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Informal Media Economies in Aspiring Global Cities

The rise of the internet has focussed public and scholarly attention on distributed media infrastructures such as BitTorrent, Limewire, and other peer-to-peer services which operate at the fringes of legality or in the extralegal realm. However, informal media circuits such as these have played a central role throughout the history of communications and have existed across every medium, from the book to the web. They provide billions of people worldwide with a daily diet of entertainment and information, and in many nations they are the only functional channels of media distribution. This paper will present material from a larger project examining the intersection of formal and informal audiovisual economies in the Asia-Pacific region. Drawing on work by Lawrence Liang, it addresses various forms of identity, imagination and affiliation incubated within the informal media economy and proposes a set of coordinates linking media distribution circuits and urban development.