How do the urban ‘poor’ access land?
- understanding informal land delivery processes and power dynamics -

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Structure of the presentation

Context:
snapshots of squatter settlements in Kathmandu Valley

Theory:
defining ‘access’

Stories of ‘starters’:
riverside squatter settlement I
non riverside squatter settlement II
non riverside squatter settlement III

Reflections
context:
Population of Nepal: 26 million
Population of Kathmandu: 1.7 million
Urban growth rate: 17 percent
Source: Census 2011
context:
...there are at present 53 squatter settlements in Kathmandu Valley: 35 riverside and 18 non riverside (DUDBC, 2010)

context:
snapshots of squatter settlements in Kathmandu Valley
non riverside
theory: defining access
How do the urban ‘poor’ access land?

‘access’...

is defined as the right to use or benefit from resource like land
  • rights given by law (de jure)
  • rights by practice based on understanding or tradition (de facto)

is also regarded as a “bundle of rights” (Riddell, 1987)
  each rights in the bundle will have at least three dimensions
  - people, time and space -

is also defined as “options and opportunities” to benefit from, or use, the resource which people value (Bruce, 1989)
in the context of Nepal

...land underpins all social, economic and political development of a person or a household (Adhikari, 2010)

Therefore, access to land is very limited, especially in urban areas

*De Jure* land rights

*De Facto* land rights

Landless
I see planning as performed story:
in process,
in foundational stories,
in stories as catalyst for change,
in policy and finally
in academic stories,
as method, as explanation and as critique
(Sandercock, 2003)

stories of ‘starters’:
riverside squatter settlement I
non riverside squatter settlement II
non riverside squatter settlement III
'access' to land
• initial occupancy of land
• retaining land through provision of infrastructure

Provided by local NGO - Lumanti

Ward Chief
Informal land delivery processes: a social network analysis

Event based - approach
(the event of occupying land)
Relation - based approach
(relation of actors involved in the above event)

Core group

Nodes
- Key informant 1
- Friends
- Ward Chief
- Lumanti

Networks and relations

Interaction: thick, informal inward looking social capital
- Flows; outward looking social capital
Chief of Village District Council (VDC)

'access' to land
- initial occupancy of land
- retaining land through provision of infrastructure

Provided by local NGO - Lumanti

Provided by Village District Council (VDC)
Informal land delivery processes

A social network analysis

Event based - approach
(the event of occupying land)
Relation - based approach
(relation of actors involved in the above event)

Core

Periphery

Primary

Secondary

Nodes
- Key informant 2
- Neighbours/poor household
- Village Chief
- Lumanti

Networks and relations
- Social relations; inward looking, bonding social capital
- Flows; outward looking social capital
- Interaction; thin, informal social capital

NTNU
‘access’ to land

- initial occupancy of land
- retaining land through provision of infrastructure
Informal land delivery processes

A social network analysis

Event based - approach (the event of occupying land)
Relation - based approach (relation of actors involved in the above event)

Event based - approach (the event of retaining land through provision of infrastructure)
Relation - based approach (relation of actors involved in the above event)

Nodes
- Key informant 3
- Other squatter households
- Ward Chief
- Lumanti

Networks and relations
- Flows; outward looking social capital
Renters in proximity to the land/Temporary jobs

Came to Kathmandu from their village

Level 1: **De Facto**: Initial access to land

Level 2: **De Facto**: Access to building materials for temporary housing

Level 3: **De Facto**: Access to infrastructure

Level 4: **De Facto**: Secure Livelihoods

Level 5: **De Facto**: Permanent housing units

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**De Jure** land rights

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Landless

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Time
**synthesis of findings**

formation of *cohesive* groups or communities  
formation of various *positions* during the formation of this group  
core group members are *gatekeepers* of the settlement  
*power* lies with core group members

How do the urban *poor* access land?  

the definition of urban ‘poverty’ is relative even in squatter settlements  
urban ‘poor’ are not a homogeneous group rather a diverse sets of households:  
*starter households, old households, new households* and * renters*  
**Not all of these can be categorized as ‘poor’**
...networks are relational links through which people can obtain access to material resources, knowledge and power (Hillier, 1999)
How do the urban ‘poor’ access land?

‘access’ to land

initial occupancy of land → Ward Office Chief / VDC Chief

retaining land through provision of infrastructure → Lumanti – a local NGO

Diagram:

- Ministry of Physical Planning and Works
  - TDC (Town Development Committee)
    - Five Political Appointees
  - DUDBC (Department of Urban Development and Building Construction)
    - Director General
      - Urban
      - Housing
      - Building Construction
  - Contemporaries/partners
- Ministry of Local Development
  - KMC (Kathmandu Metropolitan Corporation)
    - Member
    - Ward Offices
There is no doubt that the livelihoods of the urban poor are deeply affected by how cities are governed and managed (Devas, 2002).

...in times of crisis these external networks especially with NGOs become stronger.

However one must not overlook the internal power structures that already exist within each of these urban poor squatter settlements.
otherwise one may often
“privilege the already privileged”