second form of exchange incentivizes actors with large amounts of capital at their disposal to take advantage of this transformation of land: the government-sanctioned transfer of development rights to profitable suburban areas has generated a shadow economy around transfer certificates, in which powerbrokers such as politicians, real estate developers and criminals—who are often the same person—have the direct power of disposal over this transformative potential. In this pixelated economy of new buildings and internal spaces, the state and its big-capital beneficiaries utilize these land policies to employ spatial allotments as a means of dispossessing the poor of land, claiming it for other profit-seeking uses and forcing the poor into state-regulated “relocation and rehabilitation” housing.

Housing advocates lament the rationed and poor structural quality of such accommodation, which ranges from 255 to 270 square feet (21 to 25 square metres) in size. However, substandard their previous living conditions were, people were able to incrementally extend their floor areas vertically to support livelihood and community-related activities and production. The administered parametricism of “rehabilitation” architecture dislocates people’s autonomy with regard to their economies of space, replacing it with tenuous footholds in the city’s administered classifications.

These spatial parametrics also scale upwards and outwards: from the 225 square-foot room into a double-loaded corridor with eleven units on each side, to a ground-plus-seven-story building, to a parcel of land packed with buildings separated by twenty-foot buffers. The provision of daylight, air circulation, and areas for play spaces, markets, and gatherings do not figure directly in policy algorithms. Residents now employ a different calculus, absorbing a range of activities into one 225 square-foot room, renting additional 225 square-foot rooms from others at market rates, re-appropriating ground plans in this new vertical geography, or seeking other means by which to fulfil their needs and desires. These emergent practices create infrastructures for living and market exchange in much the same way that such infrastructure is created in the slums of Mumbai. In our images we document and explain some of these emergent practices that are attempting to subvert the totali-
INFORMAL MARKET WORLDS
FROM INFORMALITY TO PARAMETRICISM AND BACK AGAIN

Residents in Panjrapole Settlement, July 2013.
Residents in Lallubhai Compound use concrete stepping stones to bridge street-side water pooling between dirt entry alleys and higher elevation parts of the asphalt street.

Residents in Panjrapole Settlement use blue tarpaulin as guards in diverting water from entering under doorways.

Residents relocated from Panjrapole settlement to Lal Lubhai Compound modify their 225 s.f. allotments with a marine plywood partition wall.

Exterior curbs and raised plinths direct monsoon rains downhill to maintain dry interior spaces.

Mobile petroleum-powered water pumping units with hoses drain water away from building entryways in Lallubhai Compound.

Residents in Rafinagar and Panjrapole settlement gather barrels for filling by irregular visits from private water tankers. Tarpaulins hung from roofs also harvest rainwater during monsoon months.

The ad-hoc above-ground bundling of 50mm water pipes acts as a form of collective infrastructural planning. Traders and pedestrians treat this surface as part of a continuous terrain.

Private water tankers fill above-ground cisterns and collections of barrels. Residents use hoses and jugs to distribute water through Rafinagar and Panjrapole settlements.
MARKET ACTIVITY
38. Without adequate space for trading activity, carts, coolers, crates and tarpaulin fill Lallubhai Compound’s streets for produce, clothing and fish sellers.
39. Beach umbrellas both shade Sathenagar’s vendors and advertise logos for real estate and cellular services.
40. 41. Traders in a Chandivali SRA project use building foundations as trading surfaces.
42. 43. Everyday markets for produce and tea stalls line Lallubhai Compound’s 20 foot wide access lanes.

MARKET ACTIVITY
44. 51. 52. Without adequate space for trading activity, carts, coolers, crates and tarpaulin fill Lallubhai Compound’s streets for produce, clothing and fish sellers.
45. A small general supplies store and flour mill are built beneath the entry ramp to elite residences within Imperial Towers, India’s tallest residential buildings. The stores serve residents in the SRA component of the project who were relocated into adjacent 225 s.f. allotments.
46. 51. Some stalls and platforms are elevated above the level of monsoon flooding in Lallubhai Compound.
47–50. Residents in a Chandivali SRA site construct stationary plywood and sheet metal trading stalls. These attach to existing buildings for storing and trading; others fit the depth of existing gutters and sidewalks. Some of these include real estate brokerages in addition to produce, clothing, hardware and stalls providing a range of other services.
tarian underpinnings of these parametric architectures. New marketplaces occupy territories reserved for circulation and trade in everyday as well as “forbidden” goods — numerous real estate brokers’ offices signify a vibrant marketplace for these “free” spatial allotments, which residents are legally prohibited from selling in the “free” market.

On a recent field trip, we interviewed traders occupying the main thoroughfare of the Lallubhai Compound in northeast Mumbai, where most of the images used in this essay were shot. Additional fieldwork was conducted in a settlement in northwest Mumbai. There, a daily vegetable and fish market is held on the edge of a street where it runs into a less developed tract that leads to a large slum settlement. On this edge, the liminal space where the road tapers off, vendors set up their stalls in the afternoons when parents typically go out to pick up their children from school. Many of the vendors come from outside the settlement and are prepared to move in and out as quickly as possible in order to give way to other uses of the space. Vendors pay off organizers who live in the settlement and the local police to maintain their spaces. Stalls are made of very light, generally plywood planks set up on plastic cans or four-wheeled hand carts, which allow for a hasty retreat from the street should the police show up. One visually striking element are the beach umbrellas used for shade from the unrelenting autumn sun. This already indicates a degree of confidence in the security of this spatial occupation, and the umbrellas feature logos of popular consumer brands and advertise services from real estate brokerage to mobile phone recharging.

In Lallubhai, a daily vegetable and fish market is held on the edge of a street where it runs into a less developed tract that leads to a large slum settlement. On this edge, the liminal space where the road tapers off, vendors set up their stalls in the afternoons when parents typically go out to pick up their children from school. Many of the vendors come from outside the settlement and are prepared to move in and out as quickly as possible in order to give way to other uses of the space. Vendors pay off organizers who live in the settlement and the local police to maintain their spaces. Stalls are made of very light, generally plywood planks set up on plastic cans or four-wheeled hand carts, which allow for a hasty retreat from the street should the police show up. One visually striking element are the beach umbrellas used for shade from the unrelenting autumn sun. This already indicates a degree of confidence in the security of this spatial occupation, and the umbrellas feature logos of popular consumer brands and advertise services from real estate brokerage to mobile phone recharging.

Vendors’ use of this street and some of the other wide-access streets within the Lallubhai Compound — streets that offer transport access and therefore attract a lot of foot traffic — has coded the space with a degree of predictability, since the markets are set up and dismantled in a fairly regular rhythm. More than a physical site, the market is a set of operations that captures potentials in space, not only for trade and commerce but also other activities. For example, one recent September afternoon, just before the state assembly elections, vendors packed up their stalls early to make way for a political rally. Moreover, a few days prior to this, the ad-hoc market site was doubling as a gathering place for public celebrations of major Hindu and Muslim religious festivals. However, interviews revealed the still ephemeral na-
CONSTRUCTION OF THE EASTERN EXPRESSWAY FUNDED THROUGH THE MMRDA'S MUMBAI URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT FUNDING JULY 2013
The 127-hectare dumping grounds at Deonar, Mumbai’s oldest and one of Asia’s largest, has been active since 1927. Sorters have built Rafinagar settlement to the west of the active dumping area on the edge of the mangroves.

Deonar’s wastestream provides these recyclers with lightbulb filaments and conductive metal wires through breaking and burning. Cotton, plastics, religious produce, metal and glass, among other materials, are collected in large bowls and on tarpaulin.

Materials from the wastestream are salvaged, sorted, aggregated, placed within large woven plastic sacs and stored for sale to wholesalers. Others are used in producing shelter within Rafinagar itself.
In July 2014, residents have dug a channel to direct monsoon rainfall to the major nala connecting the sorting area to Rafinagar's edge and the mangroves beyond.

In December 2013, salvaged materials are processed, sorted and stored at this land-capped edge of the Deonar Dumping Grounds. A large maidan between the active dumping grounds and Rafinagar is used for processing, sorting and storing salvaged materials as well as for playing cricket.

In 2006, the same edge was active for dumping and Rafinagar residents were still establishing their settlement along its edge following demolitions by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation.

Residents salvage and sort waste at the edge of the dumping grounds.
fundamentally sites where economy and law intersect to iterate public and shared meanings, then we would suggest that they are also sites where the meaningful spatial practices and cultural performances of actors developed to establish concrete relationships to the abstractions of law and economy are suspected of exceeding and moving beyond these regulated iterations. In this dialectic of performance and suspension, the logic of uncertainty that drives the market-based governance of publics as consumers becomes ever more acute.

Our visual essay focuses primarily on the parametrically embodied intentions of designers who have intervened in spaces deemed to be outcomes of informal and decentralized methods of infrastructure making. These projects take highly diverse and contested “urban design ecologies” as their ground zero and sanitize them through a seemingly irrefutable logic of necessity into a predictable set of forms that mirror similar attempts elsewhere. The geographies and ecologies that are being acted upon are themselves speculative ventures, combining elements with untapped potential to create unexpected connections with hegemonic forms of practice. They anticipate but also restlessly attempt to move beyond enumerated and monitored outcomes.

In this type of speculative practice lies their potential threat to the purported hegemony of markets which rule and thrive by managing the potential uncertainty of practice. For progressive spatial practice, the “informal” is at best an impotent bridge from the primacy of material to that of exchange. What even progressive practice cannot capture is the ever-present generative potential of even pre-determined forms that arise fundamentally from exchange. Nowhere is this movement more sharply visible than in the formalizing markets of the post-colonial world.

1 This essay is based on collaborative visual and ethnographic investigations conducted by the two authors. Its theoretical framing draws on Vijayanath Banerjee’s work on the Speculative City, a book-length text that explores speculative spatial practices in the context of Mumbai’s rapidly transforming and turbulent economic, policy, and natural landscapes. The book frames space as a key analytic in understanding the ways in which people cultivate new forms of life, practice, and selfhood to respond to the legal and economic regulations of fairy-liberal markets and the unpredictable and turbulent flows of investment, information and objects. Primary fieldwork in Mumbai was conducted by Banerjee between 2006 and 2010, and in 2013-14 visual research was conducted in collaboration with Vinay Diwakar. Vincent Diwakar’s work as a designer and researcher in Ahmedabad and its economy.” Andrew Barry, “Lines of Communication

2 The primacy of material to that of exchange. What even progressive practice cannot
capture is the ever-present generative potential of even pre-determined forms that arise fundamentally from exchange. Nowhere is this movement more sharply visible than in the formalizing markets of the post-colonial world.
Artists have long been interested in the social and economic spheres, bringing their attention to focus on the everyday world, those ordinary things we need to survive, such as food, company, shelter and income. Unlike them, art is not necessary though often much desired, thus creating a counterpoint to what we might call the ordinary. The questions of commodities and labour are often central here, both the labour to make and the labour required to buy the commodity, and then even the affective labour invested in the product, service, or indeed experience itself. This artwork is often overtly political, and even when it is not, it has a worldly “investment” that is at odds with a more aesthetic strain of art that reflects nothing other than its own formal qualities, a dialogue about materiality and aesthetics.

Much of this work today comes under the heading of social practice or sometimes participatory practice. It engages the audience in ways that undermine both the so-called autonomy of the art work and its basis as a commodity. Among the artists I will examine through this lens are Stephanie Syjuco, the Institute for Figuring, Martha Rosler, and e-flux, as well as a second grouping whose project involve the production of food, among them Fallen Fruit, Oscar Murillo and Superflex. Each represents different forms of oppositional work that interrogates both the capitalist mode of production and inherited ideas of the art work. By deploying ordinary objects and alternative forms of exchange or gifting, their projects critique the basis of commodity capitalism and reflect upon the current circumstances of what might best be called cognitive capitalism.

The conjoined transformation of industrialization and photography in the nineteenth century initiated a crisis in art that impelled artists to make new claims about the work of art. Chief among them is the claim for autonomy, which originates in Kant’s Critique of Judgement as the philosopher’s argument for a form of art that serves no practical function, devoid of purpose and is thus free of instrumental value. Taken up in the nineteenth century under the slogan of “art for art’s sake,” moving into Modernist formalism, it advocated the repression of referentiality and context beyond the context of art itself. It asks less what art is, as an object of value, than “what it does.” Art historians trace this lineage back to eighteenth century French salons and the onus placed on cultivating one’s distinctive and autonomous taste, part of creating a bourgeois political subject. Later, there are Marxist and politically inflected concepts of autonomy that are instrumental to a degree, in that they desig-