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Speculation from below: how temporal market sustains local heritage in Indonesia's *desakota* region

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ABSTRACT

Urban research in the Global South often prioritizes metropolitan areas, overlooking peri-urban dynamics. This paper examines the *desakota* phenomenon in Indonesia, focusing on Barongan Market in Jombang, near Surabaya. It explores how this temporary market fosters “speculation from below” to sustain local heritage. Using ethnographic methods—participant observation and semi-structured interviews—this study examines collaboration between the community, village government, and university in supporting Barongan Market as a hub for cultural and economic exchange. Three lenses—speculative urbanism, temporary urbanism, and local heritage—frame the analysis. Findings reveal that Barongan Market thrives through transformative collaboration driven by speculative and temporary interventions centered on local heritage. Universities act as key catalysts, but continuous evaluation is needed to enhance long-term community autonomy. This study offers insight into speculative urbanism from below, showing how grassroots initiatives challenge capital-driven urban models by creating temporary spaces that integrate economy and heritage.

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Introduction

In the Global South, urban research has historically focused on large metropolitan centres or the capitals, often overlooking the dynamic and hybrid nature of peri-urban and rural regions (Chatterjee and Chattopadhyay 2020; Fattah and Walters 2024). This oversight reflects a broader epistemic gap in urban theory, which has historically privileged Northern frameworks while marginalizing Southern concepts like *desakota* – a hybrid spatial logic born of Indonesia's agrarian-urban transitions. The concept of *desakota*, first introduced by McGee (Mcgee 1991), describes the blurred boundaries between rural and urban spaces in Southeast Asia, where villages and cities are interwoven in complex socio-spatial arrangements. Derived from the Indonesian words ‘*desa*’ (village) and ‘*kota*’ (city), *desakota* regions are hybrid zones that exemplify the dynamic interplay between urban expansion and rural life. These areas are not merely transitional spaces but serve as vital sites of socio-economic transformation, particularly in the context of the Global South, where rapid urban growth is reshaping landscapes and livelihoods (Hudalah et al. 2024; Ortega and Andre 2020; Sheng Wu and Sui 2016). The evolving nature of *desakota* and inherent hybridity

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makes it a critical framework for understanding how traditional rural economies and modern urban influences intersect, creating spaces of innovation and adaptation.

This paper focuses on Desa Mojotrisno, a village located near Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city, as a compelling example of the *desakota* phenomenon. Surabaya, a significant economic hub in Indonesian, forms the Surabaya Metropolitan Area (SMA), which includes several surrounding regencies such as Jombang, where Desa Mojotrisno is situated (Abidin, Prasetyo, and Masirin 2024; Jarghon et al. 2024). The proximity of this village to Surabaya and other cities has intensified interactions between urban and rural actors, creating an opportunity for creating speculation that could benefit the village development. By centring Southern concepts like *desakota*, the study aligns with calls to 'pluriversality' urban theory (Escobar 2018; Mbembe 2015), challenging universalist assumptions about urbanization and amplifying epistemologies rooted in the lived realities of the Global South.

An example of such dynamics is the Barongan Market, a bi-monthly temporary market launched in 2021. Developed through a collaboration between local residents, village government, and a neighbouring university, this initiative highlights how transient urban spaces can strengthen economic resilience and protect cultural traditions in *desakota* zones. By temporarily transforming the village into a lively site of cultural exchange and commerce, the market illustrates the role of grassroots partnerships in sustaining local heritage amid urbanizing pressures. Its success underscores the potential for community-driven models to balance cultural continuity with adaptive responses to urban influences.

The theoretical framework guiding this paper draws on speculative urbanism, temporary urbanism, and local heritage to explore the role of temporal markets in *desakota* regions. Speculative urbanism, a concept popularized by Goldman (Goldman 2011), explores urban transformation that often prioritizes capital accumulation over equitable development. In the rural context, this speculation created a shift in rural land into speculative assets that deepened inequality between urban and rural (Goldman 2020, 2023). However, speculative urbanism is not merely an economic phenomenon and it should be extended beyond *capitalocentric* views incorporating diverse actors and strategies (Fields 2023). Therefore, temporary urbanism complements this framework, focusing on how low-cost, short-term interventions – such as pop-up markets – can activate underutilized spaces and serve as catalysts for local development (Bragaglia and Rossignolo 2021; Stevens, Awe-puga, and Dovey 2021). Finally, the paper also highlights the local heritage concept as the foundation for community identity and sustainable tourism (Mydland and Grahn 2012). Local heritage is essential for fostering a sense of belonging to the community as it promotes cultural identity and social cohesion and drives economic development (Dragouni and Fouseki 2018; Grimwade and Carter 2000; Stephens and Tiwari 2015).

The Barongan Market in Desa Mojotrisno serves as a case study for exploring how temporal markets operate within *desakota* regions. Held bi-monthly, the market transforms the village into a vibrant hub of economic and social activity, attracting both local residents and visitors from nearby urban areas. The market offers a diverse range of goods, including agricultural products, handicrafts, and traditional foods, reflecting the village's efforts to diversify its economy beyond agriculture. This diversification aligns with broader national campaigns, such as the Indonesian government's goal of developing 6,000 tourist destination villages by 2024 (Tempo 2024). Not only does the market provide economic opportunities, but it also plays a crucial role in preserving local cultural practices, acting as a site where tradition and modernity intersect. The sustained success of the Barongan Market hinges on collaborative efforts among the community, village government, and university. Notably, the university's role exemplifies how academic institutions can serve as vital catalysts for localized development, offering not only technical expertise and resources but also embedding service-learning frameworks into community practice (Harriss 2014; Pak and De Smet 2022; Sara and Jones 2018).

In light of these evolving local dynamics and the market's potential to merge cultural heritage preservation with economic development, this study addresses two primary questions:

1. In what ways does the Barongan Market exemplify ‘speculation from below,’ and how do multi-stakeholder collaborations – particularly involving the university, local government, and community – shape its long-term sustainability?
2. How is local cultural heritage manifested and sustained through the temporal market initiative?

These questions guide our exploration of how grassroots interventions in *desakota* contexts can both challenge dominant, market-centric urbanization paradigms and reinforce local heritage as a driver of equitable spatial practice especially in the cities in Global South.

Between speculation and temporality: reimagining urban transformations

Urban spaces are increasingly shaped by speculative practices that prioritize financial capital, future-oriented investment, and the promise of future returns (Goldman 2020; Prouse 2023). Speculative urbanism traditionally refers to the phenomenon where economic liberalization and global financial capital converge to propose large-scale investments that prioritize future profits over immediate use value (Goldman 2011; Nam 2017). Scholars have critiqued speculative urbanism for its role in deepening social inequalities, particularly through processes of gentrification and the exclusion of marginalized communities (Leitner and Sheppard 2018; Shin and Kim 2016). Roy (Roy 2011) argues that speculative urbanism from the perspective of subaltern urbanism, calling for a rethinking of marginalized urban spaces often dismissed as slums.

Recent scholarship has expanded the lens of speculative urbanism to incorporate diverse actors and alternatives. Leitner and Sheppard (Leitner and Sheppard 2023) situate speculative urbanism within multi-scalar and conjunctural contexts, showing how local urban transformations in cities like Jakarta and Bengaluru are shaped by global flows of capital, national policies, and local socio-political dynamics. In Jakarta, speculative urbanism manifests through the displacement of *kampung* residents to facilitate large-scale real estate projects under the narrative of world-class city (Colven 2023; Leitner and Sheppard 2018). While often exclusionary, speculative urbanism can also be reimagined as a framework for grassroots, community-driven futures. Speculative urbanism can be extended beyond *capitalocentric* views, incorporating diverse actors and strategies including local communities (Fields 2023). Shin (Shin 2014) also emphasizes the importance of forming cross-class alliances and including a broader range of actors in speculative urban projects to claim the right to the city and address these inequalities.

In *desakota* regions where rural and urban dynamics converge, speculative urbanism often operates on smaller scales driven by local actors like community groups or small entrepreneurs. They can engage in speculative urbanism by speculating on future conditions through temporary and adaptive urban interventions. These localized speculative practices challenge the traditional understanding of speculative urbanism, offering alternatives to top-down, capital-driven models (Leitner and Sheppard 2023). In some cases, speculative projects may lead to the emergence of alternative urban practices that challenge the dominance of market-driven development (Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 2011).

Temporary urbanism provides a complementary lens for understanding these grassroots practices that reimagine different kinds of speculative urbanism. While speculative urbanism typically aligns with large-scale financialization tied to neoliberal policies (Goldman 2020; Shin and Kim 2016), the concept of speculation from below – manifested through temporary, low-cost, small-scale interventions – presents an alternative. Temporary urbanism is an act to utilize temporary spaces and activities in an urban environment to enhance quality and adaptability in a context-specific situation that caters to the rhythm and dynamic everyday life (Andres and Kraftl 2021). Examples such as pop-up architecture, tactical urbanism, and temporary markets demonstrate how underutilized spaces can be activated to foster community participation.

Critically, temporary urbanism diverges from speculative urbanism’s long-term, capital-intensive focus by prioritizing flexibility and responsiveness to immediate socioeconomic needs. Beyond

serving as a catalyst for grassroots agency, this approach enhances sustainability by enabling functional adaptability within existing urban systems without disrupting their fabric (Bertino et al. 2019; Turku et al. 2023). In doing so, it challenges dominant paradigms of urban development, proposing instead a model where cultural and social imperatives coexist with pragmatic urban evolution.

The Barongan Market in Desa Mojotrisno exemplifies the intersection of speculative and temporary urbanism within a *desakota* context. The markets are temporary by design, yet they play a significant role in sustaining the local economy and fostering social cohesion, offering a flexible alternative to conventional urban planning approaches. This bi-monthly temporal market, established through collaboration between the community, village government, and a nearby university, exemplifies how local actors can leverage temporary spaces to foster economic resilience and cultural preservation. The market is speculative in nature, creating opportunities for future economic growth while addressing the immediate needs of the local. This market also illustrates how temporary urbanism can serve as a speculative practice on a smaller scale, offering a flexible and adaptive response to the rapid urbanization of *desakota* regions. Local actors – community members, the village government, and the university – have collectively speculated on the future role of the market, transforming it into a space that supports local livelihoods and anticipates further economic integration with nearby urban areas.

Catalyzing local heritage preservation: the role of universities

Local heritage draws from UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage framework (UNESCO 2003), this study defines local heritage as 'practices, representations, and knowledge transmitted intergenerationally, providing communities with a sense of identity'. Local heritage encompasses tangible and intangible aspects of the community's past that hold significant value for its identity and cultural narrative. It includes historical sites, cultural practices, traditions, and artefacts that are preserved and celebrated by the community. Scholars emphasize that local heritage is a dynamic and evolving process shaped by attention, pride, and collective responsibility (Dragouni and Fouseki 2018; Jackson 2008; Schmitz and Pepe 2022). According to Stephens and Tiwari (2015), heritage serves as 'symbolic estate' that empower communities by preserving their unique cultural markers and anchoring their collective memory.

Local heritage faces a big challenge and tension in today's urbanized and modernized world especially related to the homogenizing effect of globalization (Schmitz and Pepe 2022). Therefore, it needs innovative approaches rooted in community participation to secure the ownership and its sustainability (Perkins, Mackay, and Wilson 2023; Stephens and Tiwari 2015). Perkins, Mackay, and Wilson (2023) build on this perspective by examining how community-led heritage conservation can act as a catalyst for rural regeneration. They argue that such initiatives not only preserve cultural heritage but also create opportunities for revitalizing local economies and enhancing social cohesion.

However, preserving heritage is never an easy task especially in the context of peri urban or *desakota* regions. *Desakota* regions exemplify the socio-economic transformation that occurs when urban processes penetrate rural areas. Traditional agricultural activities are frequently replaced by industrial and service-oriented sectors. While this shift offers new economic opportunities, it also disrupts traditional rural lifestyles and local characters and creates a socio-economic fabric that is neither entirely rural nor urban.

Universities play a distinctive role in preserving local heritage in *desakota* contexts by bridging academic knowledge and community needs, particularly through service-learning, research collaboration, and the provision of technical expertise (Harriss 2014; Pak and De Smet 2022; Sara and Jones 2018). In the context of Indonesia, University has been a key collaborator of peri urban, *desakota*, and rural areas, as it has been mandated by national regulation since 1960s as part of the higher education community service (UU 1961; Wahyuni 2023). University-community collaboration offers a dynamic partnership that not only enhances educational experiences but also fosters

local innovation. Such partnerships are particularly valuable in villages with limited technical capacity, as universities can provide expertise and resources, often through transdisciplinary approaches (Mores, Lee, and Bae 2019; Tourse et al. 2008). Establishing these alliances benefits research, teaching, and community recognition (Buys and Bursnall 2007) while also addressing the technical gaps that may exist within local governance. However, for these collaborations to be meaningful and sustainable, careful planning, open communication, and shared goals are essential. Small-scale, locally grounded partnerships are often preferable, as they offer manageable and actionable approaches to community development (Till 2016)

The rise of temporal markets in *desakota* regions, like the Barongan Market in Desa Mojotrisno, illustrates how these emerging alliances can foster both economic resilience and local cultural heritage preservation. By leveraging university resources and local government support, *desakota* villages can create flexible, adaptive spaces that respond to the needs of both traditional and modern economic practices. These alliances highlight the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in navigating the challenges of urbanization and ensuring sustainable initiative and development. Ultimately, these alliances point to a future in which local heritage is not only safeguarded but also actively harnessed as a resource for community empowerment and development.

Methodology

This study employs qualitative and interpretive approaches (Creswell 2010; Lucas 2015) to explore the role of the temporal market within Indonesia's *desakota* context. An in-depth understanding of the selected case study is achieved through the application of micro-ethnography as the primary methodological approach (Alvehus and Crevani 2022). Ethnography, in general, allows for an in-depth exploration of cultural practices, social dynamics, and economic exchanges within specific contexts (Fetterman 2009; Gullion 2015). Micro-ethnography, which focuses on studying a specific context for a shorter period (Powell 2010), was chosen due to its ability to capture in-depth insight in a time-limited setting while focusing on particular interactions and moments.

The case study of the Barongan Market in Desa Mojotrisno, Jombang is the focal point of the ethnographic inquiry. Ethnography, and specifically micro-ethnography, immerses the researcher in the everyday lives of participants to gain a deeper and holistic understanding of the reality on the ground. In this study, a six-week period of residency on site was undertaken, employing several data collection methods including participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and informal conversations with the market vendors, local residents, and stakeholders from local government and university with a total 25 recorded interviews involving 40 participants. The participants are selected using a purposive sampling technique to gain insights from specific experiences related to the phenomenon under study (Tongco 2007). However, as the limitation of time on the field, the research was not able to capture insight from the external visitors who are not a part of the initiative.

Semi-structured interviews with the key stakeholders involved in the Barongan Market complemented the observation, offering a broader understanding of the socio-cultural context. Semi-structured interviews allow for a balance between standardization and openness, allowing researchers to focus on core issues while maintaining the flexibility of unexpected topics (Brinkmann 2023). This approach positions the researcher as an active participant in knowledge production, allowing for an organic flow of conversation while adhering to a guiding framework. The data collected through observation and interviews were analyzed using qualitative coding methods. Qualitative coding is the process of systematically categorizing and interpreting textual data to identify themes and patterns (Saldana 2009).

Transformative collaboration in action: Barongan market initiative

Desa Mojotrisno is a village located in the Mojoagung district of Jombang Regency, historically linked to the Majapahit Kingdom, a significant power in Nusantara and Southeast Asia between

the 13th and 16th centuries (Akbar 2014). Many surrounding villages around Desa Mojotrisno share the prefix ‘Mojo,’ a name derived from the Majapahit Kingdom (Mojo is Maja in Javanese) including Mojoagung, Mojolegi, Mojowangi, Mojowarno, Mojojejer, Mojodanu, and Mojotrisno itself (Asri, Wayne, and Arifin 2023). According to the latest national census, Desa Mojotrisno has approximately 4,000 residents, with a balanced gender ratio, and spans around 1,300 hectares, divided into three hamlets: Ngemplak, Sanan, and Subontoro. The village is located along the Southern Provincial Road, linking with Surabaya, Indonesia’s second-largest city with just about an hour away from the village.

Due to its strategic position and the wider economic reach of Surabaya, Desa Mojotrisno exhibits key features of a *desakota* region, where rural and urban attributes overlap. Desa Mojotrisno exemplifies the *desakota* phenomenon in Indonesia – areas where rural and urban characteristics blend due to proximity to a metropolis. The result is a shift away from traditional rural economies, with most of the village’s residents now employed in the formal sector or self-employed, leaving only a small percentage still engaged in agriculture. This transition illustrates the socio-economic transformation typical of *desakota* regions, where proximity to urban centres creates new economic opportunities but also demands adaptive responses to emerging urban pressures. Given its proximity to Surabaya, it is also not surprising that Desa Mojotrisno has a history of collaboration with various external stakeholders, particularly universities.

In Indonesia, universities are mandated to undertake three compulsory activities: teaching, research, and community service. Villages often become spaces for collaboration, either as part of academic courses or broader community service initiatives. Since 2021, Desa Mojotrisno has worked with Petra Christian University (PCU) in Surabaya as their primary and regular university collaborator, although other universities also run periodic initiatives. Early collaboration with PCU was focused on community service with local batik artisans, but it soon expanded through service-learning modules involving students and lecturers from different fields like architecture, interior design, and visual communication design.

Supported by the village government, the official collaboration resulted in a village potential mapping initiative in the first year, which laid the foundation for future village tourism development initiatives. This potential mapping that later became a village tourism master plan broadened the villagers’ perspectives on tourism, demonstrating that a tourism agenda is possible even in villages lacking natural attractions. According to Mr. S, a local villager resident, *‘Before interacting with PCU’s agenda, we never thought our village could become a tourism destination. We know that other villages become a tourism destination because they have natural resources’*. His statement underscores how university-community collaborations can broaden local perspectives on alternative development possibilities. This also acted as a foundational mindset to transform the village into a tourism destination.

Developing village tourism is a key part of the Indonesian government’s strategy to boost local economies, with a target of establishing 6,000 village tourism destinations by 2024 (Iqbal, Pradana, and Susanti 2024; Tempo 2024). Through this potential mapping and masterplan initiative, the village has identified several key village potentials, such as batik, metal casting, culinary traditions, agriculture, and pottery (Asri, Wayne, and Arifin 2023). All of these potentials actually have been there in the village as a part of community everyday activity and tradition throughout generations but are now reframed as cultural and economic assets for village tourism possibilities.

In articulating these village potentials, since 2022, the temporary market known as *Pasar Barongan* (pasar means ‘market’ in Indonesian) was launched as a collaborative effort between the village government, local artisans, village community, and PCU. Initially, operating once a month, but it soon expanded to a bi-weekly event, with additional openings for special occasions. What is interesting here is that the changes and adaptation of this market are decided mainly by the management of Barongan itself, which is dominated by the local villagers. *‘Following our successful opening, we decided to open it bi-weekly, based on request and suggestion from the visitors’* said Mr. P, a local villager. The market is a temporary market and located in a vacant space inside the village; it

indicates that the establishment of the market is an effort to make use of village space without changing its normal and everyday function (Figure 1).

Pasar Barongan drew inspiration from the successful *Pasar Papringan* in Ngadimulyo Village, Central Java, sharing similar sustainability campaigns like the use of bamboo tokens and a no-plastic policy, promoting an eco-friendly lifestyle as well as celebrating local traditions. However, *Pasar Papringan* emerged from local designers and community initiatives with minimal local village government involvement (Khoirina 2017). Meanwhile, Barongan Market reflects a *multi-stakeholder* model that prominently includes the village government, PCU, and diverse community groups.

In the Barongan Market context, the village government involvement plays a pivotal role in such collaborations. The village head, in particular, is crucial in sustaining these initiatives by securing resources and facilitating partnerships. The village government's contributions can range from using the Village Fund to support the initiative to overseeing management and other collaborations (Watts et al. 2019). *'The key to collaboration and community empowerment is a transformative collaboration, far from transactional or 'Santa Claus' models, therefore it needs openness and willingness from the partner,'* said Mr. L, a PCU's lecturer. He added that finding the right partner within the village government is essential, as collaborations centred solely on material gains are unlikely to last. Instead, successful partnerships should be rooted in mutual respect and long-term commitment. Community-driven development empowers local residents by involving them in project design and implementation (Mansuri 2004). In the case of Barongan Market, the involvement of multiple stakeholders including the village government is essential to make sure the initiative is inline with village agenda.

Villages are the lowest administrative unit in Indonesia's decentralized governance system, operating under regencies (*kabupaten*) or municipalities (*kota*) within a province (*provinsi*). Predominantly located in rural areas, villages have their own governance structures, including a direct election system for the village head (*kepala desa*). The village head is elected by the villagers with an extended tenure of eight years with a maximum of two terms period (as per Law No. 3/2023). What is unique from village, under Law No. 6/2014 on Villages, villages enjoy substantial autonomy to manage local affairs, such as budgeting through the *dana desa* (village fund), planning development initiatives, and managing resources (Arifin et al. 2020; Watts et al. 2019). Villages can also establish local regulations and policies to address community needs and align with local customs (Faoziyah and Salim 2020).



Figure 1. Before and after the Baronga market activity. Source: Authors (2024).

In the case of Barongan Market, the village government has supported the initiative by covering various costs, including land rental, transportation for university students, and in-situ accommodation. The market is located on private land, and the government pays rent to the landowners. *‘The village government contributes to the land rental and the transportation costs for PCU students’* explained Mr. N, the villager of Desa Mojotrisno. He also mentioned that the villagers appreciate the benefits of collaborating with PCU. *‘We have been touched by the effort of PCU, students, lecturers, and we will do whatever it takes to realise the plan and the tourism agenda’* he added.

Sustaining such initiatives requires collaboration from a wide range of actors. In the case of Barongan Market, the contributions of the university, local artisans, women’s groups, and youth have been instrumental. PCU has played a key role in capacity building and connecting the village with wider networks. Their involvement in the regular service-learning programme ensures that the initiative is reviewed and adjusted as needed. The university has also engaged with local communities and other organizations, such as the East Java Batik Lovers Community (KIBAS) batik community, to make the market’s launch a memorable and profitable event. Through media outreach and social media promotion, PCU has also helped raise the profile of the market to the wider public. It helps to attract many visitors from other regions, even from the urban areas.

Local women’s groups are central to the market’s cultural identity as they sell traditional foods that are increasingly difficult to find in standard commercial venues. *‘We’re happy to sell these foods because it’s so rare to find these days,’* said Mrs. N, a food vendor from a women’s group. Local artisans, particularly batik makers, contribute to the market’s unique identity, showcasing products that reflect Mojotrisno’s cultural heritage. These artisans also help to connect the market with other creative workers within Mojotrisno regions, such as handicraft makers, to display their work during market events. Meanwhile, youth groups from the village also involved, managing the market’s operations and organizing art performances, making the market a dynamic cultural heritage event rather than just a shopping destination (Figure 2).

The success of Barongan Market illustrates the power of transformative collaboration in fostering economic resilience and cultural heritage preservation within a desakota setting. Instead of focusing purely on immediate gains, the village government, PCU, and local residents have cultivated a long-term partnership based on mutual respect, shared objectives, and co-ownership. This approach reinforces the ‘speculation from below’ concept by allowing grassroots actors to shape their socio-economic futures in flexible, incremental ways (Fields 2023; Shin 2014). Through the active involvement of the village government, PCU, and the local community, the market has



Figure 2. Barongan market situation. Source: Authors (2024).

become more than just an economic activity – it is a space where tradition meets modernity, rural interacts with urban, and where community empowerment thrives. The transformative collaboration played a crucial role in sustaining the market and created a model that could be replicated in other *desakota* contexts.

Navigating heritage preservation: challenges and future directions

Barongan Market stands as a compelling instance of speculative urbanism from below, supported by a coalition of university partners, local community members and the village government. The Initial idea of this market was only a small cultural market that focused on batik or other craft products from the village. Now, the market's scope has evolved through organic, iterative collaboration to include homemade foods and various cultural expressions. According to Mr. L, a lecturer at PCU,

After some time collaborating with villagers in Mojotrisno, we realised their homemade food is very delicious. So, we proposed establishing not only a Batik or Art Market, but a cultural market that promotes local cultures including the local food as well.

This adaptive process reflects how university-community partnerships can steer projects towards local needs over time. It presents the application of 'dirty research' to position knowledge production as an embedded process within the creation of new worlds through entwining theory and action that takes a long-term trajectory (Shafique 2025).

The cultural market that showcases village local potential resonates with Mason (Mason 2015) ideas about performative techniques to make local heritage more accessible as it elicits strong emotional response and empathy towards historical narrative. By having the market as an established form of place making, the village community also presents innovative approaches to local heritage preservation that fosters local collective identity and pride (Perkins, Mackay, and Wilson 2023; Stephens and Tiwari 2015). Ms. A, youth villager remarks, '*we are so proud with the Barongan Market, after a lot of people know about this market when we say that we come from Mojotrisno Village, they will mention Barongan Market automatically*'. Involving the local community in cultural preservation efforts ensures not only the life of cultural heritage but also contributes to the social well-being and sustainable development of the community (Grimwade and Carter 2000; Yoshida et al. 2024).

Although the official collaboration between the university, local community, and the village government began in 2021, its foundations trace back to Mr. L's earlier relationship with Mr. A, a batik artisan. This pre-existing connection expanded from small-scale community service to an institutional collaboration. Reflecting on partnership formation, Mr. L notes, '*In pursuing successful community empowerment, being selective about the right partner is crucial. Our partners can't just be recipients – they must actively contribute*'. Considering this aspect, after finishing the first service learning programme with the architecture department, PCU has further collaboration across disciplines, including interior and product design, to support the outputs from the first service learning programme.

A key milestone of that initial service-learning phase was the production of a village handbook (Asri, Wayne, and Arifin 2023) and the construction of a bamboo communal building known as SEKALA (Figure 3). The previously underutilized space surrounding SEKALA then became a natural site for establishing Barongan Market. Since then, Barongan Market has become a focal point of cultural and economic activity in the village. The existence of this market has been valuable to the recognition of Desa Mojotrisno at regional and national levels. The special events outside the regular market opening schedule are a result of the recognition of other stakeholders outside the village. For example, in February 2024, Barongan Market hosted a free national trash-free day celebration, an event that was held by Jombang Environmental City.

Despite a recent decline in revenue and visitors – likely due to increasing competition from other initiatives and economic conditions – the market has opened new possibilities for expansion and



Figure 3. SEKALA's architectural design and its surrounds current improvements. Source: Asri, Wayne, and Arifin 2003 and Authors (2024).

growth for the villagers and the village itself. Recently, the village received recognition by making it into the top 300 villages in the National Tourism Village Award 2024, 1st place in the National Kampung Competition by KBA Astra 2023, and it placed in the top three of the Tourism Village Competition in Jombang Regency in 2023.

I still remember that in January 2023, the market could obtain almost 18 million rupiah, but revenue later fluctuated, sometimes it could only reach a quarter of, even worse. However, I always remind other villagers not to judge Barongan Market by revenue alone, look at how it attracts funding and recognition for the village

said Mr. PB, one of the market management members.

One of Mojotrisno's most emblematic cultural assets is its natural dye batik, spearheaded by Mr. A.. After the 2021 service learning programme, the village proposed the creation of the Natural Dye Batik Center (Serbalam), which has become a symbol of Desa Mojotrisno's cultural revival. Mr. A's batik is crafted using natural dyes from local materials such as tree bark, leaves, and leaf fibres, which produce environmentally friendly waste compared to synthetic dyes. *'The batik we produce uses 90 percent natural dyes. These materials are easy to find – they're all around us. Using natural dyes also makes our production more sustainable'* Mr. A added. Batik remains a cornerstone of Indonesia's cultural identity, recognized by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage since 2009 (Kusumastuti et al. 2023; Permatasari, Qohar, and Rachman 2020).

Two years into its operation, Barongan Market also faces pressing challenges. Following feedback from visitors, management shifted from monthly openings to a biweekly schedule, but lower overall revenues have discouraged some food vendors. *'Personally, my traditional cake is always sold out during the Barongan Event, but other food vendors may experience different things that make them rethink their involvement. However, we always support and give motivation to each other'* said Mrs. N. In response to this, the market management occasionally hosts thematic events – like watercolour workshops or children's competitions – to attract larger audiences, but these events often rely on unpredictable external collaborations. Internal conflicts have also surfaced over credit for the market's successes. Mr. A expresses frustration with the early youth group, stating, *'They claimed to be the sole initiators during an external event held by external stakeholders at national level, even though many people know that I consider myself a founding member alongside the university and village head.'* Such discord illustrates the dynamic between community unity and personal ambition within grassroots initiatives.

Local governance dynamics further complicate matters. While the village head's involvement delivers funding opportunities and network advantages, it also concentrates information related to the tourism village agenda in a small circle. Many villagers are unaware of future tourism plans, leading to complaints about a lack of transparency. Mr. G, a youth organization member, observes, *'We never know what's going to happen. These matters are never discussed with us, only the village head and a few people understand the plan.'* Mr. S likewise also notes

I heard that we received a significant grant from tourism village competitions at the city and national levels, but we have no idea how the money is being used. Ideally, the funding could have been allocated to improve the Barongan market or at least benefit its management.

Although PCU's service-learning modules will still continue and be scheduled until 2026, limited community engagement beyond the village head's network raises concerns about inclusivity and power disparities – challenging the truly bottom-up nature of speculative urbanism from below. One lecturer from the architecture department remarked,

We cannot deny there are political interests here. However, as long as students can learn, produce architectural outputs, and contribute to society, it is sufficient. Of course, we expect a more bottom-up process where we can learn more from the community rather than relying on a conventional architect-client relationship and we are still finding the way.

Therefore, it is also a challenge for the university to catalyze wider actors' involvement and push the transparency process of village development to broader village communities.

Looking ahead, sustaining Barongan Market's synergy of cultural heritage and economic resilience may hinge on improving transparency and diversifying partnerships. More regular public forums, structured visitor feedback, and broader leadership rotation could help mitigate dependencies on a few key stakeholders. In addition, capacity-building efforts – such as marketing workshops or artisan skill-sharing – would enable local vendors to adapt to changing visitor demands. By embracing the adaptive ethos of temporary urbanism, the market can remain flexible, incorporating new cultural expressions without losing its core identity. In doing so, Barongan Market and Desa Mojotrisno can continue exemplifying a *desakota* community where grassroots agency and heritage preservation coalesce in sustainable and innovative ways.

Discussion and beyond

This study investigated (1) how Barongan Market exemplifies 'speculation from below' and how multi-stakeholder collaborations – particularly involving the university, local government, and community – shape its long-term sustainability and (2) how local cultural heritage is manifested and sustained through the market. Findings reveal that temporal, community-driven nature of the case study resonates with the idea speculation from below (Fields 2023) while simultaneously advancing local heritage and community involvement as valuable assets to create a transformative collaboration in the *desakota* context.

Barongan Market, as a speculative initiative, built through the university-community collaboration that intertwines with local heritage preservation and the economic vitality of the villagers. It is developed on a long-term commitment to the collaboration between PCU and Mojotrisno Village. Articulation of local village potentials like traditional foods, batik, and cultural performance serve as both cultural markers and economic draws reinforcing Mojotrisno's identity. Interestingly, it fostered without too much changing the current spatial and economic activities of the villagers. This temporality also challenged the conventional heritage practice that is usually removing contemporary use of the space and detaching the everyday community experience that owns the heritage (Grimwade and Carter 2000). By leveraging intangible traditions, the market has elevated the village's tourist appeal and garnered recognition at regional and national levels, demonstrating that heritage preservation and development can indeed be viable in rural and peri-urban settings through collective community engagement (Schmitz and Pepe 2022; Stephens and Tiwari 2015).

Yet, the study also reveals that performative heritage like the temporal Barongan Market, while fostering local pride, is vulnerable to political and managerial bottlenecks. The domination of local stakeholders that hold the power not only gives advancement benefits but also creates the potential of alienating other villagers' contributions. Ensuring that the entire community understands and benefits from the heritage revitalization strategy is pivotal for the long-term sustainability of the initiative. Wider and diverse actor involvement will help to control the transparency progress towards the village development agenda.

One distinguishing factor in Barongan Market's trajectory is the university's involvement. This aligns with Sara and Jones's (2018) that university could be an agent of change in the city. However, we would like to argue that a university's role towards a transformative collaboration should be seen as the catalyst rather than a solely agent. In the end, the community itself should be able to drive the initiative independently. Of course, it will not be perfect, but the collaboration should position architects or other professionals as facilitators and enablers (Archer, Luansang, and Boonmahathanakorn 2012; Tovivich 2012) rather than solely experts who deliver solutions. As we have experienced in the case of Borongan Market that decision is mainly made internally, such as the changing market schedule. A lot of decisions regarding the market maintenance and development after the building of the SEKALA building also showed the design agency (Antaki and Petrescu 2023) that nurtured inside the community with its dynamic stories.

While micro-ethnography offered a time-efficient way to capture the living experience and local dynamics, the short field research period restricted opportunities to observe marker evolutions across multiple times or interview the visitor of the market. Future studies might consider employing longitudinal study, incorporating visitor perspectives and analyzing socio-economic impacts over a longer span. Additionally, such university-community collaborations illustrate how academic actors can support local innovations, but they also reveal potential dependencies if resources or academic priorities shift. Much like the phenomenon of temporary urbanism itself, which relies on responsiveness and adaptation, these local governance and political issues highlight the fragility of ongoing collaboration and the need for consistent dialogue, diverse involvement, and open evaluation among all stakeholders.

Ultimately, Barongan Market underscores how grassroots 'speculation from below' can produce tangible socio-economic benefits and nurture cultural heritage when supported by flexible governance, university partnerships, and strong community contribution. Even as managerial frictions and financial uncertainties pose risks, these factors also prompt ongoing experimentation – a key strength of temporary urbanism, which thrives on iterative adaptation rather than static planning (Goldman 2020). This study's findings suggest that in *desakota* contexts, sustained local participation, equitable power-sharing, and strategic use of cultural resources can advance a more inclusive urban transformation, one that honours the lived experiences and aspirations of the rural and peri-urban communities in the Global South.

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