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Making Sense of the City: Public Spaces in the Philippines

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Making Sense of the City

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REMMON E. BARBAZA

Preface

IN 2015, SOME OF THE MEMBERS of the Department of Philosophy at the Ateneo de Manila University initiated several round-table discussions on the city, later inviting colleagues from other departments, such as English, Filipino, History, Sociology and Anthropology, and Economics to join the conversations. The discussions were enlightening, and became an opportunity for us to challenge our own understanding of the city, widening our perspectives and allowing us to expand the scope of our inquiries even as each of us remained within our own disciplinal assumptions and trajectories.

The collection of essays in this book is the result of these exchanges. While the range of questions and research methods varied significantly, from the more concrete and empirical, to the more abstract and speculative, one senses that the essays do have shared concerns, and that they all struggle to make sense of the same phenomenon—namely, the city, and Metro Manila in particular.

From the nine essays in this anthology, three themes eventually emerged, thus forming the sections of this book. In Part I: Contesting Spaces, our first three essays discuss the ways by which the city becomes the site of struggle for the allocation and ordering of spaces. In “Great Transformations: The Spatial Politics of City-building Megaprojects in the Manila Peri-urban Periphery,” Jerik Cruz examines “transformations in the geographies of governance

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that have been catalyzed by . . . mega-projects,” showing how such undertakings bring about the “formation of new constellations of power, territory and governance processes, creating a special window for probing the dynamics of urban spatial production within developing countries like the Philippines.” How such new constellations develop further, especially in relation to political power, “will prove to be of historic importance not just to the maneuverings of state and capital in neoliberalized contexts, but to the prospects of still-struggling, still-evolving movements of non-elite forces to claim universal and democratic rights to the city.”

Having lived in Quezon City for a couple of years while teaching philosophy at the Ateneo de Manila University, Lukas Kaelin (now with the Catholic Private University Linz in Austria) had concrete, personal experience as a basis for his reflections in “Struggling for Public Spaces: The Political Significance of Manila’s Segregated Urban Landscape.” Kaelin is concerned with “the political significance of the urban landscape of Manila,” inquiring into “how the notion of the ‘public’ plays out with respect to the polarity of private and public.” For Kaelin, there is no doubt that the fragmentation fundamentally underlying the megacity that is Metro Manila can only be overcome through the people’s willful creation of public spaces, and in so doing also resist dictatorial and corrupt governments.

Guided by Hegelian dialectics, Fernando N. Zialcita concludes the first part with a consideration of the plaza as the historic core of towns and cities, serving as spaces that shape “municipal identity.” In “Sacral Spaces Between Skyscrapers,” Zialcita decries the loss of this central and fundamental function of the plaza: “It is here that local history, social solidarity, unique customs and expressions of creativity come together to form a sense of place.” One can easily see indeed that in most, if not all, towns and cities in the Philippines, the building of shopping malls near, if not in place of, the historic plazas is viewed as an indication of progress, rather than as a threat to the local people’s history and identity. True to his Hegelian roots, Zialcita does not see the problem as an either-or situation, for “the plaza complex can combine together history and business, creativity and livelihood. It becomes a sacred space that concretizes the various things that make a city unique.

Here the abstract universal, that is the city, becomes embodied space. The plaza can be the spine that keeps the city together as it moves forward.”

In Part II: Sensing Through the Margins, our next three essays explore the city from below and from the fringes. In “Cleaning the Capital: The Campaign against Cabarets and Cockpits in the Prewar Greater Manila Area,” Michael D. Pante examines the “complexity of urban border areas and fringe belts in capital cities,” focusing on the “simultaneous porosity and rigidity of the borders” of Manila and Quezon City with respect to two popular entertainment activities that were often seen and indeed, continue to be seen as belonging to the fringes of the city, namely, cabarets and cockfighting. As Pante hopes to show, shifting the study from the center to the fringes of the city allows us to “substantially unpack the socio-spatial complexity of vices in the greater Manila area.”

Aristotle is known to have found the ultimate end of all our actions, inquiries, and technical preoccupations, namely, *eudaimonia* (usually translated as “happiness” or “well-being”). Unlike, however, his former teacher and friend, Plato, Aristotle did not dwell on some eternal and unchanging idea or form, such as in the case of happiness, but rather sought to understand it within the context of the practical realities of human existence. Thus, Aristotle could not avoid the question whether there are certain material conditions that are necessary for us to achieve happiness. Marc Oliver D. Pasco brings this problem to bear in his essay, “*Eudaimonia* in the Margins: Negotiating Ways to Flourish in Urban Slum Dwellings.” Pasco asks, “Is it possible for people who are economically and socially marginalized to attain happiness?” Refusing to offer any easy answer, Pasco instead decides to engage the Aristotelian question by employing Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* in examining concrete possibilities of well-being among the urban poor. Pasco concludes that “Happiness, from the perspective of the *habitus*, is not an explicit goal which calls for the conscious application of practical wisdom in various situations. It is the function of an agent’s excellence in improvising strategies that cohere with objective necessity. Viewed in this manner, it can therefore be said that, indeed, the poor can be happy. Just not always in the way we would imagine or wish them to be.”

In “Sensing and Seeing Manila,” Gary C. Devilles reflects, through the sense of seeing, “the politics of Manila’s representation and depiction, the asymmetrical relations of its people, and the creative strategies employed by people under an oppressive surveillance culture.” Devilles undertakes such reflection using two Filipino indie films (*Serbis* and *Tribu*), and a novel (Edgardo M. Reyes’s *Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag*), which was later turned into a Lino Brocka movie (*Maynila sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag*). For Devilles, seeing Manila means “understanding contradictions and problematic relations and . . . in that partial light, in the interplay between absence and presence, between what is revealed and concealed, seeing is an aesthetic, ethical project and ultimately the site of struggle.”

In the concluding Part III: Imagining Possibilities, our final three essays look beyond the current state of the city and dare to imagine how it could further unfold or transform itself in the future. In “Sex(edness) in the City: Reimagining Our Urban Spaces with Abraham Akkerman,” Duane Allyson U. Gravador-Pancho foregrounds the gendered origins of the cities that we build. Taking her cue from Akkerman, Gravador-Pancho outlines the predominantly masculine characteristics of most cities, which coincides with the privileging of Western rationality that emphasizes rigidity and predictability in urban design. Such a predominantly masculine conception and design of the city comes at the cost of setting aside characteristics that are feminine, such as the elements of surprise and eroticism. But how would a city look like if we allowed the feminine to also come into play? “In the context of urban planning and city-building,” Gravador-Pancho claims, “the task is to reimagine spaces so as to make space for our bodiliness and eroticism, for our capacities to truly desire and love one another. The first aspect of this task consists in constructing spaces that acknowledge and encourage the use of our bodies for mobility, for reaching out. This would perhaps mean giving more space for walking, for sitting, for simply experiencing the city as a vulnerable human being among other vulnerable human beings, without the pretense to security that a car or any similar gadget provides.”

Proceeding from the fundamental idea that “the city is at play,” but a play that happens in the tension between innovation and

invention on the one hand and exploitation on the other, Agustin Martin G. Rodriguez, in his essay “The City and the Dynamism of Invention and Exploitation,” seeks to find a way out of the imbalance, as the dominant rationality entrenches itself in a system that marginalizes other rationalities. Rodriguez is convinced that “it is truly incumbent upon the margins, to the others who are not completely of this web of global urbanity, to break open the logic of the urban for it to accept the possibilities of other ways of dwelling.”

Finally, in “The City as Illusion and Promise,” I examine the claim (by Henri Lefebvre, and later David Harvey) that the city no longer exists, at least as we know it. What we have instead is merely an illusion, something that Martin Heidegger also implies in some of his later writings, notably his seminal work on the essence of technology. In confronting such an extreme proposition, I first raise a conceptual problem: is the city a city insofar as it is not a province? And vice versa? But the conceptual problematic of course is also manifested in actual material conditions. Can the city exist without the province? What is the relationship between the city and province? While I find merit in recognizing the illusion that is the city, he nonetheless invites the reader to imagine other possibilities, however impossible they may seem: “Either we settle with the illusion that is the city of our age, or reimagine and work towards the realization of new possibilities for the city, one that restores and respects the balance in nature that we have for so long forgotten and covered over with our illusions.”

With this anthology, we authors hope to open further the discussions on the city within the Philippine context. With Metro Manila bursting at the seams, as tensions continue to intensify and more intractable problems arise than those that are being solved, it becomes a matter of survival for all the stakeholders to come together and shape the future of the city.

I wish to acknowledge the Brigittine Monks of the Priory of Our Lady of Consolation in Amity, Oregon, where I spent close to forty days and forty nights of peace and quiet in November and December 2017, allowing me to work on pending projects, including this book. Brother Prior Bernard Ner Suguitan, Brothers Steven and Matthew, and the rest of the community were boundless in

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JERIK CRUZ

Great Transformations

The Political Economy of City-Building Megaprojects in the Manila Peri-urban Periphery¹

FAR BEYOND THE SUBURBS of Metropolitan Manila, nestled in the rolling plains of the Central Luzon basin, the construction of the roadworks of the Alviaera and Clark Green City (CGC) projects are now in full swing. Still surrounded by swathes of agricultural land and years away yet from completing their first phases of development, both mega-projects have already been heralded as the most promising ventures of their kind within the Philippines today. Despite being in their infancy, in fact, both Alviaera and CGC have been seen to form the very “next frontiers” of Philippine urbanism (*Manila Standard* 2014), introducing all at once the future growth hubs of the Central Luzon region, the nation’s very first “aerotropolis” (Amojelar 2013), and new forms of sustainable urban development in the Philippines.

But these two mega-projects are only an inkling of historic changes that await the Manila peri-urban fringe, if plans to decongest the country’s National Capital Region (NCR) materialize. Owing to worsening dysfunctions in Manila mega-city life, the Philippine government adopted last September 2014 a “Mega Manila Dream Plan” for boosting growth clusters and transport networks in the surrounding peri-urban fringe (Japan International Cooperation Agency 2014). Meanwhile, a groundswell in large-scale, mixed-use townships by leading private developers has taken root in provinces north and south of NCR (Pacis 2014). Trammeled amidst these trends, land on the Manila mega-urban region has come to

fore as a frontier zone for market-oriented mega-project development, yet also a spatial platform for the creation of “next generation” built landscapes that are proliferating across East Asia (Webster 2014, 321–23).

This chapter investigates transformations in the geographies of governance that have been catalyzed by these mega-projects. Based on mixed-method research of the Alviera and CGC projects, I unravel how the realization of such ventures has gone hand-in-hand with the formation of new constellations of power, territory and governance processes, creating a special window for probing the dynamics of urban spatial production within developing countries like the Philippines. However, if partly due to the very features of these mega-projects—their non-routine nature, the sheer scale of costs and risks that they impose, and their disruptive tendencies (Altschuler and Luberoff 2003, 4, 267)—these governance transformations have also resulted from scale-related challenges that have been faced by their proponents. Thus, I argue that a full understanding of these mega-projects’ development efforts must grapple with the state rescaling processes and the scale-manipulating strategies that market- and state-based actors have deployed in their bids to secure control over land and the production of new urban space.

Yet these mega-project processes have not occurred in an open, free-form milieu: rather, they have been situated within the Philippines’ prevailing strains of market-oriented urban governance. While the neoliberal restructuring of the Philippine political economy since the 1980s has resulted in deep-seated developmental doldrums, it has also precipitated a long-term “creative destruction” of the practices, mechanisms, and institutions governing space and urban development (Bello et al. 2014, 9–10, 55). Nowhere has this recalibration been more arresting than in the now-proliferating mega-projects of the Manila mega-urban fringe, where sclerotic governance regimes over the “losers” and “winners” of the Philippines’ “new” economy have been cast into stark relief with one another. All told, the significance of these mega-projects extends far beyond themselves: they tell an even broader story of how power relations are now exercised over the Philippines’ economy of space, of how governing regimes over new “world-class” urban spaces are

established and maintained, and of what prospects exist for realizing universal and democratic rights to the city.

Megaprojects and the Scalar Politics of Neoliberal Urbanism

Since the late 1980s, cities across developing Asia have witnessed an upsurge in efforts by market-based property firms and state bodies to restructure urban landscapes by means of large-scale, integrated “mega-projects” (Shatkin 2011, 80). Normally presented as a measure for shoring up “world class” economic opportunities, and operationalized as parcelized interventions, these large-scale ventures have, from the 2000s onwards, taken the form of mixed-use developments addressing objectives ranging from commercial to social and environmental goals (Strauch, Takano, and Hordijk 2015, 178). Globalizing middle- and upper- classes, keen to flee the inconveniences of degraded urban arteries, have often been drawn to purveyed images of plush living and “progress” (Michel 2010, 388–89), yet the emergence of such megaprojects has not always been seen in a favorable light. Numerous observers, for one, have noted that such ventures have often run counter to social concerns, particularly by intensifying socio-spatial divisions through gentrification-driven displacement and the eviction of peripheral populations (Strauch, Takano, and Hordijk 2015, 177–78).

Yet these megaprojects have been only one means by which neoliberal urban governance has found expression in the cities of the Global South. Defined as an order of market-disciplinary socio-economic regulation in which urban spaces have been transformed into strategic arenas for capital accumulation and market-oriented growth, neoliberal urbanism has entailed the remaking of cities as platforms for entrepreneurial forms of governance and unprecedented degrees of private sector involvement, if not control, over urban development trajectories (Peck, Theodore, and Brenner 2009, 57–58, 63). Yet, if widely associated with the marketization of housing and social services, the repurposing of urban administrative apparatuses toward attracting business investment, and the proliferation of privatized enclaves, neoliberal urban governance regimes have just as significantly entailed the reshuffling of the territorial scales of state power (59–62). In tandem with

efforts to recast cities along lines of market-based growth, state structures that had previously been centralized, nationally standardized, and oriented to welfarist or developmentalist objectives have been subjected to various grades of decentralization, place-based customization, and the enshrining of global competitiveness as the principal aim of policy intervention (Klink and Denaldi 2012, 547–48).

At the heart of all these processes lies a historic shift in which neoliberal urbanism and privately-driven megaprojects have brought to fore new geographies of governance. As analysts have observed, implementers of contemporary urban megaprojects have commonly been granted “exceptionalist” measures exempting them from the authority of conventional state bodies and regulations, while endowing them with special powers of intervention, decision-making, and policy-formulation (Swyngedouw, Moulaert, and Rodriguez 2002, 543; Kennedy et al. 2014, 13, 37). Justified in terms of commercial and technocratic prerogatives, unaccountable and exclusionary management regimes surrounding the governance of these ventures have increasingly prevailed, whether in the form of public-private partnerships (PPPs) between corporate firms and state organizations; autonomous and quasi-private parastatal agencies; closed-door networks of bureaucrats, business elites, professional consultancies, and technical experts; or token public participation exercises in which citizens are denied real institutional power to affect decisions concerning the governance of entire cities (Swyngedouw, Moulaert, and Rodriguez 2002, 565–66). All in all, such exceptionalist mechanisms have further undermined already-sharp democratic deficits in urban governance.

Equally noteworthy, the existence of such governance dynamics attests to how questions of scale are cardinal concerns for the development of urban mega-projects. Though typically understood as the focal setting at which spatial boundaries are defined for specific social processes (Agnew 1997, 100), subsequent recognition in human geography that scalar boundaries are socially-constructed, relational, and fluid yet objectively-inherited phenomena has drawn attention to how the framing of scalar realities can themselves be factors in how socio-political processes play out (Born and Purcell 2006, 197–99). Through their role in shaping the

relative socio-spatial power positions of different actors, and how institutional “command lines” of authority are drawn over territories (Swyngedouw 2000, 70–71), scale can even be said to constitute a socially-mediated apparatus of power—congealing and extending relations of power and control among variegated social forces. Within such understandings of scalar politics, all socio-political practices and processes are instead viewed as having indelible scalar dimensions, so that manipulating and leveraging these scalar features can have vital repercussions on the realization of the agendas of different agents, movements and organizations (MacKinnon 2010, 29–30, 32–33).

In the parlance of Smith (1993; 2004), for example, actors that are socially and politically handicapped at a given scale can seek to jump into different scalar settings where political opportunities and the balance-of-power may be more favorable for their activities. Likewise, other agents can seek to bend the existing scalar features of given social activities, disentangling the links between certain practices at given scalar frames, so as to suit the fulfillment of their interests. Through such multi-pronged scalar strategies, different agents in different spatial-institutional contexts are able to produce new *gestalts* of scale in the course of mega-project development, in order to temporarily crystallize certain geometries of power and governance (Swyngedouw, Moulaert, and Rodriguez 2002, 542; MacKinnon 2010, 31). In fact, as will be shown later, the deployment of such strategies has been an indispensable feature of urban mega-project implementation, not only to better advance the strategic agendas of private and public sector developers, but also as a means of coping with incoherencies brought about by the Philippines’ long transition to a regime of neoliberal urban governance.

Tropic of Neoliberalism: Neoliberal Urbanism and Megaproject Making in the Peri-Urban Philippines

The strategic manipulation of scalar frames, especially in relation to state institutional structures and the consolidation of neoliberal governance regimes, have been manifested to an exceptional degree in the Philippines since the 1980s. If couched at the time in the discourse of democratization following the Marcos dictatorship, this rescaling process entailed the passage of the country’s

Local Government Code in 1991, which decentralized an entire continuum of governance functions, including in urban planning, land-use management, and the power to enter into joint ventures and PPP's, down from the national toward subnational levels (Porio 2012, 11–13). Within the National Capital Region, this downscaling resulted in the dismantling of the cronyism-ridden Metro Manila Commission into a weaker Metro Manila Development Authority, limited to coordinating the urban governance functions of its constituent local government units (LGUs) (Michel 2010, 390–91).²

Even more striking has been the rise of new “exceptional” bodies oriented towards attracting investment and typified by market-friendly modes of regulation. In 1995, the Philippine government legislated the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Act, making the country the first in the world to allow the creation of privately-administered SEZs as separate customs and investment-friendly territories (McKay 2006, 210–11). Autonomous Freeports have likewise been created by legislation over lands spanning tens of thousands of hectares across the country, with unprecedented powers of eminent domain, developing and regulating utilities, public services, and infrastructure, and planning as well as managing allocated territories (Bello et al. 2014, 94). No less important, through the Bases Conversion Act of 1992, former military bases were placed under the sole jurisdiction of the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA), with powers, among others, of selling and leasing such lands to the private sector; overseeing urban planning and management within them, and constructing, owning, leasing, operating, and maintaining public utilities and infrastructure facilities (Ordoñez 2015, 36, 42–43).

In the highly class-stratified Philippine context, systematic neoliberalization has served to even further entrench the country's privately-oriented and geographically-uneven dynamics of property development (Michel 2010, 386). While state units have failed to respond effectively to the country's intractable urban woes, private conglomerates have secured unrivalled heights of control over urban planning and administration processes (Shatkin 2008, 398). Labelled by observers as evincing a pattern of neo-patrimonial trends in urban governance, the demonstrated weakness of the Philippine state in performing urban governance functions has enabled an oligarchy of family-linked companies to seize control

over nominally public urban spaces and develop them into privately-run enclaves (Murphy and Hogan 2012, 23, 25). Unsurprisingly, the country's urban form has displayed ever-higher degrees of socio-spatial fragmentation between high-performing, globally-connected nodes of the urban economy, and more publicly-neglected segments of Philippine cities, epitomized by the 500 major slum communities of Metro Manila (Ragrario 2003). For the most part, a “bypass-implant” character of developer-driven projects such as gated enclaves, privatized business districts, and privately-operated interconnecting infrastructures has obtained—with commercial developments tending to “bypass” all zones of unwanted urban “excess,” while “implanting” new spaces for globally-connected consumption and accumulation (Shatkin 2008, 384, 388).

These same trends have also been increasingly displayed in the peri-urbanization dynamics of the Manila Mega-Urban Region (MUR)—a roughly 12,000 km² conurbation consisting of NCR and parts of six surrounding provinces, which has been estimated to be the fourth most populous urban region in the world in 2015 (Demographia 2015, 20). Home to some of the foremost farming regions of the Philippines, large expanses of the MUR have already been buffeted by waves of land-use change since the early 1980s, usually through the mushrooming of SEZ's, leisure estates, but most especially, private residential enclaves (Kelly 1998, 35–39). More recently, the longest ongoing real estate boom in the Philippines' post-dictatorship history has tilted peri-urbanization trends in the MUR toward mega-project development, with advances in the scale, sophistication, master-planning and financing capabilities of property developers lending more and more prominence to the establishment of large-scale, mixed-use ventures on the urban fringe (Webster 2014, 323). Beginning with the 2007 unveiling of Ayala Land Inc.'s 1,600-hectare Nuvali township in Canlubang, Laguna, the mixed-use township trend has continued to garner momentum, with observers declaring 2015 as “the year of townships” on account of at least 11 such ventures being developed across the country (Lamudi 2015).

Yet despite buoyant expectations, institutional impediments have still threatened the realization of such townships. As noted in studies of urban mega-projects across Asia, the most common

causes for the failure of these ventures has been in consolidating large-scale tracts of urban land, protracted local resistance against project implementation, and oftentimes the unreliability and ineffectiveness of local governments (Shatkin 2011, 86–89). On one hand, even while incentivizing entrepreneurial governance approaches, local governance quality amidst decentralization has remained uneven, and improvements in lagging LGU’s have been sluggish (Capuno 2005, 28). On the other, the makeup of Philippine urban and peri-urban land markets have also posed persistent challenges to large-scale land acquisition and conversion processes. With a fragmented, inefficient, unreliable, and corruption-prone land administration system stretching across nineteen different state agencies, such markets have proven a fertile ground for conflict, with the same plot of land often harboring competing claims on the basis of different property regimes (Chikiamko and Fabella 2011, 133).

Confronted with these hurdles, mega-project proponents have usually found it necessary to “strategically localize” their development activities by meeting the needs of and simultaneously influencing political, institutional, and social conditions particularly at the local level (Coe and Lee 2006, 63–64). Far from simply “place-shopping” among pre-constructed sites, developers have systematically intervened across multiple scalar terrains not only in order to establish their leverage within local institutional processes and relations, but also to proactively reconstitute such conditions (McKay 2006, 8–9). How then have these above-mentioned challenges affected the Alviera and CGC projects, and how have local governance processes over land resources and urban space been transformed amidst project proponents’ efforts in order to surmount these constraints? We now turn to addressing these questions.

Ayala Land’s Alviera: In the Shadows of “Acting Government”

By acclamation the Philippines’ premier real estate developer, and a subsidiary of one of the country’s oldest family-owned conglomerates, Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) can lay claim to being a consistent pioneer of urban development trends throughout

post-war Philippine history. To begin with, the firm was chiefly responsible for developing its former Hacienda Makati throughout the 1950s into the Philippines’ leading central business, diplomatic, and financial nerve center, setting a gold standard for Philippine property developers for years to come (Michel 2010, 389).



Fig.1. Entrance of Alviera as of February 2016

Source: Author



Fig.2. Ongoing Construction of Alviera as of February 2016

Source: Author

Since then, ALI has replicated such feats in now-iconic projects, the most recent being its 1,600-hectare Nuvali township in 2007 in Laguna province (Ayala Land 2015, 25–27).

Hailed by pundits to be Ayala Land's most ambitious initiative since Nuvali, the 1,180-hectare Alviera project in Porac, Pampanga is a mixed-use, master-planned township that is envisioned to eventually serve as the growth center of the whole of the Central Luzon region (Dumlao 2014). To be developed over a twenty-five-to thirty-year period, the first phase of the project, from 2016 to 2019, will involve the establishment of three residential communities, two educational institutions, a high-end country club, and a 31-hectare industrial park (Montealegre 2014). With the Subic-Clark-Tarlac expressway (SCTEX) passing right through its property, and being strategically located close to the refurbished Clark International Airport, the mega-project has been projected to become a central district of a looming "aerotropolis" in CL (*Philippine Daily Inquirer* 2014). Likewise, Alviera is to be distinguished as a new "green township," by preserving the project site's mountainous environment for ecotourism purposes while incorporating eco-friendly urban landscapes (Vibar 2014).

This focus on Alviera's development as an urban and nature hub highlights Alviera's being constructed in the town of Porac,³ specifically within the barangays of Hacienda Dolores and Sapang Uwak, where communities of lowland farmers and Aeta indigenous peoples (IPs) reside. In these areas, the project will consolidate separate property contributions of 1,180-hectares from ALI and 761.1-hectares from Leonio Land Holdings Inc. (LLHI), which had acquired property in the town even earlier (Ayala Land 2015). Both companies have formed a JV company for the project called Nuevocentro Inc., in which a 55 percent (ALI) /45 percent (LLHI) profit-sharing scheme has been arranged (Magturo 2014; PEZA 2014).

Thwarting the Ayala Model in Porac?

From a project standpoint, the reported performance of Alviera has exceeded expectations: on the merit of the project's ambition and initial success to date, Porac has been heralded as one of the leading "next-wave cities" providing alternative business and

commercial hubs to Metro Manila (iMoney.ph 2015). Yet in reality, the venture's operations on the ground have been far more complicated. For one, the capacity of the Porac local state remains anemic across practically all business-relevant areas: as of April 2014, Porac was ranked 826th out of 978 municipalities in the country's Cities and Municipalities Competitiveness Index, suffering particularly in the categories of economic dynamism (940th) and infrastructure (853rd), but still also performing far below median levels for government efficiency (667th)⁴ (National Competitiveness Council 2014).

But even more serious has been Alviera's enmeshment with local land disputes—especially in relation to the 761.1-hectare lot that ALI's JV partner, LLHI, claims to have acquired by a 2003 Deed of Sale. This purchase, however, has been censured by residents and critics as a case of dispossession, having involved lands inhabited and tilled by 1,500 residents from local farming communities. In fact, certifications from the Barangay Council of Hacienda Dolores attest to many of these families' first settlement within the area as far back as 1835 (Jimenez-David 2014). Despite this, the resulting land dispute has witnessed LLHI security forces and unidentified figures committing systematic human rights violations since 2011 against residents, including evictions, demolitions, crop destruction, intimidation, assaults, and extrajudicial killings (Hernandez 2014).

Meanwhile, though the 1,180-hectare lot of ALI (which the company purchased from the once nationally-influential Puyat family and their Manila Bank group in 2012) has been repeatedly emphasized not to suffer from land problems, critics maintain that the ongoing construction of Alviera has actually entailed an illegal conversion process, having been missing a formal conversion order from the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) (Carranza 2016). Likewise, rural justice advocates from Pampanga contend that the project's development has flouted a 1990's application of Hacienda Dolores residents to have the same land plot covered by the government land reform program. In the recollection of such advocates, the entire estate was originally intended by DAR to be developed into a model agrarian reform community, though efforts to this end were stymied by the resistance of the Puyats' property managers and the long-term impacts of the Mt. Pinatubo eruption

(Enriquez 2016). Hence, while no legal proceedings are presently hounding ALI’s property, dormant legal risks have remained.

The Scalar Politics of Intervention:
From Coalitions to Land Acquisition

Amidst such impediments, ALI has had to undertake unprecedented measures to craft more favorable conditions for Alviera’s development. This has evidently been the case in the firm’s coalition-building efforts, which have reportedly garnered the support of key power-brokers within Pampanga province, such as the governor of Pampanga, the present congresswoman of the second District of Pampanga (former president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo), former Senator Lito Lapid (a resident of Porac), and the Pampanga Chamber of Commerce and Industry (comprised by the province’s business elite), who have each contributed to the mega-project’s development (see fig. 4.2) (Mapiles 2015; Ayala manager 2016). Former president Arroyo especially has been recounted by project stakeholders to be a vital mediator of talks between LGU officials, ALI and prospective investors—and was even, in the recollection of Porac’s mayor, the key agent who facilitated ALI’s entry into Porac starting in 2010 (dela Cruz 2016).

But the extensiveness of ALI’s engagements goes far beyond the extension of a multi-level project coalition. On one hand, with communities in peri-urban settings reportedly being prone to “insular” outlooks, the Alviera project has witnessed attempts by ALI to cultivate supportive relational webs with the LGU and local communities, with ALI’s managers on the ground often having to comport themselves in a fashion reminiscent of Philippine landed elites of yore through gestures such as donating to local festivals, attending weddings, sponsoring dinners and local functions, as well as becoming godparents to children of key residents (Ayala executive 2016). Apparently, the ability of ALI personnel to conduct themselves in this quasi-patron manner, and to derive tactical advantage from it, has been a prized asset in Ayala’s Strategic Landbank Management Group. The said group has even reportedly stopped hiring business school graduates from Ivy League universities on the basis of their lacking the necessary flexibility for such activities (Alviera manager 2016).

Secondly, ALI and LLHI have been able to exercise considerable influence over the crafting of the municipality’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP). Starting in 2005 with LLHI and 2012 with ALI, both companies have prompted major post-hoc adjustments in plans to accommodate the mega-project, by contributing substantial inputs and expertise to municipal planners (Lansangan 2016). One critical outcome of this has been the explicit recognition that the CLUP has given to the Alviera project as Porac’s “new economic center” (Municipality of Porac 2016, 42). As can be observed from fig. 4.3, the prominence of Alviera—located at the center of municipality’s land terrain and adjacent to various proposed road interchanges—corroborates its privileged status in the town’s planned land-use regime. Since CLUP adjustments are required for the passage of new zoning ordinances, these new features of Porac’s land-use plan effectively produce a quasi-legal instrument for facilitating local land conversion and fostering a broader growth-driven agenda.

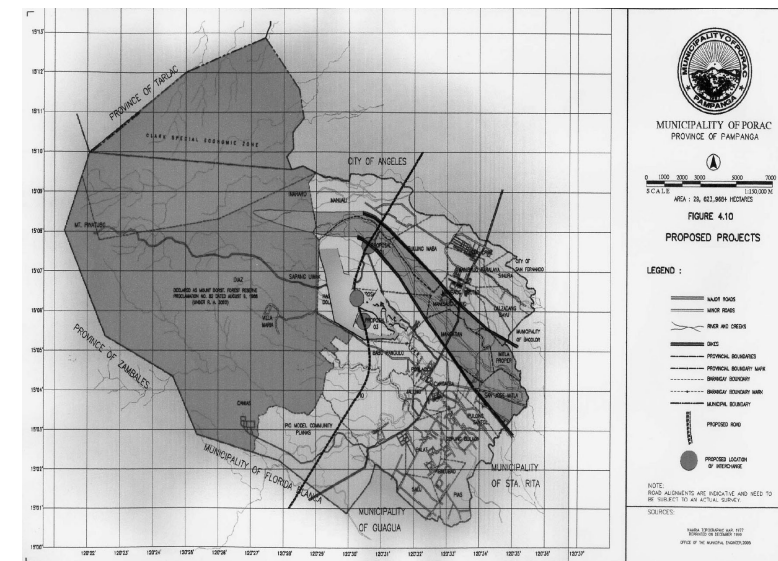


Fig.3. Porac Map with proposed Alviera project in the revised CLUP
Source: Municipality of Porac (2016)

Just as riveting has been the CLUP's proposed development trajectory, which has buttressed ALI's commanding position in the town's local economy. This is most apparent in the revised CLUP's endorsement of a public and private partnership model for undertaking eco-tourism projects—an area which the plan repeatedly identifies as the emerging industry within the municipality (Municipality of Porac 2016, 26, 34, 38). Though not mentioned explicitly in the document, this proposed policy focus promises to secure significant potential returns for ALI, given that the only access route to one of the town's main tourism attractions—the Miyamit falls—is located right within ALI's property (Ayala manager 2016).

The most pressing concerns of ALI and LLHI, however, have been their efforts to insulate the lands acquired for Alviera from coverage by the government's land reform program. On one hand, vital to insulating Ayala Land's 1,180-hectare lot has been its startling mode of acquisition. Secured in 2012, the land transaction occurred at a time when the Philippines' Central Bank (BSP) had become the effective administrator of the land parcel (Ayala Manager 2016), as the parcel in question had been mortgaged to the BSP by the Puyat family's Manila Bank (and eventually foreclosed) in the years after the Asian Financial Crisis (Dizon 2016). While details as to the exact arrangement between ALI, Manila Bank, and BSP are murky, this process has—in line with an August 10, 2012 Legal Opinion of the Philippines' Department of Justice—ultimately resulted in an effective exemption of the parcel from land reform coverage. On the basis of the BSP's being granted fiscal and administrative autonomy by the New Central Bank Act of 1993, the Legal Opinion stated, any mandatory requirement for BSP to transfer foreclosed agricultural lands that have come under its authority for land redistribution would constitute an undue infringement of the Central Bank's unique “discretion to allocate and utilize its resources” (Alegado 2012; Dizon 2016).

In comparison to this exceptionalist acquisition tactic of ALI, LLHI's maneuvers have been more locally-focused. Having purchased its 761.1-hectare property in 2003 in anticipation of SCTEX's completion, the company afterwards secured an exemption order from DAR in 2006 on the basis that the lands within

the property were non-agricultural, untenanted, poorly suited to cultivated crops, and also features an excessive slope of 18 degrees (Hernandez 2014, 1–3). Central to procuring the order was a compromise agreement LLHI had cobbled with the officers of a local irrigators association, Aguman, which consisted of local farmers who had been forced to settle in the LLHI-claimed lands due to post-eruption lahar flows in the 1990s. Entailing the cessation of efforts for land reform coverage in exchange for a 30-hectare residential land concession from LLHI, this agreement, however, has been impugned to have been forged without proper consultation of the organization's membership while being out-of-odds with the facts on the ground (Mendoza 2016; Hernandez 2014, 3).

However flawed, the order has nevertheless allowed LLHI, with support from LGU officials, to drive forward land conversion proceedings against local settlers, who have reorganized themselves into a local association entitled the Aniban ng Nakakaisang Mamamayan ng Hacienda Dolores (Aniban). In 2011, the Mayor of Porac granted LLHI the authority to fence their land despite protests by residents and opposition municipal councilors; in 2012, a municipal ordinance reclassifying the land-use of LLHI's property was issued despite lacking legally-mandated public consultation. Even more troubling, in the midst of demolitions, intimidation episodes, and outright killings, the municipal police has been consistently reported to turn a blind eye to reports of human rights violations (Tapang 2016; Mendoza 2016; Carranza 2016). In all this, LLHI has revealed itself as adopting more overtly patrimonial methods than ALI, having harnessed both clientelist and coercive techniques of asserting control over territory that have been standard fare among traditional Philippine political elites.

“Heroes at the Backstage”:

Emerging Power Geometries in Porac

As the above discussion has shown, the development dynamics of Alviera have hinged upon ALI's harnessing a cornucopia of scalar strategies in the areas of inter-scalar coalition formation, planning, land acquisition, and consolidating supportive firm-local relations. Yet the most consequential impacts of these and other strategies have been its reshaping of local power networks which

have deepened ALI's leverage over core governance processes. In discussing ALI's role in local urban governance processes, an Ayala officer confided:

We shoulder all these—the [governance] responsibilities. Let's say we develop this [a mixed-use estate]: anything that happens here is our call. It's supposed to be the call of the government. We're just supposed to develop buildings and subdivisions within. But since the government's not the one developing, we basically become acting government. . . . Basically we are the “heroes at the backstage,” as far as government functions are concerned. Sometimes they [the LGU] don't know any better. So we do it, so we assist them. That's how it goes in the Philippines. (Ayala manager 2016)

What accounts for this position as “acting government” within the territory of Alvierra and the broader Porac municipality? ALI, undoubtedly, has profited from its immense financial muscle to contract high-level services of all kinds (e.g., security, legal, promotional), as well as its ability to hone strategic linkages with key influentials, such as Pampanga Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PamCham), Pampanga's governor, Porac's mayor, and especially former president Arroyo. And yet, based on the accounts of informants, even more decisive has been the company's “soft,” flexible methods of projecting and consolidating influence. Ayala insists that it “never controls” and “never fights” LGU players (Ayala manager 2016). Instead, the company portrays its manner of influencing as entailing a more indirect guiding and even mentoring presence vis-à-vis local state officers, in which ALI seemingly assumes the role of a senior partner to the LGU in fulfilling of governance responsibilities: “We try our best to mentor them so that in the future, they know already what to do—but that's already ideal since they always need our assistance. We mold them to think like us” (Ayala manager 2016).

Yet throughout the Alvierra episode, ALI's mentoring strategy to influencing local processes has apparently hinged upon two preconditions. It depends, for one, on the abiding proneness of peri-urban LGU's—in the context of neoliberalized urban governance—to actively seeking capacity augmentation from non-state actors such as ALI, to adopting more entrepreneurial, investor-friendly

modes of governance, as well as to granting planning, policy and administrative concessions to key investors (Ortega 2012, 1125, 1128). Collectively, such institutional dynamics have undermined the Porac local state's bargaining position vis-à-vis prospective investors, while simultaneously incentivizing stronger public-private collaborations in order to compensate for perceived governance shortfalls, whether in employment generation, local enterprise growth, and overall governance.⁵

But no less decisive has been the reputational capital that the firm has been able to amass for itself through the success of its previous ventures, including the technical and managerial competencies that have enabled its personnel to demonstrate expertise, and not to mention the capacity of its officers to adapt to relational dynamics at variegated contexts yet still attain de facto local leadership. In this, ALI's ability to project seniority, competency, and legitimacy in its relations with its “junior” partners has been of cardinal importance, having purportedly relied upon their consensual appeals for support. By successfully garnering such positions of local hegemonic leadership, ALI, in short, is able to relatively ensure LGU's “spontaneous” seeking to be mentored by them, even if in so doing the company is able to reproduce and deepen the conditions of its influence.

It may indeed happen that such interventions by ALI into local urban governance may offer the Porac government capacity-augmentation opportunities—yet what should be clear is that ALI has been remarkably adept at leveraging such opportunities for longer-term advantage. Coupled with the savvy of ALI staff at projecting themselves into positions of local hegemonic leadership, the firm has been able to systematically consolidate a new spatio-institutional gestalt of governance surrounding Alvierra in which they are able to indirectly mold governance activities over the production of urban space by means of soft interventions of competency provision, administrative guidance, and seeming beneficence. In producing these new strains of governance, ALI's influence over the municipality's policy and development trajectory is itself produced and reproduced. Insofar as wide institutional disparities between ALI and the LGU continue to exist, and insofar as the municipality continues to be located in a setting of neoliberalized

inter-urban competition, there is every reason to expect that Porac local government will be continually consigned to be ALI’s junior partner in such urban governance collaborations.

BCDA’s Clark Green City: Redeveloping the Developers?

Over the past two decades, the Bases Conversion and Development Authority has come to prominence as one of the most successful government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs) in the Philippines. Established in 1992, the authority claims to be the single largest landholder in the country today, having inherited 41,500 hectares of former military bases across Northern Luzon, Central Luzon, and Metro Manila (BCDA 2013, 4, 8–9), which was tasked to convert into SEZs and mixed-use urban growth centers (House of Representatives 2010, 3-4). Independent of guaranteed budget appropriations, and directed by the BCDA Act to “encourage the active participation of the private sector,” BCDA has also been noteworthy for harnessing private sector collaborations as one of its chief instruments for project development (BCDA 2013b, 18). Yet if influenced by market-oriented policy approaches, its operations have also been leagues away from patrimonial forms of urban governance in the Philippines. Owing to high pressures for sequestering the agency from corruption at the time of its establishment, highly-qualified technocrats have been regularly appointed to the agency’s Board of Directors and management—all of whom have remained answerable only to the Office of the President (Ordoñez 2015, 40).

These features of BCDA have been central in the agency’s CGC project—the agency’s most significant venture since converting Fort Bonifacio into Bonifacio Global City in the 1990s. Spanning 9,450 hectares of the former Clark airbase in the municipalities of Capas and Bamban in Tarlac province, the mega-project is aimed by BCDA to become the Philippines’ first smart, green and disaster-resilient metropolis (BCDA 2013, 22–23). Planned to incorporate numerous urban functions, such as a financial and commercial center, green industrial zones, residential areas, districts for schools/universities and backup government offices, and urban farmlands as well as forest areas, and to be supported by networks of already-existing and forthcoming infrastructures including



Fig. 4. Construction of Clark Green City as of February 2016
Source: Author

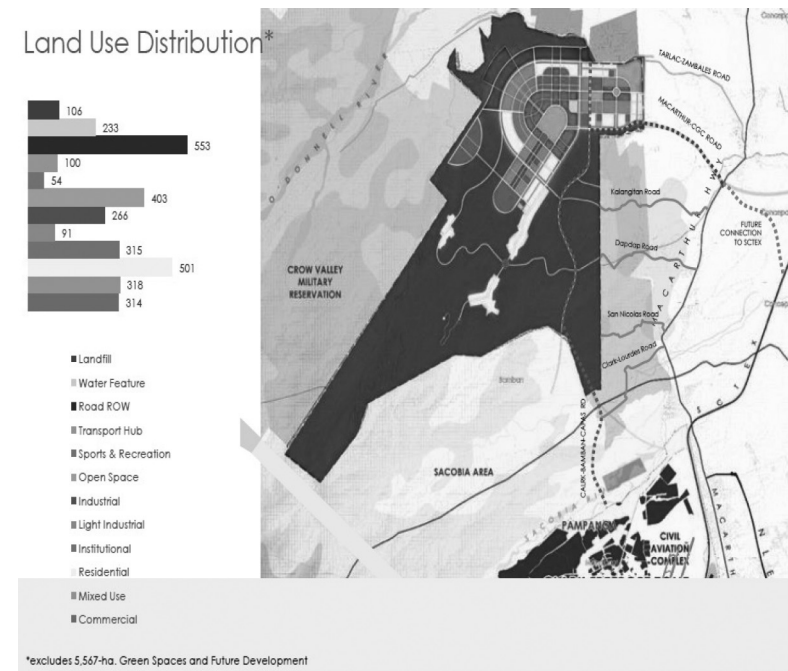


Fig. 5. Clark Green City’s Planned Location and Land Use Distribution as of 2016
Source: BCDA

SCTEX, the Clark International Airport and future Clark Rail from CGC to Metro Manila, the venture is positioned, like ALI's Alviera project, to become a core node of a budding Clark-centered aeropolis (Lee 2015, 188).

Beyond its metropolitan-scale aspirations, CGC is envisioned as offering nothing less than a new model of urbanism for the Philippines. As the project's name suggests, it will be the country's first full-fledged eco-city, and will integrate a plethora of sustainability features such as green spaces, urban farms, green buildings, renewable energy, and sustainable transport into its design and operations (BCDA 2013, 22–23). But even more momentous has been BCDA's attempt in planning CGC to directly foster more inclusive forms of urban development: at full development, CGC is foreseen to house around 800,000 workers in "slum-free" fashion, which BCDA plans to achieve by providing affordable, decent, and quality housing (*Sun Star Pampanga* 2015).⁶

At present, the mega-project's master plan envisions CGC's development as a 50 year-long affair, though the first phase of the development until 2019 aims to construct two industrial zones, two mixed-use lots, a "global campus" of the University of the Philippines, a public park district, and roadworks all within a 1,300-hectare land area (BCDA 2014). These components of the first phase of CGC are slated for accomplishment through several PPP mechanisms (e.g., joint ventures), in which most of financing and risk allocation will be borne by the private sector (Bingcang 2016).

Unrest in the Baselands: Community and LGU Opposition, and Master-Planning Dilemmas

With CGC's master plan having been fully approved by the Philippine government last May 29, 2014 (Locsin 2014), it is still too early, as of writing, to provide a detailed assessment of the project's impact to date. Nonetheless, considerable stumbling blocks to the project have surfaced. Firstly, though the governance conundrums of the Capas and Bamban LGUs have not been as pronounced as Porac's, CGC's development has nevertheless created friction with officials of these municipalities. These tensions concern how the military base lands encompassed by CGC have been excluded from

these LGUs' jurisdiction since 1947, which the passage of the Bases Conversion Act in 1992 sustained (Municipality of Capas 2011, 4–8). Accordingly, on June 9, 2014, a hearing of the Special Committee on Bases Conversion at the Philippines' House of Representatives was held at the behest of Tarlac LGU officials, where various misgivings were voiced concerning the project. Based on their testimonies, neither the congressmen, mayors, nor governor of Tarlac province were reportedly consulted by BCDA throughout the planning process for CGC (House of Representatives 2014, 12, 18).

Paralleling LGU grievances has been the threat of anticipated displacement for townfolk residing within CGC-spanned areas. Though BCDA has been granted legal stewardship of the lands comprising the whole CGC area, a considerable portion of project lands has already been occupied by settler households, some of whom even claim to have resided within the area since even before the creation of the airbase. Based on local surveys, around 500 farming families stand to be relocated if the development proceeds—though if non-agricultural households within the area are included, the figure rises to nearly 20,000 (Letana 2016). Many of these same territories have also been among the ancestral domains of indigenous Aeta tribes, whose control over the lands has been severely disrupted since the creation of Clark airbase during the American colonial period. While such indigenous populations have not been able to regain complete possession of their original ancestral lands, two Certificates of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) have nonetheless been issued for their communities in Capas since the 1990s: the Aeta Sambal and Abellen area (6,671 hectares) and the Aeta Mag-Antsi area (4312 hectares). Both of these CADT areas overlap with the military reservation of Capas (House of Representatives 2014, 16).

Finally, as revealed by BCDA informants, another quandary faced by the project concerned the development of the CGC master plans. Developed with a wide range of experts, the master plan ultimately establishes the frame of the agency's land bidding processes with potential business partners, allowing it to evaluate different developers based on their overall capacity to bring the plan to fruition (Ordoñez 2015, 41–43, 51). However, while the initial conceptual master plan for CGC was completed in 2013

by a consortium of PROS Architects and Woodfields Consultants, critical flaws were soon discerned. In particular, the most glaring weakness of the initial plan lay in miscalculations of the gross floor area (GFA) of the different land uses in the project, which had a deleterious domino effect on plans and forecasts for items like utilities, population, finance, and investment. Additionally, it was characterized by an emphasis on intensive infrastructural development and a non-compact layout for CGC districts, which would have contradicted the sustainability commitments of CGC (Letana 2016).

The Scalar Politics of Intervention: Land Settlements to International Expertise

On account of these challenges, BCDA, similar to ALI's own efforts in Alviara, has had to engage in intensive local intervention processes. In response to LGU tensions, the authority agreed to formulating a technical working group (TWG) following the congressional hearing that has since functioned as a steering committee by decision makers located across different government levels. Chaired by Tarlac's provincial governor, and composed of representatives from BCDA, local executives and congress persons of Tarlac, the National Housing Authority, the National Commission for Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), as well as local farmers' and indigenous peoples' associations, the TWG has been said to have held regular consultative meetings as a means for fostering inter-organization consensus on projects (*Sun Star Pampanga*, 2016).

As it appears, the success of the TWG has been borne out in the reversal of the views of Tarlac officials: from being a vocal critic of the project, the former mayor of Capas has since become one of its boosters, and was among those who attended CGC's groundbreaking last April 11, 2016 (see [fig. 5.3](#)) (Balita 2016). Joining such officials in their active promotion of the project, moreover, was former President Aquino himself, whom some in BCDA have credited to be CGC's "number one marketing agent" in international venues in the past administration (Bingcang 2016). Similarly, BCDA's interventions apropos LGU's have also extended into the creation of a long-term program of governance capacity-building in order to ensure that the broader region surrounding CGC

remains as seamless as possible with the mega-project (Casanova 2016; Bingcang 2016). In 2015, for one, BCDA sponsored the attendance of the mayors and planning officers of Capas and Bamban in an urban planning training program at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore for upgrading their municipalities' urban planning capacities.



Fig. 6. CGC's Groundbreaking, featuring BCDA's President (first from left), Philippine President Aquino (second from left), BCDA's Chairperson (third from left), the Philippine Public Works Secretary (fourth from left), and Capas' Mayor (fifth from left), 2016

Source: Joseph Vidal / Malacañang Photo Bureau (2016)

The BCDA-created TWG, in addition, also seems to have been the venue in which responses to the land claims of populations within CGC areas have been discussed. On the end of the indigenous Aeta, the NCIP has affirmed a commitment from BCDA to first solicit the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent of any indigenous community that will be directly affected by CGC-related development processes (Sunggod 2016). At the same time, however, BCDA officials assert that the boundaries of CGC were explicitly delineated in such a way so as not to overlap with lands covered by the IP's CADTs in the military reservation (Casanova 2016); for this purpose, the agency reportedly contracted a surveyor in November 2013, partly to segregate all CADT areas in the vicinity from the

mega-project (BCDA 2013c). Similarly, agency officials also reveal that currently-farming households will be offered lots, technical inputs, and marketing assistance in order to participate as higher-value agricultural entrepreneurs in CGC's urban farming district (Casanova 2016). But for those farmers who stand to be immediately displaced by ongoing construction activities, TWG-formulated guidelines allow for furnishing such households a financial sum equivalent to a decade's worth of agriculture-based income, or roughly PHP300,000 per hectare on average (Orejas 2016).⁷

Even though it remains to be seen whether each of these policy directions for local populations will be sustained, their communication toward established communities within CGC areas already appears to have diffused earlier opposition by residents. Emblematic of the shift in local sentiment toward the project are the views of the local Capas Green City and Proclamation No. 163 Affected Farmers Association Inc., which from forming barricades against the entry of heavy road-construction equipment in April 2015, have reportedly become CGC supporters a year later on the basis of BCDA's compensation packages and promised future lots



Fig. 7. CGC Roadworks in Brgy. Aranguren, Capas, where a farmers' barricade was staged in April 2015

Source: Author

for affected farmers (Orejas 2015; 2016). This shift in resistance, in turn, has effectively allowed roadwork construction processes to begin proceeding for the project (see fig. 5.4).

Lastly, shortfalls in the PROS and Woodfields master plan likewise prompted the employment of multi-level strategic responses by the agency. Following the approval of the project by former President Aquino on May 2014 (for which in-house corrections to the CGC master plan were undertaken), BCDA launched an open international competition for the optimization of the CGC conceptual master plan in mid-December 2014.⁸ More recently, BCDA inked a JV agreement with the Japan Overseas Infrastructure Investment Corporation for Transport and Urban Development (JOIN) last March 2016 for crafting a more detailed CGC Master Development Plan (Letana 2016; Bingcang 2016). Not only is JOIN's involvement in CGC's master planning expected to assure potential locators that the mega-project will fulfill the standards of the Japanese government; the said entity has begun encouraging Japanese investors in the Philippines to locate within the CGC area, while committing to help in garnering additional infrastructure funding from the Japanese government (Bingcang 2016). By such means, BCDA has contracted additional capacities and advanced its international network embeddedness by bypassing local entities for international-level actors.

Steering the Market: Emerging Power Geometries in CGC

These interventions reveal the central importance of BCDA's realignment of initially-unfavorable conditions across a variety of scalar terrains. Yet in achieving each of these scalar interventions, BCDA has also begun to consolidate a marked position of influence over urban governance processes in CGC-proximate areas. As a BCDA architect narrates,

The vision for the LGUs is that since we do not want Clark Green City to be an island, unlike BGC [Bonifacio Global City], we want the neighboring LGUs to grow along with Clark Green City. . . . We want these LGUs to integrate the Clark Green City development in their own plans. . . . By being a model agency, and building a model city, we plan to influence our neighboring LGUs. (Letana 2016)

While this desire to foster the capacities of CGC-adjacent LGUs has been shared among informants, another motive also has been at play: namely, isolating the project and BCDA's business partners from political undercurrents associated with intra-state incoherence and the Philippine electoral cycle. BCDA emphasizes that a defining feature of its urban development model has involved shielding "private partners from political risks, such as those associated with changes in administration" (BCDA 2013, 5); likewise, among the agency's responsibilities in its JV agreements for CGC are commitments to assisting developers in politicized processes such as securing all required government approvals, supporting the acquisition of required permits, and coordinating with LGUs (BCDA 2015b, 6–7). In this vein, BCDA's interventions to strengthen LGU capacities directly contributes to the agency's efforts to minimize political disruptions against CGC's development. By projecting its influence over other government bodies, and working to reconfigure key aspects of their operations along its own model of technocratic governance, BCDA has installed wider institutional and relational buffers against a backdrop of personalized state dynamics which have regularly threatened investors' needs for regulatory predictability (McKay 2006).

But if certain features of BCDA's governance approaches are technocratic in orientation, the earlier discussion also indicates that BCDA and CGC's institutional complexion cannot be reduced to standard neoliberal mores. Indeed, the rigor with which the agency has formulated its master plans and harnessed them in bidding procedures suggests that BCDA possesses unusually authoritative features in the landscape of Philippine state anemia, which has merited its designation by some observers as a nascent "strong state technocracy" (Cardenas 2016). BCDA officers themselves express awareness of the distinct institutional facets of the agency, noting that good parallels have existed between them and Singapore's Urban Redevelopment Authority (Letana 2016), which have been critical in honing a balance in the city-state between developmental and neoliberal policy regimes (Haila 2015, 15, 17–18). By this view, BCDA has hybridized market-liberal mores with quasi-"strong state" components, which have enabled it to exercise relatively greater power over business in governing the

production of CGC. In contradistinction to ALI's hegemonic leadership over the Porac LGU, such institutional features of BCDA have allowed it to pool governing resources from the private sector while nevertheless co-opting their participation into realizing the formulated master plan (Ordoñez 2015, 39).

This advantaged position of BCDA can be traced to several conditions. On one hand, the 1992 Bases Conversion law furnished the authority with a purportedly "very powerful" charter, which granted BCDA monopoly-level control over all the lands that have come under its jurisdiction (Bingcang 2016). In turn, BCDA's resulting status as a monopoly merchant of strategically-located, commercially-attractive base lands has vested BCDA with a firm initial bargaining position against the private sector (Casanova 2016). Beyond being the monopoly seller/lessor of lands in its portfolio, however, BCDA has been simultaneously capacitated by Bases Conversion Act with significant development, administrative and regulatory powers over the territories that fall under its jurisdiction, furnishing it with multiple bases with which to influence private developers beyond bidding. Though it does not always maximize such powers, BCDA nonetheless can function as an effective city government for CGC, with all the powers and capacities that are normally afforded to LGUs (Ordoñez 2015, 63; Bingcang 2016). Finally, not to be underestimated has been the overall efficacy of BCDA's technocratically-oriented bureaucracy, which has been undergoing systematic capacity-building efforts at both domestic and international venues, particularly in the areas of urban planning and management (Letana 2016).

Though initially formulated in market-liberal mores, a fortuitous set of circumstances has enabled the agency to consolidate a new hybrid regime of spatial production over CGC with both market-oriented and quasi-"strong state" characteristics. Mirroring, in this sense, forms of selective government steerage of market dynamics that have been observed in East Asian developmental states like Singapore (Wade 1990, 30), such efforts by BCDA have conformed with the parameters laid down by developers' revenue imperatives, even while seeking to bend their trajectories to other purposes. As echoed by BCDA's president development:

BCDA is not simply a developer. We are not a market player. We are the market, actually. We set the market. We set the platform for developers, infrastructure builders, utility provider, businesses to come in. We are the stage, basically. (Casanova 2016)

The Scalar Powers of Neoliberal Urbanism

Alviera and Clark Green City: these mega-projects have not only served as nascent growth poles in a broader wave of peri-urban expansion—they have come to fore as the frontiers of new constellations of power amidst Philippine neoliberal urbanism. Both ventures, after all, have hinged on intensive public-private modes of collaboration, while also harnessing a wide range of market-friendly mechanisms. Similarly, they have gained immensely from entrepreneurial pressures affecting LGUs, which has firmly incentivized local state officials to grant considerable influence to mega-project developers—to the extent, at times, of delegating to them entire urban governance functions.

Whether due to efforts to assemble governing coalitions spanning power-brokers from the highest echelons of national politics to municipal levels, to governance augmentation interventions for affected LGUs, to measures that reshuffle the scalar features of their respective institutional jurisdictions, and finally to the creation of new institutional and quasi-legal instruments, the landscapes of power within the municipalities have undergone dramatic shifts, effectively placing ALI and BCDA at the commanding heights of the local production and governance of urban space. To achieve its self-professed role as acting government in Alviera, ALI has projected hegemonic leadership over the moribund Porac LGU—leveraging upon its reputational capital as the Philippines' premier property developer and its assembled forms of expertise to harness spontaneous appeals for assistance and/or augmentation for advancing its commercial prerogatives. In the case of CGC, the exceptionalist composition of BCDA, which has endowed it with monopoly ownership as well as administrative, regulatory, and development control over its land assets, has granted the agency tremendous leverage to serve as a *de facto* steerer, not only of urban governance in adjacent LGUs, but also of private sector partners.

Though arrived at by dramatically different means, the formation of these new urban regimes around both mega-projects demonstrates an often-overlooked reality concerning the creation of new urban spaces in the Manila MUR: in a context of immense spatial and institutional fragmentation, the production of “world-class” urban spaces has hinged upon the simultaneous production of new institutional formations, new governance gestalts, and new lattices of power able to underwrite a modicum of stability throughout the entire cycle of project implementation. Ironically, the overall effect, even when sporting divergent forms of urbanism (i.e., enclave vs. inclusive), has been a diminution of public power over nominally-democratic institutions in favor of governance regimes ultimately directed by corporate elites or state technocrats.

Power and Neoliberal Governance in a Changing Peri-Urban Landscape

Beyond their immediate locales, what do the development processes of Alviera and CGC tell us about the workings of urban governance and spatial power in the Philippines and other similar countries today? While the outcomes of the Alviera and CGC episodes have partly reaffirmed narratives concerning the weak nature of the Philippine state (Hutchcroft 1997), the salience of patrimonial elites in urban governance (Shatkin 2006; Murphy and Hogan 2012), and the deleterious impacts of neoliberal restructuring (Bello et al. 2014), other processes in both case studies are less straightforward. Can BCDA's current position of institutional strength and its newfound commitment to “slum-free” urbanism be easily interpreted as a weak state apparatus or as an exclusionary purveyor of neoliberal-urban regimes? Likewise, while some informants speculated as to possible links between ALI's operations and LLHI's more coercive actions (Carranza 2016), might not the firm's reported long-term avoidance of patrimonial tactics (Batalla 1999), along with the consistent avowals of all interviewed Porac LGU officials that “Ayala is different” (Lansangan 2016; dela Cruz 2016; Tapang 2016) make it problematic to lump it together with more consistently rentierist fractions of Philippine business? Amidst such disparities, it becomes difficult to presume the cohesiveness of a single regime of neoliberalized spatial production in

Philippines. As it seems, a variety of actually-existing neoliberal regimes have been at play in the Philippines—sharing the employment of a continuum of market-oriented practices of spatial production, yet differing substantially as to their exact regulatory contents, development trajectories, and political imperatives.

One could even go further by contending that these subnational varieties of neoliberalism have been an outcome of neoliberal state rescaling all along. With the unravelling of nationally-standardized spatial governance frameworks, the shift toward decentralized and area-customized governance regimes that have accompanied processes of neoliberalization has also granted subnational jurisdictions, especially cities, far more incentive and flexibility to experiment with new policy and institutional arrangements, whether to shore up local economic opportunities or to pursue other policy objectives (Peck, Theodore, and Brenner 2009). Though the adoption of such entrepreneurial arrangements has tended to intensify patterns of uneven spatial development between and within cities, it has also tended to encourage diverse, place-specific forms of governance across different locations (Brenner 2004, 474), most especially among municipal governments jockeying for better competitive positions. While the variety of such subnational governance formations may be far from unlimited, it is likely that more plural currents have obtained around different urban sites and around different organizational units than has tended to be recognized in Philippine urban governance discussions.

A second insight concerns how power relations have been employed in the process of mega-project development in the Manila MUR. Indeed, both Alviera and CGC have witnessed the realignment of power networks that have obtained in their host localities, which has been embedded in new scalar gestalts of governance. Yet seen from another angle, these great transformations of scalar and institutional realities affirm the established Foucauldian precept that “power is productive” (Foucault 1978)—if with an added twist.

For power, after all, in the process of developing Alviera and CGC has been eminently productive: the power to produce urban space in the peri-urban periphery has itself produced new institutional norms and arrangements, new legal and quasi-legal

instruments, new forms of expertise and relational know-how, new networks and coalitions of actors, and new institutional capacities for urban development and governance. In this vein, the exercise of power by ALI and BCDA in developing their mega-projects has generally been less about the assertion of directly repressive forms of control, and more about “gaining and fusing a capacity to act” (Stone 2015, 115) otherwise dispersed across a *mélange* of actors. The purveyors of power, in such a context, have instead revealed themselves to be more predisposed toward eliciting the consensual collaboration of various forces in a broader governing coalition, often by leveraging upon existing assets and incentives for cooperation, strategically adapting to relational dynamics at diverse settings, creating new knowledge, and improvising new institutional approaches toward potential allies. Among neoliberalized mega-projects, one might say, the dynamics of power themselves have become entrepreneurial.

These come with two caveats, however. On one hand, this entrepreneurialized power to convene coalitions, along with the collective capacities that they represent, still admits of hegemonic control. As ALI’s and BCDA’s influencing tendencies have shown, even in the midst of adaptation to coalitional allies and scalar settings, decision-making control over the frame of mega-project development has remained squarely among main project proponents. Whether formalized or not in a master plan or other instruments, both organizations have demonstrated that they retain veto leverage to reject disruptions to anticipated project trajectories as well as strategic policy processes. This can mainly be traced to both organizations’ possession of crucial resources (e.g., land, expertise) whose removal would effectively jeopardize the mega-projects at stake and all forms of gain (whether real or imagined) that other allies might expect from their implementation.

But if power has been productive in the development of Alviera and CGC, it has also remained profoundly territorial, having been engrossed in the management, manipulation, and policing of spatio-institutional boundaries. This has been borne out in the varieties of spatial politics involved in the mega-projects: similar to elsewhere, the reshuffling of scalar formations that has accompanied these ventures has been instrumental in rendering the

territorial lines of authority far more “porous, unstable, and prone to transgressions and transformations” (Swyngedouw 2000, 68), giving rise to ambiguous institutional boundaries between nominally-public and non-democratic forms of urban governance. Yet in the case of both projects, such institutional porosity has hardly translated into a free flow of governance influence: though ALI and BCDA differ on the formation of spatial enclaves, the concurrence of both organizations on the need to shield project processes from political risks and the commensurate need to shoulder paltry LGU activities, alludes to the heightened importance of managing institutional boundary-setting dynamics that have prevailed in both projects’ relations with established government units. To the entrepreneurial power of assembling governance capacities is welded the police power to territorially exclude a spectrum of undesired forces within the Philippines’ fragmented universe of urban governance.

No doubt, it can be argued that the use of these institutional boundary-setting practices has been an integral part of both Alviera and CGC’s aims to produce spaces that deliver upon the preferences of global investors, modernized fractions of Philippine business, and prospective clientele from the middle-class upwards, who have all been documented to be predisposed to more programmatic forms of governance (McKay 2006; Hutchcroft 1998). But more importantly, the use of this territorial power in both projects has foregrounded an expanding domain of political and regulatory activity in which the production of prime urban space has become intertwined with the creation and policing of institutional territories.⁹ Distinct, if still linked, from the creation of spatial enclaves, this rapprochement has hardly been a foregone conclusion: ultimately, it has hinged on the accumulation of “transversal bordering capabilities” (Sassen 2013, 69) and their deployment to exclude disruptive processes from the institutional geographies of re-scaled governance formations.

Viewed before these trends, the emerging mega-projects investigated in this chapter become even more remarkable. Not only have these mega-projects been among the largest and most ambitious of their kind in the Philippines today; not only have they been at the heart of contemporary efforts to inject new strands of urbanism;

not even have they been the beachheads of perhaps the most ambitious wave of city-building to have swept the country since the aftermath of World War II. In truth, their development provides a privileged panorama for discerning finer shifts in the fragmented landscapes of governance, and indeed, the birth and expansion—out from the ashes of neoliberal adjustment—of a cornucopia of new regulatory orders and scale-manipulating instruments for creating and maintaining them. How will these new governance gestalts develop in the years to come, both in themselves and with one another? And what relationships will they come to establish with nominally-democratic governing orders whose jurisdictional authority they have subtly yet indelibly reconfigured—if not already displaced? The eventual responses to these questions will prove to be of historic importance not just to the maneuverings of state and capital in neoliberalized contexts, but also to the prospects of still-struggling, still-evolving movements of non-elite forces to claim universal and democratic rights to the city.

Endnotes

1. The material for this chapter was originally written in mid-2016, prior to the election of the present administration of Rodrigo Duterte. Circumstances since then have prompted some outward changes in the two mega-projects being studied—particularly with the rebranding of Clark Green City as “New Clark City.” Despite such developments, there is little reason to believe that the fundamental governance dynamics discussed in this chapter have altered in the period since then up to the time of writing.
2. Other signal features of market-friendly urban governance were adopted by means of national legislation over the years. In 1992, major responsibilities for socialized housing were ceded over to the private sector with the passage of the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA), even as networked, public-private forms of urban infrastructural development were enabled through the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) Act of 1990, and its amendment in 1993 (Bello et al. 2014, 92–96, 203).
3. Porac is the municipality with the largest land area in Pampanga province, most of which has been dedicated to forest reserve (45.50 percent), lahar (26.73 percent) and agricultural (22.89 percent) uses (Municipal Government of Porac 2016, 2, 27, 29). Lahar areas stand out prominently as the town was one of the most devastated in the CL region by the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in 1991 (Municipal Government of Porac 2016, 1).
4. According to the Index, Economic Dynamism covers data mainly related to business registration, employment, and financial institutions; Government

- Efficiency to transparency and accountability, public finance, performance recognition, business responsiveness, and basic government services; and infrastructure to road network, basic utilities, and registered vehicles (National Competitiveness Council 2014).
5. Even while professing reserve at the prospect of establishing new PPPs within Porac, for instance, the town's municipal planner still justified appealing to ALI's help in formulating the municipality's development plans on the following basis:

“Right now we're already talking that we need their help because their development, they're the ones who know how to do it. . . . If only they could sponsor it, they could help us with our Comprehensive Development Plan, because they'll be the center [of development]. . . . If Porac can possibly become a city, if Porac really progresses, if their development is realized, it's only [then] that we will be given a chance for Porac to be uplifted.” (Lansangan 2016 trans.)
 6. Tellingly, one of the very first CGC initiatives being undertaken has entailed the construction of 2,000 units of affordable rental housing across 279 hectares of land for approximately 85,000 minimum wage earners, as part of a partnership between BCDA and the Philippines' Home Development Mutual Fund (Remo 2015).
 7. On the other hand, while BCDA's guidelines for non-farming residents were still being finalized as of writing, the authority's agreement in the TWG has been not to relocate any resident that had been dwelling in the area by the time that BCDA conducted a household census in 2013 (Casanova 2016).
 8. The winner of the competition—the Singaporean branch of world-leading design firm AECOM—was selected on the basis of its flexible, more compact and mixed-use design, as well as its clearer allocation of lands for future expansion (Letana 2016; Amojelar 2015).
 9. The embedding of CGC's entirety in an SEZ-denominated space and the simultaneous incorporation of a PEZA zone in Alviera are particularly symbolic illustrations of this.

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Struggling for Public Spaces

The Political Significance of Manila’s Segregated Urban Landscape

HAVING TRAVELLED WITH EASE across the different countries of nineteenth-century Europe, José Rizal experiences “*el demonio de las comparaciones*” upon his return to Manila. This “demon” no longer allows him to see Manila without constantly being reminded of the cities in Europe. This “demon of comparison” created a form of double-consciousness, such that Rizal could not help but experience the rising German capital Berlin without simultaneously thinking of then provincial Manila and vice versa. His perspective on Manila had changed. It is this story that serves as the title of Benedict Anderson’s essay collection on Southeast Asia, *The Spectre of Comparisons*. It is this epistemological vantage point that allowed Rizal to judge Spain’s backwardness from the perspective of more progressive European nations in the way the Spaniards judged the Philippines (B. Anderson 1998, 229). Thinking about public spaces and writing about the city of Manila cannot be disentangled from that epistemological vantage point. Not only nations are imagined communities—to refer to Benedict Anderson’s famous phrase—cities are, too. Talking about cities is thus largely shaped by our own experience and imagination.

This essay deals with the political significance of the urban landscape of Manila. Key to this analysis is how the notion of the “public” plays out with respect to the polarity of private and public. The shape of the public is an index of the democratic organization of any larger community; without a public, an essential aspect

of democracy is lacking. It would be difficult to imagine democracy without the actual free exchange of arguments and opinions, insights and convictions, between citizens. This is what the public is about. The public is thereby understood in its metaphorical significance as the public sphere of mediated discussion in mass media and communicative political participation as well as in its concrete spatial significance of chance encounters in the public squares and spaces.

This essay will focus on the spatial aspects of the public, yet still reflect on its significance by tying it to the larger discussion of the political public sphere as put forward by John Dewey, Hannah Arendt, and Jürgen Habermas. The topic is the enigmatic notion of the public in its different meanings—as public life, public streets and spaces, and public sphere. Its key idea is simple: how can one conceive of urban spaces conducive to democracy? And how can we evaluate the contested (and congested) urban space of Manila with such an ideal?

The tangible and visible ideal of democratic spaces are often seen as realized in the Greek agora, a space at once for the exchange of goods as it is for political ideas. Nowadays, we find it increasingly hard to imagine how spaces conducive for democracy *would look like*.¹ This essay wants to contribute to such a re-imagination. In order to explain the political significance of the urban public, it will dwell upon different theoretical disciplines and traditions to address the political implication of the specific urban organization of Metro Manila.

To understand this question from a philosophical perspective, however, we need to take a step back and clarify the city as a specific form of human life. This article will be developed through six parts in order to clarify this. First, following Max Weber, it will outline the city as a venue of economic, social, and political emancipation. Second, a closer look will explore the specifics of the political emancipation in understanding the city as a venue of self-organization. Still, we already know that the city as a collective attempt to shape the world according to the “heart’s desire” (cf. Robert Park), is distorted by an uneven influence of shaping the city, i.e., by the power of Capital. Part of the problem of this distortion is its impact on the public. This is particularly worrisome

for democratic practices, as the public sphere and spaces play a key role for democratic self-governance. The third part will thus outline the most prominent philosophical theories in this regard put forward by John Dewey, Hannah Arendt, and Jürgen Habermas. Fourth, this paper will argue that the public, however, is not only relevant in terms of communication structures, but also in its spatial dimension to create venues of concrete encounter in the public streets and squares. Sidewalks and streets are the essential factors that make a city livable by fostering a public life that provides safety and contact. Yet, that function requires a certain organization of the city and a certain mentality. Fifth, it will show how the segmentation of Manila into different strictly separated neighborhoods makes such public life difficult, if not impossible. The sixth and final part will highlight the problems arising for democratic practice from the lack of common public life and shared public spaces.

The City as Venue of Emancipation

There is no single identifying characteristics of “the city.” There is not even a single identifying set characteristics of “the modern city.” Cities have different sizes, different origins, and are embedded in different cultural, social, and economic practices. Cities might develop around market-places, military bases, factories, monasteries, or a mix of these different institutions. Whatever the concrete formation conditions, cities can be characterized as larger settlements with professional differentiation and specialization against the backdrop of rural subsistence farming. For this reason, Max Weber understood the city (with the European medieval city in mind) in a fundamental opposition to the countryside. Next to the role of Protestantism, the unique configuration of the European city was responsible for the evolution of modernity. The strict polarity between the city and the countryside was for a long time marked by the city-walls, which separated two radically different forms of societies. Until far into the modern age, walls surrounding cities (and not borders between nation-states) were the main divisions between communities. The modern city can thus be understood as revolutionary in its economic, political, and social structure.

On the economic level, the self-sufficiency of the household in traditional subsistence farming can be contrasted by the specialization of city-settlers and their mutual inter-dependence mediated by the market. Hegel describes this mutual dependence concisely in his concept of “civil society” (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*), which requires the citizens—note the link of city and citizen—to leave home and household to make a living outside in the realm of free market exchange governed by competition. Leaving family and home, the individual must act upon an entirely different logic. Rather than particular altruism (doing things for the family) which prevalent in the family and the entire household in a subsistence economy, life in the city requires an egotistical attitude (doing things for yourself). The market-place works precisely through the complementary interest and interplay of mutually egoistical non-self-sufficient actors. Because of their radical dependency on others, city dwellers have to leave household and family to provide for their needs on the market place. For the individual, this transition from rural subsistence economy to necessary and yet free market exchange means an emancipation from fixed forms of rural life to a choice (albeit a limited one) among different forms of life in the city. The city thus served as a necessary requirement for the development of the economic bourgeois.

On the political level, the difference between the city and the rural life amounts in the medieval setting to the alternative between rural feudalism and (at first limited) urban democratic self-organization. Feudalism can be characterized as a particular form of serfdom, where “serfs had juridically restricted mobility” (P. Anderson 1974, 147). Peasants were tied to the soil and were not the owners of the land they occupied and tilled. Still, they had to pay rents to their feudal lord and were submitted to the latter’s jurisdiction. The city, by contrast, allowed for some degree of self-organization or at least self-administration, even though this self-organization was for a long time restricted to a small class of privileged citizens (such as the patricians during the late Middle Ages). In Medieval Germany, one of the significant privileges of cities was their constitution as commune with its own administrative body, even if the sheriff (*Schultheiß*) was appointed by the prince or bishop, the elected mayor initially responsible

for administration only gained increasing influence and power (Weber 1972, 755). With the growing importance of cities, however, the affluent class of city dwellers was able to gain more power for self-organization. Thus, the transition from rural to urban life can be framed in terms of political emancipation. For the individual, this transition amounts to the development of the political citizen.

On the social level, the transition from the closed communal rural setting to the city means a deregulation of social contacts. Instead of the familiar patterns of human interactions, city dwellers usually deal with a large number of anonymous encounters among strangers. While rural life follows socially predictable patterns, urban life is filled with unplanned social encounters. The management of this new form of sociality requires a strict separation between private and public life. To deal with the plurality of daily encounters of strangers, city-dwellers have to develop a new economy of attention. Dealing with strangers in the same way as villagers do with occasional travelers, for example, would be unpractical, even factually impossible. The public life is thus characterized by a mentality of aloofness, detachment, and airiness—as Georg Simmel points out (1903). In the anonymity of the city, the instances of rural control no longer apply. Rather than the everyday handling of familiarity, behavior in the city is impregnated in a complex system of codes. For the individual, this change amounts to the development of the bourgeois individual with the strict separation between private and public life.

However, it would be misleading to understand this emancipatory development undialectical without the emergence of new constraints. One might even challenge this understanding of the city as “venue of emancipation” on the ground that cities have always been built around (and impregnated by) power: parochial, state, military, trade and/or financial power have always stood at its center. Stressing cities as venues of power helps us to understand that these processes of political, economic, and social transformation do not necessarily lead to individual liberation. Rather, the emancipation from the old powers and constraints might easily be exchanged for new ones.² On the level of economic emancipation, the “free” market exchange turns out to be only formally free, but it is factually unequal in terms of knowledge and the

bargaining position. The economic liberation from the dependency on the self-sufficient household brings along the inequality of the Capitalist marketplace—with the difference in attitude of the different actors well-observed by Karl Marx (1887, 123): “the money-owner, now strides in front as capitalist; the possessor of labour power follows as his labourer. The one with an air of importance, smirking, intent on business; the other timid and holding back, like one who is bringing his own hide to market and has nothing to expect but—a hiding (*Gerberei*).” The liberation from the economic dependency from the feudal lord is traded with new forms of modern serfdoms on the labor market. On the level of the social emancipation, life in the city brings along differentiated and sophisticated forms of social control. Social behavior is no less regimented and requires the strict separation of private and public (something that will be discussed in detail below).

The City as Venue of Self-Organization

The modern city, therefore, played a significant role in the emancipation of the individual from its “natural” or “traditional” forms of life. The emancipation process on the political level translated into the demand for democratic self-governance; cities (from ancient Greece onward) played a crucial role in the development of democratic self-governance. As cultural artifacts, they can (on a very general level) be understood, according to Robert E. Park, as “man’s most consistent and on the whole, his most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in more after his heart’s desire” (as cited in Harvey 2012, 3). Cities, thus, are expressions of human desires. The question to ask, however, is how human desires are expressed, filtered, and selected to give shape to the city.

To understand the city in terms of democratic self-organization in the narrow sense—in terms, that is, of due process of choosing officials in equal and fair elections—might not do justice to the production and reproduction of urban life as a very particular way of living. Rather, the production of the city takes place as a common effort of which self-governing the urban environment is only a part. City dwellers produce an environment according to their “heart’s desire”—the city becomes an expression of what Hegel would call “objective spirit.” The city is an expression not only of human desire,

but also of the combined reason manifested throughout history. Cities—just like old medieval texts—are palimpsests, where layers upon layers have been “written” and the former layers, however blurred, are still visible. The most visible expression in contemporary Manila of these layers are the massive structures of Intramuros, the remnants of the Spanish colonialization. But less monumental structures that are embedded in the daily life in the city like the network of roads and the political administration of the barangays and so on, are equally to be understood in their historical genesis, since they carry with them the desires and intention of past generations and how they shaped the city.

This optimistic notion of the city as a quasi-spontaneous, actual expression of human desires has to be adjusted to incorporate the historical dimension. Many inadequacies of contemporary city life are expressions of past ideas of shaping the world according to one’s “heart’s desires.” The emphasis on private transport and the neglect of public transport might have captured the imagination and ideals of past generations, but it creates, nowadays, negative consequences for the entire urban population and the environment alike. The absence of meaningful and successful city planning for almost the entire region of Metro Manila brings along a lack of parks and recreation areas: things that might not have been of great importance to the ideals of past generation, when the population had been smaller and motorized traffic a privilege of a small affluent minority. We live, so to speak, continuously in an environment created by the dreams of our ancestors, dreams that might well have transformed circumstances turn into nightmares.³

The optimistic notion of the city as the outflow of human desires might further be put into question by asking about *whose* desires are materialized in the contemporary city. In view of the deregulation and globalization, cities increasingly understand themselves as entrepreneurial actors with the need to position themselves toward competing cities in order to attract investments, wealthy citizens, potent companies, and tourists. In Germany, the lack of federal and state funding for cities—a trend that started in the late 1960s—was a major cause for the deregulation and privatization of cities (Häußermann, Läßle, and Siebel 2008, 282) This has opened up cities and made them interesting for investors, and has even led

to a gradual decline of the city government's political influence to shape urban policies. For instance, in the decade after World War II, German cities kept some power to shape the city through their public utility housing enterprises in their own hands. The privatization of these enterprises has weakened the position of cities and has transferred power from political administration to the free market.

As a consequence, it is not primarily the city-dwellers' desires that is materialized, in the concrete structure of the city, but the ones of wealthy private investors. Indeed, it is not the political citizens who decide about the forms and structures of their polity, but wealthy individuals who see the city as an investment opportunity and who often have divergent interests from the inhabitants. The group of individuals who by living, working, and commuting in the city take an existential interest in their environment do not decide on the parameters of their cities insofar as private investors decide upon construction and development projects. Yet it would be misleading to understand this shift one-dimensionally as one from citizens to investors. Rather, it must be understood as a shift, in Marxist terms, from one bourgeoisie (industrial capitalists) to another (financial investors).⁴ As David Harvey and Lata Chatterjee point out, capital that "lies waste" in times of crisis is reinvested in (city) construction (1974, 22–36.) The less cities keep their own housing projects, the more they are dependent on these investments. In case of debt-ridden cities, this dependency and lack of political power becomes even more glaring. Regarding indebted Western nation-states, Wolfgang Streeck has pointed out the power shift from citizens to investors. The withering of their political power lies in their demand to cater to the needs of investors, which in case of conflict, trump the needs of citizens (Streeck 2013). We can easily draw parallels to indebted cities, which, moreover, do not have the financial authority to impose taxes (with few exceptions like the local governments in Switzerland), and thus are dependent on regional and national governments.

The political self-organization of the city by its inhabitants is thus severely challenged by the power of wealthy individuals, families or corporations—domestic or international—to shape the city according to their wants and needs. The question of *whose* desires are materialized in contemporary cities has thus increasingly be

answered by reference to (foreign) investors and their (profit-oriented) desires rather than the desire and needs of city-dwellers. The shape and organization of the city follows thus less the needs of citizens but the profit-orientation of investors. Certainly, the needs and interests of citizens and investors might converge, however, in politically significant aspects there are different agendas. Moreover, it is important to ask which types of citizens are excluded from the formation of the city according to the desires of wealthy investors.

In Metro Manila, we find a radicalized notion of this opposition between the needs and wants of urban citizens and the interests of wealthy private city-developers. Manila, as described by Peter Murphy and Trevor Hogan, "is one of the world's most fragmented, privatized and un-public of cities" (2012, 10). Given the weak role of the city government and the limited implementation of civil planning, city-building in Manila lies in the hands of a couple of powerful families.⁵ If we thus ask the question according to whose desires the larger city of Metro Manila is modelled, then the answer has to point to a number of powerful families who engage in private urban development and mold their urban land according to their particular desires—along the alleged desires of the wealthy tenants of their constructions. The needs, wants, and desires of everybody else are marginalized; these desires normally include the desire to be unharmed by noise and environmental pollution, being able to safely walk the streets, or more generally, simply having a say in the transformation of their environment.

This marginalization of the needs, wants, and desires of the vast majority of the citizens of Manila requires a struggle to re-appropriate the city. These struggles can take on different forms to counter marginalization and exclusion, which are ubiquitous in Manila. The marginalization of space for pedestrians, the lack of public squares and parks, the pollution of the environment which hits the poor the hardest, the comparable lack of public housing projects,⁶ among others, run counter to the very idea of the city as a place, where its inhabitants shape the world according to their desires. Where spaces are created against all odds (the lack of urban planning, the privatization of spaces, pollution, and many more), marginalized citizens have developed ingenious ways of "creating the city" in common (Kaelin 2007, 215–26).

What makes this struggle over the city all the more important is the significance of migration for the shape of the city. Doug Saunders has coined the term “arrival city” in order to describe the phenomenon of urbanization that has created large urban regions around the world. He expects the twenty-first century to be the historical period characterized by human beings becoming an entirely urban species. By the end of the century, two to three billion people, i.e., roughly one-third of world’s population, will have moved to the city and become city dwellers (Saunders 2010, 1). “Arrival city” thus pertains to the change in the social fabric that accompanies this urban migration in terms of family structure, behavioral patterns, and lifestyles. Starting with the need to accommodate the new migrants in the cities, this migration continually transforms the shape of cities. The settlements are often created by these migrants at the city-margins, where they take possession of previously sparsely populated areas. Cities have for a long time been created, produced, and transformed by migrants from rural areas. Looking for better opportunities and a different form of life, these migrants attempt to shape their (part of the) city according to their desires. An important challenge for any urban society is its ability to integrate these new arrivals.

Metro Manila is no exception to this narrative of an urbanization push and the need to accommodate migrants from the provinces. Not only is the population of Metro Manila increasing at a fast pace, but the nearby provinces of Batangas, Bulacan, Cavite and Laguna are also now becoming subject to the urban expansion of Manila. This means that not only the desires (however distorted) of the long-established city-dwellers give shape to the city, but new arriving migrants who settle at the city’s margin also mold the city as well. This serves as a reminder of the ever-changing nature of the challenge of forming the city.

The Role of the Public in the Democratic Politics

The city as a venue of an economic, political, and social emancipation is inseparably tied to the polarity of the private and the public. As pointed out above, the proximity of strangers in everyday city-life necessitates a clear distinction between private and public; a separation that is less pronounced in the rural

setting. The German sociologist Hans-Paul Bahrtdt defines a city paradigmatically as a settlement, in which all life tends to take place either in the social state of public or in privacy. The degree of urbanity, according to Bahrtdt, might even be derived from this polarity (as quoted in Häußermann, Läßle, and Siebel 2008, 301). This polarity between the public and the private can be described in the following four dimensions: (1) *Functional*: The public spaces of streets and squares serve as venues for market and politics; the private spaces of house and company are responsible for the economic production and human reproduction of society. (2) *Legal*: Different legal regimes are in place in private and public spaces—streets and squares are regulated by public law, house and factory by private law. (3) *Social*: The public space is the area of stylized self-portrayal—only a small part of the personal life is made visible for others. The typical encounter in the public realm takes place among strangers; private life, in contrast, allows for sharing more of the personal life among family and friends. (4) *Symbolic*: Many different architectural and urbanistic features signal openness and closeness, exclusivity and accessibility (Häußermann, Läßle, and Siebel, 301).

Whereas this sketch of the polarity between private and public gives insights about a central aspect of urban life, it is important to remember the historical contingency of the concrete form of this polarity: Factories can only be inappropriately understood as merely private realms of production, markets might be increasingly taking place in enclosed private areas (like shopping malls), and social media are situated in a grey area between private and public. This occasional indetermination in said examples, however, does not disqualify the general polarity between private and public. Rather, it indicates that a detailed analysis is needed in order to better understand the private-public polarity in the respective concrete situation. But in turning to the concrete question of the private/public in the urban landscape of Manila, it is important to understand the political relevance of the public for democracy.

Following John Dewey (1927/2012) Hannah Arendt (1958/1998) and Jürgen Habermas (1961/1991), discussions in political philosophy on the operation and legitimacy of democracy have focused on the role and form of the public (or public sphere). In different

ways, all three philosophers (and many that followed in their footsteps) understood the public as a crucial institution for the working of modern democracy. They all explain the public by reference to a theoretical (Dewey) or historical (Arendt, Habermas) original situation, which explains the political significance of the public (sphere) for political self-organization. These approaches focus on the communicative infrastructure necessary for democracy, yet we can draw consequences for the relevance of public spaces in the city.

The public, in Dewey's account, is not necessarily only an urban phenomenon. He points out, however, that publics do not exist in villages with close (kinship) ties and social control (2012, 62). Instead, publics only emerge where people are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions of others. As long as the consequences of any transaction only affect the (two) people engaging in the transaction, such transaction is deemed private. But if such a transaction affects people in an indirect way, they form a public and seek to influence its outcome by encouragement, regulation, or prohibition. Therefore, "[t]he public consists of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for" (48). As long as the sale of say, a loaf of bread only affects the baker and his customer, that does not create a public. But if it turns out that he overcharges or uses unhealthy ingredients, a public might be generated that aims at regulating maybe not only this bakery, but bakeries in general.⁷

A number of aspects should be noted in Dewey's conceptualization of the public. First, publics are not free-floating communicative networks but problem-oriented associations of individuals aimed at influencing social cooperation. Being subject to the indirect cooperation of others creates a public. Given the interdependence of city-life, we can easily see that publics emerge more often in cities and are a necessary requirement to address the indirect consequences of cooperation. Second, the border between private and public is not fixed, but dependent on the perception of the consequences of actions. Different societies might perceive different problems and deem them worthy of regulation. We cannot identify issues that should be part of public discussion independent of concrete communities and their way of framing issues as problems

(or not to do so). Third, this makes the public dependent on the human capacities of not only recognizing consequences that affect us, but also to find adequate means to counter and regulate these consequences. Looking at some of the most pressing issues on a global scale such as climate change, financial regulation, and transnational migration, this is by no means self-evident. Political challenges in the city, in contrast, are often more tangible, as we experience some of the negative consequences of collaboration (like pollution, disadvantageous city planning, safety and security concerns, etc.) on a daily basis. Fourth, such an account of the public stresses the importance of knowledge and education for the ability to recognize indirect consequences of transactions and the power to an appropriate attempt for regulation. Finally, Dewey understands the state, the government, representatives, and officials deriving from the internal differentiation of the public. Specifically, the more complex a public gets, the more difficult the intended regulations become. For a community not to be permanently engaged in discussion and problem-solving of indirect consequences of cooperation, therefore, it will need to elect officials and come up with some form of government. For Dewey, government is nothing more than the public plus elected officials (58).

The public—to conclude these reflections on Dewey—is thus a feature emerging in larger settlements, where people are not only dependent on each other, but also are indirectly affected by the actions of others. The public is not so much understood in terms of the symbolic fabric of cities or the functional differences between market and household etc., but is entangled with all important aspects of life that needs problem-solving beyond the immediate transaction partners. Yet, the free flow and accessibility of information is required in order for such a public to fulfill its regulatory function. People need to be aware of consequences of cooperation; they need to have places where they can meet and exchange their ideas and learn about issues that affect their lives. Such places are called public places. In large society, mass media are required to fulfill the function of the ever-increasing circulation of information about indirect consequences of cooperation that affect our lives. And an increasing challenge for the public is to acquire this information. For the purpose of this article with its focus on the city, it

is noteworthy to point out the importance of spaces where people affected by indirect consequences of cooperation can come together and look for joint solutions for these problems. In the next part, we will see the problems following from a lack of such encounters.

While Dewey situates its birth in concrete problem-solving situations of people indirectly affected by other people's cooperation, Hannah Arendt traces the public sphere back to a particular form of life as paradigmatically embodied by the Ancient Greeks. This life is shaped by the polarity of household and city with entirely different functions. Life in the *polis*, the city, takes place among free and equal citizens that strive for excellence. This excellence, in turn, is aimed toward a kind of immortality that has no need to worry about the (economic) necessity of life. Life in the household, the *oikos*, in contrast, is dominated by the strict hierarchy and basic inequality between the *paterfamilias*, the rest of the family, and slaves. The male figurehead in each *oikos* enjoys absolute rule. The household is the realm of the economic necessity, the realm of bondage. The contrast could not be any stronger: The public realm of the *polis* is the realm of freedom and equality; in the brightness of the public, citizens strive for excellence, they cultivate their talents, and treat each other as equals. The private realm of the household, in contrast, is the realm of economic necessity, of bondage, of basic and inextricable inequality (Arendt 1998, 28–78). Becoming human meant, in Ancient Greece, therefore to excel in the public sphere of the *polis*.

Such an understanding of the polarity of the private and the public emphasizes the difference of these two realms in terms of their different functions. Even the (economic) market as a traditional feature of the public is in Arendt's polarity restrained to the private domain. The stylized interaction in the public is restricted to debates about political issues, to the arts and sciences, and the striving for virtue. In an Arendtian perspective, one might therefore raise the question how such a public can be fostered by providing the appropriate framework in modern cities. How could we translate the Greek *agora*, which served as a meeting ground for these public activities into today's cities? And what might be the repercussions, if we fail to come up with an urban planning that allows for these spaces? These are questions that follow from a

perspective on the polarity of private and public through the lenses of Hannah Arendt.

Just as Arendt has identified an ideal age of the public sphere, namely, that of Ancient Greece, so did Jürgen Habermas, who idealized the liberal age of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century as the time during which the public sphere in its purest form existed. Salons, coffee houses, and table societies served as venues for an affluent bourgeois class to come together and discuss matters of first literary, and later, political relevance. According to Habermas, "The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people coming together as a public" (Habermas 1991, 27). Situated in the age of political absolutism, yet within idea-historic enlightenment, these gatherings soon turned against public authorities. What was significant about these publics are the norms that guided their discussions. It was not wealth, ancestry, or social position that was essential for the validity of a contribution, but rather their plausibility and rationality. Power was not exerted from any member in an authoritarian way. Rather, the emancipatory function of these gatherings consisted in the dissolution of authority through reason altogether—"veritas non auctoritas facit legem (truth not authority makes the law)" (53).

There is no doubt about the exclusivity of these early forms of the public sphere. Women, workers, along with anyone lacking wealth and education—i.e., the vast majority of the people at the time—were excluded from these elitist publics. Yet, the norms inherent in these publics transcended these empirical limits. In principle, anyone regardless of their position in society should have been able to participate and have their arguments heard. Its inherent values of inclusion, equality, and rationality make the public sphere in principle accessible for everyone. The history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can then be understood as a continuous struggle for an ever increasing public—by fighting censorship and by developing media outlets that reach out to segments of the population previously excluded from the public. Habermas's narrative, however, interprets this extension of the public sphere in terms of a history of decline. The "ideal" public with its high standard of rationality becomes distorted by the transformation of the public sphere. This transformation is brought about by

powerful actors from the economic and political arena, who seek to influence public discussion and opinion not through rational arguments, but for their own (economic) self-interest. Advertisement, public relations, and a dilution of the private-public boundary all contribute to deterioration of the public deliberation, which ideally is conceived in Kantian terms as a public consisting of private citizens that mutually enlighten each other.

One interesting aspect in this sketch of the Habermasian notion of the public consists in its ideal of the physical encounter between a group of private people to discuss issues of common concern by way of rational deliberation. More importantly, there needs to be certain venues that allow for these discussion: venues that increasingly are located in mass media as it would be difficult to gather all citizens of, for instance, Manila, in a coffee house or table society—which are Habermas’s original venues of the public sphere. Yet, his tacit assumption is that they share the same language (or language game) and similar experiences that would allow them to reach a consensus on the issues at stake.

The Role of Sidewalks and Streets for Public Life

The previous section focused on the importance of the public sphere for the democratic self-governance of any community. Its emphasis was on the public in terms of a communicative infrastructure of democracy rather than a spatial feature of urban life. Yet, this communicative feature is related to spatial public structures. It is the shared space of the *polis* that serves as the stage for the striving for excellence of the Greek citizens (cf. Arendt); it is the coffee houses, clubs and table societies that brought the bourgeois public together for discussion (cf. Habermas). Lastly, these are the indirect consequences of cooperation that brings people together to solve these problems (cf. Dewey).

So the question now arises: How do the urban structures of today facilitate such public encounters? In a groundbreaking book on American cities first published in 1961, Jane Jacobs attacks what she identifies as modern city planning, which leads to a withering of the public character of the city and attempts to create some segregated suburban form of life in inner cities. Her analysis focuses on the function of streets in general and sidewalks in particular. When

we talk about a city, what we actually mean are the streets of the city; therefore, “Streets and their sidewalks, the main public places of a city, are its most vital organs” (Jacobs 1961, 29). A safe city, a lively city, a noisy city, etc. is a city, where the streets and sidewalks are safe, lively, noisy etc. Streets and sidewalks cannot be judged independently of how they are used. Sidewalks, thus, fulfill a crucial function for city life.

In particular, Jacobs attributes to sidewalks three vital functions: They provide safety, contact, and an assimilation of children. Safety is their most important attribute. Safe streets equal a safe city. Safety is not first and foremost provided by the police—“the public peace—the sidewalk and street peace—of cities is not kept primarily by the police. . . . It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves” (31). If this complex system of control and mutual trust breaks down, then police cannot fix it.⁸ Jacobs, moreover, identifies three aspects that are crucial for a safe street and sidewalk and thereby a safe city: first, a clear demarcation between private and public space; second, people watching the street and thereby feeling like being “the natural proprietors of the street” (35); third, sidewalk must be used frequently. These three safety requirements need to be explained and contextualized from the United States of the 1960s to Manila in the twenty-first century.

In regard to the first aspect, the clear separation of private and public spaces, Jacobs targets housing projects that would create semi-public spaces that are not easily visible and accessible, yet for the lack of visibility more prone to vandalism and crime. It is also not clear who “owns” these places and feels responsible for its safety. The second aspect describes this notion of “ownership” or “proprietor” of the street. Some people feel responsible for what happens on the sidewalk and they have a vital self-interest for safety and order; these people are mainly store owners or restaurant managers. If the sidewalks are not safe, people do not dare to visit their business. The third aspect points to a frequent use of sidewalks at different times of the day, because it augments the observation of others and it makes the street more interesting for onlookers, who might spend time just observing the busy street-life.

But safety is just one aspect of the social function provided by sidewalks. Another function is that sidewalks provide contact which, over time and with enough frequency, eventually will produce trust. It is not the permanently anonymous contacts that Jacobs has in mind, but the contact in a city neighborhood that consists in the exchange of the occasional word with a bartender or shop owner, the nodding to neighbors while walking the dog or the time shared when watching children play. These encounters create a web of trust among strangers, which still respects private affairs, yet allows—for example—to leave the door keys with neighbors or watch other people's children. These contacts do not yet, however, qualify for a sense of “togetherness” like in a suburban or rural setting: “There is no public life here [in Garden cities], in any city sense. There are differing degrees of extended private life” (64). The lack of public life means that there is no public trust in suburban settings; rather, there is only either a choice of “togetherness” or nothing.

Finally, sidewalks fulfill the function of assimilating children. Even though playing on the streets is preceded by bad reputation, as Jacobs writes (74), noting how the streets are not arranged according to the needs of children, that children are safer when observed by many people who share a sense of “ownership” over the street, people who make sure no extortion or violence happens among the children. In other words, unsupervised playgrounds might be pedagogically valuable, but if they are not in the public focus, children might not be safe there. Moreover, older children find the streets more interesting and adventurous than secluded playgrounds. Jacobs thus debunks the fantasy of the moral and emotional corruption that children suffer when spending too much time on the streets (74).

Looking at Manila of today, this critique of urban planning in the United States during the 1960s can provide us with important insights about the conditions necessary for sidewalk safety. Important differences consist in the street and sidewalk safety due to increased motorized traffic. Playing on the streets is nowadays often very dangerous for children; sidewalks are scarce in Manila and seem to be built and respected for what they are only for as long as they have not been appropriated by building constructions

bordering on the street or by vehicles right on them. Pedestrians are treated like second-rate citizens, even if they are the vast majority and even if most motorized travel requires some amount of foot walk. Heat, dust, pollution, and noise make life on Manila sidewalks often unbearable. While the climatic conditions cannot be changed, other aspects vary in different parts of the city and largely depend on city planning and the way sidewalks are used.

The anecdotal comparison between the segregated and policed subdivision “Xavierville I” and densely constructed and populated “De la Costa Homes I” both in proximity to the renowned Ateneo de Manila University in Quezon City might illustrate the application of Jacobs to contemporary Manila. Xavierville I, a subdivision guarded by several armed security personnel and separated from the rest of the city by high fences, radiates a sense of suburban feeling with its lack of city-life. Although the streets are wide and only with minimal traffic, they are almost always deserted. Judging from the private police presence, there are safety concerns among the population, which can also be gathered from the high walls and fences surrounding the compounds and the protection of the individual houses. Hardly any children can be seen that would make use of the wide streets and the few dangers from traffic that might be there. Applying Jacobs's diagnosis, one can say that that (semi-) urban arrangement does not provide a public city life and only offers the alternative of either “togetherness” or nothing. Hardly surprising, then, that little familiarity with the neighbors exists.

De la Costa Homes, by contrast, is a housing project for the employees of the nearby Ateneo de Manila University and consists of comparably small lots with many one- to two-story houses cramped side-by-side with small lanes only accessible for pedestrians serving as street system. Surprisingly, it fulfills the function of city-life outlined by Jacobs: through small shops and eateries, it has natural proprietors of the streets, who not only have a vital interest in the peace and order of the streets, but also constantly watch the street. They (and many others) act as “proprietors of the streets.” The necessary occasional walks to stores and eateries create a web of acquaintances and the trust needed for a safe public city-life. Although there is a small playground available, children prefer to play on the streets. Given the watchfulness of the owners of stores

and eateries and other people spending their time watching the streets, there is always attention on the streets, which fulfills the function of providing safety and contact. This, as a result, assimilates children. Given the small size of the neighborhood and the proximity of the inhabitants, questions can be raised whether that neighborhood provides the sense of privacy that characterizes the city or whether it is in regard to the aspect of social control akin to a rural community.

The description of these two neighborhoods gives us not only information on how city-life and public spaces play out differently across Manila. It also points to the fact of a very segregated city with many suburban-type hermetically-sealed subdivisions as well as tight squatter areas. When it comes to Manila, Jacobs is certainly wrong when she writes that “no normal person can spend his life in some artificial haven” (36). Everyday life among affluent citizens often exists only by hopping from artificial haven to artificial haven without experiencing any of the aspects of city-life as described by Jacobs. They hop from subdivision to gated university campus or office space; or they dine and shop at secured malls, and thus minimize the chance encounters to strangers (cf. Kaelin 2007, 215). No sense of public life will arise in this context that would provide the functions of safety, contact, and children assimilation outlined by Jacobs. They nominally live in the city without actually living there.

The diagnosis developed from Jacobs’s idea of the city identifies a lack of the private/public separation in Manila. Even if the legal separation is very evident, like in affluent subdivisions, there is no public life or public sphere in the proper sense springing from it. Other city areas are too densely populated to allow for a private life. Furthermore, the growth of motorized traffic makes many streets virtually impractical to provide the vital functions of public life. Manila shares this negative diagnosis—to a bigger or lesser extent—with many other contemporary cities. The mix of business establishments, restaurant and living areas needed to create a vivid sidewalk life has given way to a segregation of living, shopping, and working areas in the city. Sidewalks are generally considered too dangerous for assimilating children, and watching streets and sidewalks for entertainment purposes has given way

to mass-media forms of entertainment. One problematic aspect of Manila from the perspective of Jacobs is its segregation into small suburban-like parts. Such segregation is certainly supported by the organizing principle of its street system.

The Organization Principle of Manila

We can understand the segregation of Manila in many quasi-suburban quarters, squatter areas, and middle-class housing projects with an analysis of the street system. Richard Sennett refers to the Egyptian hieroglyph depicting a cross in a circle as one of the primordial signs of the city (1990, 46). This indicates two basic and lasting elements of the city: the continuous circle refers to a closed domain, such as a wall or a square, within which life unfolds. Already the Babylonians and the old Egyptians organized their cities with streets in the right angle, thereby creating a grid of streets with plots of land of equal size. It is this organizing principle of the grid that serves Sennett for his reflection of the city. And it is this reflection that will be transposed to the urban landscape of Manila to complement Jacobs’s diagnosis.

The grid is a simple, efficient, and rational way of organizing space. In European history, especially after natural catastrophes, cities have been reconstructed by using a grid system as was the case with the London after the Great Fire of 1666 or with the Italian city of Noto after the earthquake in 1693. In the nineteenth century, the grid served as the primary way to shape cities in the United States. Sennett understands this organization principle in the new settlements of nineteenth-century America in terms of a negation of the existing natural complexity and variety. Nature is neutralized: “The grid has been used in modern times as a plan that neutralizes the environment” (48). And very much against the ancient grid of the Roman military camp, the modern grid of the American city was not confined to a certain space but without limits. This reflects for Sennett a shortcoming in nineteenth-century American city-planning. His critique of the grid as the urban organizing principle of nineteenth-century America is directed against the lack of establishing rules and regulation for the place of market, church, and school, rather than simply administering a grid. The administration of the grid hardly took into consideration

preexisting settlements or natural obstacles like hills and rivers. The previously (practically) uninhabited land could have been structured according to social and/or natural organizing principles, yet the planners “were not so minded. Instead, they aggressed against the environment; their victories lay in neutralizing it” (53).

That might well be true. Additionally, the complaints from attentive observers like Alexis de Tocqueville point to the “soulless” nature of the newly constructed American cities. But what a grid also expresses is an ultimately egalitarian and democratic mindset. Social hierarchies are not mirrored or expressed in the organization of the city. Authority is not bestowed upon a certain place within the city as such but rather, as Sennett would write, “grids would organize power precisely by stripping away the character of a place” (51). The lack of places of authority within the urban landscape of grid-like organized cities might be criticized as lack of planning, or praised as inherently democratic. Without dispute, too, is the aspect of practicality of the grid system, as it in fact allows the inhabitant easy orientation even in places he has not been before and it provides the shortest possible way from A to B.

The critique of the grid-system by Sennett points to its lack of center, its ignorance of natural conditions, its oblivion of previous settlements, and the lack of city planning beyond administrating a rigorous and systematic street system. When compared to the development of suburbs, subdivision, and gated community, an evaluation of a grid as an organizing principle for the entire city takes a different form. The development of the past decades in Europe and North America has seen the rise of suburbs as dominant middle-class form of living. Suburbs can be characterized according to a number of different features. First, residential and commercial activities are normally separated, so that stores catering to daily needs are usually not within walking distance. In the discussion of Jacobs, we have seen the importance of this proximity for public life. Second, the daily (and other) needs are supplied by shopping malls rather than the “usual” downtown shops. Third, the street system is no longer organized in a grid, but rather follows a hierarchy. The prevalence of cars, the separation of work and life, and an increased want for safety and exclusivity bring about a street system that caters to these needs. This is

especially true for gated communities and exclusive subdivisions. Lastly, if these are developed by one real estate company rather than by a community, then this creates homogeneous communities with very similar income and demographics. Suburbs, thus, from the very way they are organized, lack the public space and public life characteristic for city life.

The consequences of that segregation of society can be studied excellently in Manila. With heightened want for security and a portrayal and experience of the outside world as dangerous and chaotic, (public) life is internalized and privatized. The opposition of chaotic outside world and inner harmony can be drawn upon imagination from Chinese, Spanish, and American heritage, as Peter Murphy and Trevor Hogan point out (2012). Chinese culture has a preference for the hidden garden and home in its opposition to the chaotic street, and thereby is a long-standing cultural influence in the Philippines. The Spanish colonizers fortified Manila. It is also of interest that “the symbolic center of Spanish rule in the Philippines was not a great plaza but the Intramuros—the historic walled city of Manila, where the public sphere was sealed off in a stone container” (15). This model emphasized the difference between an orderly and calm inside and a chaotic and dangerous outside; being inside was good, outside bad. Even though the period of American colonialization in the first half of the twentieth century was a success in some regards—creating the basis for a public infrastructure by building roads, railways and harbors, putting in place a general education system, promoting public health, and laying the ground for democratic self-governance (18), it was nevertheless also a failure in other regards, because it did not manage to bring about civic order. Being rather in line with the American presence in military bases and diplomatic residences, the inside/outside dichotomy was reinforced.

It is against this historic background that the present urban landscape of Manila, with its peculiar inversion of private/public, has to be interpreted. Murphy and Hogan interpret the city’s development in the last century in terms of a “new encomienda” system (23). That much of the city-planning and construction was done by wealthy families constructing their own “cities” within the city means that within these cities there might be something

as carefully constructed “public lives,” yet heavily homogenized and thereby excluding “others.” It also means that these “cities” are sealed against the outside world of the larger city. And most importantly, as essentially private ventures, these cities lack the important aspect of the city as democratic self-organization and forming the world according to the “heart’s desires.” These privately constructed and managed cities fall short of the emphatic notion of political and social emancipation as understood by Max Weber. As private enterprises, citizens do not get to politically decide on their urban environment. In regard to the social aspect, the public life that provides safety and contact is hardly realized in many affluent quarters judging from the private security forces and the lack of the use of streets. Constructing “cities” as private enterprises means that they did not follow the democratic principle of a “grid” as a street system, but rather require few (or even only one) access street(s) and a hierarchy of different locations within the “city.”

The outside, in contrast, is left for the barely organized chaos of the city outside of “cities.” That outside is largely characterized by areas of traffic, squatter areas on wasteland, and the omnipresent billboards catering to commuters—not exactly nice to look at, as a famous advertiser once put it: “As a private person, I have a passion for landscape, and I have never seen one improved by a billboard. Where every prospect pleases, man is at his vilest when he erects a billboard” (Ogilvy, quoted in Klein 2009, 3).

Struggling for Public Spaces for Political Self-Organization

These various observations on the theory of the public sphere and some urban phenomena in Manila have shown the importance of a functioning public life and public spaces for city life and political organization. The city has been presented as a paradigmatic venue of individual emancipation—economically, socially, and politically. Furthermore, it is the place where the natural environment has been reshaped to suit human needs and desires. That reshaping, however, requires a collective effort and problem-solving processes that can only take place in public. It also requires public space, where discussion can take place about the social joint-venture that a city is. Without the public life and without the trust among citizens, unfortunately, that discussion is difficult to take place.

If we take seriously the idea that all politics is rooted in their local conditions, we can evaluate different aspects of the urban landscape in Manila from that vantage point. We can also see how important public spaces are for political self-organization. One problematic aspect of the urban landscape is the segmentation into different areas with no shared public space for interaction. Problems affecting different segregated communities cannot be discussed or even solved in common, because there is no public space where people habitually meet and interact. The public function of sidewalks according to Jacobs is not only to build safety through mutual trust, but also to have habitual contact that might be used to address matters of concern for the neighborhood. If that sense of public does not arise, then the essential trust and habitual contact is missing, and so is the problem-solving ability of a community. This might be true *within* certain neighborhoods in Metro Manila: I have argued above in my comparison of the subdivision Xavierville I in Quezon City and De la Costa Homes in Marikina City (both situated near the Ateneo de Manila University) that only the latter is successful in producing a public life that ensures safety and builds trust. The lack of trust is certainly evident *across* neighborhoods; the lack of public spaces and public trust results in fortress architecture and extreme security measures.

The vast area of Metro Manila, which consists of different cities makes it difficult to come up with a single analysis. In many parts of Manila, city development in the hands of private families has created “cities” within the city that exclude important areas of Metro Manila factually from citizens’ political self-organization. Such private city-planning might try to artificially create a “public life.” Yet, if such a public life comes into existence, it is a highly homogenized one, that is orchestrated top-down rather than an outflow of the genuine self-organization of citizens. Private city-developers, furthermore, are not interested in politically active citizens, but rather in wealthy consumers. They create their internal public space according to consumer rather than citizen imperatives; the interests of private city-developers are good consumers and not good citizens. In a Weberian framework, these privately developed “cities” provide the economic emancipation of the bourgeois, but not the political one of the citizen.⁹

Thus, the fragmented larger city of Metro Manila lacks public spaces that would provide the basis needed for public life, public trust, and the public organization of Manila. Yet, the history of Manila has shown that at crucial times throughout Philippine history, people creating this public space against all odds on the street can form a powerful public that can successfully challenge dictatorship and corrupt governments. Unfortunately, these politically successful revolutions have only very partially been translated into lasting social transformation. There is still the need for public venues, public places, and a public sphere that would allow for continuous discussion and the lasting creation of a public life and public trust. The struggle for public spaces needed for democracy, thus, is a struggle aiming at a different urban infrastructure that would allow political self-organization and lasting social change.

Endnotes

1. “Or were modern architects asked to design spaces that better promote democracy, they would lay down their pens; there is no modern design equivalent to the ancient assembly” (Sennett 1990, xi).
2. I am grateful for the comments made by my brother, Benjamin Kaelin, on this text in general and on the normative evaluation of this emancipation/transformation process from rural to urban life.
3. This might happen simply because of the rapid growth of the city. What was well-planned and organized for a city of, say, 2 million people in terms of streets, recreation areas, means of transport, no longer can accommodate the needs of, say, 14 million people.
4. Manchester in the nineteenth century has not been formed according to the wishes and needs of the working class, as Benjamin Kaelin (personal communication) laconically points out.
5. Murphy and Hogan write: “The Ayala family turned city building into a family enterprise” (2012, 23).
6. There could be sensible debate about the role that the city government should play in providing housing for its citizens. The city of Vienna with its big share of government housing—one third of the 1.8 million inhabitants of Vienna live in government housing—was successful in creating a good mix of different social classes throughout the city and thereby avoiding ghettos, slums or suburbs with increased criminality.
7. Where the need of regulation arises is, in Dewey’s pragmatic approach, left to the respective public identifying problems and seeking to regulate them. This need for regulation might lead as far as to a state-controlled economy

—as the leftist slogan goes: “We do not want to have a larger slice of the cake, we want to own the bakery.”

8. Jacobs writes on page 32: “No amount of police can enforce civilization where the normal, casual enforcement of it has broken down.”
9. This shows, by analogy, a major problem in the transposition of public debate from the traditional media of newspaper to social media, especially Facebook. Facebook is more interested in having consumers use its network for consummation purposes (which creates more revenue) than politically active citizens. It will therefore program its website and algorithm in a way to foster consumerism rather than critically active citizenry.

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FERNANDO N. ZIALCITA

Sacral Spaces Between Skyscrapers

AS A METROPOLIS GROWS, it soon absorbs once-independent suburbs, be these small towns or sizeable cities. By “suburbs,” I mean settlements adjacent to a city where people reside and work, but are dependent upon the city. Though the cities¹ that have sprung up around Manila are now economically and politically independent of Manila, in one one sense they are still dependent upon it. Before the rest of the country and indeed of the world, their identity is connected with Manila, being collectively called “Metro Manila.” Years back, informal boundaries may have opened between such settlements—a stretch of fields or a river running through—without government decree. However, as suburban cities (like Makati) themselves expand to their administrative boundaries as defined by the national government, the visible boundaries between Metropolitan Manila’s political units have disappeared. Instead, one shapeless sprawl is in place. Contributing to the sameness is the upsurge of skyscrapers. While these may be needed because of the scarcity of land, often efficiency seems to be their sole objective. Unfortunately, although their residents may indeed pay many of their taxes locally, mentally and spatially they live in enclaves with no connection to the surrounding city.

But why should it matter that the identity of each town or city be retained? Moreover, how can a municipality affirm its identity in a context where the metropolitan cityscape has become one

indistinct blur of more and more concrete buildings, whether low rise or high rise?

This essay will show that the historic core of particular Philippine towns and cities, namely the plaza and its immediately surrounding neighborhood, are spaces that can create a strong sense of municipal identity if local decision-makers paid more attention to it. It is here that local history, social solidarity, unique customs, and expressions of creativity come together to form a sense of “place” in the sense used by Doreen Massey (2005, 151–52), geographer.

The limitations of this essay are that, as an *outsider*, I refer to elements that give particular plazas their specific identity. Research needs to be done on how residents themselves feel about their plaza. Moreover, I cite only their *potential* use in the drive to differentiate their city from other cities. How such potential is actually being used by officials and ordinary citizens needs further study.

Why should it matter that a municipality affirm its own identity and that it should even defend a sense of “place”?

Affirming Local Identity

Before the 1970s, there was no Metropolitan Manila; indeed, there was only Manila. To the north were the municipalities of Navotas, Malabon, Caloocan, and Quezon City; to the east Pasig; to the south, Pateros, Makati, Pasay, and Parañaque. Often the boundaries between these consisted of wide gaps such as stretches of fishponds between Malabon and Quezon City, or bamboo groves between Pasay and Makati. As populations grew, these boundaries disappeared. Today, travelling through the circumferential road called Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (or EDSA as it is popularly called), the casual visitor would never know that he is passing through a ring of cities—Pasay, Makati, Mandaluyong, Quezon City—each with its own charter, governmental structure, and taxing authority. As the metropolitan area grew, it absorbed municipalities that before the 1970s, seemed (at least to the Manila resident) “provincial and far away,” such as Las Piñas, Taguig, Marikina, and Valenzuela. Again, the seemingly “natural,” informal boundaries disappeared as the road led from rows of nondescript buildings to more of the same.

However, even as the metropolitan region became one continuous sprawl, some municipal governments in the 1990s (and thereafter) began to commission the composition of local anthems that would be played at flag ceremonies. Examples are Makati and Marikina whose anthems extol the glories of each city. Most municipalities also set aside a day to commemorate the foundation of the municipality. It also became the fashion to project an icon that would represent the municipality before residents and outsiders. For Marikina, as the center of the shoe-making industry, it was the shoe. For Pateros, the duck and *balut*, since until recently duck-raising was its specialty. Municipal museums also sprang generally located near the main plaza. These initiatives form part of a nationwide trend to highlight local identity in the form of local anthems and museums. In Metro Manila, such innovations could affirm local identity amid the spreading sprawl.

However, municipal governments are understandably torn between affirming local identity and aspiring to a “global image,” namely as a city that is competitive in the global, market-driven economy. A popular icon of globalization is the skyscraper. Tellingly, Makati’s logo features skyscrapers against a sunrise. The truth, of course, is that there is no incompatibility between affirming local identity and aspiring to a global status. New York City, paradigm of the global city, has indeed vast blocks of high-rises. However, it conserves neighborhoods such as Greenwich Village where buildings, as low as four stories, still abound. At the core of this neighborhood is a plaza—Washington Square. Is this low-rise neighborhood inimical to New York City’s global image? On the contrary, it is one of the city’s major attractions because it has been at the center of many globally important cultural movements and is among the most expensive neighborhoods. Moreover, the median rent in 2016 was USD 2,204—double that of the city as a whole, which was at USD 1,235 (City-data.com, np).

While local city officials want more high-rises as icons of globalization and as lucrative sources of revenue, their constituents may desire other ends such as livability, social solidarity, and creativity. One example is Greenwich Village where world-famous celebrities want to live. Another is the expensive, gated community Bel-Air, which abuts the Makati *población* (municipal center). Organized in

the 1970s by the Ayala Corporation as one of several gated communities in Makati, Bel-Air, like the rest, follows an American model: self-enclosed with its own church and playground, it provides safety while denying its connection to the rest of the municipality. This is a low-rise neighborhood where villas, surrounded by gardens, are homes to executives in globally-connected corporations. It seems, therefore, to be the ideal. As a matter of fact, however, it was found wanting. In 1993, the wealthy residents invented a now yearly fiesta called "Pasinaya" for either the last week of April or the first week of May. Streets were decorated, shows were organized for the children and for domestic help, and horses pulling traditional *calesas* (rigs) were paraded. The traditional Filipino fiesta, still alive in nearby but poor and congested barangays like Poblacion, was consciously emulated by wealthy Bel-Air.

Writing of global cities, the geographer Doreen Massey (2005, 59) says that space is active. It is "exhilarating and threatening . . . because it [is] unfurnished and always becoming." Stories continually occur within space because space is about social relations. It is about being human. But planners and city officials are liable to regard time (speed, efficiency, connectivity) as more important than space, which they imagine to be an empty entity that can be manipulated at will. Hence, according to Massey, we must always ask which sector benefits when local spaces are regarded as manipulable entities. In affirming the local, "place" also matters, for it is the weaving together of those stories that, in various ways, locate a place as distinct (Massey 2005, 130 and 141). Unfortunately, space and place are denied because of the obsession with actualizing a particular form of time dominant in global discourse: time visualized as a highway speeding toward a never-ending progress that will supposedly benefit all. The truth is that such a notion of time may benefit a powerful few, while at the same time blotting out particular time-spaces which have their own stories (82). Massey does not advocate shunning the global, for the specificity of a place may in fact connect it with other places beyond on other sites on the globe (Massey 1994, 156). Greenwich Village's specificity, for example, derives from the local expressions of artistic creativity within it as well as from its connectedness to currents from other cities.

Anthony Smith (1990), expert on the genesis of nationalism, argued that it may be too soon to speak of a global culture. People continue to relate to their national culture because there are memories and symbols connected with national culture which are lacking in its global counterpart. Following his and Massey's logic, we argue that assertions of municipal identity originate in collective memories of significant events and places that only local residents can relish. While developing an identity on both the national and global planes is important, local identity does matter, too. At issue is not an "either-or," but rather a "both-and." Phenomenologically, human beings are embodied consciousness. We know and experience the world through our bodies. At the same time we develop interpersonal relationships within circuits of relationships that transcend the immediate (Low 2014). Our town or even just our neighborhood is often more meaningful to us than the nation because we have experienced these entities directly and physically. In contrast, the nation seems a remote and abstract Universal, to use a Hegelian term.² Even the city, though more immediately felt, seems abstract. It is a proximate Universal. It is in places, like the plaza, that the Universal becomes immediate. Here we move outside the sphere of the kin group, the Particular, to meet friends and even strangers. Here too via monuments, museums, and historical writings, we are introduced to a wider and more Universal Space, the City and to a Time beyond the present, History.

Assertions of municipal identity matter for other reasons. Local governments in the Philippines, according to the Local Government Code (1991), now have the right to raise their own revenues through taxing powers, and need not rely on the central government for their income. But even the city may be too abstract for many of its residents. From my experience in two settings, urban districts and rural villages, what many connect to is the neighborhood. However, for the city to operate well, its inhabitants should identify with it as a whole rather than with just their cluster of streets. Will more shopping malls foster a city identity? Still, such malls are privately-owned spaces where the visitor must spend money in order to enjoy its facilities. Often, these deterritorialized spaces form part of a nationwide chain that are not reflective of

local identity and do not stimulate local economic interests. In contrast, the plaza, whether on the level of the municipality or a barangay, is truly a public space.

Public Open Spaces

During the Renaissance, Roman ideals of city planning were revived, among them the public square and the streets laid out on a grid (Chanfon 1997). This was a major innovation both in continental Europe and in the Spanish empire which included the Philippines.³ Hitherto, European cities were warrens of twisting streets, with limited open spaces (Marías 1999, 394–95). In the Philippines, until 1565, north of the Sultanate of Sulu, there appears to have been no cities, but only villages, according to the urban geographer Robert Reed (1978, 6). The *barangay* was the basic political unit. It consisted of a local chief, his relatives, and their followers, whose attachment was based on varying degrees of indebtedness (Plasencia [1595b] 1910, 471; Morga [1609] 1910, 191).⁴ The space that gave the village unity was the chief's house where community rituals were performed (Plasencia [1589], 185–86). Because these settlements were based on extended kinship ties, I would consider such gathering places as private rather than public. In Manila and Cebu, the barangay was evolving toward a true city in the structural sense used by geographers, sociologists, and anthropologists that I mentioned above. Reed, in addition, coined the term “suprabarangay” (1978, 3). Because Manila's ruler was a Moslem, we may assume that there was a mosque which would have constituted true public space transcending kin affiliation. Cebu's ruler was not a Moslem, hence public space would have been his dwelling. For purposes of conversion, the Catholic missionaries brought together dispersed barangays into nucleated settlements. At the core of these settlements was the plaza (40, 42). Around these public buildings stood the church, the municipal hall, as well as privately-owned houses. For centuries down to the present, the plaza has been that space where residents, regardless of kinship, social class, age or sex met, though this be at arm's length, on special days and at public celebrations.⁵ That the plaza has been and continues to be contested by various interest groups indicates that it is “*genuinely* public rather than the exclusive domain of a private group” (Massey 2005, 153).

The Philippine plaza has also been studied by Donn Hart (1955) as an institutionalized social space and recently, by Paulo Alcazaren, an architect and landscape planner, in newspaper articles,⁶ as a space with varied forms and degrees of aesthetic attractiveness. Here we examine the plaza as a configuration of local history, social solidarity, unique practices, and creativity as a counterpoint to the tendency to reduce all meaning to an abstract one-size-fits-all vision of Progress.

Meanwhile, Setha Low (1999), urban anthropologist, classifies cities according to their particular focus. My concern in this essay connects with two of her foci: “contested” and “sacred.” “Sacred” because historic urban spaces encourage in a dramatic way expressions of local identity and solidarity. “Contested” because the multiplication of high-rises, with little government regulation, encroaches on the historic core of municipalities. The contestation takes place in the form of two tensions: 1) between the local and the global, and 2) between the local and the national. Offices in these high-rises have few exchanges with the immediately surrounding local community. Their very design concedes little to the local environment: they are self-enclosed, flat-roofed towers, dependent on artificial ventilation, and lately with glass walls that generate heat. Theirs is an architecture of Nowhere. Their clientele, a mixture of Filipinos and foreigners, are outsiders to the community, and as such are more interested in national or foreign issues. Proliferating shopping malls also contest the plaza. Local governments like these privately-owned entities because the latter take over the task of development while remitting taxes. However, because of their high rental fees, local businesses are excluded. Nationwide and international brands are instead featured. The terms “transnational spaces” or “deterritorialized spaces” by Low and Zuñiga (2003, 25) are thereby apt.

Over the past half-century, plans of local governments for urban spaces have been dominated by the American myth which extols that living in suburbs, which are in turn interconnected with each other by freeways, are better than living in compact cities with communal open spaces. But the sprawl model has produced isolation, expensive infrastructure, dependency on oil, and less farmlands (Wagner, Box, and Morehead 2013, 200). Some

urban specialists say we should revisit the plaza because it fosters “convenience and community,” less dependence on energy for transport, and “a richer life experience” (200). Fortunately, we have the plaza in the Philippines. Here, municipal solidarity expresses itself. Undoubtedly, the medium has been largely religious: annual fiestas such as Christmas dawn masses, the saint’s feast and Holy Week rituals. But this can be reconfigured to become secular as well, so as to accommodate those of different beliefs.

Emile Durkheim’s classic distinction (1968) between the sacred (*sacré*) and the profane (*profane*) is relevant. The sacred is that which is separate from the everyday world (Durkheim 1968, 65, 584–85), being a time, a place, and a practice that embodies the basic values of a people. The profane, in contrast, is the everyday world. The distinction enabled Durkheim to explain the wellspring of religion in a non-evolutionary way. We can broaden Durkheim’s idea by arguing that any human group needs communality in vision, values, narrative, and purpose. A municipality needs a locus to serve as a focus. One locus could be the historic center which would have a special meaning for the local community. To call this “sacred,” however, may confuse, since “sacred” in the English language today, is often equated with “religious.” “Sacral” may be an alternative term. It combines two meanings: 1) sacred and 2) the spinal column’s base. The sacrum is a large, thick, triangular bone that supports the spinal column while articulating with the pelvic bone. Without it, our skeleton would not be upright. Analogously, the historic center embodies the narrative of the city or town, while ensuring its continuity.

Our problematique can thus be reframed: how can the plaza and its surrounding neighborhood (the immediate Universal) become “places” that convey the identity of its municipality (proximate Universal)? What are salient examples in Metro Manila of plaza complexes that are “sacral” ?

Three Oases

Let us examine sacral space in the suburban cities of Marikina, Pasig, and Makati which now form part of Metro Manila. Both cities are among the most built-up parts of the metropolis. They have attracted major business companies, whether national or

transnational and are the sites of elite subdivisions. Visually, this has led to medium-rise to high-rise buildings which now form a solid phalanx in some districts. Boundaries between these cities and their neighbors tend to be fuzzy because they build up to their government-approved boundaries. Nonetheless, there is a historic core where centuries of habitation have “inscribed” meanings either in buildings or even in natural formations (Low and Zuñiga 2003, 13). With government support, these plazas could be even more affirmative of local identity. Nancy Munn (1996) and Stuart Rockefeller (2010) rightly say that “social space is both a field of action and a basis for action” (cited in Low 2014, 35).

My study is based on a current research project that my team and I have been doing on the architectural heritage of Metropolitan Manila since 2010. We did an inventory which I supplemented with direct observation, participant observation, key informant interviews, and archival research. To appreciate how these three plazas could foster a sense of place, we shall describe each with attention to the following: 1) historical remembrance 2) expressions of solidarity beyond the kin 3) venue for local customs and practices and 4) artistic creativity. Furthermore, space becomes place by interweaving “social, economic, ideological, and technological” factors (Low 2014, 35) and the multiplicity of stories (Massey 2005, 130 and 141). By “stories,” I mean structures, customs, and practice in addition to what living people narrate. After all, these human creations have tales to tell—that is, if we open our eyes and ears. Like other Philippine plazas, each is the site for church-related celebrations: Christmas masses, Holy Week processions, and the yearly fiesta in honor of the locality’s patron saint. I shall show how these plazas interweave the four factors listed above.

Pasig: Mother River

Surveying Pasig’s history, three themes stand out: 1) the central role of the river to which the city gave its name “Pasig”; 2) more so than in most Philippine communities, the capital role of women; and 3) the earliest victory of the 1896 Revolution. Except for the first, these themes can be experienced in the historic core. At the same time, it is in the historic core that a unique cultural practice, called by some as “Cocina pasigueña,” still takes place.

Pasig's historic core consists of the seventeenth-century church, two large plazas, the remnant of what used to be the Pasig River's arm, the Beaterio, and the nineteenth- to early twentieth-century houses in the Pariancillo district.

According to Luciano Santiago's reconstruction (1998, 22), Pasig dates back to at least 1450. Such was its dynasty's prestige that the couple, Dayang Kalangitan and Gat Lontok, founded a lineage from which Manila received three rulers in succession: Solimans I, II and III, while Tondo in turn received Lakan Dula. In 1572, the town became a mission and subsequently a parish administered by the Augustinian friars. Pasig's very location made it prosperous. Extensive rice lands, flooded annually by the waters of Laguna de Bay, yielded a rich crop in nearby Taguig. Trade in rice and other commodities between the lakeshore towns and Manila had to pass through Pasig. Hence, the structures of large stone buildings, civic, religious, and domestic, that sprang up in the town, some of which survive.

Not to mention, Pasig was the eye of the storm in significant bloody events. Many Manila Chinese revolted against the Spaniards in 1601 and 1639, and during both, they fled to Pasig. An event of which Pasigueños are specifically proud is the assault on the colonial military in the opening days of the 1896 Revolution. On May 3–12, 1896, Andres Bonifacio and the leaders of various councils of the Katipunan met in an *Asamblea Magna* (Great Assembly) at the house of Valentin Cruz, located by the Bitukang Manok River. They agreed that an attack should be launched against the colonizers (Velasquez 2001). On Saturday, August 29, in response to the discovery of the Katipunan by the authorities, 2,000 Katipuneros and Pasigueños successfully overwhelmed the town's government house and the Spanish garrison (Velasquez 2001). From the town they climbed the heavily forested hills to nearby San Juan del Monte to resume the fight. "Nagsabado," indeed, is an important event that ought to be commemorated yearly rather than intermittently.

In 1901, under the Americans, Pasig became the capital of a new province called Rizal which was carved from the previous provinces of Manila and Laguna. A provincial capitol building arose on its western highland overlooking the Pasig River. Aside from being the capital of a province, this municipality was close to the national

capital, was the corridor between the lakeshore towns and Manila, and was endowed with open spaces on its western flank. Pasig has been one of the more prosperous municipalities in the country. Following independence in 1946, when the Philippines began to industrialize, an important locus was Pasig where manufacturing plants for processed food, textiles, garments, and pharmaceuticals appeared. In addition, it became an important commercial and office center, following the expansion of the Ortigas Center, which straddled three municipalities: San Juan, Mandaluyong, and Pasig. In turn, these commercial and office developments fuelled the need for subdivisions that catered to upper income households (such as Valle Verde) and middle income households (such as Kapitolyo) (Manuel 2001; Bayana 2001). In 1975, Pasig was pulled out of Rizal province and incorporated into a political entity—Metro Manila—after President Ferdinand Marcos created the Metro Manila Commission, which was later renamed the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority. In 1994–1995, Pasig was declared a city.

From the beginning down to the 1970s, the Bitukang Manok waterway, called such because it resembled a chicken's intestine, connected the town to the Pasig River. Unfortunately only a trickle now remains because much of it was cemented over, reducing it to a narrow canal.

Meanwhile, the important role of women can be felt in the church and in the beaterio in front of it. When Pasig was reorganized in 1573 as a mission, and eventually as a parish, its titular patron was Our Lady of the Visitation. In 1587, Mary continued to be the patroness, but her title was instead changed to the more popular Immaculate Conception. Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage, a popular, brown-skinned image of Mary, is enshrined at a church in the hills of nearby Antipolo. To journey between Manila at the mouth of the Pasig River and Antipolo, she would pass through the Bitukang Manok in several processions during the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries. Henceforth, for Manileños, Pasig became the gateway to the annual May pilgrimage to Antipolo during the seventeenth to early twentieth centuries. During the nineteenth century, a century after the Conversion, a mystical movement appeared among women. One locus was Manila, the other Pasig. Women who wished to live a life of devotion formed communities

called *beaterios*, where they took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience only when close to death. Witnessing the fervor of native women, Felix Trillo, an Augustinian friar, founded the Beaterio de Sta. Rita de Pasig in Pasig in 1740. This, in turn, led to a parochial school for girls. However, in 1883, native Filipina Augustinians, who had been recruited by Spanish Augustinian sisters, took over the beaterio and transformed it into the present-day Colegio de Nuestra Señora del Buen Consejo (Santiago 1998). To complete the picture, one of the most evocative songs ever composed in the islands was inspired by the Pasig carnival of 1926. The music was composed by Nicanor Abelardo, the lyrics by Deogracias Rosario. Called “Mutya ng Pasig,” it eulogizes the spirit (*mutyá*) of the waters (de la Paz Osorio 2001), a spirit that assumes the form of a maiden.

Pasig’s stone church and belltower was begun in 1575–1591, the present stone church, the Immaculate Conception Church, meanwhile, was most likely constructed before 1639 (Galende 1994). During the British Invasion in 1762, 10,000 native Filipinos dug trenches around the church and convent to face 500 British troops, but were defeated (Tech 1994). The lone tower at the north side of the church rises quadrilaterally in four stages, and then abruptly becomes octagonal in the fifth and last. Pairs of plain tuscan columns frame the church’s lone main door, as well as the large window above. The interior has a unique treasure, the wooden bas-relief called “The Virgin of the Apocalypse,” from the eighteenth century. Mary stands with a mantle that drapes over the left shoulder and unfurls as it falls over. Her hands clasp together in prayer while on her youthful face is a wistful look. Surrounding her are clouds and representations of her attributes. Underneath her feet is a serpent with a human head. Fernando Zobel de Ayala, painter and art critic (1963) praised this work for its exceptional beauty.

Two plazas open beside the church on the north side and to the west. On Plaza Rizal to the west of the church is the surviving neoclassical facade of the former Beaterio de Sta. Rita, founded in 1740. The beaterio chapel was erected sometime during 1799–1824 (Santiago 1998).

The plaza and Calle Burgos, a street that runs alongside it, lead to the Pariancillo where prosperous families of mixed Chinese and native Filipino ancestry raised their huge mansions in the

nineteenth century, some of which still stand. A singular house is the lightly ochre Guanio House, now the Alfonso Hotel. This was built in 1881 by Apolonio Santiago y Domingo, at one time the *gobernadorcillo* or town mayor. In 1895, this became the Cuartel de la Guardia Civil (Headquarters of the Civil Guard). Together with the now vanished Tribunal de Mestizos, this was besieged on August 29, 1896 by revolutionists armed only with “scythes, bolos, a few firearms” (Velasquez 2001). It was an opening act in the Philippine Revolution of 1896.

Back at Plaza Rizal, we find the Museo de Pasig in the former mansion built of Don Fortunato Concepción y Cabrera, a business tycoon, in 1937. In 1980, it was acquired by the City of Pasig and turned into the Pasig Library and Museum. This neo-Spanish structure of reinforced concrete has a grand three-story tower with a dramatically projecting balcony. The entire house is painted a delightful lemon yellow, with columns and ornaments in a contrasting white. Within the past two decades, town and city museums have sprouted all over the Philippines to foster local identity and pride of place. To do so, they must highlight the unique narratives of their locality. In Pasig’s case, a unique icon is the haunting “Mutya ng Pasig.” Unfortunately in 2013, when I visited it, the museum had at most a collection of paintings by local artists on themes that could be found anywhere else. Nothing was shown (or heard) that was specific to Pasig.

In front of the museum, people, both young and old, enjoy the sun on the metal chairs of Plaza Rizal, and converse with each other under the palm trees and on the red-tiled walks. Here at least, unlike in a shopping mall, locals can either renew ties or develop new ones without needing to pay.

In the vicinity of the plaza are two modest eateries where Pasig’s *cocina pasigueña* can be sampled. Here local identity is asserted creatively. Because of its prosperity, according to conversations with a heritage advocate, José Velasquez, Pasig produced cooks who were sought after in other towns and developed its own cooking style. Mang Ato’s, an eatery, features a local version of Chinese noodle dishes: thin rice noodles cooked in broth, and sprinkled with thinly smashed *chicharron*, toasted garlic, and chopped green onions. A *patis*-flavor gives it *unami*. An eatery on

a sidewalk several blocks away from the plaza serves Pasig's *putong laksa*. Unlike the usual *puto* or rice cake, this soft cake is spooned and eaten with vegetables, such as banana heart turned orange because of *achuete* (annatto) juice. This is standard fare among old Pasig families on festive occasions. Such unique local creativity, clearly, cannot be expressed in a shopping mall with high rentals.

Makati: Street Creativity

Down to the late 1960s, most of the Makati plateau was an empty grassland. However, in the 1970s, Makati became the country's financial center, being the address of major local and international companies. It is also the home of very prestigious gated enclaves. Makati's rise to power was rapid once the Ayalas implemented lessons from California suburbs, i.e., by developing not only housing zones, but likewise adjacent zones for business, commerce, and worship (Lachica 1984, 141–43). Few appreciate that Makati has a historic core that dates back to the 1600s and that this core continues to be the site of local assertions of identity and creativity.

Until the boom of the 1970s, Makati's neighborhoods clustered on a headland along the Pasig River. Let us set aside the Monasterio de Guadalupe, founded by the Augustinians, which dominates the highest cliff of this headland, and focus rather on the "población," the core of the local community. Its landmark is a church constructed by the Jesuits in 1620, burnt by Chinese rebels in 1639 and reconstructed in 1899 following bombardment by the Americans during the Philippine-American War (Javellana 1991, 196–97; Co et al. 2006). The church of San Pedro and San Pablo have a classic baroque façade. A half-moon pediment rises over the two-story façade of volcanic tuff called adobe, which tapers off at both ends into a mild suggestion of a scroll. Inside the church, a lavishly carved baroque *retablo* rises in three stories and houses two beloved icons of Makati: the Sto. Niño de la Pasión and the Virgen de la Rosa. Traditional celebrations fete these icons.

Makati's Población does not have as rich or as varied a legacy of cut-stone construction as Pasig would. Other than the church, there is a dignified 1934 house which used to house the Municipal Government before it moved to its present building on JP Rizal Street. This has been transformed into a Museo de

Makati which houses exhibits depicting both the prehistory and the history of the city. Unfortunately the museum's hours are erratic. The neighborhood surrounding the church is picturesque. The mostly all-concrete houses stand cheek-by-jowl along narrow streets that rise and descend because of the hilly terrain. Dramatic streetscapes open as one walks through.

The Población is the locale of unique annual rituals and spectacles. For instance, to commemorate Sts. Peter and Paul on their feast day, June 29, young maidens dance with hoops of flowers before the Virgen de la Rosa (Our Lady of the Rose). Different bands also play during the festivities.

During Lent, Passion Week, and Holy Week, the Población's significance as a unique place, reflective of municipal identity, manifests itself in a unique way. Practices surrounding temporary chapels, called *kalbaryo*, flourish on streets all over the Población from Passion Week till Easter Sunday. Temporary chapels, made of plywood, recycled materials, and a roof made of galvanized iron sheets spring up on side streets between hotels, office buildings, brothels, bars, and in the shadow of the skyscrapers. *Kalbaryo* literally means "calvary" because scenes from the Passion and Death of Christ are depicted in paintings and sculptures. Each *Kalbaryo* is commissioned by a group of friends as a sign of devotion. Here the *pabasa*, or the public chanting of the Passion and Death of Christ, using the old text called *Pasyon Henesis*, takes place. For instance, one club founded in 1947 has 30 members today, who regard each other as *kabarkada* (groupmates). Many are professionals: architects, lawyers, or businessmen. To facilitate the chanting of the *Pasyon*, lasting for seven to eight hours, tables are installed. While the purpose is to pray, the members enjoy socializing with each other and their many guests. But the *kalbaryo* can stir religious devotion as well. A member says that he fell into a pond. So severe was the accident that part of his leg skin was stripped almost to the bone. Although he received proper medical attention at the hospital, on the eve of Holy Week during that particular year, he felt very ill. However, after he chanted passages from the *Pasyon* at the *kalbaryo*, he suddenly felt well.

The *kalbaryo* enliven the streets with their naïve art. Essentially an altar, some memorable *kalbaryo* in 2012 were actually small

chapels made of plywood and paper. A couple of such chapels had neoclassical Tuscan columns. The most arresting *kalbaryo* of 2012 was a huge papier-maché bust of Christ that rose to almost three meters. The next year, a different design replaced it. In 2012, there were approximately 40 *kalbaryo*, which shows that they have been increasing. Their continual re-invention, moreover, suggests a craving for artistic expression. These shrines also connect the members with the larger community rituals: the processions of Holy Wednesday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday pass through several of these *kalbaryo* which are all lit up. This 2018, I joined a procession at midnight on Easter Sunday which brought together the statues of the Risen Christ and His Mother in a plaza in front of the Museo. It was awesome witnessing a community celebrating together in the deep of night. In the morning, the *kalbaryo* are torn down after a motorcade passes by, which throws candies to the children.

Skyscrapers are, in the meantime, encroaching on the low-rise houses of the Población. Ominously, some residents have sold their property to high-rise developers. But there are those who are determined to stay and live close to their friends. Why live in the crowded Población instead of a tower? Jaime lived in the US for 10 years where he practised his profession. Why did he come back? His father was ill. Besides he found living in the US stressful and life in the quiet and clean suburbs “*malungkot*” (sad). But why live in the crowded core? Though his father lived in a gated subdivision, he preferred to live in their house by a busy main street. Jaime likes the city core because many places are accessible on foot, and no car is needed. He says, “I meet people in jeepneys. They see me. *Parang magkakilala* (It’s as though we know each other). I like crowdedness. There’s a sense of community.”

There is another expression of creativity in the Población, one that is continuous throughout the year. The Población, with its mixture of houses, apartments, hotels, bars, and brothels has spawned imaginative restaurants. “A Toda Madre” is a Tex-Mex café that offers a fine selection of tequilas from newly distilled to aged. “Tambai” is a witty take-off on the Filipino corner eatery where teenagers with limited funds hang around (*istambay*). “Tilde” offers a wide assortment of pastries. “Poblacion Bar” is home to Joe’s Brew, a locally crafted beer. These are located not

in malls, but at the base of a buildings or in the wing of a house. Their highly original concepts have attracted habitués from all over Metro Manila. Their charm is enhanced by the población itself, where streets meander up and down the hill and somehow end in the church plaza. They connect the local with a wider circuit: the city, the nation and the global, for in Makati cluster the country’s top corporations, powerful families, and avant-garde art galleries. The población bars and cafes draw their energy from this mixture of currents from within and from other places from outside the Philippines. It well illustrates Massey’s call for “a global sense of the local, a global sense of place” (1994, 156).

A master plan for the Población was commissioned by the City of Makati, under Mayor Jejomar Binay, to improve the flow of traffic, to connect the cultural sites together, and to make the place more liveable. Conceived by one of the country’s best planners, Arch. Nathaniel von Einsiedel, the plan was submitted to Jejomar. Unfortunately, it has not yet been implemented by the two succeeding mayors, both of them Jejomar’s children.

Marikina: Shoeprints by the River

Among the cities of Metro Manila, Marikina stands out for having consciously conceived a cultural complex to serve as the city’s core. This is thanks to former Mayor Bayani Fernando who brought order into the disorder that typified this, like most other Philippine cities, before his term. One outstanding example is his relocation of 10,473 informal settlers away from the river banks at the city’s expense, in order to free both banks of the river for both recreation and commercial establishments (Palisoc 1991, 77–78). Rare among Philippine mayors, he gave importance to building pride of place among the residents by developing a comprehensive cultural complex integrating this riverside park with sites celebrating the city’s main industry. At the same time, he helped the poor and simultaneously fostered a neighborhood spirit by setting up a “*Barangay Talyer*” in each barangay. Here tools and equipment are stored and can be used by barangay residents, especially the poor (Palisoc 1991, 79).

As an outsider, I see the identity of Marikina connected with two things: water and shoes. This too has been given emphasis by local officials in defining Marikina’s identity.

Water has been central to Marikina's identity. Manila's drinking water, during the nineteenth century, came either from cisterns in houses or from springs in San Juan del Monte, San Mateo, and Marikina (Gonzalez y Fernandez 1878, 456).⁷ Marikina in Spanish documents is "Mariquina." It was here that Augustinians opened their first mission in the 1590s (Marikina City 2015). The water of San Mateo River (another name for Marikina River then) was described as having water that was "crystal-clear and health-giving" (*un agua cristalina y saludable*) (Buzeta 1851, 307). A more lasting solution appeared when the Carriedo Waterworks were inaugurated in 1881, which drew water from the Marikina River and pumped it up to a deposit in San Juan del Monte from whence it entered Manila through metal pipes (de Mas 1882, 71–74).

Appropriately, Bayani Fernando used Marikina River as one axis of the cultural complex he envisioned. He opened a park on both banks of the river where people can stroll. During his term, there were water-oriented festivals that he commissioned. During the Christmas season of 2015, long tents were set up to accommodate small shops that sold household goods and clothes. This fostered a holiday mood and gave people opportunities to earn money. On the south bank across was a carnival with a ferris wheel. During the rest of the year, Marikina friends tell me that they like to come to the park to stroll with their family and friends on the grassy banks.

Another axis is Rizal Street, which connects the city's principal church, its plaza, and three sites honoring the shoe industry. Though the Augustinians began their mission at the close of the seventeenth century, the present church, located on the north bank of the Marikina River, was consecrated in 1791 according to the historical marker. It is under the advocacy of *Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados* (Our Lady of the Abandoned). The church has a cruciform footprint, a lantern tower over the crossing and a single side belfry at the main entrance. Though heavily altered in design, there are some elements of its original neo-romanesque style—receding round arches in series and decorative rows of blind arches on the belfry walls and pediment.⁸ In front of church, the large plaza is a venue for the city's celebrations. On the other side of the main road stand a series of three buildings, honoring the

shoe industry which, during most of the twentieth century, was Marikina's main industry and its face to the world.

The first such building is the former one-story storehouse of the Hacienda de la Paz. The nineteenth-century building is a single story made of thick adobe stones. After the Society of Jesus was suppressed in 1768 in all Catholic domains by Pope Clement XIV under pressure from the kings of France, Spain, and Portugal, their lands were put on auction in 1794. Their hacienda covering Marikina and parts of other adjacent towns was bought by Vicente Dolores Tuason, first-born of Antonio Tuason, a mestizo of Chinese and native Filipino origin, who had made his fabulous fortune in the Galleon trade. The Marikina estate was later on called de la Paz, after Teresa de la Paz, a native of Marikina. She was the widow of José Severo Tuason, hacienda heir who died in 1874. The successor should have been their first-born José Victoriano, but he died on 25 January 1878 at the age of thirteen, while on a trip to Germany. As her son's universal heiress and successor, she took possession of the Hacienda de Mariquina on 1 October 1878 (Santiago 1998c, 345, 353). Since this was a valley with yearly flooding, rice was a major crop. Converted into the city's Shoe Museum, an old adobe-stoned storeroom of the hacienda displays samples of Marikina footwear, basic shoe-making equipment used, a limited assortment of footwear from all over the world, and Imelda Marcos's collection of shoes. The museum could also help the flagging shoe industry if it showcased outstanding Filipino shoe designs over time and fostered research on shoe innovations. At present, it seems more like a big display cabinet. Nonetheless, the museum is a start. Hopefully, in the future it will have a better vision. It is also admirable that the city officials have savvy in choosing this former hacienda storeroom as the setting of a shoe museum. In it, two major themes in Marikina's history converge: hacienda town and footwear center.

On the same side of the street rises a five story concrete-and-glass building that houses the showroom of Gibi, one of Marikina's best-known shoe brands. The showroom is also a storeroom. The third building in this series of buildings relating to the shoe industry is separated from Gibi by a small plaza. This was the residence of Laureano Guevarra, popularly called "Kapitan Moy," during the years 1851–1871. According to the historical marker, he

founded Marikina's shoe industry. Wanting to know how to repair his imported shoes, Moy took these apart and reassembled the parts, and shared the knowledge with others. Marikina emerged as a shoe-making center in 1887. Today, the ground story of this house houses two restaurants. One restaurant, called "Kusina ni Kambal," specializes in serving Marikina dishes such as the well-loved "Everlasting"—a large meatloaf consisting of ground pork mixed with *chorizo*, hotdogs, strips of bell pepper and carrots, raisins, onions and hard-boiled eggs, steamed in a baking pan. The sidewalk connecting the three buildings has bronze plates in the form of shoes with the names of celebrities who patronize Marikina shoes.

Comparisons

Comparing the three plazas, it is Marikina that seems most self-aware. There is a conscious attempt to remind people of the importance of the shoe industry by clustering together the Shoe Museum, a shoe factory, plaques commemorating the founder of the shoe industry and the shoe-shaped sidewalk plaques. On the other hand, a broad sense of solidarity is palpable, not only in Marikina, but in Makati as well. Aside from the long riverside park in Marikina, there are various annual riverside festivals; in Makati, the wayside shrines during Holy Week bring large masses of people who are non-kin together to construct and maintain them during the holy days. Though local customs can be experienced in the three plazas, Pasig (at the time I explored it) did not highlight its culinary heritage. The eatery selling its puto was then on a sidewalk in a side alley. In contrast, Marikina features its cooking in two eateries, one of them a sizeable restaurant located within its cultural complex. In Makati, the temporary wayside shrines flourish and increase in number in preparation for the Holy Week processions on Holy Wednesday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. The inventiveness shown in the designs of these yearly reconstituted structures and in the famous, well-publicized eateries of the poblacion make Makati's plaza complex truly tops in creativity. But the most attractive plaza is that of Pasig with its lordly rows of palm trees in the center and its vistas of museum, antique houses, and ancient church.

A final comparison is this: while all three plazas supposedly form the affective core of their cities, perhaps this is really only true of Marikina which has branded itself as the Shoe Capital of the Philippines and has clustered the emblems of its identity by the church plaza. In contrast, especially in Makati, no such clarity of branding has taken place. The city's old plaza is, at present, the affective core of the Población, but not of the wealthy barangays that ring it each of which has its own large parish church. Religious festivals are celebrated enthusiastically in and around the old plaza, but there is no clear, all-embracing narrative about Makati that would attract residents either to it or its environs.

Toward a Sense of Place

Why protect local identity as expressed through the municipal plaza?

Progress is inevitable, claims the reigning myth. If we fully participate in the global market economy. Supposedly there is only one way—the highway taken by advanced capitalist countries, a highway that ignores differences between different worlds on the globe. A monolithic, uniform conception of time is devastating the multiplicities of time-space. A monotonous sameness of appearance has descended upon Metro Manila.

However, there are oases of exception that do open up. The plaza of Marikina stands out for its shoe industry, its water festivals, and its annual riverside fair; that of Makati for the imaginative quality of its Lenten shrines and its quirky cafes; and that of Pasig for the high visibility of women in its traditions and for embodying one of the first victories of the Revolution. Social solidarity is expressed differentially. In Makati, this is dramatically shown by the construction of new street shrines every Holy Week by many associations and the free sharing of food and drink to all who come for the chanting of the Passion. In Pasig and Marikina, local food specialties found nowhere else can be bought near the plaza. In Makati, the creativity of bars and cafés has made the Poblacion a fashionable magnet. Lastly, Marikina's footwear industry could be revived if the Shoe Museum were to inspire both as a storehouse of designs from the past and as a research center for new styles.

These oases are important for three reasons. In this global age, one paradox is that on the one hand, a time-space that does not fit the norm of the supposed urban landscape is regarded as a deviant to be blotted out. But, precisely because it is a deviant, it can also be seen as an asset because people crave unique experiences, often interconnected with a locality. The business executives who hold office by day in a transnational company located in a skyscraper will, by night, seek eccentric bars in the winding streets of the Población because such an experience can be found nowhere else.

A second reason is that, particularly with more local autonomy, our municipal officials seek to mobilize their constituents. They have tried to foster local identity and solidarity by commissioning anthems, designating foundation days, and opening municipal museums. They could take another step forward by making the plaza attractive because it can combine together history and business, creativity and livelihood, the quest for religious transcendence and mundane pleasures. It could be the spine that keeps their city together as it moves forward.

Finally, we all want a home. Our family dwelling is one home. But we need a home where we can share with and meet others who are not our kin. Logically, our municipality should be such a home. But where is one space where the stories of our municipality across generations and across social boundaries interweave and can be felt in its structures, art, cuisine, rituals, festivals, legends? One such space could be the plaza and its environs. We should shift metaphors. The plaza can also be a heart, the center of our affections, for here the indefinite abstract universal space that our city is becomes a definable concretely felt sacred place like no other.

Endnotes

1. Two concepts need clarification. One is “municipality,” the other “city.” The former refers to the administrative and political units into which a Philippine province is divided. While most municipalities are towns, some are recognized by the Philippine state as a “city.” Two definitions of “city” are relevant. One is the standard understanding of either “city” or “urban settlement” in geography, sociology, and anthropology. As defined, for instance by Louis Wirth (2002), a city should be understood “structurally,” rather than solely in terms of its population. 1) It brings together people who engage in lifelong

occupational specialization other than in agriculture, 2) it clusters people into a compact, nucleated settlement, and 3) it is heterogenous for it gathers people of differing social classes, occupations, and even ethnicities. But “city,” as currently defined by the Philippine state, refers to settlements that meet two requirements: 1) a minimum population size and 2) a minimum annual revenue (Philippine Statistics Authority, n.d: Republic of the Philippines 1953). Hence not all municipalities, however urban-like they be, can carry the designation of a “city.” While my basic understanding of what a city is structural, when I discuss “suburban cities” I take into account the definition by the Philippine state.

2. My first Masters was in Philosophy with emphasis on German phenomenology and on Hegel. The higher abstraction in philosophy helps clarify basic conceptual relations.
3. This needs qualification. In indigenous Mexico, the Spaniards encountered public plazas laid out correctly with four corners that were grander, cleaner, and safer than what they knew. Mesoamerican ideals of planning may have influenced the large rectilinear plazas that began to emerge in Spain during the late sixteenth century (Wagner, Box, and Morehead 2013, 42). They could have influenced Philippine plazas as well.
4. The Anonymous Author of the Boxer Codex ([1590] 1960, 357) says that in the Visayan *haop*, their equivalent of the *barangay*, the chief’s followers were his *deudos* (relatives).
5. Recently, the accusation is being made that the plaza was introduced to keep watch over colonials. How can this accusation be substantiated? As shown above, the plaza emerged in both the Philippines and Western Europe during the sixteenth-century Renaissance as an effort to create better planned urban centers. Indeed, the indigenous Mesoamerican example of monumental plazas may have inspired the Spaniards themselves. Understandably, there is resentment against Spanish influence because of colonialism. But it would be wrong to suspect malicious motives in their every move. My favorite example: supposedly Spaniards obliged Filipinos to wear their shirt tails out and to use translucent materials so as to detect weapons. But where is the documentary evidence for this? Meanwhile the Chinese and Indians who came here to trade wore their shirt tails out; moreover, Indians took pride in wearing muslin which is even more transparent than our piña. Baseless accusations keep us from taking pride in many aspects of our heritage, including the plaza.
6. Alcazaren has a regular Saturday column in the newspaper *Philippine Star* called “City Sense.” From 2016 down to this year 2017, every so often he features a plaza. I will cite just a few examples: Alcazaren (2016a, 2016b, 2016c).
7. The headland and watershed, where the campus of Ateneo de Manila arose in the 1950s, yielded springs, for it was then forested. Hence, the street called “*chorrillo*,” the Spanish for “water jet,” located close to this headland (“arangka” is the Tagalog form of “*barranca*,” meaning “gully”).

8. Though the adobe walls are covered with gray cement which is both dull and too dense a cover for adobe, the interior looks cheerful. Painted murals on the wooden ceiling and cartouches on the cemented pillars brighten the interior.

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MICHAEL D. PANTE

Cleaning the Capital

The Campaign against Cabarets and Cockpits in the Prewar Greater Manila Area

Introduction

A CITY'S BORDERS do not simply delineate its territorial limits. Whereas the urbanized center, as the main locus of the city's economic infrastructures and political symbolisms, defines the city and makes it recognizable to both residents and non-residents, borders provide a haven of sorts to elements of the urban underside. While boundaries separate contiguous towns from one another, they also create corridors of urban activity that are radically different from those in the center, straddling both sides of the border.

As early as the 1960s, scholars have noted the importance of fringe belts in cities (Whitehand 1967). However, the edge of the city remains neglected in favor of the center, with only a few works paying attention to the former (Thomas 1990; Waterhouse 2015). Although the urban social underside has been foregrounded in a number of studies, the urban geographical underside remains understudied.

Border areas form part of a city's peripheries. While modern cities have developed in a way that allows certain parts of the periphery to evolve into suburbia, the fringe attracts illicit economic activities such as prostitution and gambling, or is designated to accommodate undesirable spaces, like cemeteries and slaughterhouses. However, although corridors of such economic activities happen along both sides of the borders (making boundaries seem

artificial), one must be reminded that borders are still real, especially in its legal sense. One important implication of this point is that the peripheral-underside character is different in the two sides of the border: those outside the border serve as sites for activities that are prohibited in, but demanded by, the city. This paper highlights this duality of the city border: its rigidity give the border area a legal character that treats it as no different from the city center and sets it apart from surrounding towns; yet its fluidity and flexibility also provide the border area linkages with the surrounding towns that the city center cannot enjoy as much.

Cities, however, are not created equal. Capital cities, for instance, are not ordinary urban settlements, but act as the geographical showcase of a province, region, or of a nation. In a sense, the entire city must appear as a center; from the perspective of political elites, having areas in the capital city devoted to illicit or undesirable activities runs the risk of undermining its ideological message. The complexity of urban border areas and fringe belts in capital cities is the subject of this work. Here, I highlight the simultaneous porosity and rigidity of the borders of American-colonial Manila and mid-twentieth-century Quezon City, the two Philippine capitals of the previous century, in relation to two activities that were associated with the urban fringes: cabarets and cockfighting.

Manila Vice

Late-nineteenth-century Manila was an urban oxymoron: a cosmopolitan and conservative city. On the one hand, its rapid urbanization liberalized the attitudes of the elite and middle classes, especially men. On the other hand, the Catholic Church's influence remained pervasive, albeit significantly diminished, and exerted its force on society, from state officials down to the ordinary city residents. Thus, when it came to Manila's perceived social ills and vices, like prostitution and gambling, the prevailing attitude was disdainful tolerance.

This ambivalence was apparent in the case of prostitution and cockfighting. Frowned upon but recognized as part of daily life (Camagay 1995, 99–118), prostitution became legal toward the end of the Spanish colonial regime (Dery 1991, 486). When venereal diseases spread quickly in the nineteenth century, ambivalence

begot hypocrisy as the male-dominated Spanish government turned its gaze to Manila's women prostitutes, or *mujeres publicas*. Meanwhile, the colonial capital also served as a haven for cockfighting, enjoyed not just by enthusiasts but even more so by the state and businessmen. Each *arrabal* (suburb) of Manila had one cockpit, and Thursday and Sunday were the designated days for cockfights (Camagay 1992, 140). Although looked down upon by educated natives and Spanish civil officials, cockfighting remained the main form of entertainment for ordinary Manileños, as well as a constant contributor to the coffers of the state, which farmed out cockpit contracts beginning in 1861. The government monopoly over cockpit contracts translated to annual revenues of 100,000–200,000 pesos. Chinese and mestizo Chinese contractors amassed fortunes from this type of business, such as the prominent Manila Chinese Tan Quien-sien (Wickberg 2000, 113–14). Clearly, cockfighting was the unofficial “national sport” and remained so despite the onset of US colonialism at the end of the nineteenth century (Villamor 1909, 83; Malcolm 1936, 339).

Against this backdrop, American colonialism found itself having a capital city that it perceived to be deficient due to these social ills. Americans felt Manila had to undergo an “imperial makeover” (Doeppers 2010). Two important factors were behind Manila's colonial cleansing. One was the Americans' aim to depict Spanish colonialism as autocratic and responsible for these social ills. For instance, Americans emphasized how the Spanish overlords perpetrated cockfighting as a vice among Filipinos (Laubach 1925, 402; Malcolm 1936, 339). The other factor was the upsurge of social reform movements in the mainland US that were by-products of America's rapid urbanization, from the Progressive Movement, which sought municipal reforms (Abinales 2005, 157), to anti-vice crusades such as the Temperance Movement (McCoy 2011, 243). These had implications in the colony, such as in the formation of a Moral Progress League by American protestant missionaries. One of the campaigns of the league was to ban cockfighting (McCoy and Roces 1985, 140). Sanitation and urban planning were thus not enough to ensure the makeover; a moral prophylaxis also had to take place. The drive toward an urban moral cleansing persisted even into the 1920s. In his exposition on the moral reforms needed

in the Philippines, Dr. Frank Laubach (1925, 398–414) cites the 1922 Report of the Methodist Annual Conference, which enumerates five social ills: 1) the saloon, 2) the cockpit, 3) the commercialized prize-fighting, 4) the dance; and 5) the uncensored crime.

Although the new colonizers came in with a crusading zeal to clean the city, what they did was to simply sweep the dirt under the couch. While the change in colonial regimes led to crucial shifts, most especially geographical ones, the demand of residents for the “services” offered by these establishments of ill-repute never diminished. Indeed, the influx of US soldiers in Manila following the American occupation of the city even added to the demand for the city’s male-patronized vices, namely prostitution (Dery 1991, 480–82) and alcoholism. As a result, turn-of-the-century Manila teemed with saloons and brothels; its sidewalks littered with drunk soldiers and sailors.

The colonial state addressed the situation of uncontrolled vice (of course, with maintaining colonial stability as the main consideration) mainly through municipal legislation, although national laws also helped. In terms of law enforcement, the city government had been so preoccupied with stamping out vices that it beefed up its police force, albeit without significant success (McCoy 2011, 243).

In regard to cockfighting, the policy shift was quite drastic. Official tolerance during the Spanish period gave way to a long-term policy of gradual elimination through municipal and national legislation. Nonetheless, the new colonial state was realistic enough not to advocate an abrupt and absolute abolition. At the national level, Philippine Act 82 empowered municipal governments to regulate, permit, or prohibit cockfighting and the keeping or training of fighting cocks, as well as to close cockpits (Philippine Legislature 1909, 39). Cockfighting held in cockpits should only be scheduled during legal holidays and for a period not to exceed three days during the fiesta of the town (ibid.; Laubach 1925, 402). At this point, it is interesting to note the Supreme Court’s (1919, 714) view on this matter: “It must be conceded that cockfighting is on about the same plane as the conducting of dance halls and the selling of liquor; and it is generally recognized that police supervision over these forms of entertainment and diversion can be much more strict than over activities of a harmless nature.”

In 1925, Dr. Laubach (1925, 402) declared that the “days of the cockpit are numbered” due to numerous restrictive laws. His pronouncement, however, was utterly premature. Government officials themselves were aware that total elimination was unfeasible given “the power of the cockpit trusts” (Malcolm 1936, 340). More importantly, cockfighting was popular among all social classes: from *cocheros* (carriage drivers) to politicians, and remains so until today.

Compared to cockfighting, which probably only a few Americans patronized, prostitution received less opprobrium from the new colonial state. Of course, one should not discount the early battles against prostitution in Manila, which was inextricably tied to the fight versus alcoholism. Backed by Manila anti-vice crusaders, the municipal government enacted an ordinance that prevented saloons, bars, and other drinking places from operating from 12 am to 5 am. The municipal board also prohibited the issuance of liquor licenses (with the exception of third-class “wholesale” licenses) to establishments located in major streets and the downtown areas, such as Escolta, Calle Rosario, Plaza Cervantes, and Plaza Moraga (Malcolm 1908, 84–90; McCoy 2011, 243). The idea behind these campaigns was that many of the saloons and wine shops also operated as brothels. These state actions, however, boomeranged; prostitution became even more pronounced in the twentieth century. In fact, the Americans’ arrival gave rise to a place of entertainment that served as a new front for prostitution rings: the cabaret.

Cabarets, or dance halls, were “a distinctly American addition to Manila’s nightlife.” The more prominent ones even became tourist attractions (Malcolm 1957, 199; [Anon.] 1938, 48). Here the *bailarinas* were the center of attention. Customers paid an amount, around twenty centavos (or ten cents, the rate during the 1930s), that allowed them to dance with a *bailarina* for a certain amount of time. The *bailarinas*, or taxi dancers, were masters of a wide range of dances: waltz, foxtrot, one step, etc. If a client, whether American or Filipino, wanted a *bailarina* to sit and drink with him, he had to pay her the equivalent amount of the dances foregone (ibid., 53–54). American legal luminary George Malcolm compared the *bailarinas* with Japan’s geishas, China’s sing-song girls, and America’s taxi-dancers. He then described how *bailarinas* survived

the pressures of a rapidly urbanizing city:

They will also flirt with suitors with direful consequences when jealousy is inflamed to passionate deeds. The money made by these girls of a night is by no means insignificant. A few of them salt away their earnings in banks; others use their money to attend school in the daytime; others support a family or a good-for-nothing common-law husband, while still others go the pace that kills. (Malcolm 1936, 345)

Unfortunately, not a few of the *bailarinas* would eventually fall into the trap of men who deceived them with false promises. Dance halls, according to state prosecutor Ignacio Villamor, were “the main cause of the ruin of many girls” (Villamor 1909, 74).

In the early American period, most of the customers in cabarets were American soldiers and sailors (Lowe 1938, 136). The Americans’ demand for alcoholic drinks stimulated the increase in the number of saloons and other places of leisure. Many of these soldiers sought women in the saloons and liquor stores or in the brothels outside the downtown area (Mactal 2010, 103–4, 162–65). Also, many of the early cabarets were established by ex-American soldiers (Torres 2010, 178). Although civilians also patronized cabarets, *bailarinas* favored US military men as customers. John Canson, owner of the famous Santa Ana Cabaret, began his foray into the business by establishing the Santa Ana Road House, “where over a hundred bailarinas danced nightly for a peseta a dance, and where a greater portion of its patrons were soldiers from [Fort] McKinley” (Freeman n.d., 20). Eventually, cabarets attracted many young middle- and upper-class students who were enamored by the *bailarinas*. In 1909 Villamor (1909, 56) estimated that 70 percent of the clients were students (cf. Laubach 1925, 406). Malcolm (1936, 346) could even recall the day he went to Maypajo Cabaret and met a *bailarina* named Juanita after ordering glasses of San Miguel Beer.

The set-up in cabarets made them a convenient cover for prostitution (Laubach 1925, 406; Baja 1939, 455). According to Alfred McCoy (2011, 244), “Filipina *bailarinas* often practiced a coy prostitution by escorting customers to nearby lodging houses.” The situation had become so serious that the state enacted measures to

remedy this seeming moral breakdown. Firstly, under the Philippine Commission Act no. 519 of 1902, prostitution was declared illegal (Terami-Wada 1986, 309). City ordinances also sought to curtail the activities of cabarets. While section 590 of Manila’s revised ordinances of 1917 allowed the maintenance of a public dance hall for so long as the proper licenses were obtained, section 98 prohibited the playing of any musical instrument in saloons, bars, or drinking places—a seemingly ridiculous provision that actually targeted cabarets (Malcolm 1917, 90–91).

As cabarets and dance halls mushroomed in Manila, concerned citizens began complaining against these “immoral” establishments and brought them into public discussions. Moralists denounced how cabarets served to abet adulterous relations. Lamentably, the resulting discourse emphasized the perversion of the morals of young men rather than the structural oppression of women. Public discussions eventually translated into public protests. Public outrage even forced the Municipal Board to pass a resolution limiting the operating days of cabarets to Saturdays and Sundays; however, shortly afterwards the Board revoked it. But in 1908 protests against cabarets succeeded in forcing the city government to limit their operating hours and then ban them altogether (Villamor 1909, 56, 74; McCoy 2011, 244).

The moralists’ biggest victory came in 1917 when the city government raided Gardenia’s cabarets and brothels. Gardenia, which was established in 1900 in Sampaloc district, was Manila’s most infamous red-light district mainly because its clients’ demands varied widely in terms of race: it showcased not only Filipinas, but also “white” and “yellow” prostitutes. Under instructions from Interior Secretary Rafael Palma, the city government closed it down in 1917 due to pressure from citizens (Laubach 1925, 406–8; Terami-Wada 1986, 310). Palma’s rationale for this campaign was that dance halls had become “a real menace to the health and morals of the city” (Baja 1933, 450). The campaign also covered other parts of the city and the neighboring municipalities of Caloocan, Pasay, San Juan del Monte, and Makati (450; *MT* 1918, 1).

Despite the publicity the Gardenia raid generated, Manila remained a magnet for illegal brothels. In fact, critics noted that the 1917 campaign only caused prostitutes to move to other parts

of the city and to the suburbs (Baja 1933, 450), and that the prostitutes sent to Davao after the raid eventually returned to Manila (Laubach 1925, 408). One major factor behind the persistence of these dance halls, even within city boundaries, was the involvement of local politicians, who had been compromised by graft and their weak implementation of the law (*MT* 1918, 1). This reality was most visible in the 1920s, as the Jazz Age had sashayed its way into Manila's cabarets (Keppy 2013), and as the "moral politics" of Prohibition-era America had spilled over into the Philippines. In 1922, the municipal board deliberated on a bill that would bring the dance halls back; the legal measure, nonetheless, was met by a "flood of protests," and did not prosper (Laubach 1925, 406). The same scenario was repeated in 1926, but this time, the municipal board considered allowing both cabarets and cockpits within city limits (*MT* 1926a, 2; 1926b, 1).

In the end, the opponents of cabarets and cockpits won, as evinced by the revised city charter of 1927. Although the Municipal Board still granted licenses to cabarets, it also stipulated that "cabarets can only be established and made to function within the distance of one-half kilometer from the city limits" (Malcolm 1927, 407). In regard to cockfighting, although ambiguous provisions remained in the 1927 charter, an important proviso in this charter stressed, "The government's policy as regards cockfighting has been directed towards the gradual restriction thereof" (37).

Happy Times along the Borders

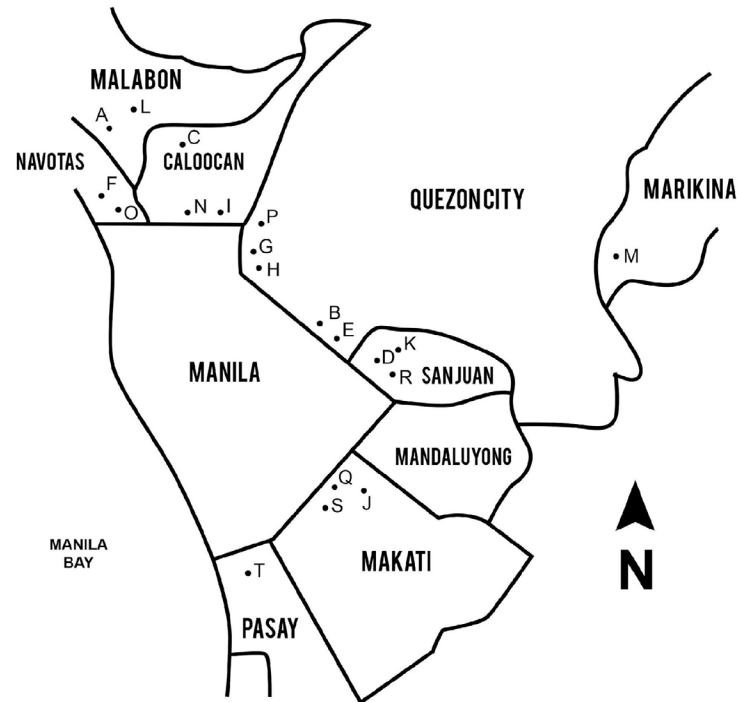
Throughout the see-saw campaign against cabarets and cockpits in Manila, neighboring towns looked the other way. The result was as expected: vice simply moved into these other towns, but still near the city boundaries to make them accessible to their Manila-based patrons ([Anon.] 1934, 35–36; *MT* 1910, 2, 5; Keppy 2013). The legal reality of Manila's boundaries, although physically "non-existent," thus obtained a geographical reality.

City borders were such an important aspect of municipal governance that fixing the city boundaries, legally and physically, was one of the first things that the municipal board accomplished upon the consolidation of US colonialism. The reason was that Manila's boundaries were deficient: stones were used to demarcate them

and no survey was done before 1903 (Municipal Board of Manila 1904, 112). Another factor behind the significance of borders was the expansion of Manila's territory early in the colonial period. Act 183 of the Philippine Commission (1901, 3–5) was the basis of the new territory and was amended and made permanent in the amended city charter, Act 1407 (Malcolm 1908, 21–23). This legislation gave Manila's municipal board the power to "suppress houses of ill fame and other disorderly houses, gaming houses, gambling, and all fraudulent devices for the purpose of gain and of obtaining money or property" (US Philippine Commission 1901, 11). Interestingly, despite the aforementioned, the charter was not yet certain about its position regarding cockfighting, as the municipal board was given the mandate to "regulate and license or suppress cock-fighting and cock-pits" (12). This ambivalent position persisted until the 1910s: although the revised charter empowered the Mayor to issue licenses to cockpits and cockfighting, no applicable item existed in the schedule of license and permit fees (Malcolm 1917, 37, 277). Despite the ambiguity, cockpit operators did not want to risk their businesses. For example, when the town of Santa Ana was incorporated into Manila's territory, cockpits in the area closed down immediately (*MT* 1902, 1). Santa Ana's case was an early revelation of how Manila's boundaries had concrete implications in the geography of vice.

From the perspective of Manila's officials, city boundaries acted as a force field that kept unwanted activities away. However, from the point-of-view of cabaret and cockpit owners, the same boundaries gave them legal shelter from Manila's moral zealots and law enforcers (see map). As the municipal board (1908, 55) itself admitted: "The district just beyond the city limits, at several points, is infested with clusters of gambling joints, cockpits, and dance halls of a low order, in some of which prostitution is practiced or fostered."

Early on, cockpit operators eluded the most stringent of laws by conducting illegal cockfights, called *topadas*, often "in barrios remote from the centers of population and beyond the vigilance of the municipal authorities" (Villamor 1909, 83). Simply put, cockpit operators took the most logical step to continue their activities: move their businesses just outside the borders. Throughout the



Map. Locations of cabarets in towns adjacent to Manila, 1937–1940

Legend: A. Bolinao Amusement Enterprises, B. Bolinao Cabaret, C. Centro Cabaret, D. Cosmopolitan Cabaret, E. Galas Cabaret, F. Imperial (formerly Ambassador), G. La Loma Cabaret, H. La Loma Recreation Hall, I. Lerma Park Cabaret, J. Luzon Cabaret, K. Mabuhay Cabaret, L. Malabon Recreation Hall, M. Mariquina Cabaret, N. Maypajo Cabaret, O. Navotas Recreation Hall, P. Old La Loma Cabaret, Q. Olympia Cabaret, R. San Juan Cabaret, S. Santa Ana Cabaret, T. Whoopee Cabaret

Sources: Philippine Education Company, 1937, 466; Philippine Education Company 1940, 559; Philippine Education Company, 1941, 347.

N.B. Prewar Manila directories did not include cockpits in their listings.

American colonial period, the border areas outside the capital teemed with cockpits (Supreme Court 1919, 709–10). Maypajo Cockpit in Caloocan was the largest of these establishments that

flourished in the border zones. Maypajo, according to one account, was the largest in the world (Fitch 1913, 61) and attracted thousands of enthusiasts every Sunday (Lyons 1922, 10).

Cabaret operators used the same strategy (Torres 2010, 178; McCoy 2011, 244). After the Gardenia raid, Manila's peripheries became the favored site of a growing number of cabarets. However, most of these post-raid cabarets belonged to the lowest rung, while many of the more prominent ones—those patronized by the middle and upper classes—had been established early in the colonial period. By the 1920s, these suburban cabarets “had superseded the city's brothels, lending a certain legitimacy to this illicit enterprise” (McCoy 2011, 244). Just before the outbreak of the Second World War, at least 14 cabarets operated in the greater Manila area (Philippine Education Company 1941, 347).

Santa Ana Cabaret in Makati was the most popular. Owned by John Canson and “[r]eputed and generally conceded to be in the world's largest dance hall,” it opened in 1910 and charged an admission fee of P 0.50 per person. Regular patrons were Manila's elite, both Filipinos and Americans, including US military personnel (Lyons 1921, 11; [Anon.] 1938, 54; Malcolm 1936, 346). Lewis Gleeck (1977, 98), an expert on the history of the Manila American community, asserts that many Filipino-American mestizas were “the offspring of Canson's Santa Ana bailerinas and American fathers, some of them prominent in the community.”

Maypajo Cabaret in Caloocan was another prominent cabaret. It was not as fancy as Santa Ana, although American civilians and military men also went there (Malcolm 1936, 346; Lowe 1938, 136; [Anon.] 1938, 54). Also located in Caloocan was Lerma Cabaret, owned and operated by American AW Bert Yearsley. According to *American Chamber of Commerce Journal* editor Norbert Lyons (1922, 10), “Manila's night life is at its gayest” in the Lerma cabaret. Meanwhile, the Whoopee Cabaret in Pasay advertised itself as “Owned and Patronized by Filipinos” (Salonga 1934, 115).

Given the moralist urban-based crusades of the early twentieth century, the American colonial period magnified the marginality of the border areas, as these became a haven for other illegal and reprehensible activities driven out of Manila. In this period, illegal gambling was rampant in the towns of Mandaluyong, Malabon,

and Pasay, as well as in the peripheral districts of Manila. Gambling operators tricked law-enforcement officials by moving their operations just outside the city limits (Baja 1933, 342–49, 366). Major Emanuel Baja (355) of the Philippine Constabulary noted how operating in the peripheries gave gambling syndicates an advantage: “For instance, since the city vice squads leave these people no repose, in order to thwart the police they sometimes leave the city and go to the adjoining municipalities such as Pasay, near the cockpit, and on Calle Dominga and, also, in Malabon and San Felipe Neri [Mandaluyong] where they transfer their rendezvous.” Baja’s statement reveals how illicit activities, cockpits, cabarets, and the like gravitated toward one another and clustered near the borders. One tourist guidebook even said that the major cabarets “may all be visited in one evening” ([Anon.] 1938, 54) and listed a cockpit and a cabaret under a directed tour: “Through the Paco district and old walled cemetery, thence passing San Pedro Makati cockpit, Santa Ana Cabaret, and along the banks of the Pasig River to Guadalupe Ruins, through the towns of Pasig, Mariquina, San Mateo and Montalban, returning via Fort William McKinley and Pasay to Manila” (48).

Petty crimes followed suit. A state prosecutor believed that dance halls directly contributed to incidences of robbery and theft, such as in cases that involved men stealing to obtain money to spend in dance halls (Villamor 1909, 56). Also, gangs included cabarets as part of their respective turfs. For example, Makati’s notorious Veintinueve gang operated around the Luzon and Olympia cabarets. The awkwardly named Filipino Physical Culturalists, which started as a sporting association and eventually became a gang, gravitated toward Pasay Cabaret (Macaraig 1929, 414–17; de Gannaban 1930, 6; McCoy 2011, 357). There were also cases in which cabaret employees were themselves gangsters (McCoy and Roces 1985, 65). The presence of gangs imperiled the operations of cabarets and the safety of their employees and patrons. Gangs were also known to mug abusive American soldiers who maltreated chauffeurs outside cabarets. At the same time, rich and power-hungry men would order gang members to abduct *bailarinas*, intimidate rival suitors, or cause disturbances in the cabaret (Macaraig 1929, 416–17). Manila’s suburban fringe

thus became a “vice zone of roadside brothels and gambling joints with tough gangsters and compromised local governments.” The problem had worsened by the 1920s that the constabulary took over the police force of the nine towns that surrounded the capital (McCoy 2011, 357).

Colonial-era La Loma exemplified how social and geographical marginalization coincided in a particular space and how socially reprehensible activities existed in spatial clusters. La Loma’s peripheral character surfaced under Spanish rule. By the 1870s, it was the location of several cemeteries, including a Chinese cemetery (Chu 2010, 223–24). It was also the site of a hospital for the Chinese, who, though economically dominant, were looked down upon by Filipino society. Then in 1901, a certain Don Juancho Mapa, along with Pedro Casimiro and Manuel Guison, renovated and expanded a small cockpit, which became known as the La Loma Cockpit and turned it into one of the most important sources of income in the area (Decaesstecker 1978, 29–31). A popular cabaret patronized mainly by Filipinos also found a home in La Loma ([Anon.] 1938, 54). A frequent customer there himself, Malcolm (1957, 199; Gleeck 1977, 91) regarded La Loma Cabaret as one that catered to those who wanted more excitement. A certain Sy Chiuco owned and operated this establishment from 1926 to January 1956. For a typical night of dancing, the cabaret charged P 0.30 per dance, a P 0.10 entrance fee, and P 0.20 to the “bailarina” after the dance (Supreme Court 1960). Long-time residents in the 1970s regarded the cabaret and the cockpit as two of the most prominent establishments in the 1930s (Decaesstecker 1978, 28). However, it was also in the 1930s that the notorious Liberty gang ruled La Loma’s streets and targeted American cabaret customers. Police officials believed that this group emerged in response to the abusive behavior of drunk Americans in cabarets, especially military men (Macaraig 1929, 414–17). Despite its rurality, La Loma earned a reputation as “the Hell’s Kitchen of Manila and the rendezvous of gangsters” (Malcolm 1957, 199; McCoy 2011, 357).

Three important factors sustained this socio-spatial structure at the urban fringes, exemplified by La Loma. Aside from the fundamental reality that these establishments catered to an insatiable demand, one must also give importance to their significant

contribution to municipal revenues, state collusion and negligence, and enhanced mobility.

The profitability of vice discouraged local governments from strictly enforcing laws because they also benefited from it (Villamor 1909, 84). In Pasay and other suburban towns, saloons and brothels contributed generously to municipal coffers (Gleek 1998, 262; McCoy 2011, 358, 368). The stakes were so high that rivalries even among operators ensued, while the dominant ones tried to protect their respective monopolies. For example, in 1912 a businessman applied for a license to operate five cockpits in Rizal province, all within Manila's border zone (Supreme Court 1919, 709–10).

The second factor is related to the first one: how could officials have gone after the operators of cockpits and cabarets when doing so went against their interests? Firstly, politicians themselves patronized these places (McCoy and Roces 1985, 41 and 151). Many of them even fought anti-cockfighting bills in the national legislature (Gleek 1998, 206). Manuel Quezon, a prominent lawmaker and future president, frequented cabarets (Malcolm 1957, 88). Meanwhile, Santa Ana Cabaret owner Canson ensured the continued profitability of his business by becoming Quezon's close friend and donating fire engines to the municipal government of Makati, the town where his cabaret was located (Gleek 1977, 100–101). Even among politicians who were non-enthusiasts, the cockpit was also a source of political capital: due to the popular appeal of cockfighting, politicians often turned these events into political gatherings. Like cockpits, cabarets were also strategic political spaces to mobilize people, albeit limited to the middle and upper classes. For example, the Santa Ana Cabaret served as the venue for the charity ball of the Philippine Anti-Tuberculosis Society (Legarda 1929, 140), a cause-oriented group that relied on the support of prominent politicians, such as Quezon.

At the local level, cockpit owners often exerted their influence over Manila's municipal board (McCoy and Roces 1985, 42), and at the outset, its police force had already been compromised and inefficient (41, 151). Outside Manila, violations of gambling and cockpit laws were numerous, and it was not unusual for town officials to be the violators themselves. Municipal officials used legal loopholes to increase the number of days for cockfighting in relation to

the *pintacasi* (feast day of the town's patron saint), which was the only day in the calendar when a town was allowed to hold cockfights outside the normal Thursday and Sunday fights. They did so by postponing or advancing the day of celebration to increase the number of holidays. Two towns that were consolidated into a single territory took advantage of this situation by having two *pintacasi*. These legal maneuvers attracted more *tahures* or professional gamblers from various places to spend money not just on cockfights, but also in other gambling houses (Villamor 1909, 84).

Because cockpits and cabarets were often found outside city limits, accessibility proved crucial. Fortunately for owners and patrons, early-twentieth-century Manila saw urban transport motorization. Motorized mobility made these cabarets and cockpits accessible, and thus intertwined two aspects of a virile lifestyle in the colony (Pante 2014, 259). As early as 1910, the *Manila Times* already observed how cockfight patrons who usually took *carromatas* (two-wheeled carriages) going to the cockpits (see fig. 1) switched to the electric streetcar, which was inaugurated in 1905 and had terminals outside city limits and near the cockpits (*MT* 1910, 25). Cockpit patrons “crowd[ed] the street cars, carrying their roosters in their arms and often bringing their families along”



Fig. 1. Carromatas and cocheros outside a cockpit near Manila.

Source: American History Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University.

(Lyons 1922, 10). This practice of streetcar passengers riding along with their game cocks was so common (Fitch 1913, 61; Malcolm 1936, 340) that an ordinance had to be amended to restrict such riders to second-class compartments (Malcolm 1908, 186). The boost in cockpit revenues due to the streetcars even became the topic of a 1923 *Bagong Lipang Kalabaw* (1923, 10) editorial cartoon.

The streetcar also enhanced the accessibility of cabarets, with almost all major ones found near terminals: Santa Ana Cabaret at the end of the Paco line, Maypajo Cabaret and the Tondo line, Rainbow Cabaret and the San Juan del Monte line, and the La Loma Cabaret and the Sta. Cruz line (Torres 2010, 178). American soldiers in Fort McKinley frequented the Santa Ana Cabaret because it was just a streetcar ride away from the fort (Pante 2014, 259). However, given that the cabarets' clientele was more upwardly mobile than cockfight enthusiasts, the advent of automobility had more impact among the former, a change that cabaret advertisements mirrored. In the 1920s, ads for the San Juan Cabaret proclaimed, "just one minute away from the car line" (Philippine Carnival Association 1921); however, in the 1930s this tagline gave way to new ones: "10 minutes by motor car from downtown districts" (American Express 1937, 38) and "about 15 minutes in a taxi from Luneta" (Anon. 1934, 35–36).

Although cabaret and cockpit patrons favored motorized vehicles over horse-drawn carriages, the latter remained integral in Manila's underside economy. In particular, carromata cocheros acted as prostitution "agents," with a number of them "employed to stop young men late at night and invite them to the homes of prostitutes" (Laubach 1925, 409). These transactions, which were eventually facilitated using automobiles, also had links with the cabarets (Baja 1939, 454).

Quezon City's Geographical Conundrum

Although Manila's moral crusaders constantly complained about cabarets and cockpits, the socio-spatial status quo described above remained stable throughout the American colonial period. Perhaps the only serious challenge this *modus vivendi* faced was the decision of the Philippine Commonwealth government to create a new city that would eventually serve as the nation's capital.

In 1935, the Philippine Commonwealth was inaugurated as a transitional ten-year period before the US granted Filipinos full independence. The Commonwealth government, headed by Pres. Quezon, exercised control over practically all domestic concerns. During this period, Quezon pushed for the creation of a new city just outside Manila, to be carved out of various suburban towns, to serve as a future capital. And in 1939, via Commonwealth Act 502, Quezon City became the realization of that objective. Quezon envisioned it as a model city, a home for Manila's working class who suffered from housing shortage. Quezon City was thus essentially a suburb of Manila (Pante 2017).

Just like in the case of Manila, politicians prohibited cabarets and cockpits in Quezon City to give it a favorable image. Commonwealth Act 601 granted the President "complete, absolute and unlimited power to promulgate regulations governing the establishment and operation of places of amusements, including cockpits" and essentially made "an unconditional surrender of legislative powers unto the Executive without any limitation whatsoever." This law gave the president excessive power—the Supreme Court (1956) would deem it unconstitutional decades after—and thus revealed Quezon's drive to control the most important cities of the country, a dictatorial set-up justified as part of his anti-gambling campaign (*PM* 1936, 117). As a chartered city, Quezon City was subject to this law.

But there's the rub: prior to the creation of Quezon City, a number of cabarets and cockpits had been built in areas just outside Manila's borders that would eventually become part of Quezon City's territory. These border areas included Galas and La Loma. Thus, the act of "cleaning" Quezon City of its cabarets and cockpits became a complicated task. For example, when officials ordered cabarets in Quezon City to cease operations by 18 January 1940, at least three cabarets were affected in the Galas and La Loma areas alone. Operators tried to resort to their usual ways:

The Municipal Board of Quezon City raised their annual license fees from P900 to P5,000. The cabarets were willing to pay and are now paying this fee but the board has given them until June to leave the city premises.

The cockpits also have been told to move out of the new city. (*Philippines Commonwealth* 1940, 12)

Despite the seeming strict implementation of the law, no significant change in the socio-spatial structure of the borders zones resulted from Quezon City's establishment. The three enabling factors enumerated above persisted in Quezon City's peculiar geography even after the Philippines had gained independence in 1946. The convergence of interests of cabaret and cockpit operators, not to mention those of politicians, lingered. During the Commonwealth period, state-sponsored activities continued to be held at the Santa Ana Cabaret, such as the ball and pageant organized by the Philippine Tuberculosis Society in 1940 that was held on President Quezon's birthday (Litiatco 1940, 353). The revenues that local governments derived from these establishments were as high as ever to the point that high-income cities like Cebu and Davao pushed for amendments in their charters to allow their municipal governments to tax and regulate cockfighting and cockpits. Although both legislative moves failed—vetoed in 1938 by Quezon, who stressed that having cockpits in chartered cities was unwise (Quezon 1939, 496) and ran counter to the national government's intention "to suppress gradually the cockfighting vice and other vices of similar nature" (430)—the fact that these local governments even considered the said amendments spoke volumes regarding the temptation coming from moneyed interests. As for the issue of accessibility, the case of the University of the Philippines (UP) provides us with an instructive example.

Coinciding with the founding of Quezon City was the planned transfer of the UP campus from Manila to the future capital in 1942. The Diliman area in Quezon City was chosen as the new site. Quezon himself initiated the move. His rationale was that urban distractions had diluted the spirit of scholarship in the old campus in "sinful Manila, with all its devices for prodigality and waste" (*Philippine Graphic* 1938, 5). The rurality of Quezon City, national and university officials believed, would preserve an academic atmosphere. Critics, however, noted that the new location in the suburban peripheries made future UP students, especially those who drove their own cars, vulnerable to the temptation of cabarets in the area (see fig. 2):

When 15,000 families and 6,000 college students move in, how many cabarets will there be in Marikina, which is only three kilometers, as a college boy's coupe runs, from university town? And will Marikina cabarets be able to afford to open only over weekends?

The San Juan cabaret is only six kilometers away from the proposed site of the University. That's no farther than the Caloocan cabarets are from the present U.P. campus. And the proposed U.P. campus is only two kilometers away from Camp Murphy, where there are a lot of dashing army men to make the co-ed's heart go pit-a-pat and where, a report has it, there is at least one whorehouse.

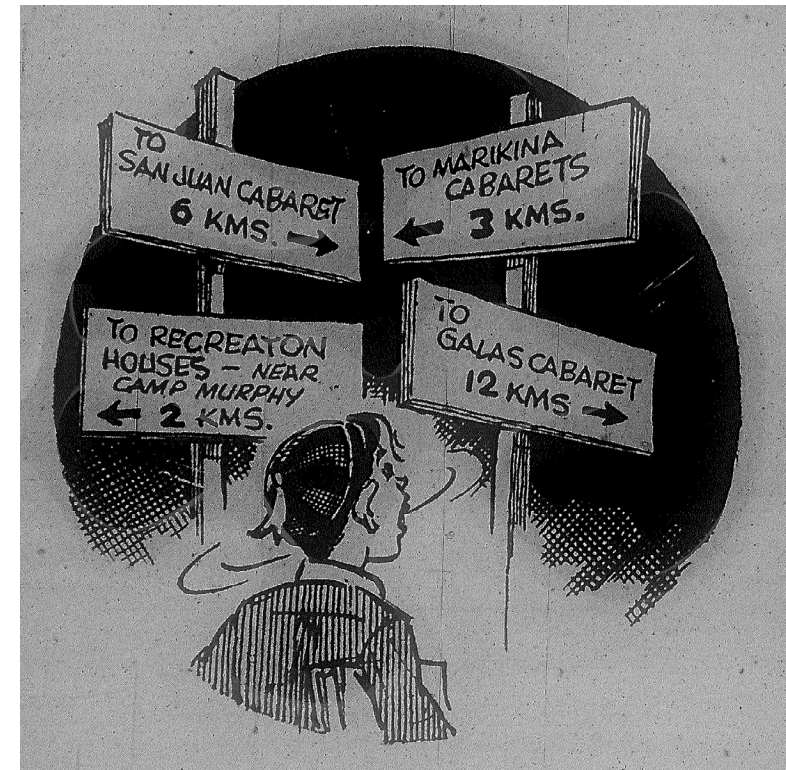


Fig. 2. Artwork depicting a UP student surprised by his sudden proximity to cabarets as a result of the campus relocation to Quezon City (*Philippine Graphic* 1938, 4).

The Japanese colonial period, from 1942 to 1945, delayed UP's planned relocation—which took place in 1948—but did not do much to remap Manila's border zones. Indeed, continuity rather than change marked the trajectory from pre-war to post-war Manila. During the Japanese occupation, Manila's municipal officials still held a prejudiced view toward cabarets and cockpits. Although in the then-enlarged territory of Manila cabarets and cockpits were allowed to operate, Executive Order no. 95 prohibited the establishment of these businesses within a radius of two hundred meters from any city hall or municipal building. Cockfights were allowed but only on Sundays and legal holidays, or for a period not exceeding three days during the town fiesta (Office of the Mayor 1942, 83, 88). In the early post-war period, cabarets and cockpits remained important places of entertainment in the metropolitan area. Just a few years removed from a devastating war, Manila had 14 dance halls but no cockpits; Quezon City had one dance hall and one cockpit (Bureau of the Census and Statistics 1948, 100–101). The establishment of new cockpits in border areas continued in the succeeding years. In November 1953, Leon Roque began operating the Grace Park Cockpit on 3rd Ave., Grace Park, Caloocan. Under Ordinance No. 6, series of 1953, Caloocan imposed a minimum distance of “250 lineal meters from any city, municipal or provincial building, public plazas, schools, churches, etc.” on cockpits. This provision contradicted Presidential Executive Order No. 318 of 1941, and therefore the Office of the President had instructed the Provincial Treasurer of Rizal to stop the cockpit from operating, although Roque disregarded the order (Supreme Court 1956).

Cabarets in the postwar period also continued to post profits. From January 1947 to August 1950, the La Loma Cabaret, for example, earned PHP 59,160.40 from gate admissions (PHP 0.10 each), PHP 5,339.90 from restaurant sales, PHP 47,459.10 from bar sales (Supreme Court 1960). Moreover, cabarets, cockpits, and other similar places of amusement still provided municipal governments a significant source of additional revenue (Supreme Court 1956).

Expenditure data in 1965 confirm that cockpits and cabarets continued to generate demand in post-war Manila and its suburbs, including Quezon City. Total expenditures for recreation reached

PHP 53,595,000, and out of this total, entrance fees for “cockfights and races” amounted to PHP 1,250,000. This amount did not include purchases of “fighting cocks and feeds” (PHP 3,602,000) nor “losses at cockfights, races, mahjong, sweepstakes, etc.” (PHP 3,148,000). Meanwhile, spending on “dances, night clubs, cabarets” amounted to PHP 1,341,000. In comparison total family expenditures for May amounted to PHP 3,059,652,000 (Bureau of the Census and Statistics 1968, 1, 8). Based on these data, it seems that independence had minimal impact on the geography of vice in the greater Manila area, which traces its roots to as far back as the late Spanish colonial period.

In 1960, the Araneta Coliseum was inaugurated in Cubao, Quezon City's commercial district. The coliseum became famous for hosting cockfighting derbies. In May 1969 it hosted the International Cockfight Derby, the first time an international cockfight event was held in the country and then “the biggest event in native cocker history.” This “sabong a la mode” featured 65 bouts and drew a crowd of 8,000 (Quijano de Manila 1980, 237). If cockfighting existed in Manila's peripheries in the colonial era, in postwar Quezon City, it occupied the very center of the new capital city.

Conclusion

The specific historical geography of cabarets and cockpits in the environs of Manila allows us to see the socio-spatial significance of municipal borders and border zones. As a result of a moralist crusade in the capital city, these places of vice scampered away but found refuge just outside the city boundaries. But more than just a safe haven, the border zones provided sustenance to the said establishments. Moreover, these areas became magnets for other activities of Manila's underside.

Despite the persistence of anti-vice crusades, cockpits and cabarets enjoyed happy times along the borders, which streetcars and automobiles aided. Furthermore, the allure of money made law enforcers easy prey to operators, while politicians themselves were patrons of these establishments. Therefore, even with the purported image of a model city attached to the future successor of Manila, Quezon City became more of a conundrum when it incorporated within its territory the same border areas that nurtured

cockpits and cabarets. That conundrum survived the Japanese colonial period and continued in the post-colonial era.

This complex geographical reality could not have been elucidated using the conventional framework that treats municipalities and cities as homogenous entities defined by their respective centers. Studying cabarets and cockpits from the perspective of Manila's center limits us to the city's geographical boundaries and thus may lead us to conclude that the moralist crusade of the early twentieth century was successful in driving the establishments away. At the same time, taking the perspective of the neighboring towns from their respective centers prevents us from seeing the totality and coherence behind the presence of cabarets and cockpits in Caloocan, Quezon City, San Juan, Pasay, and other areas. In contrast, by using borders and border zones as analytic tools and understanding their duality as simultaneously porous and rigid, we can substantially unpack the socio-spatial complexity of vices in the greater Manila area. Lastly, this study hopes to contribute to a deeper understanding of suburbanization as a global phenomenon (Keil 2018) that goes beyond the stereotypical, Western-derived image of a "crabgrass frontier" (Jackson 1985). The experience of Manila and Quezon City should force urban studies scholars to come up with new frameworks that consider how colonialism and poverty influence suburbanization in non-Western societies. Similar to what Harms (2011) has noted in the fringe areas surrounding Ho Chi Minh City, the border zones of Manila demonstrate not a homogeneous site of elite consumption and convenience as in the American suburbs, but one of crime, corruption, and street-level conflicts that exist whenever income inequalities are projected unto urban space.

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MARC OLIVER D. PASCO

***Eudaimonia* in the Margins**

Negotiating Ways to Flourish in Urban Slum Dwellings

ARISTOTLE WAS THE FIRST THINKER to systematically emphasize the role of habituation in the formation of an excellent or virtuous character. Since then, ethics, or the pursuit of *eudaimonia*, became associated with skill (*techné*)—a kind of soul-activity aimed at progressively achieving degrees of perfection relative to one’s situatedness. With Aristotle, it became apparent that happiness is something that one does, and not something that naturally occurs, nor something that waits for us at the end of the rainbow, so to speak. Ethics, etymologically rooted in *ethos* (custom, habit) is essentially an activity based on a multi-dimensional set of human skills that are constantly tested and adapted to various contexts and conditions arising from our interpersonal, social, and political engagements. Excellence (*arête*) or perfection in the human context is a matter of harmonizing oneself with one’s rational nature by habitually responding to differing demands of different situations excellently, that is, to skillfully exhibit and hold fast to our humanity even in the most inhumane of situations. Book II of the *Nicomachean Ethics* begins with a statement precisely stressing this point:

Virtue, then, being of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time), while moral virtue comes about as a result of habit, whence also its name (*ethike*) is one that is formed

by a slight variation from the word *ethos* (habit). From this it is also plain that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature; for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature. For instance the stone which by nature moves downwards cannot be habituated to move upwards, not even if one tries to train it by throwing it up ten thousand times; nor can fire be habituated to move downwards, nor can anything else that by nature behaves in one way be trained to behave in another. Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit. (Aristotle 1998, 28)

Despite the historical novelty of Aristotle's insight concerning the adaptive component of excellence in a human being's pursuit of happiness, it is nonetheless apparent that his theory remains enmeshed within the ambit of the rationalistic tradition of ethics made famous by none other than his teacher, Plato. Virtue, as defined by Aristotle as a "disposition to choose the mean" (36), the mean defined as the appropriate response to particular situations, is achieved as a result of a subjective and intentional reckoning of objective demands as presented to us by concrete situations that call for human—that is—rational responses. Disposition, in this context, is practical wisdom concretized. It is practical wisdom forged, shaped, and directed by time, repetition, and most importantly, reason, to consciously transcend the appetitive in favor of the rational. As with his contemporaries, Aristotle leaves no doubt in our minds that reason remains the supreme principle of morality, albeit now furnished with a concrete relationship with empirical circumstances and practical habit, thereby avoiding a Platonic plunge, so to speak.

Yet there is one crucial passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* which somewhat affords Aristotle a unique place in the history of ethical philosophy. Book I, section b10 reads,

Yet evidently, as we said, it (happiness) needs the external goods as well; for it is impossible, or not easy, to do noble acts without the proper equipment. In many actions we use friends and riches and political power as instruments; and there are some things the lack of which takes the luster from happiness—good birth, goodly children, beauty; for the man who is very

ugly in appearance or ill-born or solitary and childless is not very likely to be happy, and perhaps a man would be still less likely if he had thoroughly bad children or friends or had lost good children or friends by death. As we said, then, happiness seems to need this sort of prosperity in addition; for which reason some identify happiness with good fortune, though others identify it with virtue. (17)

Aristotle suggests that there is more to *eudaimonia* than an excellent character. Access to external goods, specifically social capital, to use modern parlance, is crucial in achieving one's ultimate *telos*; for life in the *polis*, after all, is ultimately the only locale where human happiness is possible. Good education, a decent family, an intelligent and reliable set of friends, and shares of social or political power are just some of the things that make the road to happiness a bit smoother. It must be said, however, that lack of these external goods does not absolutely negate one's ability to flourish, though having them definitely won't hurt. Social circumstances play a crucial role in the formation of a happy, that is, an excellent person. Although there is no guarantee that enjoying favorable social historicity translates into an ethical life, Aristotle nevertheless believes that people who find themselves in such contexts are more likely to be happy than those who do not share the same fate. These goods are by no means absolute goods in themselves. But they aid in negotiating paths toward virtue.

This brings me to the point of this essay. I have always wondered whether those who exist in the margins of society, the economically challenged and socially disadvantaged, have access to happiness given the social conditions in which they live. The easy answer of course, is, "Of course." After all, aren't Filipinos (rich and poor alike) by reputation considered to be one of the happiest and most optimistic people in the world?¹ Seldom would we see pictures of poor people looking depressed. In fact, it is often us, the not-so-poor, who become depressed once we see the background of the photos we are looking at—dilapidated shanties performing balancing acts on wooden stilts atop a river of garbage. In addition, it is quite apparent that Aristotle builds his argument from the presupposition of human rationality, which is universal, and not on the contingencies of historical facticity, though the latter has

significant implications to the former as I have mentioned above. But I don't intend to answer my obvious question with an obvious answer. What I wish to accomplish is a critical examination of the social dynamics among people that undeniably lack access to sufficient external goods and see whether Aristotle is correct in emphasizing the correlation between favorable socio-economic conditions and the achievement of happiness. For this purpose, I shall be utilizing Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* as a framework for examining slum life. Ethnographic and sociological data shall be sourced mainly from F. Landa Jocano's seminal work, *Slum as a Way of Life: A Study of Coping Behavior in an Urban Environment* (2002).

Simply put, my aim is to investigate whether the external conditions of poverty (specifically poverty in an urban setting) negate the possibility of human flourishing or *eudaimonia*. Without having to resort to the rationalistic aspect of Aristotle's definition of happiness (which would inevitably resolve the issue in terms of formal ethical categories pertaining to the different kinds of virtue that are potentially accessible to all human beings by virtue of rationality), is it possible for us to conceive of a way by which excellence can remain a concretely achievable end for agents who confront seemingly impossible odds on a daily basis? Can there be, in other words, a different way of understanding the conditions for the possibility of human flourishing, other than grounding it on conscious practical reason?

Slum life: Informality and Community

Erhard Berner (1997, 22) notes that, "The urban poor have been commonly associated with unemployment, shanties, overcrowding, filth, stink of uncollected garbage, lack or total absence of social services, malnutrition and just about everything that makes life miserable." However, there is more to slum life than grime, crime, and desperation. The first step in securing any semblance of truth to one's opinion about urban poverty is to be aware of stereotypes we may have of the poor so that the phenomenon of slum life may be allowed to show itself from itself just as it shows itself from itself, as Heidegger would say. Jocano explains:

[S]lum is more than so-called less privileged, poverty-stricken people. It is a way of life—a society in microcosm. To really understand slum life, it has to be viewed in this manner, and not in terms of the abstract model of those who study it. The slum has its own social organization, standards of values, expectations, normative behavior, moral order, and system of reward and punishment. (2002, 6)

The slum is a world in itself, with its own way of seeing and interpreting different realities. This world is a network of various beliefs, values, and ways of life that was mainly forged by strategic interests that sought the most efficient ways of adapting to the givens of economic deprivation. Jocano says that "[s]lum dwellers are far from what most people say they are. They are far more pragmatic than scholars see them; more intelligent, calculating and psychologically attuned to take advantage of changing conditions and available opportunities which occur in their lifetime" (2002, 8). Given the fact that their context provides them with a marginalized form of rationality that has translated into an unjustly limited horizon of economic possibilities in terms of social mobility, slum folk rely mostly on themselves for almost everything. In addressing needs ranging from basic necessities such as food, clothing and shelter, to utilities like water and electricity, residents abide by informal yet normative rules for behavior that allow them to survive and even flourish, despite extremely difficult and deprived circumstances. Laquian, as quoted by Alcazaren, points out, "They retain the traditional characteristics of rural life, communal solidarity, intensive face-to-face dealings, groupings according to ethnic, kinship or economic ties, closed communication systems characterized by localized gossip, strong 'we feeling' felt against the outside world."² There is a pronounced sense of solidarity which permeates every aspect of slum life. Slum life is governed by behavioral conventions grounded on strategic communal cooperation. Since everyone's on the same boat, as it were, everyone takes it upon himself/herself to guard against departments divergent from informal rules of conduct that have locally proven to be effective in coping with problems such as the scarcity of resources and inhuman living environments.

With thinkers like Rawls and Habermas, Western rationality has established the foundation of communal rule construction on

reasoned argumentation by all concerned. Ideally, ethical rules in a community are more or less the product of structured, reason-based procedures that calculate the advantages and disadvantages of accepting the viability and reasonability of adopting certain norms. In other words, in such a setting, concerned parties are required to take an objective and detached perspective on a situation and deliberate as if the rules that shall be taken up would be scrutinized for its universal validity by universal reason (*a la* Rawls' veil of ignorance). What is good is defined and legislated by reason and is therefore potentially valid for everyone (unless a clashing rationality challenges its validity by submitting itself to the same discursive procedure). Such a procedure also requires participants to formalize their agreements so as to legally and morally gain legitimacy. That which is ethical and communally condoned as practical ways of pursuing happiness, therefore, is always defined within the synthetic bounds of reason and the *reasonability* of the procedure serves as the basis of the normative appeal of a rule.

In the context of slum life, however, the ethical, or that which promotes happiness, is not exclusively promulgated by one's virtuous conscience, as if one's autonomous notion of the good and the just transcended one's specific and concrete standing in the community. Just as Aristotle opined, practical prudential judgment of what one ought to do and how one ought to live is grounded on one's relative standing within the parameters of shifting temporal contexts. In other words, while one's ethical sense is not thoroughly determined by context by virtue of reason, human rationality, in making practical choices cannot just deny the existence of objective circumstances that permeates practical deliberation. One cannot just sweep reality under the rug, so to speak. Objective structures of historicity always already influence behavior and decision even before one consciously pursues specific ways of being. In the case of urban slum communities, one's way of life, including its ethical content, is significantly shaped by informal rules that govern the street (*kalye*). Jocano explains:

It can safely be said that life in *Looban* is actually defined in the street. Some people go to the streets to escape boredom at home or avoid domestic problems; others, to do business. At any rate, this is where events are

openly discussed, where individual and family statuses are evaluated, and where decisions are reached as to which information should be allowed to leak out or be withheld from the authorities. Information on local activities or events, impending or ongoing, is likewise classified according to whether or not the entire neighborhood should know about it. In other words, the informal meetings in the street provide the people with ample opportunities to know each other better—to know what each one is doing and why.³ (2002, 41–42)

The narrow *eskinitas* that snake their way around the makeshift shanties is the locus of ethical life in slums. The laws which permeate and structure one's personal *mores* are governed by informal communal rules that preside over the streets. Evaluations concerning the good and the just as interpreted for different situations that happen in and out of the community take place in wooden benches (*bangkô*) positioned in front of houses or *sari-sari* stores, in the *talipapa* and in beauty salons or barbershops that serve as the *tambayan* of most slum folk. These places where people spend most of their time hanging out serve as the repository of public opinion concerning not just the trivial everyday occurrences in the community, but more importantly, they serve as the public platform for the personal opinions of specific personality archetypes about the moral import of the goings-on in the slums (e.g., what would a *sunog-bagà* think of this issue, or how would a *Waray* handle this problem). These informal networks of communication saturate the streets with a somewhat ambiguous "feel" regarding everything that goes on in the community. As Jocano states:

The spatial proximity of people influences the intimacy of interaction between them. This intimacy underlies the formation of a local worldview relative to a specific value or orientation. Values are developed through group interaction and are normally expressed in the manner in which people agree or disagree about specific things, beliefs and actions. Once a common understanding of these things, beliefs, and actions is reached, they become important to the functioning of group life. They become constituent elements of common ends and values toward which all members of the group are oriented and in terms of which the life of the group is organized. (2002, 191)

Hence, for instance, if a particular person who is known to be the *sigà* of a certain *purok* publicly declares a particular opinion about an issue, say perhaps, how the community ought to react to gossip pertaining to an impending demolition of a segment of the community inhabited mostly by thieves and gang members, he immediately consigns this opinion within the frame of a reflexive understanding of himself that is thoroughly saturated by a pre-reflexive comprehension concerning what an alpha male is expected to think and say about this particular issue, given the history of the normative relation between this particular situation and his particular understanding of himself as the present bearer of the tradition of alpha males that roamed his *purok* over the years. He does not, strictly speaking, “autonomously” form his own practical opinion about the situation, but on the contrary, his particular role within a specific context or situatedness generates certain practical compartments for him. This convergence of the past, the present and the future that happens in the continuous sublimated interaction between persons that presently live in the community and the past archetypal modes of character (and the ethical virtues or faults that these characters correspondingly represent) constitutes the “feel” or to use a different term, the “pulse” of the street. Bourdieu (1997, 86) explains this point in his work, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, “Since the history of the individual is never anything other than a certain specification of the collective history of his group or class, each individual system of dispositions may be seen as a structural variant of all the other group or class *habitus*, expressing the difference between trajectories and positions inside or outside the class.” The *habitus* shall be discussed at length in the next section. What is relevant for us at this point is to see how patterns of social reproduction and frameworks of normative behavior must not be understood apart from their specific contexts. As Jocano (2002, 42) states, “individual acts are defined in terms of community norms.” All individual acts in the slums, be it seemingly trivial or explicitly significant with regard to one’s social standing in the community, observe and assimilate this so-called “pulse” of the street. Community norms are not the product of overt and systematic discursive procedures engaged. Informal, yet normative rules are continuously created

and re-created by the ever-dynamic ebb and flow of life on the streets. It is interesting that the lives that dialectically form and are formed by the rules of the street are, for the most part, absorbed in their own everyday lives without an explicit recognition of how this certain “feel” saturates their judgments and actions, especially in regard to social and ethical behavior.

Slum inhabitants, in other words, do not consciously or formally pursue happiness, which in the case of slum life is largely dependent on social harmonization. Slum folk, as described by Jocano, find themselves in situations where they negotiate how they are to create and re-create the various meanings of social texts (which include notions concerning the good life) for different contexts. Although happiness, as formally described by Aristotle as rational fulfillment grounded on virtue, constitutes the proper *telos* of any person, regardless of historicity, people who live in slums have to strategically navigate their way to this goal despite the radical absence of external goods, which Aristotle had asserted to be essential. Living way below the acceptable standard of living, slum folk rely on “feel” rather than reason in being virtuous. Virtue or excellence, in this context, is not abstractly defined in terms of one’s being a rational animal; instead, it is negotiated in terms of how one carries oneself and fulfills one’s historically designated role within the social matrix in the face of common adversity. Virtue, then, becomes a function of practical reason, not so much in the sense of its ability to preserve one’s humanity, but for its ability to preserve one’s way of life even without consciously trying to (analogous to Aristotle’s vision of a virtuous person, the *phronimos*, who through habit no longer has to deliberately aim for the mean, but has in fact developed a predisposition toward it).

Since most of the substantial issues that are deemed pertinent in the slums occur in a historically cyclical fashion (in view of the fact that the roles/archetypes rarely change given the stagnancy of the social living conditions), perspectives concerning every aspect of the everyday grind of life, including discourses concerning happiness or fulfillment are more or less preserved by the uninterrupted interactions between the inhabitants and their place of residence. In other words, the so-called “feel” or the hazy mixture between one’s assumed role in the *looban* or the *pook* and

the historical archetypal notions of excellence and happiness that reside on the streets, somehow takes the form of a “homogenizing lifestyle.” But such an idea must not be interpreted as rigid and sclerotic in such a way that the inhabitants somewhat assume certain roles and dispositions without having any form of conscious and rational assent. Rather, this “feel” for what promotes personal and communal happiness is something that *always already* saturates the inhabitants’ way of life, in the same manner that each life that moves within this frame *always already* contributes to the dynamism and legitimacy of the very frame that defines its way of life. In order to clarify this idea of the “feel” for “excellence,” we turn to Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of the *habitus*.

The Habitus

The contemporary French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu developed and utilized a conjunctive framework for understanding the active relationship between social agents (the subject) and society (the world/worlds). In an interview, Bourdieu says that, “In order to capture the gist of social action, we must recognize the *ontological complicity*, as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty suggested, between the agent (who is neither a subject or a consciousness, nor the mere executants of a role or the “carrier” of a function) and the social world (which is never a mere “thing” even if it must be constructed as such in the objectivist phase of research)” (Wacquant 1996, 215). The classical chasm created by transcendental philosophy must be overcome by more sober and “realistic” methodologies that are more sensitive to the artificiality of the modernist conception of the subject-object bipolarity.⁴ The immanent construction of any form of psycho-social framework by agents is by no means derived from a purely objective assessment of conditions that exist outside of the self. The constitutive elements that form the self invariably relate with the social, historical, cultural, and ethical frames of understanding that it may have purported to have created and formulated *ex nihilo*. Hence, the symbolic orders of differentiation and recognition that enable agents to know and manipulate the world of objects may be interpreted as precisely by-products of a more primordial dialectic that always already conditions and grounds the so-called ways of life that specific agents assume for themselves.

The autonomy of the conscious will is always already circumscribed by the tempo-historical conditioning of one’s very existence as a *social* being. As such, meaningful, relevant, and transformative human agency takes for its point of departure the existence of this primordial dialectic between itself and the specific social, historical, and cultural context it always already finds itself in. Such is the philosophical foundation of Bourdieu’s seminal idea of the *habitus*. He explains this concept as follows:

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor. (1977, 72)

Social agents, Bourdieu asserts, become pre-disposed toward particular forms of behavior by virtue of *habitus*—“structured structuring structures” that equip agency with practical mastery of a set of skills that are characteristically attuned to the exigencies embedded within the concrete demands of various situations that practically share the same language-game.⁵ An agent’s adaptation to social rules, whether formal or informal, does not occur mechanistically nor even consciously, but takes place within the framework of dispositional complicity with the demands of objective circumstances. The *habitus*, Bourdieu (1990, 56) writes, “is a spontaneity without consciousness or will, opposed as much to the mechanical necessity of things without history in mechanistic theories as it is to the reflexive freedom of subjects ‘without inertia’ in rationalist theories.” If social life is understood as collectively orchestrated without a conductor, then behavioral strategies aimed toward social solidarity (or happiness) or whatever end, generate recurring patterns of action that are not necessarily grounded

on intentionality. One's way of life unconsciously participates in a perpetual play of metaphorical and analogical significations occurring between mutually reinforcing yet different pre-reflexive dispositions in a given *field*.⁶ The *habitus*, adds Bourdieu, "is the source of these series of moves which are objectively organized as strategies without being the product or by-product of a genuine strategic intention—which would presuppose at least that they are perceived as one strategy among other possible strategies" (1977, 73). In other words, in all fields (academic, cultural, political, economic), different ways of being are defined within specific matrices of meaning, which automatically infuse pre-reflexive goals and stratagems to specific actions.

To put it briefly, Bourdieu says that for the most part, the execution of social action, the acquisition of tastes, the formation of habits, and the establishment of normative ethical claims by different collectives all happen beyond objectively determinable processes of intentionality. He explains that, "The *habitus*, the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle, while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation, as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures making up the *habitus*" (73). Social agents simultaneously assimilate and reproduce social life subliminally, yet are able to effectively project and comprehend systems of meaning and valuation relevant to varying contexts. Because agency is "the product of a *modus operandi* of which he is not the producer and has no conscious mastery, they contain an "objective intention," as the Scholastics put it, which always outruns his conscious intentions. The schemes of thought and expression he has acquired are the basis for the intentionless invention of regulated improvisation" (73).

The *habitus* metaphorically defined as one's feel for the game delivers the very essence of Bourdieu's understanding of the dynamic relationship between objective structures and agency. For him, when one has a feel for the game, one no longer thinks about oneself, the game itself, and even one's relatedness to the game. One simply plays the game. He explains:

[P]re-perceptive anticipations, a sort of practical induction based on previous experience, not given to a pure subject, a universal transcendental consciousness. They are the fact of the *habitus* as a feel for the game. Having the feel for the game is having the game under the skin; it is to master in a practical way the future of the game. While the bad player is always off tempo, always too early or too late, the good player is the one who *anticipates*, who is ahead of the game. Why can she get ahead of the flow of the game? Because she has the immanent tendencies of the game in her body, in an incorporated state: she embodies the game. (Bourdieu 1998, 81)

When various agents, "with differentiated means and ends according to their position in the structure of the field of forces," meet each other in specific contexts, they intuitively and immediately know their place within the structure of discursive or non-discursive interactions (32). Players only become players when they play the game, and for Bourdieu, everybody plays. Hence, *habitus* functions both as a unifying and differentiating principle. On the one hand, it is a "unifying principle which retranslates the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position into a unitary lifestyle, that is, a unitary set of choices of persons, goods, practices" (8). On the other hand, they are also "distinction operators, implementing different principles of differentiation or using differently the common principles of differentiation" (8). Given a specific communal context, agents are more or less homologized by the field to act and think in certain ways about specific things. However, the principles of differentiation (evaluation/valuation) remain the same, in as far as the specific modal dispositions that they originate are appropriated in different ways by different agents in accordance with their unique standing and interests within specific matrices of meaning within particular fields in a society. Different players play the same game differently at different times, as Gadamer would say. Bourdieu expounds:

Habitus are generative principles of distinct and distinctive practices—what the worker eats, and especially the way he eats it, the sport he practices and the way he practices it, his political opinions and the way he expresses them are systematically different from the industrial owner's corresponding activities. But *habitus* are also classificatory schemes, principles of classification,

principles of vision and division, different tastes. They make distinctions between what is good and what is bad, between what is right and what is wrong, between what is distinguished and what is vulgar, and so forth but the distinctions are not identical. Thus, for instance, the same behavior or even the same good can appear distinguished to one person, pretentious to someone else, and cheap or showy to yet another. (1998, 8)

Differing systems of dispositions or comportments are accommodated within the vast spectrum of intersecting fields or worlds that cultivate, generate, and regenerate pre-existing and existing ways of life in the world of the social. Applied for instance to social interactions that take place in slums, there are popular interpretations of informal yet normative codes of conduct and visions of the good life that have been unconsciously embodied by the inhabitants, but such codes are differentiated in the way individuals assimilate them in view of their personal and specific interests that are only actionable within the communal *habitus*. In other words, Bourdieu places a greater degree of emphasis to the actual practices or *modus operandi* generated by the *habitus* than toward its functional value of being a unifying principle of classification.

This *modus operandi*, otherwise known as the feel for the game or sense of the game, “explains that the agent does ‘what she has to do’ without posing it explicitly as a goal, below the level of calculation and even consciousness, beneath discourse and representation” (Wacquant 1996, 218). Hence, for instance, actions performed excellently relative to the goal of happiness, as hermeneutically influenced by context, are products of “the objective homogenizing of group or class *habitus* which results from the homogeneity of the conditions of existence which enables practices to be objectively harmonized without any intentional calculation or conscious reference to a norm and mutually adjusted in the absence of any direct interaction or, *a fortiori*, explicit co-ordination” (1997, 80). In addition, Bourdieu says that every action or disposition by social agents is hinged upon a specific *illusio*. *Illusio*, Bourdieu explains, “[T]he fact of being invested, of investing in the stakes existing in a certain game, through the effect of competition, and which only exist for people who, being caught up in that game and possessing the dispositions to recognize the stakes at play, are ready to die for the stakes

which, conversely, are devoid of interest for those who are not tied to that game and which leave them indifferent” (1998, 77–78).

Most of us don’t understand, for instance, why slum folk insist on building their shanties in what most of us would consider danger zones, like riverbanks, sanitary landfills, and the underside of bridges, though government offers them residence in relatively safer relocation sites. In Bourdieu’s view, being invested in a particular game equips a player with certain normative presuppositions about the good life that translates into patterns of behavior, habits, and tastes. Once ossified by the gaze of an outsider, these patterns constitute what we usually call stereotypes. However, Bourdieu argues that the *habitus* imbues agents with tendencies and dispositions that facilitate their functional position within the matrix of the rules, the systems of reward and punishment, etc. that animate the game and are also conversely substantiated and legitimized by the game. This remains totally alienated from those of us who are outside the playing field, as it were. As Nick Crossley elucidates, “Although fields are not hermetically sealed, their “players” nevertheless chase after goals and adhere to distinctions and norms that often strike the outsider, who does not believe in the game or share its *illusio*, as peculiar and perhaps even meaningless” (Crossley 2001, 86). Hence, as far as those who are invested in the game are concerned, they act the way they do, not so much because it is what they “think” is the “proper” way to act, but because these are the practical principles and modes of action that are normatively legitimized within the context of their *habitus*. To go back to my example, the urban poor’s choice of residence is not primarily a result of a deliberative process grounded on a universalizable rational principle, but rather is a function of a very specific *illusio* relative to the *field* where their specific *habitus* is legitimized. We can only surmise that apart from the common complaints we hear from slum folk who were enticed by government to move to a more habitable environment (e.g., lack of livelihood due to alienation from urban economy), slum dwellers choose to squat in hazardous environments because “[t]he dispositions of *habitus* predispose actors to select forms of conduct that are most likely to succeed in light of their resources and past experience. *Habitus* orients action according to anticipated consequences”

(Swartz 1997, 106). This choice, it appears, is made somewhat in the spirit of Aristotelian *mesotes*, where cowardice and recklessness are the extremes and as well as equal to courage in the face of great odds is the mean. However, this choice, according to Bourdieu was not made by conscious, autonomous, rational subjects, but is a result of the *habitus*, which “tends to generate all the ‘reasonable’, ‘common-sense’, behaviours (and only these) which are possible within the limits of these regularities, and which are likely to be positively sanctioned because they are objectively adjusted to the logic characteristic of a particular field, whose objective future they anticipate. At the same time, ‘without violence, art or argument’, it tends to exclude all ‘extravagances’ (‘not for the likes of us’), that is, all the behaviors that would be negatively sanctioned because they are incompatible with the objective conditions” (1990, 55–56). Slum dwellers, therefore, find virtue in their suffering. In fact, one can even say that most of them (those that are thoroughly invested in the game) are excellent sufferers. This remark is of course not meant as an insult; nor is it parodic. As we have learned from Bourdieu, strategies aimed toward the accumulation of capital in a given field are not the work of conscious subjectivity, but are a function of the *habitus*. In other words, slum dwellers gravitate toward values and beliefs that can guarantee versions of excellence endemic within the ambit of their field and not those versions which transgress the limits of their objective conditions. As Swartz points out:

Habitus adjusts aspirations and expectations according to the objective probabilities for success or failure common to the members of the same class for a particular behaviour. This is a “practical” rather than a conscious adjustment. . . . The dispositions of habitus predispose actors to select forms of conduct that are most likely to succeed in light of their resources and past experience. Habitus orients action according to anticipated consequences. . . . Not all courses of action are equally possible for everyone; only some are plausible, whereas others are unthinkable. (1997, 105–7)

Hence, excellence for the marginalized is marginal excellence. A conservative reading of the grand *telos* of Aristotelian *eudaimonia* is the dream of a philosophy, which views practical reason as

capable of prudently transcending structural and objective conditions. Viewed from the perspective of Bourdieu’s idea of *habitus*, we must, as Camus did, imagine Sisyphus to be happy.

Happiness Beyond Virtue

The particular value-orientations and ethical consciousness of specific character types (the *tindera*, the *sigà*, the *baliw*, the *martir*, the *pok-pok*, the *laborer*, the *lasenggo*, the *butangera*, the *mangu-ngutang*, the *kubrador*, the *balik-bayan*)⁷ that populate slums are products of daily interactions that regularly occur within similar contexts. Regular informal gatherings and conversations that take place within specific social circles reinforce and reproduce the same social reality that has existed in the slums for the longest time. Probably unconscious of the social implications of these habits, the everyday mundane reality of slum life reproduces itself by virtue of the various agreements and disagreements about personal judgments of daily social, political, economic, aesthetic, and ethical life in the slums. In these relaxed and free-flowing conversational encounters, specific “slum-versions” of Filipino virtues like *pakikisama*, *pagtanaw ng utang na loob*, and *hiya* are implicitly discussed and embodied by various archetypal characters appropriated and guised in anecdotal narratives that are specifically meaningful and relevant to the different circles in which they assume their specific relevance. According to Anthony King, “For Bourdieu, social agents are virtuosos who are not dominated by some abstract social principles but who know the script so well that they can elaborate and improvise upon the themes which it provides and in the light of their relations with others” (King 2000, 419). In other words, be it wittingly or unwittingly, ethical norms that hold sway over the entire community are passed on, sustained, and reproduced by the different character types that “play the game” with their own very specific “feel” and *illusio* that they employ for the duration of the game. As the game progresses, the “feel for the game” develops along with it. Inscribed within the parameters of pre-reflexive agreement as regards the validity of the rules and principles of the game, unique dispositions are brought to bear upon the issues and principles that are deemed relevant or necessary with respect to the sustainability of playing the game. This is precisely the *habitus*

at work. As a generative principle, the *habitus* grounds and configures the vast networks of discursive and non-discursive dispositions into a coherent lifestyle. The distinctions operative within the system of differences of character types and their respective areas of “expertise” work within the functional space afforded for them by the *habitus* itself, understood as a generative principle. The various systems of valuation and visions of the good life that have been shaped and dialectically shape the *habitus* find its systematic and “universal” base in the structural economy of meaningful and relational signs that operate within particular social spaces or discourses as well as the varying degrees of internalization that different agents or characters have acquired in the course of the game. As Bourdieu (1977, 81) explains, “it is because they are the product of dispositions which, being the internalization of the same objective structures, are objectively concerted that the practices of the members of the same group or, in a differentiated society, the same class are endowed with an objective meaning that is at once unitary and systematic, transcending subjective intentions and conscious projects whether individual or collective.”⁸

Happiness, therefore, in the context of homogenized slum life is not a conscious goal, but is in fact, a residue of *habitus*. Since agents are, for all intents and purposes, are simply playing the game, strategic and purposive actions are invested with non-subjective intentions which cannot transcend the boundaries of the game. In other words, the unconscious improvisations derived from the *habitus* are not generated from goals projected *pre-factum*. These so-called master-patterns which define and regulate informal social norms and modes of conduct are always already exclusively invested in what the game allows to unfold at the moment. The *modus operandi*, the strategy, as Bourdieu refers to it, “does not mean conscious choice or rational calculation. . . . Thus, choices do not derive directly from the objective situations in which they occur or from transcending rules, norms, patterns, and constraints that govern social life; rather, they stem from *practical dispositions* that incorporate ambiguities and uncertainties that emerge from acting *through time and space*” (Swartz 1997, 100). The material and temporal objective conditions that permeate strategic actions are in constant flux. The seeming regularity of

behavioral patterns in a given lifeworld is hence but a snapshot of an otherwise on-going and ambiguous struggle for both personal and normative validation. The stress which Bourdieu places on unconscious strategic improvisation is a function of his seminal recognition that agents are always already just on their way to carrying out their respective pre-reflective tasks within a specific *field*. As Swartz explains, “There is an ongoing adaptation process as *habitus* encounters new situations, but this process tends to be slow, unconscious, and tends to elaborate rather than alter fundamentally the primary dispositions” (107). Primary dispositions as grounded on and guided by one’s *habitus* are in a perpetual process of elaboration. Goals, values, and necessities are made up as one goes along. Meaningful teleological frames for practical action are always in transit, as it were. But they are in transit on a given set of tracks, which invariably influence an agent’s trajectory concerning what makes sense and what does not make sense for him/her to do or not do in a given situation or the practicality of the things he/she may aspire for. As Bourdieu expounds:

Social agents who have a feel for the game, who have embodied a host of practical schemes of perception and appreciation functioning as instruments of reality construction, as principles of vision and division of the universe in which they act, do not need to pose the objectives of their practice as ends. They are not like subjects faced with an object (or, even less, a problem) that will be constituted as such by an intellectual act of cognition; they are, as it is said, absorbed in their affairs: they are present at the coming moment, the doing, the deed (pragma), the immediate correlate of practice (praxis) which is not posed as an object of thought, as a possible aimed for in a project, but which is inscribed in the present of the game. (1998, 80)

Bourdieu’s use of the word “embodiment” to signify an agent’s relation with his/her different modes of disposition toward the real, presents us with a novel perspective in understanding various forms of social life, including life in slums. As Richard Jenkins expounds, “It is in bodily *hexis* (manner and style in which actors carry themselves: stance, gait, gesture, etc.) that the idiosyncratic (the personal) combines with the systematic (the social)” (Jenkins

1992, 75). Social agency is always already absorbed in its affairs. The virtuosity with which slum dwellers improvise and invent ways of being happy despite their dismal situation must be interpreted as of kind dispositional acumen, which is neither formally learned nor procedurally accomplished. The excellence (or virtue) with which they negotiate for their survival is in fact a correlative of the forms of happiness that are forged, legitimized, and reproduced within the specific boundaries of their *field*. It is in the techniques by which they literally and figuratively carry themselves through adversity that their happiness or fulfillment is produced and exhibited. Their virtue is realized, not in their ability to roll the rock uphill, as it were, but in their immediate, yet unconscious grasp of the situation they are in. Unlike Sisyphus, whose salvation came in the form of reflexivity, slum life, viewed from the perspective of the *habitus*, enables agents to non-reflexively *be* the rock, thereby nullifying the possibility of conscious anguish. This, in my opinion, is what makes happiness possible in slums. Their smiles—those that we see in photographs and documentaries are not Sisyphusian smiles; but smiles that are, strictly speaking, inaccessible to those who can afford pity. It is a smile which is not for the camera, but for its own sake. Their happiness cannot be evaluated from outside the ambit of their *field*. *Eudaimonia*, framed within the context of *habitus* is love of one's fate. This *amor fati* unconsciously submits itself to the demands and vicissitudes of objective structures that require virtue (excellence) from those who are currently engaged in the game. Collusion between agent and structure, self and world, personal and social, resident and residence, happens as a matter of course. It is never planned or contrived. As Swartz explains:

Habitus, then, represents a sort of deep-structuring cultural matrix that generates self-fulfilling prophecies according to different class opportunities. And Bourdieu's "cultural" explanation of unequal educational attainment differs from the blaming-the-victim version of culture-of-poverty arguments in emphasizing individuals' adaptation to limited opportunities rather than the cultural origins of deviant behaviour. It shows how structural disadvantages can be internalized into relatively durable dispositions that can be transmitted intergenerationally through socialization and produce forms of self-defeating behaviour. Bourdieu's habitus thus offers

a perspective that sidesteps the recurring debate among culturalists and structuralists on the origins and perpetuating cycles of poverty. . . . Habitus transforms social and economic "necessity" into "virtue" by leading individuals to a "kind of immediate submission to order." It legitimates economic and social inequality by providing a practical and taken-for-granted acceptance of the fundamental conditions of existence. (1997, 104–5)

This immediate submission to order must not be haphazardly interpreted as a form of irrational fatalism. Nor should the legitimation of economic and social inequality by the *habitus* be interpreted as an estrangement from the undeniably real consequences of socio-economic deprivation. What Bourdieu tries to show is that self-fulfilling prophecies are instances of perfect complicity between *habitus*, *field*, and *illusio*. Immediate submission to order grants and galvanizes an agent's chances at fulfillment. The spectacle of poverty with which most of us are familiar, once examined from a Bourdieusian perspective is revealed to be radically different from how people that are actually poor reckon their situation. The durability, flexibility, and inter-generational character of practical dispositions which commit themselves to a given *field* is directly related to the informal communal understandings of the good life that place particular agents within particular horizons of possibilities suited for their pre-reflexively constructed roles within the lifeworld. Happiness, from the perspective of the *habitus*, is not an explicit goal which calls for the conscious application of practical wisdom in various situations. It is the function of an agent's excellence in improvising strategies that cohere with objective necessity. Viewed in this manner, it can therefore be said that, indeed, the poor can be happy. Just not always in the way we would imagine or wish them to be. As a sociological and philosophical tool for investigation, Bourdieu's notion of the *habitus* opens up the possibility of understanding how informal, ambiguous, and non-reflexive norms permeate and structure our various conceptions of the good life and the strategies that we deem to be necessary in achieving them. This relation, however, is not grounded on logical necessity, but on unconscious improvisation—the progeny of a perfect marriage between agency and structure, residency and residence, intentionless invention and practical necessity.

Endnotes

1. In 2018, “The Philippines has emerged as one of the happiest countries in the world, according to a global survey by US-based firm Gallup International. Gallup’s 41st Annual Global End of Year Survey shows the Philippines ranking 3rd happiest country in the world, with a net score of +84.” See: <http://news.abs-cbn.com/focus/01/02/18/ph-third-happiest-country-in-the-world-gallup-survey>.
2. Alcazaren, Ferrer, and Icamina 2011, 65.
3. Continued from *Slum as a Way of Life* (Jocano 2002, 41–42): I personally grew up around slums in Marikina. Though I didn’t live there, our home was a stone’s throw away from what is still known as “Babuyan Island,” a narrow *eskinita* known for having an open fire *litsunan*. Most of my friends growing up were sons and daughters of our *sapateros* and *mag-aareglos* (we had a small shoe factory), tricycle drivers, *jueteng kubradors*, sari-sari store owners, and cockpit arena personnel. These shanties surrounding the San Roque Cockpit Arena, with their narrow, half muddy streets were my stomping grounds in the late 1980s and early 1990s. I find Jocano’s description quite accurate especially with respect to how space is utilized in the community. There are hardly any explicitly noticeable boundaries between what is yours and what is mine, as it were, and the people treated the *eskinita* as an extension of their living room, hosting parties, wakes, wedding receptions, and baptismal receptions. Growing up with friends from these areas gave me a very colorful childhood, oftentimes pushing me to the limits of my highly conservative, middle-class upbringing. I was treated like family in their houses and to a great extent I absorbed their *ethos* up until now. This paper is actually an attempt to philosophically reflect on this part of my life, owing much to the friendships that greatly molded me into who I am today. Growing up with peers who barely had anything and seeing them as happy as they were left a mark in my philosophical memory, which then prompted me to embark on this research.
4. “For Bourdieu, classical social theory is characterized by an opposition between subjectivist and objectivist approaches. Subjectivist viewpoints have as their center of gravity the beliefs, desires and judgments of agents and consider these agents endowed and empowered to make the world and act according to their own lights. By contrast, objectivist views explain social thought and action in terms of material and economic conditions, social structures, or cultural logics. These are seen as superordinate to, and more powerful than, agents’ symbolic constructions, experiences, and actions” (cf. Calhoun, Postone, and LiPuma 1993, 3).
5. David Swartz notes that, “Bourdieu has also used the wording ‘cultural unconscious,’ ‘habit forming force,’ ‘set of basic, deeply interiorized master-patterns,’ ‘mental habit,’ ‘mental and corporeal schemata of perceptions, appreciations, and action,’ and ‘generative principle of regulated improvisations . . .’ In addition, Swartz notes that, “*Habitus* is not an innate capacity, such as the physical operation of the brain posited by Levi-Strauss or the mentalistic outlook of Chomsky. *Habitus* is a ‘structured structure’ that derives from

the class-specific experiences of socialization in family and peer groups” (cf. Swartz 1997, 101–2).

6. Bourdieu explains the relationship between *habitus* and *field* as such: “It is the double and obscure relation between habitus, that is, the durable and transposable system of schemata of perception, appreciation and action that result from the institution of the social in the body, and fields, that is, systems of objective relations which are the product of the institution of the social in things, or in mechanisms that have the quasi-reality of physical objects; and, of course, of everything that is born out of this relation, that is, social practices and representations, or fields as they present themselves in the form of realities perceived and appreciated” (Wacquant 1996, 217).
In addition, “Field denotes arenas of production, circulation, and appropriation of goods, services, knowledge, or status, and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate and monopolize these different kinds of capital. Fields may be thought of as structured spaces that are organized around specific types of capital or combinations of capital” (Swartz 1997, 117).
7. While I do not claim that character stereotypes like the *tindera*, the *sigà*, the *baliw*, the *martir*, the *pok-pok*, the laborer, the *lasenggo*, the *mangungutang*, the *kubrador*, the *balik-bayan*, exclusively appear in the slum communities (I am sure they are present anywhere in the social hierarchy), my own experience has shown me that these personalities have a pronounced presence in communities where reputation play a big part in issues concerning *pakikisama* and *hiya*.
8. Yet, Bourdieu is quick to qualify that, “the fact that schemes are able to pass from practice to practice without going through discourse or consciousness does not mean that acquisition of the *habitus* comes down to a question of mechanical learning by trial and error” (1977, 87–88). Bourdieu adamantly holds that the historical resilience of *habitus* is not due to the conscious effort of agents that may have an interest in preserving particular ways of life. The effectiveness of various behavioral dispositions is not measured by empirical calculation (trial and error), but is dynamically adapted to changing objective conditions in a given *field*.

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GARY C. DEVILLES

Sensing and Seeing Metro Manila

Sensing Metro Manila

GROWING UP IN METRO MANILA in the seventies in its southern suburban part, I have often been morbidly fascinated by the clear-cut difference between the rich and the poor, the gated communities and the squatters, and the central business district against the long queue of small and neighborhood shops. The disparity is hardly inconspicuous especially for commuters who travel from one city to another or from the barrios to the center, and when I was studying in a Jesuit university in Quezon City, commuting would take about three to four jeepney rides, roughly two to three hours one way. I remember that if I had an 8:00 am class, I would wake up around 4:00 am and then in half an hour must be able to catch my rides. Despite the difficulties, these rides made me a keen observer of my surroundings, and I realized that these rides helped me socialize and talk to co-passengers and drivers.

The jeepney is still our public transport today, and its two long parallel benches somehow makes it a virtual social space where one cannot avoid facing other passengers to talk about everyday things, from the prices of commodities to crimes in neighborhood, national scandals, and politics. The long ride from my place to the school made me wonder at times why there were few people in some places and so many in others. From Taguig City, I would go to Pasig and then to Marikina, and finally to Quezon City, roughly about 30 kilometers. Passing through four cities, jeepney rides



Fig.1. Philippine Jeepney

Source: Author

afforded me a vision of Metro Manila, a way of sensing the incongruity of cities that somehow stemmed back to the most fundamental contradiction of everyday living.

Going to school, commuting has been my real education, my way of sensing Manila, my world. One lesson I would never forget was the global economic crisis in the late eighties. Inflation was an abstract economic term for a student like me then, but when jeepney drivers all over the country held a general strike, I learned what inflation meant by walking 30 kilometers back home, under the glaring sun and on searing asphalt roads. Public commuters usually were the first to understand oil price hike, wars in the Middle East, and national economic crises because these events, no matter how seemingly remote, were always felt within and became part of daily living.

It was odd that the university where I studied could be oblivious from what was going on around the world. Most of my classmates were rich and middle-class, and so my being on scholarship meant a peculiar feeling of isolation from them. I remember one group work in my class when my classmate asked for my contact details,

and I told him I didn't have a phone. He was surprised that I had no phone, but I was more stunned by him for not knowing a lot like us could not afford phones. We inhabited the same space in our school, yet we came from different worlds. My classmates would not be bothered by public transport strikes because they all had their own cars, and they could accomplish group homework over their phones. At that time, when there were few telephone lines, phones were like indicators of class and privilege. I realized that my university was like the bigger Filipino society with its rich and poor students, social stratification, and class segregation. All these experiences, from my daily commute to my observation of different lifestyles, and my schooling, would eventually draw me to studies of alienation in philosophy and literature that were compellingly rich in understanding human displacement, the problem of isolation, and all the disparity in human existence.

I am particularly drawn to a short story of Pedro S. Dandan (1996), "May Buhay sa Looban" (There is Life in the Slums), which prompted me to study its depiction of urban space. My interest in urban space is inspired by the story's dramatization of the conflicting views about *looban* (or slums), and its resonance with my own. The story is about a boy whose family decided to move to the city. The boy could not let go of his friends and attachment to *looban* that for his father, who was a writer and keen on joining the Commonwealth Literary Prize, was ugly, filthy, dead, and bereft of any inspiration. The father's disgust of *looban* was something the boy could not accept because for him, his life, childhood, and memory were all intertwined with it--hence, the title of the story, which literally means that there was indeed life in the slums.

Looking back, I was like that boy in the story who felt that there was something more about the place. *Looban* for the boy was not just the slum but his whole being, including his imagination, and his friends. The interesting part of the story is that it was the father, the writer, who failed to see *looban* for what it really is. The father is like anyone nowadays who has forgotten that *looban* used to function similarly to a backyard or a garden and as such, functioned as a place for respite. But somehow, the height of urbanization of Manila in the seventies made everyone forget what a *looban* is and what it possibly connotes as an interior, the internal dimension,

or the inside. The father's failure to see *looban* mirrors his inability to see his son's feelings. Thus, the story for me became an archetypal story for a lot of people who were displaced, alienated, and violated. It became a complex articulation of the spatiality of our human existence, our ironic experience of displacement, and our desire to make sense of it.

Edward Soja explained that making sense of one place is an act of embracing spatialities, a strategic awareness of the collectively created spatiality and its social consequences that became a vital part of making both theoretical and practical sense of our contemporary life worlds at all scales, from the most intimate to the most global (1996, 1). Making sense of one's place is indeed embracing spatiality, understanding, and making the place as one's own or *loob*, cognizant that such place can be taken away, or *nulooban*. Hence, even though the word *looban* was used to refer to squatters and dirt, the residents of *looban* had always claimed otherwise. They insisted that they were not the dirt or outsiders, but rather the "real" insiders, hence *taga-looban* or the ones who dwelled inside. *Looban* residents according to sociologist Edhard Berner would always adjust to their place and that despite the noise and dirt, would claim such places as their own (1997, 125).

In Tondo, in the western district of Manila, for instance, there was in fact a squatters' area called *hapilan* which meant garbage, but its residents called or pronounced the place instead as happy land, which sounded similar, but obviously suggested a far different meaning from the garbage associated with them. "Happy land" evoked a more playful or imaginative meaning and they called the place as such even if it was filthy. The heap of garbage, in fact, was their livelihood, and they had lived and raised their family through garbage collection and recycling. The place was therefore not just *hapilan* or waste land, but a happy land, a place with their family, co-workers, and friends.

By the same token, sensing or seeing my place, Metro Manila, will be an attempt to make meaning that comes from that awareness of differences and a commitment to connect personal experiences with the political, all in the context of the spatiality of human condition, whether this is my own space of alterity, a violent space of colonization or dispersal, or the very space of reclamation and

appropriation. For this chapter, I would like to discuss one sense, the sense of seeing Metro Manila, the politics of Metro Manila's representation and depiction, the asymmetrical relations of its people, and the creative strategies employed by people under an oppressive surveillance culture. I study two Filipino indie films, *Serbis* and *Tribu*, and the novel-turned-into-film *Maynila sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* (Manila in the Claws of Light, 1970).

Using these indie films, I argue the problematic visibility of Manila, as the depiction of Manila's poverty becomes pornographic due to uneven geopolitical relationship between the viewers and the Filipinos being viewed. I trace this kind of invisibility with the problems of modernity and modernization as the characters in the novel *Maynila sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* find themselves trapped, unable to survive, and thereby reconcile with their love interests in an urban jungle like Manila. I rework the concept of alienation in the novel and argue how such alienation is very much part of city's modernity, how the characters maintain a critical vision of Manila, and how in the end they become the embodied contradiction, culminating in their death or escape from the city. This novel which was turned into a film in 1970 was digitally remastered and shown in 2013 Cannes Film Festival. The success of this film and the novel itself gives us a fitting opportunity to look at Manila as depicted in the novel and the film in the seventies. It is also an opportunity for us to try to contextualize such seeing in the eyes of contemporary viewers today. Seeing Manila in the film or the novel, moreover, provides a vantage point in assessing city visibility, as visibility always implicates its contemporary viewers.

Seeing Metro Manila in Lino Brocka

They say that the downfall of the Marcos regime in 1986 could be attributed to the construction of the 33-km elevated railway system that ran from north to south of Manila. For the first time, a year before the famous EDSA revolution that toppled the dictator, passengers bound from Baclaran to Monumento, could get a top view of the deteriorating condition of Manila. I was in second year of high school when the EDSA Revolution happened and although I was young then, most of us, my classmates and friends, had a sense already that something was wrong in our country. It was in

my senior year that I was given the chance to go to Manila to watch *Hamlet* at the historic Metropolitan Theatre, take a ride in metro rail, and see for the first time the stretch of Manila, from Central Station to Pedro Gil, to Taft Avenue and EDSA. I saw a Manila that had been confirmed by my readings of stories and poems about working class Filipinos, as well as by movies banned and censored which also became available only during my senior year. I saw a Manila teeming with people: I had to run and squeeze my way to cramped coaches, I had to elbow some people, and then while inside the train, I had to mind my bag and wallet, as I had been warned of pickpockets everywhere. Never had I been so alert in my life that I felt that Manila was the most dangerous place for me as a student.

It is this kind of Manila that I saw that I want to talk about. It is the Manila that was depicted in the movies of the late Lino Brocka, imagined in the novel, *Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* by Edgardo M. Reyes, and which today is evoked in the indie films of Brillante Mendoza and Jim Libiran. Seeing Manila as depicted in the films and novels gives us a critical sense not only of Manila, but also of ourselves. However, seeing Manila in some films can also perpetuate the same violence of concealment; hence, instead of offering critical visuality, this concealment may degenerate to mindless display of excess and become pornographic.

It is important for me to start with Lino Brocka's depiction of Manila since growing up in the seventies during the Marcos dictatorial regime meant stringent censorship of any films critical of the government, especially films like that of Lino Brocka's that depicted the poverty and wretched living conditions in Manila. I have seen poverty in Manila, but never have I seen or watched films or TV programs that were critical of poverty in the country. I remember watching old shows and reruns that seemed to evoke a glorified pastoral past of Manila, where there were still lush and green, and actors were singing *kundiman*, or our traditional love songs. When we saw films of Lino Brocka, Ishmael Bernal, and Malou Abaya in my senior high school, I never realized that films could be that disturbing.

Lino Brocka is one of the Philippines' finest directors whose films made Manila visible not only to us but to the international

viewers as well. His first film, *Wanted: Perfect Mother* (1970), was loosely based on *The Sound of Music* (1965). Even though this movie was an adaptation, one could see already his genius in adapting foreign material by using familiar locations and believable characters speaking in their local language. In *Wanted: Perfect Mother*, Brocka added the dimension of the conflict between the daughter and her stepmother, something that is seemingly a staple with Filipino melodramas. Brocka knew his audience, and he tried to make his film relatable and understandable. Even though his first film was an adaptation of a romantic foreign film, one could see already some strand of Brocka's realism, and this realism would be more apparent as it gradually became clearer for Brocka that film could be a tool for his political advocacy.

In 1974, he directed *Maynila sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag*, which is considered by many critics to be the greatest Filipino film. This was followed by films like *Insiang* (1978) which was the first Philippine film shown at the Cannes Film Festival, then *Jaguar* (1979) which was nominated for the Palme d'Or at the 1980 Cannes Film Festival and then two years after, with his third entry, *Bona* (1981), as Cannes' Director's Fortnight. In most of these films, Brocka is consistent in portraying the stories of working class, with Julio as a migrant worker from the city (*Maynila sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag*), Insiang as a rape victim (*Insiang*), and Bona as an obsessive fan (*Bona*). These characters resonated powerfully with Filipino audiences because the stories were theirs, given that most moviegoers were also common low wage earners. In effect, Brocka succeeded in letting them see their own stories through his characters.

By choosing to depict his characters' stories, Brocka was at the forefront of defining realism in film production. He veered away from mainstream romantic stories of the bourgeoisie or middle class and tried without fail to present how typical romance becomes illusory and alienating in their lives: Julio's search for his girlfriend ended in both their tragic deaths; Insiang drove her mother mad killing her stepfather; lastly, Bona eventually killed the actor she adores. In Brocka's films, realism is the depiction of the tragic lives of working class; his works portray how the poor struggle, eke out a living, and pursue dreams only to meet their tragic endings. With such endings for Brocka's films, realism becomes the antithesis of a romantic

movie, where, for example, a poor lady meets her rich handsome man and they end up happily as though love conquers all.

In contrast, in a typical Brocka film, such a relationship is portrayed as downright deceptive, and love among other forms of socialization leaves the poor more wretched and alienated. Meanwhile, the rich are oftentimes depicted as extravagant, foolish, and self-absorbed. For Brocka, characters are to be portrayed in any actual aspect of life with their specific actions and consequences. What would an ordinary worker do if he were desperate for money to pay the hospital bill of his pregnant wife? In *Bayan Ko: Kapit sa Patalim* (This Is My Country), such a worker becomes a robber who is pursued by the police and dies. For Brocka, his characters are always caught in an ethical dilemma, and since these characters are related to their social status and their own past, their decision, temperament, and motive become more intricate, as they move and create the story's plausibility. They therefore produce a powerful cathartic response from the same working-class audience.

Aside from strong character development, Brocka's *mise-en-scène* allows the audience to get a sense of the landscape of Manila's poverty. Brocka's opening close-up shot of Manila already contextualizes and captivates the viewers, as though telling them that what they are seeing is very much like their reality, or close to their reality. The use of Manila's streets, for instance, is far from the romantic style of postwar films, usually set up in provinces, in the fields, and along the rivers, places that evoke the serene, simple life and the imminence of man with nature. With Brocka's opening shots of Manila streets and slums, his films expose immediately the connections between the viewers and the objects of their view.

In *Maynila sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag*, we see street sweepers at the break of dawn, then the old dilapidated buildings, the vendors, the passersby, and then a long shot of the main road gradually zeroing in toward Julio who is standing on a corner near a poster that says workers are on strike. The opening scenes already capture the gist of story by setting up Julio in his environment, by depicting him as though he is lost in the crowd, looking for something or someone, while the bleakness of the surrounding suggests the tragedy that awaits him. By using scenes of the everyday whether in small factories, old and dilapidated buildings, makeshift houses,



Brocka coaches Lorna Tolentino and Richard Gomez in a scene from *KAILAN MAHUHUGASAN ANG KASALANAN*, 1989.

Fig.2. Lino Brocka

Source: Rizal Library Photo Collection

or garbage dumps, Brocka depicts a realistic Manila, dark and sinister. Brocka, in fact, used real slums in Manila such as Tondo, Pasay, Pasig, and Caloocan with residents acting as extras. One can recognize Misericordia Street in Quiapo, the china town in Binondo, and Ermita, the red light district area of Manila. These are real and familiar places, notorious for pickpockets, prostitution, gambling, burglary, and crime. Long-shot scenes of Manila often establish a landscape providing the audience a glimpse of the extent of the wretchedness of their conditions. Most of the scenes were also shot at night giving a very bleak impression of Manila.

Brocka's realism is quite similar to the realism in the TV series, *The Wire* with its rich complexity built on narrative and conversational digressions, extended periods of seeming stasis, and an affection for the quotidian. Hsu analyses how a TV series can aspire toward some condition of documentary truth, as in the case of *The Wire*, which provides its audience a sense of unfiltered experience of life in Baltimore with its urban turmoil (2010, 509). The strength of such TV series in aspiring for truth relies not only

on its aesthetics, but also on the structural social condition of the viewers, at a time when the media text is being viewed, used, and appreciated. Hsu noted that in the case of *The Wire*, some real crooks were doing what they had seen on TV such as damping one's phone to avoid surveillance. Brocka's realism as a truth-telling device is further understandable as political advocacy in a time of dictatorship, when truth is always something that the state conceals and represses. Brocka's Manila is therefore political.

By depicting Manila in its sordid condition, Brocka's films challenged the state's propaganda of Manila as the City of Man. In this way we can understand Brocka as a political-activist director who believed that in as much as films can be instruments of state propaganda, they can also be utilized to enlighten viewers against the state and even the capitalists who own these films. For Brocka, enlightenment comes not in idealizing one's alienation, but with the recognition of man's destruction as he is caught in the endless grip of the oppressive hands of the state and capitalism. In *Maynila sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag*, the last scene freezes to Julio as he ends up in a no-through alley and people are chasing him for the crime he committed. Brocka dramatizes the last scene with slow motion and close ups of Julio as he feared for his life, gave up, and cried. In *Bayan Ko*, we see Luz with her dead husband Arturo, looking at all the photographers taking their pictures. In *Orapronobis* (Fight for Us, 1989), the ex-priest rebel, Jimmy, calls a friend to tell him he's ready again to go underground. In all these films, more importantly, Brocka was consistent in portraying a political Manila where the state was repressive. Brocka's involvement in politics was not limited to his craft, however.

In 1983, Brocka created the organization Concerned Artists of the Philippines (CAP), which he led for two years. His position was that artists were first and foremost citizens and, as such, must address the issues confronting the country. His group became active in anti-government rallies after the assassination of Benigno Aquino, Jr., eventually becoming one of the progressive organizations representing artists and cultural workers in the country. The following year, *Bayan Ko* was deemed subversive by the government of Ferdinand Marcos, and underwent a legal battle to be shown in its uncut form. At the 1984 Cannes Film Festival, however, it was

nominated for the Palme d'Or. Some of his other notable works such as *Orapronobis* had to be secretly smuggled out of the country to avoid government censorship. Film critic Rolando Tolentino discussed how Brocka's films such as *Bayan Ko* and *Orapronobis* reflected the national political turmoil during the Marcos dictatorship and continued during the Aquino administration (2001, 31–42).

Brocka's Manila was antithetical to the true, the good, and the beautiful Manila that Imelda Marcos wanted to portray. In 1975, Imelda Marcos was installed as governor of Metro Manila, while also holding the office of the first Metro Manila Development Authority or MMDA. The latter was established for the sole purpose of creating Metro Manila as a legitimate political unit to supervise the urban renewal programs of all the cities in the Manila. Moreover, it was not accidental that the role of governor landed on the president's wife. Imelda herself rationalized her role as governor in terms of housekeeping and beautifying Metro Manila. With the combined powers of the president and his wife, they institutionalized the production of the arts and other popular media, building the Cultural Center of the Philippines in 1969 and the Manila Film Center in 1982 that initiated the series of Manila International Film Festivals. These edifices and the beautification projects promoted the country to the world and helped Manila become spectacularly visible. It also helped that the Marcoses controlled the media firms such as Channel 4, Channel 9, and Channel 13, as well as Channel 2 which they seized from the oligarchic Lopez family. News, film, and TV programs in all these channels then were all about the progress of the country, specifically Manila. In 1974, the *Ms. Universe Beauty Pageant* was held for the first time in Manila, and before this show, police rounded up all the street children in the streets and a white wall was erected to cover the slum area visible to anyone going to Manila from the airport.

Marcos's beautification or gentrification program was funded by massive foreign borrowing in the seventies, and Manila was a haven for US Fordist economic policies that aided Manila's urbanization, modernization, construction of public roads, buildings, and centers (Harvey 2006, 14–146; Graham 2006, 50–52). With various construction projects, critics of Marcos branded him as someone



Fig.3. Cultural Center of the Philippines
Source: Rizal Library Photo Collection

with an edifice complex, an irrational need to construct buildings and monuments to display his power, virility, and his championing of progress and modernity (Lico 2003, 5). Some of the finest hospitals and buildings like the Philippine Heart Center (1975) and the Cultural Center of Philippines complex (1969) were built to communicate precisely the image of progress and new society or in the state's parlance, *Bagong Lipunan* (New Society). Leandro Locsin was commissioned to design the Cultural Center of the Philippines and the Philippine International Convention Center (1976); he also designed these buildings using an architectural style known as Brutalist architecture, a style that flourished from the fifties to the mid-seventies, spawned from the modernist architectural movement. These buildings are typically linear, fortress-like and blockish, often with a predominance of concrete construction. It is said that most government buildings, low-rent housing, and shopping centers followed this architectural design. Though such style

can be unappealing due to its "cold" appearance, such building design projected an atmosphere of totalitarianism consistent with Marcos administration.

Through all these buildings, Marcos showcased a Manila that is orderly, peaceful, and progressive. However, in as much as these buildings communicated a beautiful Manila from the outside, the view from inside in these buildings themselves reveals the uneven development of the city, as high-rise buildings provide a landscape of disparity between the rich and the poor in their surrounding areas. While Manila was being propagated by the state as progressive, it was also revealing its dark, ugly side. Manila's population in the seventies bloomed and squatting problems became a major concern. Today, it is estimated that Manila alone has 20 million residents, almost the entire population of Australia. Such development of Manila shows deep cleavages in Philippine society (Caoili 1988, 62). It is this kind of division in society that became a constant theme for films, while Manila's underdeveloped areas and ghettos became their basic setting.

Brocka's Manila, insofar as it challenged the state's sanctioned image of Manila, can also be understood within the context of geopolitics. Incidentally, Brocka's prominence in international film festivals coincided with the emergence of Third World Cinema coming from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These films foregrounded the historical encounters with colonial and imperial forces that shaped their economic and political power structures as evidenced by films like *Afrique, Je Te Plumerai* (*Africa, I Will Fleece You*) by Jean-Marie Téno, *In Search of Famine* by Aakaler Sandhane, and *Black God, White Devil* (*Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*) by Glauber Rocha (Shohat and Stam 1994, 248-3). Though Brocka did not consider himself to belong to Third World Film aesthetics, Brocka's underlying political motivation and message in the end is in line with other issues that Third World Cinema was addressing at that time, during the dominance of commercial movies that were illusory and highly ideological.

Third World Cinema's role was to subvert cinematic codes, embrace revolutionary ideals, and combat the passive film-watching experience of mainstream cinema. These films became a militant practice parallel with revolutionary struggles, produced with the

intention of provoking discussion with and amongst its viewers and proposing alternative visions of the past, present, and future. Third World cinema and Brocka's films remained true to this principle of questioning and challenging the structures of power and oppression, as well as educating those who live under and must struggle against its domination. Brocka's dark and ugly Manila as portrayed in his films provided the international audience of these film festivals a way to understand international relations, the role of US in financing Third World countries during the cold war, and the unevenness of city development resulting to a landscape of disparity between the few rich and the poor majority. Neferti Xina Tadiar explains how the Asia-Pacific region in the seventies (that includes the Philippines) functioned as a locus of containment of the threat the region posed to the dominant powers that benefited from its promotion (2004, 33–5). She contends that with the Vietnam War and other anti-imperialist revolutionary struggles being waged in Southeast, the Asia-Pacific region emerged as a threat to the global power of the United States. Like Third World Cinema, Brocka's films revealed this dark and sinister side of global politics and US hegemony over countries like the Philippines.

Seeing Metro Manila in Indie Films

Despite Brocka's perceived revolutionary and progressive agenda in depicting Manila, poverty depiction was also something that First World Cinema unquestionably exploits by portraying the poor as heroes who can surmount any struggle and be successful in life. Such was the lure of mainstream cinema, where it depicted the lives of poor and oppressed characters. Most of these characters were stereotypes, and plots were oftentimes formulaic.

Film critics Shohat and Stam discuss the difference between First World and Third World cinema's depiction of poverty, pointing out how First World cinema oftentimes dramatizes the poor as either passive victims or as exemplar of pastoral purity—crude transcendental poets or strumming guitars mouthing the rustic wisdom of simple folk (1994, 259). Filipino mainstream cinema, in the same way, romanticized poverty by concentrating on the stories of poor women trapped in prostitution, as they deal with the dismal economic condition of the country. Most of these films

had been commercially successful since they often display not the acting prowess of stars but their nude exposure, giving rise to a film genre called Bomba pictures (loosely translated as “the sexual bomb”) or skin flicks. One of the most prominent sexy actresses in this period was Alma Moreno, who starred in films with provocative titles, like *Mrs. Eva Fonda, 16, Bakit Ako Mahihiya* (Why Should I Be Ashamed, 1976), *Hinog sa Pilit* (The Adult Kid, 1976), *Walang Karanasan* (Inexperienced, 1976), *Mga Bilanggong Birhen* (Virgin Prisoners, 1977) and *Bomba Star* (1978).

Most of these sexy commercial Filipino movies exploited the romantic Cinderella theme, where a poor girl meets her rich lover who saves her from misery. In some movies, a typical revenge motif adds texture to the story where a poor woman, abused by her neighbors and family, comes back with a vengeance against her former tormentors as a rich lady. It was quite apparent in these films that the focus was not the visual depiction of poverty, but rather the narrative story of a poor woman who can capitalize on her sexuality as a way out of misery. Such films did not elicit the kind of critical catharsis that most Brocka's films tried to evoke visually and intellectually, but rather the kind of sexual gratification that comes only pornographically with frontal nudity, sexual encounters, and kissing scenes. As these films became more popular, the depiction of poverty in mainstream cinema became a form of gratuitous display, exploiting not only women's bodies, but also the very condition of poverty that subjected these women. Audiences somehow became instant voyeurs, reinstating instead of dismantling the asymmetrical relationship between viewers and the objects of view, as well as shaping the very way of viewing the signs of poverty.

The politics of viewing also had to be examined through the insidious and uneven way that International Film Festivals exhibited films across the globe while geopolitics was thriving on the desire for difference between First World-Third World. If International Film Festivals were the site of viewing, they must be understood as framing what and how film images were seen. In as much as international film festivals subtly perpetuated an idea that everyone was equal by promoting Third World Cinema, viewing became limited to spectatorship and degenerated to some form of voyeurism. It is important to underscore that film festivals

were not totally autonomous, but rather the very site by which class, race, and gender interests competed and difference, instead of leading toward political mobility and emancipation, became another salient feature of racism, colonialism, or sexism.

Difference reinforces hierarchy and between First and Third world countries; films from the Third World became theatrical display, compelling representation of poverty. Visuality in this case was more about the reconstitution of First World audience against Third World as objects to be viewed. In other words, in as much as film festivals purported to be a celebration of talent and the arts, viewing betrayed its principle, giving way to objectification or pornography on one hand and voyeurism on the other. Shohat and Stam discuss Mrinal Sen's *Aakaler Sandhane* (In Search of Famine, 1980) which was about a film crew who went to a remote village to shoot a film entitled *Aakaler Sandhane*, a fictive study of the real Bengal famine of 1943. Accordingly, the film highlights the social abyss separating the urban middle-class filmmakers from the impoverished rural world they attempted to portray (1994, 280). Similar contradictions of filming poverty and misery exist in geopolitics, where the display of the Third World reinforced this kind of dualism, alterity, and otherness.

Hardt and Negri trace this internalization of the outsider to the logic of capital accumulation since capitalism thrives only in uneven development or in selective exploitation to create surplus (2000, 16). The recent success of independent films in the country is a good case of studying this problematic visuality and with today's proliferation of independent films that display poverty in Manila or in other cities in the Philippines, this otherness is being internalized and capitalized; it becomes the visual spectacle for eliciting pity and disavowal. Manila visibility in this case is not the kind of political visibility that Brocka employed when his films were first exhibited abroad. In the internalization of the other, visibility becomes selective to an audience and independent films tended to play around some form of vulgar capitalistic opportunism. Some of the independent films today in the Philippines are guilty of displaying poverty in Manila.

Serbis (Service, 2008) and *Tribu* (Tribe, 2007) are two of the most successful independent films today that were showcased in

international film festivals that displayed poverty in a problematic way. *Serbis* was directed by Brillante Mendoza, a former production designer of Lino Brocka in television and commercials, who also dabbled in production design for full-length feature films. The latter was directed by Jim Libiran, a former television investigative journalist. In terms of portrayal of working-class characters, *Serbis* was not entirely different from Brocka's films—even the resolution of Alan to leave the family's movie house and go elsewhere resonated with some of the characters' actions in Brocka's movies.

In depicting poverty and use of locale without the benefit of elaborate production set up, *Serbis* was also definitely following Brocka's realism, as this film is a day-in-the-life portrait of a family running a movie house that showed pornographic films and allowed sexual encounters between moviegoers. The film used a moving video camera to follow characters such as Nanay Flor, the family matriarch who had a bigamy case against her husband, then Alan who learned his girlfriend was pregnant, and then Nayda who was married but attracted to her cousin, Ronald. One gets the impression that the movie is a documentary of these characters, such that as the day developed, the family struggles to focus on the daily tasks associated with the movie house, with their own personal conflicts overwhelming them. The moving camera technique employed in this film provides a seamless depiction of various characters and scenes where the only logical connection is the movie house itself, where everything happens. With close up shots of skin wounds, filthy restrooms, and sexual encounters of various characters, the film achieved an ultimate effect of eliciting the viewers' loathing. Such film technique could be understood as carnivalesque in so far as a carnival is a production of the grotesque and the excessive.

The film capitalized on various forms of excesses, such as the five-minute scene of Alan who was cleaning the wound on his butt or as he was cleaning filthy toilets; or with Ronald getting a blowjob from a gay patron and moviegoer; or with Nayda cleaning her rooms. Furthermore, a carnival show does not necessarily constitute a coherent whole but rather a serialization of one show after another, one display of oddity after another. In this way, *Serbis*' use of a moving video camera to capture the lives of these characters

can be considered a form of this serialization, one which operates without necessarily tying the scenes together but rather exposing and displaying a form of foible and intensifying it. In as much as carnivalesque can be a potent tool for shocking the audience, carnivals can only do so much in transcending shock to lead to a powerful realization.

Sometimes in a carnival, the only value is the intensity of shock itself, but once the audience has been accustomed to an oddity, the audience leaves and searches for another without necessarily understanding the organic unity of the show. In addition, in a carnival show, the gaze is conditioned to look for intensity and the object of view is inured to exaggeration. It is not that Brocka's films were without exaggeration, but exaggeration in Brocka's films tended to be a logical conclusion or culmination. In *Serbis* however, the final scene is where all the disparate and discrepant scenes become connected. The ending serves as a convenient moralization, making the whole movie as a sermon. The point of the movie was that someone should be responsible, and this was driven home toward the end. *Serbis* must be viewed as simplistic, in conclusion, if its only point was to teach its viewers. And in showcasing this film to international audiences, the sermon became moot, and so the whole movie became a meta-commentary on the failure of reflexivity, lack of agency, helplessness, and victimization of Filipinos. In international film festivals, movies like *Serbis* display differences as oddities, exoticizing, and even eroticizing poverty.

Carnivals and carnivalesque artistic practices therefore are not automatically progressive since these portrayals and practices depend on who is carnivalizing whom, in what historical situation, for what purposes, and in what manner. In some instances, carnivalesque can be a form of licensed and contained rebellion that serves the interests of the official culture, which it apparently opposes (Stallybrass and White 1986, 13). One can see how films like *Serbis* become politically conservative, such that instead of challenging or provoking viewers to question reality, viewers tend to act like a commodity itself, satiating themselves through perpetual production and reproduction of odd images. *Serbis*, compared to other films of Brillante Mendoza, is one ultimately

conservative variation of carnivalesque display of poverty.

Tribu, like *Serbis*, employs the same technique of carnivalesque through creative manipulation of shots of rival gangs in Tondo, in the western part of Manila. The film may have some affinities and resonances with *City of God* (2002) in terms of themes and subject matter since it is about life in the slums, as well as told from the viewpoint of a young boy who was a witness to the deadly lives of teenage gang members, including the events that lead to their explosive confrontation. *Tribu*, moreover, is a slice of life in Tondo, which is quite notorious for its gang members. With the gang members as the major characters in this film, they are depicted in their normal day, starting with the usual breakfast scene with their families, their hanging out in the streets, drinking, singing rap songs, attending the wake of a fallen gang mate, and then the confrontation of the rival gangs.

Again, what one sees is not a coherent whole but a serialization of the quotidian and an intensification of oddity, as gang members themselves are considered unusual already and their way of life even more peculiar, so much so that they can sing, wax poetry, and rap; furthermore, they have a sense of brotherhood or a code, and they induct members into their group, among others. Gang life, as depicted in this film, is limited to a stereotypical introduction to violence or a violent culture of gun-toting, and then fraternizing. What the film cannot show is how one gang member differs exactly from the rest. Carnivalesque technique, to reiterate, is limited to stereotypical depiction and one gets the impression that all gang members think, feel, and behave alike. As the day develops and each does his own business, the ending becomes shocking because the little kid unknowingly plays with a real gun, brings it into his mom's room, and fires it.

The ending serves as a convenient moralization again, which, like *Serbis*, betrays the whole experience of seeing, since the ending encapsulates the movie. This is where film fails again to elicit or provoke thinking on the part of audience. The film highlights the stereotypical life of gang members only to serve as an example of what not to do, a sort of simplistic prescription. Libiran, the film's director, talked about this movie and his intention of using the film to teach his viewers. He believes that the film is a mirror for them and that

viewing is a cathartic experience. At one level, there is of course no problem with this function that the director purports. It is, however, the representation of poverty and life of youth gang members in Manila for an international audience that becomes problematic.

With such a moralistic purpose and the seemingly incoherent collection of images and scenes of the quotidian in Tondo, the film enhances a sense of the peculiarity and difference of Third World culture and poverty. Such renditions or displays of the odd do not necessarily translate to a critical engagement, but rather enhance the perpetuation of difference, through the internalization and intensification of the other, the victim, and in the film's case, the "othering" of the gang members. And if one views *Tribu* alongside Brocka's films and other notable films about poverty such as Fernando Meirelles' *City of God* (2002), Vittorio de Sica's *Shoeshine* (1946) and *Bicycle Thief* (1948), Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali* (1955), Robert Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero* (1948) and Asghar Farhadi's *A Separation* (2011), *Tribu* can be seen as adding less to the craft and history of filmmaking, and more to the problematic representation and culture of voyeurism and spectatorship.

These indie films, which exacerbate the problematic visibility of Manila and its poverty, contribute to political indifference, as well as to what Baudrillard has called the "New Victim Order" (1996, 131). Accordingly, as long as there is the fetishism of otherness, strangeness, and dual relation, the same profound disaffection is at work in the so-called collective pity that is elicited by these films. Baudrillard points out that the humanitarian seeks the other just as desperately in the form of victims to aid. Idealization pays for better or for worse. The scapegoat is no longer the person one hounds but the one whose lot he laments. Poverty and squalor as depicted in these films can be fetishized.

The themes explored in these films have also been explored and used elsewhere, and with such proliferation of study, there is always the danger of cooptation. The same danger is accompanied by the tendency to veer into perpetual visual ossification, which does not help the audience to be critical, but rather contributes to their apathy. It is noteworthy to repeat that Brocka's films remained progressive by their political context. He was trying to offer a counter-discourse of the state's propagandist image of

Manila and in effect, he was also articulating the voice of the other. But independent films today that copy him or his techniques end up internalizing this otherness and as a result, have become bereft of political advocacy, playing only in ostensible ambiguity. These independent films fail, ironically, to become independent, and their reliance on international film festivals for affirmation only aggravated problematic neocolonial relations and uneven distribution of power. With *Serbis* and *Tribu*, the visibility of Manila and other cities have again become pornographic.

Pornography, therefore, is much more than just the explicit depiction of sexual practices. Ultimately, pornography objectifies its subjects, turns events or persons into something that can be possessed, and maims the viewers' critical faculty (Dworkin 1981, 200–202). Such functions of pornography extend to all forms of media and textual production with their numbing effects on the perceived and preferred audience. Sontag has reflected similarly on the power of photography and believes that in so far as photography has the power to shock and effect an attitude toward its viewers, it can also serve as a containment for attitude, causing viewers to become passive onlookers, bystanders, or spectators.

Sometime in 2000, Sontag narrated, an exhibit of Black victims who had been subjected to lynching small towns in the United States between the 1890s and the 1930s. The photographs provided a shattering, revelatory experience for the thousands who flocked in the New York Gallery. But then, the same pictures were turned into souvenirs and made into postcards. More than a few of these showed grinning spectators, likely good churchgoing citizens as most of them had to be, posing for the camera with a naked, charred, mutilated body hanging from a tree as a backdrop (Sontag 2003, 1–7). Whatever shock power photography has, in that moment, was converted into its objectifying function and thus, readers or viewers became convenient voyeurs, part of that objectifying gaze that the very pictures of suffering have created or disavowed. In other words, photography, like film, can lend itself to pornography by a culture of passivity of onlookers and audience.

The containment of audience and readers is of course part of a much larger discourse. Feminist critic Laura Mulvey (1989, 14–19)

situated audience passivity in the psycho-sexual political discourse, where, accordingly, film production oftentimes constructs the male gaze and women as the objects of this gaze and fantasy. Implicit in film production is the construction of this intrusive male gaze that violates women and therefore, such films can be considered as downright pornographic. Similarly, Said's concept of orientalism—the knowledge produced about “the orient”—can also be considered as pornographic because the colony is often represented as the objectified female with their colonizers as the male counterpart, wherein their relations become oppressive (1977, 31–49). Orientalism is also pornographic in so far as knowledges produced about the orient are stereotypes highlighting their supposed inferiority vis-à-vis the colonizers. Hence, to talk about pornography in this manner is not to talk about morality, but rather to foreground film's discursive and visual functions, whereby pornography is more about the power relations constituted between the viewers and the ones being viewed, where such relations become ultimately oppressive.

Seeing Manila becomes a struggle between the objectifying gaze of the state and the creative manipulation or appropriation of its viewers and audience. On one hand, in as much as its visibility is constituted and distributed by the state, its consumption sometimes becomes tactical and counter-discursive. However, in films like *Serbis* and *Tribu*, we see that viewing Manila can as well be a certain conservative display of Manila, especially if the audience is being led to an emotional lockdown, as well as when the audience is not left enough room for thinking and reflection.

Sometimes films that offer discourse and images replete with proletarian struggles and their exploitation succeed only in isolating our agony, leading to a sense of internal loathing on the audience's part and that estranging distancing from the viewers abroad. What is supposed to be liberating becomes mystifying. Poverty is reduced to graphic depiction of filth, excessive images of sexual encounters, stereotypical gay sexual encounters, rival gang wars, and teenage anxieties. Poverty plays upon our alienation, manufacturing the internal contradiction by projecting a perverse desire motivated by revulsion. However, not all films about poverty are counter-productive. What must be stressed here was that

the depiction of poverty in the city, in most films, stem from the complex power relations already operating in the city and in its visual consumption and distribution, a network of relations that can be oppressive, legitimate and normative, but at other times, appropriative and resistant.

Seeing Metro Manila in a Novel

For Mikhail Bakhtin, the modern novel as a literary form is best suited for the multiplicity of voices, various speech acts, literary-verbal performances that require speakers, readers or authors to take a position, even if only by choosing the dialect in which they speak (1991, 80–85). With the contradictory character of Manila, novels become strategic for exposing this duplicity or ambiguity, as well as for rendering the complexity of its depiction in so far as the intended readers assume a particular point of view as well. To depict their worlds, novels rely on the power of language or verbal performances as opposed to visual arts and films that rely on the power of images. With the various positions and viewpoints by which language deploys its power, I intend to demonstrate this dexterity using Edgardo M. Reyes's novel *Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* (In the Claws of Light, 1970), starting with the archetypal romantic plot of man's search for his loved one, who is aptly named as *Ligaya Paraiso* (which is translatable to “Bliss Paradise,” literally), and the futility of this search as the main character degenerates from a romantic lover to an oppressed, casual construction worker and finally, to a criminal.

The elusiveness of the woman he pines for is part of the traditional themes of revolutionary stage plays during the American occupation of the Philippines, and in these stage plays, the Philippines has always been allegorically depicted as a woman who has often been wronged and abused. It is important then to posit that this unending search for one's love in the novel is the visual rendition or act of imagining Manila. I will elaborate on how such a depiction of Manila (or the country) as a suffering woman is related to Neferti Xina Tadiar's concept of Noranian Imaginary (“Norianian” comes from Nora Aunor, one of the seasoned Filipina actors in the Philippine cinema, well-known for her dramatic roles as the suffering woman, a domestic helper, poor little girl, and

other similar subservient roles). With such depiction of Manila or the country as a suffering woman, I would like to look at how multifarious such depiction is and in what stages of our history such depiction becomes potent. I also look into the situations wherein such visibility becomes weak, albeit problematic.

To see Manila in the novel is to read Manila as an intersection of various texts, a nexus of distinctive and coexisting stories in which Manila (or the country) becomes embodied or anthropomorphized. Novels oftentimes rely on this intertextuality and symbolic imaginary to connect not only readers to the text, but to its possible and future readers as well. Novels become a visualization of a community of readers, thus providing a strategic and useful framework for imagining not only oneself, but one's place within its specific history. Despite its fictionality and imagined worlds and places, novels help readers deal with their realities, as the unfamiliar world can be read as symbolic and allegorical, and as plots and resolutions can be graphic commentaries about their own familiar worlds. Moreover, in as much as the reader can visualize the country as it appears in the novel, the multifarious perspectives in the novel provide channels for communicating this depiction to other readers.

Using Edgardo Reyes's novel to see Manila provides a unique perspective since the novel was first serialized in *Liwayway* magazine from 1966 to 1967, a time when Manila was also experiencing rapid urban growth in the context of Marcos's dictatorship and the structural adjustment programs launched by institutions like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. With its serialization in a magazine, Reyes was able to provide enough incidents, thereby bringing the end of the installment to enough of a conclusion to satisfy his readers; at the same time, this allowed him to keep enough elements unresolved to entice the same readers into coming back for more. The serialization of the novel, as a result, provided the very space and medium for making sense of Manila. It is important to emphasize that the novel is written in Tagalog, the language mainly used in Manila. By using Tagalog, there is already the implicit gesture to address the Tagalog readers at a time when English, as a language, was dominant in many school curricula and the US exercised hegemony over the country's cultural production.

The development of Tagalog literature would therefore be pivotal in contributing to the national consciousness. Tagalog writers took their chance with *Liwayway* magazine, which had been serializing Tagalog novels, short stories, poetry, comics, essays, news features, as well as entertainment news and articles since 1922. As the oldest Filipino magazine, it produced the Tagalog works of great Filipino writers like Jose Corazon de Jesus, Florentino Collantes, Julian Cruz Balmaceda, and Cecilio and Apostol Borromeo. Edgardo Reyes, in fact, debuted his work in *Liwayway*.

Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag, from the title itself (which can be translated as the phrase, "in the claws of light," is already gesturing toward a kind of Manila's visibility, not in full and glorious light, but a partial light that reveals and conceals at the same time. Partial light creates shadows and in as much as Manila is seen or depicted in the novel, there is a suggestion that this light is deceptive, that Manila is not what it seems to be, and that there is a darker aspect to it, or that what we see of Manila is just the superficial layer. Construed in this way, the title suggests a sense of lure that comes with partial light, but at the same time, it also immediately warns the readers that what one sees are fractional and thus, the title becomes a form of invitation to look deeper and investigate. In addition to this partial light, the claws are a figurative description of Manila's visibility. Claws or talons are used by birds of prey, and by using it to describe the kind of light that falls on Manila, Manila then can be seen as a prey, caught up in this ambiguity of revelation and concealment. However, Manila is possibly trapped as well, unable to move, waiting to be devoured.

Manila as caught in a predatory relationship alerts us to its intertextuality; it indicates that its depiction as a prey comes from a tradition of portraying Manila and by extension, the country, as a hapless victim from Jose Rizal's novels to seditious plays during the American colonization of the Philippines, as well as popular melodramas in the seventies. Seditious plays like *Hindi Aco Patay* (I'm Not Dead, 1903), *Tanikalang Guinto* (Golden Chains, 1902), and *Kahapon, Ngayon, at Bukas* (Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow, 1903) are all deceptively love stories between a revolutionary soldier and a beautiful Filipina maiden. However, because of the colonial situation, these seditious plays became allegorical and in most of these

plays, the beautiful maiden, wronged and victimized, would always reveal herself in the end as the embodiment of nation, since she would always be dressed in the colors of the Philippine flag. These were called seditious plays precisely because the Americans had outlawed the exhibition of Philippine flags and theater writers and directors were cunning enough to use stage plays by which they could wave the Philippine flag through costumes and express their nationalism. *Walang Sugat* (I Have no Wounds, 1898), for instance, was first presented to the public in 1902 at the Teatro Libertad (Liberty Theater). The play is set during the Philippine Revolution (1896–1898) against Spain, at the height of the injustices received by Filipinos from the colonial rulers. The play also features the romance and love affair between Tenyong and Julia, in which toward the end of revolution, Tenyong is reunited with Julia and both sing about their freedom. More importantly, their costumes as revolutionaries and the mother country cannot be mistaken for other than as symbolic expression of one's patriotism, which stir powerful emotions against the colonizers, who are in turn always seen as predators.

Depicting Manila as a dangerous place can be culled from the novel's apt description of a place in Manila, called *Estero Sunog Apog*—an estuary where a factory of lime is located. Here one reads a description of a squatters' area in that estuary:

Ang Estero Sunog-Apog ay isang itim na ahas na nakapalupot sa Isla de Balut, isang piraso ng lupang umulpot sa baybay-dagat sa kasasahod ng basurang suka ng salaulang lungsod. Sa bahagi ng North Bay Boulevard na pinigtas ng Estero Sunog-Apog ay nakabagtas ang isang konkretong tulay. Sa kabilang labi ng estero, sa kapaligiran ng konkretong tulay, ay nagsampid ang mga barong-barong, dikit-dikit, at kapit-kapit upang mandi'y magkaalalayan sa kanilang kahinaan. Ang mga haligi nila ay mga payat na binting nakasisid sa burak. Sa silong nila ay di tumitinag ang likidong sing-itim ng sunog na pulot at sinlapot ng lusaw na tingga. (Reyes 1986, 22–23)

[The estuary is a black snake coiling around the Isle of Cover, an inlet that was formed by the tides and pile of rubbish of a filthy city. In the North Bay Boulevard where the estuary ends, there is a bridge made of concrete. On the other side of the estuary, near the bridge, makeshift houses are spread together as though they support each other in their utmost weakness. The

houses' stilts stood in murky waters as dark as burnt honey and viscous as melted tin.] (Translation is mine.)

Depicting the place like a snake serves as a ready clue to a jungle-like existence and life in the city. Manila as a jungle can only mean that life within it is a predatory, dog-eat-dog, survival of the fittest sort of existence. Using this in the novel connotes the danger that abounds in a concrete jungle; it implies that everyone is on his own or that no one can be trusted. This depiction situates Julio and Ligaya, as well as their love story, the latter of which is definitely fraught with all these betrayals, broken dreams and hopes, suffering, and misery. One street in the novel is named aptly Misericordia, which is a real street in Manila, and the name that has its roots in misery cannot be more appropriate to the theme of the work. It is also important that much of this betrayal comes from the lure of the city, as both Julio and Ligaya are drawn to Manila to find work and improve their lives.

The depiction of Manila as a snake here also becomes a fitting trope for the kind of lure that Adam and Eve experienced when they were seduced by the snake in paradise. It is not inadvertent then, as the novel is read as Julio's search for his lover Ligaya Paraiso; as such, the story becomes a graphic rereading of the seduction of the first man and woman in paradise. In the archetypal story, both lose the paradise, their innocence, and then are banished to roam the earth. In using the concrete jungle to depict Manila, the novel brings to fore these problems of alienation and exile, hopelessness, suffering, and death. For reader, such a depiction of Manila becomes powerful and strategic in foreshadowing the fate of characters.

Aside from depicting the estuary as the proverbial snake, it is also described as full of dirt and refuse from the city. Such graphic visualization of filth that makes the place unfit for living becomes a sort of commentary on the kind of denigration of people and unfair treatment of workers. In the following paragraph, this squatter's community thrives only because of the factory nearby:

Sa silangan, isang pukol mula sa konkretong tulay, ang estero ay nagsasanga, lumilikha ng higanteng Y. Sa lukab ng higanteng Y ay nakalatag ang isang

kagulat-gulat na imperyo ng komersyo at industriya. Dito lumuluwal ng mantika at mga sabon at mga mantikilyang matatagpuan mulang Jolo hanggang Aparri, mga produktong maririnig sa bawat bukas mo ng radyo, makikita sa bawat bukas mo ng telebisyon, masasagasaan sa bawat bukas mo ng magasin. (Reyes 1986, 22–23)

[To the east, a stone's throw away from the bridge, the estuary forks. In the delta, an empire of commerce and industry stands. This is the factory of cooking oil, soaps and butter that can be found from Jolo to Aparri, products that one hears over the radio, one sees on television and one reads on magazines.] (Translation is mine.)

The factory is described as an empire whose products are everywhere from the northern province of Jolo to Aparri down south, and then as heard on radio, seen on TV, and read about on magazines. The depiction intimates the kind of problem that the characters are dealing with: the basic problem in economy, the uneven production, distribution, and consumption of food. Even though there is no scarcity in production, the workers who toil in these factories cannot afford these goods and are trapped within inhumane and desperate living conditions. The description of the nearby factory in a squatters' community is an attempt of the author to situate relationships and sociality within the governing forces of economy, making the story more realistic and thus less romantic. This prepares the readers for eventual tragedies and makes sense as well of the experience of urbanization which had been part of the seventies. Any reader back in that decade would have automatically seen such a passage in the novel as a bold attempt to criticize the existing condition of Manila, such that in so far as Manila was being promoted or hailed as the "City of Man," or the "New Society," people knew even then that such monikers were simply lip service.

Insofar as Manila is depicted as a snake, or a jungle, even an inverted paradise, the novel also uses *Ligaya Paraiso* not only as a character but as an allegorical embodiment of Manila and the country. Her name means happiness and it is not surprising that Julio's search for *Ligaya* can be read as everyman's search for happiness. Only in this novel, this search becomes tragic and this kind of reading alerts us to another tradition of depicting Manila (or

the nation) as a suffering woman. Literary critic Soledad Reyes notes that the image of the suffering woman is a staple in popular culture. According to her, the period of production of popular literature, from the serialized novels to seditious plays and *komiks*, is the period of the Romance Mode, since most of these stories are love stories where the hero is always portrayed as a lover and the fair maiden will always be the representation of the mother country (1991, 26).

Reyes believes, furthermore, that this romance mode had already been present in *corrido* and *awit*, the Philippine versions of the European Medieval romances. These romantic narratives help readers and listeners make sense of their lives, make complex reality intelligible through stylized depiction or various literary conventions, and provide sanction for ceremonies, explain origins and settlements, etc. (23). Romance mode always conjures a fantastical world, a world where there is suffering and separation of lovers but also always ends in their reunion. Such depiction becomes a strategic reading, as readers become familiar with these texts as allegorical, since they see romance as their refracted reality and love stories as the very condition of subjection and suffering. The romance mode paved the way to more realistic novels, such that by the seventies, when most romantic novels were serialized in magazines like *Liwayway*, the reading public knew only too well that all these stories were versions of their unending struggle against oppression. *Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag*, therefore, as one of the most popular realistic novels influenced by this tradition of romance mode, has always been understood and appreciated as the imaginary desire of every Filipino in their struggle or continuing fight against various forms of oppression from colonization then to the alienation of city life now. In *Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag*, Julio becomes the typical Filipino while *Ligaya Paraiso* becomes the embodiment of ideal.

The romance mode depicts the nation as a suffering woman, usually as deranged, hysterical, crying, or wounded. *Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* then becomes another portrait of this suffering woman as *Ligaya Paraiso* here is recruited from the province to Manila to work, only to end up as a prostitute who is then killed by the owner of the whorehouse. The image of a suffering woman used

in this novel, together with other romance mode of literature that portrays the suffering woman, only affirms the collective history of abuses suffered by Filipinos. For Marxist critic Fredric Jameson, reading novels as part of a grand narrative constitutes a symbolic act and the continuing proliferation of such novels thereby become the incessant desire for narrativization, or in this case, the visualization of our political unconscious (1983, 5). This act is considered unconscious, additionally, because these novels and plays are seemingly discrepant and multifarious, yet when taken as a continuum, one can see whatever is concealed: this overwhelming desire to resolve conflicts and confront contradictions; in other words, the desire to end suffering itself, to reunite with loved ones, to imagine once again a nation.

It is also notable that the unconscious takes on a particular form and works by way of both sublimation and condensation, according to Sigmund Freud. Given the limited expressions based on our history of colonization and subjugation, collective desire finds its outlets, transforming such desire for freedom and liberation to heroic and romantic narratives, from epics to modern novels. But sublimation also works on the act of reading and reception, as these narratives are not just there to saturate us, but rather to interrogate and transform our implicit beliefs and values, even to transcend our ways of seeing. If our collective unconscious assumes the form of a suffering woman, it only makes sense as the woman becomes both the sublimated and condensed image of our suffering, objectified to the point that we can critically engage it, resituating and visualizing ourselves by bringing us deeper into reflexivity. When we see the suffering woman, we see ourselves.

The suffering woman in the novel can only be understood as part of this collective unconscious, this collective identification, which is present from the time of colonization of Philippines until now. Filipinos are still suffering and in the dark, just as the title of the novel also suggests a prolonged moment when the light has not yet fallen completely on Manila. It makes sense now that this partial light alludes to the inevitability of freedom, yet somehow suggests that this freedom has not yet been fully grasped. The proliferation of romantic stories about suffering women can also be understood within this trope of partial light. Television and

films today are replete with characters of the suffering woman, and one actress who excels in this genre is Nora Aunor, who has starred in countless movies with a suffering heroine.

Critic Neferti Xina Tadiar uses Aunor's name as a trope to understand not only the popularity of melodrama as a genre, but also as a predilection to identify unconsciously with the suffering woman. Accordingly, during the eighties' snap election for instance, Tadiar observes how Cory Aquino, the grieving widow of the hero Ninoy Aquino, was pitted against the dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Even though Cory is a common housewife who has no formal training or education in politics, people overwhelmingly voted for her and made her president. For Tadiar, this phenomenon can be explained by our proclivity to identify with the suffering woman, a tendency which she calls our Noranian Imaginary; this is the imaginary in the Lacanian sense, as the locus where the subject realizes and integrates his or her disjointed, fragmented states, pregenital phases, and partial drives (Lacan 1996, 78–79). In other words, Noranian Imaginary, in as much as it explains the popularity of melodramatic films and TV programs about suffering women, also informs and constitutes our identification with these cultural forms (Tadiar 2004, 10–15). Both for Lacan and Tadiar, these cultural forms are a means and mode of identification on the level of the symbolic plane. Additionally, this is the reason that the suffering woman is deployed in novels, plays, and films, from Edgardo Reyes's *Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* through *Ligaya*, to Philippine films that feature Nora Aunor, to politics as Cory Aquino, or even to our present economy as exemplified by millions of overseas Filipina migrant workers who suffer maltreatment and abuse from their employers.

These novels provide the necessary language and through such, also provide the necessary visibility to articulate and imagine our experience of contradiction, as most of these contradictions (social, economic, and political) are part of our long history of class struggle, gender conflict, and even racial discrimination. For Benedict Anderson, the formation of modern nation is understood not in terms of its articulated political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that create, inform, and precede it (1983, 10–15). Insofar as the novels provide an imagined community through its contemporary and future readers, the novels serve as the requisite

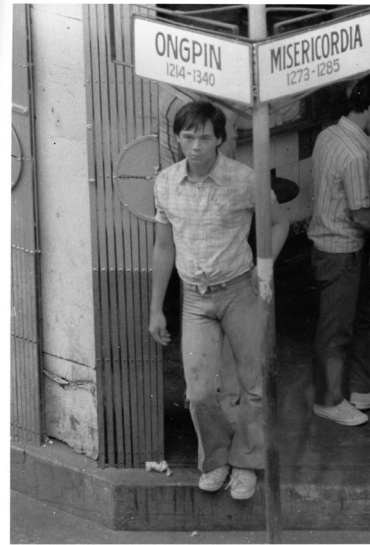


Fig 4. Lino Brocka, *Maynila sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag*
Source: Rizal Library Photo Collection

space or conduit for representation of modern society (or the nation), and this spatial imagination has for a long while now been at work from the very beginning (Tadiar 2004, 3–4).

In other words, what we read in these novels is our continuing saga, in which seeing Manila becomes both retrospective and forward-looking at the same time, and in which a potential character such as the suffering woman can be used to visualize and radicalize earlier forms of expression. At the same time, it can also anticipate possibility. Reyes's novel, therefore, is a rereading and revisualization of our past and present suffering. We need to understand that reading or seeing Manila always initiates a contradictory process, as well as augurs a reading between the lines where the agent of discourse becomes at the same time an utterance (Bhabha 1994, 24). Such a reading opens possibilities and becomes strategic, which Jameson argues should be strategic enough "to recover the original urgency for us, if told within the unity of a single great collective story, the struggle to wrest a realm of Freedom from a realm of Necessity—the unfinished plot of class struggles" (1983, 3–4). This is exactly what seeing means and entails; seeing is a task, an imperative of understanding oneself as

a perceiver among others who are equally engaged with this vision. The act of seeing Manila is also an act of understanding contradictions and problematic relations. In the novel *Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag*, in that partial light, in the interplay between absence and presence, between what is revealed and concealed, seeing is thus an aesthetic, ethical project, and ultimately, it is also the site of struggle.

Toward a Sensory Study of Metro Manila

By way of conclusion, I would like to tie up some loose ends in my argument on how seeing leads to an aesthetic and ethical sensory project. I started with my own account of seeing Metro Manila from a perspective of a jeepney commuter, learning about my place and the various cities I passed by, including the apparent contradiction of one city to another and the disparity of our lives. In connecting such points, I also made sense of these contradictions as part of, if not the outcome, of the greater contradictions of capital flows, labor relations, and the global politico-economic conditions. Thus, even an innocent glance or the act of looking out from the jeepney seat instantly becomes a mediated act of criticality, a way of seeing that simultaneously questions the object of sight, the site itself, and one's relation to the place. This reflexive seeing is not unlike reading stories and watching films, and what I have tried to do in this chapter is to set up how all these forms of seeing constitute and become constitutive of each other.

Trying to recall seventies Manila, for me, was like taking snapshots or watching a movie reel unfurling before me, wherein the jeepney ride serves as the practical cinematograph. I remember the morning traffic, the narrow alleys from the streets of Taguig to Pateros, Pasig, Marikina, and then Quezon City, the smell of cologne used by students, the factory refuse along the banks of Pasig river, the women who go to the marketplace, men who go to factories, and then the kids who go to schools. Everyday life was rendered surreal in my jeepney rides, and when I took my first train ride to Manila in the late eighties, Manila's squalor became very palpable from the window seat of train traveling from Central to Buendia Station. Additionally, I'm sure that I'm not the only one who felt, that night, that the city can be overwhelming. Eventually,

reading or watching Manila in novels and films made some sense of my whole experience. Henri Bergson, in discussing how movement is constituted in cinema, tells us that our perception of reality is very much conditioned by an abstract, invisible apparatus of knowledge, as though a kind of cinematograph resides inside us (Deleuze 1986, 3). To a degree, cinematography presages philosophical inquiry for Bergson, and although this is not within the scope of my work, I tend to agree with the dialectical or dialogic relationship of these modes of seeing. Just as Bergson was trying to make sense of Eisenstein's editing as a mode by which the film's ideological power is constituted, I also see how watching Metro Manila in either Lino Brocka's or today's indie films could make sense. Also, these activities resonate from my own experience of living in Metro Manila since the seventies. Brocka's neorealism is perfectly understandable from an experience of repressive society, when films and writings deemed as subversive at that time, were then banned by the state, virtually erased from the consciousness of moviegoers or students like me. Hence, one cannot just set aside the value of lived experience, the sensorial, or even the affective dimension of the space we inhabit.

Henri Lefebvre, in the seventies had already criticized the dichotomy between the concrete and abstract space, including how the abstract space of urban planners and architects has taken over control of decisions about urban life; meanwhile, real activity withdraws to the everyday, to static space, to the reification that was initially endured and then accepted by the rest (Lefebvre 2003, 182). Sensory projects can be construed as the first step in rectifying this problem, yet it should by no means be considered as comprehensive, since urban phenomenon can only be grasped and understood within the varied scopes and disciplines we possess. Seeing Metro Manila in various texts should lead to other sensory modalities of hearing or feeling Metro Manila, or to an extension of scope of sight/site, such as seeing other cities like Cebu, Jakarta, Mumbai, or Mexico. More importantly, a sensory project such as seeing should always be calibrated (or recalibrated) within the present politically vexing situation, especially in an era where the state and global powers threaten to erase and eradicate everything that stands in their way. At this point of writing, I would like to take note of the

various independent films that have taken as their subject matter the growing relentlessness of Filipinos over extra-judicial killings caused by the present government's rhetoric of total war on drugs. These films have been extra vigilant in exposing the contradictions of our society: the everyday life, poverty, and corruption in our government and police force. None of these films have asserted nor endorsed the simplistic and jingoistic way of solving these problems, and many have suggested, by way of "showing," that only through continuous, reflexive thinking can some of our problems be properly addressed and thought about. Indeed, self-criticism can and may transcend our limitations. Herbert Marcuse (1972, 64) reminds us, using his reading of Karl Marx's *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscript of 1844*, that the emancipation of our senses is predicated on a reconstruction of society, which is in turn generative of new relationships and serves as a continuing font of a new rationality freed from exploitation. With the present crises and the endless, senseless killings of the innocent and the poor, nothing and nobody is freed—there is, instead, only a growing myopic fear.

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DUANE ALLYSON U. GRAVADOR-PANCHO

Sex(edness) in the City

Reimagining Our Urban Spaces
With Abraham Akkerman

Introduction

TO BUILD A CITY is to make space. But of course, we need to ask: for what? For whom? If city-building, as in human existence, is always directed toward some end, then it is necessary to establish the end of architecture as profoundly related to some end of human life, or some depiction of what a human life should be, as a human being envisions it.

According to Abraham Akkerman (2006, 229), the construction of the city is rooted largely in gendered traits and dispositions; thus, we build cities out of masculine and feminine characteristics. Akkerman's claim is that the Western City has been built largely out of masculine traits or aspirations, leaving the feminine traits to the sidelines that serve minor decorative and profitable functions. As this paper shows, a huge part of the feminine that city-building has shelved are the aspects of intimacy and eroticism.

As we explore our cities more and more, we are bound to discover that such cities are wanting in terms of spaces for fostering human connectedness and desire. What we have, instead, are spaces that serve only to transform whatever desires we may have into something profitable. The result, thus, is the kind of urban living that thinks of intimacy and eroticism as either the concerns of the home or as capital—either way, it is the kind of urban living that is impoverished and incapacitated in its desiring of the other.

Because the masculine has always emphasized the straight and the predictable, it has also always favored the mind over the body, leading to the building of dis-embodied cities, cities that discourage movement as much as possible, cities that discourage relationships except for purposes of advancing one's own interests. What this ultimately leads to, therefore, is a kind of impoverished human living, with an emphasis on the self as alone, as well as an enforced forgetting of human existence as shared.

What is needed, therefore, is a way to reimagine our urban spaces, in such a way that they highlight our bodily capacities to express desire for each other without leading to possession or oppression. There is a need to reconstruct spaces, if only to have spaces that allow us to rediscover our proximity to each other, a proximity whose human quality lies in the fact that it can never be overcome. Such a proximity, of course, is one that is rooted in love.

In this way, then, we can say that we, as human beings, take responsibility for the city that we have built, as well as for its unintended consequences, including our own dehumanization. In this whole process of taking responsibility, we have also come to see how we are to restore what our own city has taken away from us: the capacity to remake our own humanity.

This paper proceeds in four parts. The first part is a discussion of Akkerman's text on femininity and masculinity taking on a city-form. However, instead of simply settling with Akkerman's gender binary, this work also treats the masculine-feminine divide as the mind-body divide, and shows that it is the body that we lose along the way in the construction of our cities. The second part is the discussion of the Western city as dis-embodied, and as such, it is a place that discourages us from using our bodies for mobility and for human interactions, thus leading to the kind of existence that renders us incapable of loving one another. The third part is where we see the proposed solution to the problem identified in this paper: man's loss of humanness in the city may be restored by reclaiming the original meaning of eros and translating applications of eros into spatiotemporal constructions and urban planning. The fourth part is the conclusion.

The Western City as Masculine: Abraham Akkerman

Mutual feedbacking

In "Femininity and Masculinity in City-Form: Philosophical Urbanism as a History of Consciousness," Abraham Akkerman traces out the development of the city-form based on the unfolding of human consciousness. Based on Carl Sauer's insight into mutual feedbacking (2006, 230), Akkerman shows how the process of building a city is one that is accomplished by human consciousness; at the same time, as its construction, the same city, in turn, shapes the consciousness that built it, giving rise to new problems, new concerns, and new values.

City-building as masculine, feminine: The Myths

Akkerman (230–32) shows, more importantly, that city-building is rooted in gendered traits and characteristics: the feminine and the masculine, which, he says, are represented by two myths, the Myth of the Garden (feminine), and the Myth of the Citadel (masculine). The City as a Garden emerged as a response to human values such as fertility and abundance, while the City as a Citadel arose as a response to values such as protection and security, both internal and external. Through time, it was the Citadel that became dominant as opposed to the Garden, as communities also began to favor the need for security over the celebration of fertility.

Along with this, according to Akkerman, came the priority given to egoism over altruism (232), with the city spaces beginning to take the form of a fortress, and the garden gradually losing ground. In this sense, then, we see how spaces were constructed to address man's need to secure property, over and above whatever reasons he might have had to establish relations with others. In a way, we can say that the spaces man constructed, while protecting his property, also isolated him from other people and kept him from sharing what he owned. At the same time, the fortress man built around himself became a testament to what he had achieved, and thus a testament to his egoism.

City-building as Platonic: Straight and Predictable

Apart from the understanding of the masculine as the kind of consciousness that seeks to define and protect what is his,

masculinity also took on a different dimension of meaning in Plato. In Plato, masculinity became not just a matter of securing one's ownership, but also the kind of consciousness that accomplishes this security of property in a very calculated, measured way. Thus, another characteristic for the masculine would be that it is straight (235); moreover, as straight, there is a clear sense of positionality and direction in the masculine, while the feminine would be represented by the curves and the "crooked lines." With Plato, then, masculinity becomes synonymous with a hierarchical system, classifying and measuring everything according to a standard of straightness, where the straight line took on an ethical dimension in the Platonic world.

Along with the assumption of straightness-as-ought, furthermore, has come the consequence of designing cities according to the same assumption. Cities designed after what Akkerman calls the Platonic blueprint thereby sought to reproduce straightness in every possible way, minimizing curves and eliminating crookedness as much as possible. The operative principle in Platonic architecture was also taken as true in the ethical life—that is, human life, if it is to be moral, is to be characterized by a rigidity and a firmness (235), reminiscent perhaps of a fort, a tower, or a phallus.

City-building as Cartesian: No Confusion

It is with Rene Descartes that Akkerman finally shows more clearly the second phase of mutual feedbacking. Descartes, according to Akkerman, as a philosopher and mathematician, was largely influenced by the New Cities of the Renaissance which he had begun to see emerge (238). Built primarily on Platonic foundations, these New Cities were characterized by straightness, where one sees roads stretching into roads, and the distance of each one is perfectly measured in such a way as to lead a person to the next—everything comes and goes, therefore, without surprise; everything is predictable.

Descartes, being a child of his time, thus fashions his mathematical and philosophical system out of the cities to which the so-called Enlightenment has given birth. Akkerman argues that it is largely to the straight and predictable New Towns of the Renaissance that Descartes owes his system, valorizing ideas that

are clear and distinct over those that are vague and confusing (239). With Descartes, we see a shift: from Plato's straightness as the foundational principle of city-building, we now have straightness in city-building as the foundational principle for human consciousness and, consequentially, human life.

As an attempt to develop further the ideas of Akkerman, this paper, applied to urban planning, goes beyond the binary of masculine-feminine, and explores the mind-body divide, where the mind, as straight, logical, and responsible for prediction and control, takes priority in the building of cities. Meanwhile the body, as flowing, unpredictable, and curved, is left to the sidelines. Hence, from the myths that early civilization has handed down to us, to Plato's blueprint of the Ideal City, down to Descartes' standard for the modern city, we find that the Ideal state of being of the human person is one that is driven by the thinking mind, and at the same time, the Ideal City is one that enables us to think of new ideas, new strategies, and new possibilities for achievement.

Looking into Philippine history, we find that Daniel H. Burnham's plans (Palafox 2014) for the City of Manila also ran along the same lines—emphasizing logic and straightness, calculating proper distances from one boulevard to another, and assigning specific spaces for waterways, parks, and civic spaces; ultimately, these plans reflected Burnham's vision for Manila, that of a city that could rival the grandeur of the more advanced Western cities. It was to be known as the City Beautiful of the Orient, with Burnham infusing some touches of Rome, Paris, and Venice into his plans for Manila.

Akkerman: Mind the Gap

However, as Akkerman pointedly reminds us, in between the planning of the city and the actual city, there is a gap (2006, 240). This gap has two aspects. The first aspect is what Akkerman calls the "unplanned," as captured by situations that serve to remind that we are not in control: for example, when one's car breaks down in the middle of the road, or when the weather does not seem to "cooperate" with our plans to go out, and many other instances. This aspect of the gap gives the human being a quick but biting reminder of the city as a human artifact, and as a human artifact, it comes with human limits and definitions. One only needs to look

around Manila's state today to see how builders have fallen short of realizing Burnham's original plans. The second aspect of the gap is the ethical aspect, where the way we have fashioned our cities have also caused a significant change in our character, and thus in who we are as human beings. In a way, we have become our cities—mechanical, calculative/calculable, in all of our dealings, and even with each other.

With the second aspect of the gap, then, we see a new dimension opening up. We now see how the process of building cities is simultaneous with the building of what is to be considered a fully human life. With cities built to emphasize and maximize achievement and profit, it is understandable that the principles of straightness and predictability should accompany them. As a consequence, we have also come to believe that such is the so-called measure of a human life—an existence that is straight and predictable, a life lived by carefully foreseeing benefits and costs both in the long term and in the short, a life emphasizing achievement and profit. And all this at the expense of those parts of our selves that are “crooked,” surprising, altruistic.

The Western City and Its Dis-embodiment

Developing Akkerman's concept of the gap, this present section shows how the gap that was earlier discussed can also be explained by way of looking into our cities and revealing not what they have, but what they lack. At the same time, what the cities lack may also tell us a lot about what we have come to lack as human beings who dwell in the city.

Returning to Sauer's insight into mutual feedbacking, where consciousness shapes cities and cities shape consciousness, it is perhaps time to allow our minds to be formed by the cities that we have built, focusing this time on what these cities do not have. In particular, what they lack, as this section shows, is an authentic embodiment, where we have cities that discourage movement, cities that favor security, discourage love and pleasure, favor the profit of stability and the stability of profit, discourage personal relationships, and favor functional operations as well as fierce competition.

Cities Without Bodies

In the article “Imperiled Pedestrian,” Charles Porter (1964, 55–67) depicts how difficult it is to have lived as a pedestrian in Paris of the eighteenth century. We read of a pedestrian who considers himself as imperiled, due to the many dangers that walking along the city streets has in store for him—from the “minor” dangers such as getting doused with the water that someone throws out the window, down to the more serious dangers such as getting run over by a speeding carriage. Centuries later, we find that pedestrians still suffer the same fate: that of facing dangers that come with physical mobility.

What is the assurance that the city gives, in its pretense of control and predictability? The city promises safety and security, and thus devises various solutions, all of which are aimed at the flourishing of this promise. Hence, what are these solutions? They all boil down to this: that people remain as immobile as possible. On a micro scale, surveillance and other technological systems restrict movement, or willingly perform the movement for people. Netflix marathons have replaced the cinema, for instance. Communication lines, business transactions, and even athleticism have all taken on a virtual character; maintaining this virtual trait, they have also moved on to become the quick and easy solutions to the threat and agony of actual mobility. Websites and applications thus give the assurance of productivity and efficiency, right from the comfort and security of one's home.

On a grander, macro scale, there are also cities that have built to make people believe that each city is fully capable of providing everything they need, to make them believe that there really is no need to move elsewhere, or indeed, to move at all. This calls to mind the slogan of the biggest chain of shopping malls in the Philippines, Shoemart (SM): “We've got it all for you!” where the assurance in itself professes to give one enough reason to not go anywhere else, precisely because this very mall already has everything one can possibly need. It also reminds us of certain cultural standards of what having a good residential area means: you must be near the hospital, the school, the church, and the market. Once again, it is the same operative principle—the less movement, the safer, the better.

What we have, then, are cities that are in themselves disembodied (Pallasmaa 2008, 30 and 7),¹ leading to the “creation” of human beings who also end up just as dislodged from their bodies as their cities, unable to move unless with a machine.

Cities without Love

At this point, we return to Akkerman’s discussion of how the early cities were built with the intent of defining and securing man’s property, protecting it against strangers who are automatically potential enemies or threats. From the perspective of economics, cities were built according to the law of supply and demand. With this, we see how the city is, in a way, a testament to how well man has preserved his selfishness and warded off his rivals.

Hence, we have a Western City that is built on the notion of conquest and egoism, and in pursuit of both, this city has also come to lose its capacity to love. The city is a place that seems to have forgotten how to desire without possessing. Urban spaces, therefore, have also become spaces where even relationships become simply reduced to matters of conquest and egoism, leaving no room for real desire and connection with another human being. We are left with spaces that either constrict our capacities for intimacy to the confines of the home and the private sphere, or spaces that turn our desire for each other into a profit center, spaces that alienate us from our own desires.

Cities without Relationships

Ultimately then, the city as we know it has alienated us, not just from our bodies and our desires, but more fundamentally, from each other. Man’s construction of the city out of largely masculine ideals of profit, control, and predictability, has led to a reconstruction of human relationships under competitive and calculable terms.

Such a depiction of the building of the city reminds us of David Harvey’s discussion of what urban planners call “creative destruction” (2012, 16). The assumption is that in order to build or create, it is necessary to destroy. Thus, in the building and creation of cities, taken literally, contractors need to destroy trees, as well as pre-existing structures such as houses and other buildings. In

other words, they must destroy anything that comes in the way of the new structure that needs to be built. That in itself is disturbing enough.

However, taken in a more fundamental sense, it becomes even more disturbing. To say that destruction is necessary for creation is the ultimate justification for our dehumanization, in the wake of the Ideal City. For the builder to build a city, it becomes a prerequisite for him to destroy himself, including whatever it is in him that gets in the way of building—his capacity to be—with others in a context beyond productivity, and thus also his capacity to feel and love.

And so, Akkerman quotes George Simmel:

The more the unifying bond of social life takes the character of an association for specific purposes, the more soulless it becomes. The complete heartlessness of money is reflected in our social culture, which is itself determined by money. . . It may be emphasized in this context that money has just as close a relationship to the widening of the social group as to the objectification of the contents of life. (1903, quoted in Akkerman, 234)

At this point, it appears appropriate to ask: if we have failed to build human cityscapes as our cityscapes have failed to humanize us, what is to be done, then?

Reimagining Urban Spaces: Resuscitating Eros

What have we lost? Our vain attempts at building cities based on masculine ideals have caused us to lose a significant aspect of our humanness, what Akkerman calls the feminine. In our struggle to build a city fashioned after the Ideal Man—free, independent, calculative, straight—we have done so at the expense of our capacities for relationships, surprise, dynamism, and love.

In the article “Reclaiming Eroticism in the Academy” (Bell and Sinclair 2014, 269), there is a concept called “resuscitating eros,” which we interpret to mean as the need to rescue eros on two levels: first, to restore it to the meaning that is closer to its etymology, and second, to restore its status in human practices and relations. In the context of this present paper, this section shows how the very process of urban planning itself is in dire need to resuscitate eros. Additionally this resuscitation can be done in

two interrelated ways or aspects: first, to construct architectural spaces that acknowledge the indispensable role of the body in the living of a human life, encouraging movement and mobility, and second, to construct spaces that encourage and invite us to build relationships founded on love and desire, instead of the culture of competition.

To resuscitate eros, the first thing to do is to restore its meaning. In the midst of a world that seems to enjoy turning everything into a product from which one can profit, eros has had to suffer the same fate. Transformed into capital (270) the erotic has become what we now know it to be—merely the sexual act and all tools and methods that may be used to achieve its consummation. And yet, upon closer inspection, eros has richer, more profound meaning. Erotic experiences can be found in practically any human experience that serves to deepen our connection with another—art, music, poetry, and even looking upon the face of another person (270). What we need to do, then, is to give back to eroticism what it has lost. More interestingly, what we must return to eroticism is closer to eroticism itself than sex, and that is love.

In the context of urban planning and city-building, the task is to reimagine spaces so as to make space for our bodiliness and eroticism, for our capacities to truly desire and love one another. The first aspect of this task consists in constructing spaces that acknowledge and encourage the use of our bodies for mobility, for reaching out. This would perhaps mean giving more space for walking, for sitting, for simply experiencing the city as a vulnerable human being among vulnerable human beings, without the pretense to security that a car or any similar gadget provides.

The second aspect of the task consists in constructing spaces that emphasize the need to build relationships rather than profiteering empires. To do this, we may want to take our cue from architectural spaces that invite us to embrace as it embraces us, those spaces whose silences remind us of our own depths. Akkerman (2006, 245) uses the imagery of the zen garden, where, as opposed to the city, we feel and better experience ourselves as subjects. We pause, we are quiet, we reflect, and we are reminded that we are selves. At the same time, we are reminded that the others around us are selves, too, and not mere objects for individual satisfaction.

Ultimately, as we share in this kind of existence, we also come to enrich one another.

Apart from the garden, we may also look for ways to redesign our corporate offices. These offices are usually spaces that emphasize individual productivity to ensure individual advancement; hence, cubicles set one apart from everyone else, floors and buildings are designed in such a way that people never have to speak to each other, and many other “solutions” that the modern city provides to ensure such productivity. Constructing in the spirit of love, however, allows us to rethink the way we plan these offices. Rethinking leads to new ways that call into question this very emphasis on productivity. Perhaps spaces that have more interactive opportunities may provide the key to seeing how an overemphasis on productivity has turned us into zombies and robots, as well as the key to getting on the road to better humanness.

Utilizing our bodies for mobility allows us to physically come together, to see, and more importantly, feel, that human existence in the world is one that is shared and thus not solitary. At the same time, entering spaces that remind us of our need for one another in love helps us to see how humanness is found and cultivated in human relationships and not just in individual accomplishments. This insight into a shared existence then underscores the meaninglessness of the modern city’s emphasis on selfish motives and ambitions. This new city, instead, ushers in the coming of new values, all the while emphasizing empathy, relationships, community.

Conclusion

To build is to make space. As we have seen in this paper, human civilization is a civilization that builds out of its innermost longings and dispositions. However, in our blind longing to become the Ideal Man, we have made a city that has, in turn, led to our own unmaking. Thus, as we build cities that are founded more and more on our aspirations for independence and profit, such cities transform human beings into mere calculating atoms, absolutely independent from each other except for transactions, thereby reducing relations to mere business opportunities.

To build is to make space. However, our attempts at building have only served to make space for more destruction, not

necessarily of physical structures, but of the capacities and abilities that were rightfully ours as human beings. In effect, our building has given place to cities, but has dis-placed the builders, and even more, its dwellers.

To build is to make space, which means there is still work to be done, and space to be made. As this paper has shown, to make space this time might no longer call for more opportunities to rake in more profit, or for us to be even more separated from each other. Perhaps, this time, we may want to make space for that part of us which our modern cities have so strongly tried to suppress—that part which comes together, that part which reaches out, that part which truly builds, in order to make space.

Endnote

1. Juhani Pallasmaa notes in “Eroticism of Space” how ironic and impossible it is for embodied human beings to create or build dis-embodied cities. Pallasmaa claims that it is impossible for architecture to have been created by a dis-embodied human being. On the other hand, we may say that the dis-embodiment that we find and experience in our cities is a product, not of our actual dis-embodiment, but of our longing to be dis-embodied. For too long, culture has inscribed sinister meanings to the body, thus leading to shared efforts to actually be rid of it.

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The City and the Dynamism of Invention and Exploitation¹

THE CITY IS A DYNAMISM AT PLAY. It is the hothouse for both innovation and the development of human civilizations, but it has also facilitated the creation of a worldwide web of unjust resource extraction and exploitation. Because humanity created urban settlements, we as a species have an arena for continuous and creative development. The city allows us to gather the best thinkers and entrepreneurs of our species in concentrated areas of cooperation and competition. Scientific and technological ideas are shared and artistic possibilities are exhibited to challenge set boundaries. If not for the city and its concentration of human exchange, the great discoveries of humanity, particularly Western humanity, in the areas of medicine, technology, governance, and all aspects of art would never have flourished and gained world domination at the rate that they have today.² However, it is also the instrument that makes possible the marginalization of many of the world’s poor. In colonial times, the imposition of Western cultures and economies allowed for the exploitation of indigenous cultures that could not, for various reasons, resist the impositions of colonialism. Through the establishment of cities, it was possible to link indigenous communities of the non-Western world to the mostly aggressive and imposing Western economies (Gilbert and Gugler 1992). This function of the city continues today to the extent that all civilizations have been linked to the global commerce of the West and the cities are the nodes of the net which gather all peoples of the world in that world order.³

The city is both an engine of invention and exploitation. This dialectic is the play that keeps the city dynamic and essential to the development of civilization. This essay aims to reflect on this dialectic and how it plays in a city like Metro Manila in order to articulate its potential as an engine of the flourishing of civilization and not just the machineries of exploitation. The dialectical nature of the city has, in recent times, allowed for the marginalization of majority of the world's people, and it has also allowed for the great innovations and developments based on the rationality of these dominant Western systems. As we face the dangers of Western development, as we face the unsustainability of its endless aspiration for development, we must rethink the city no longer as a facilitator of the spread of Western civilization and development, but as a nursery for the emergence of a just and sustainable world order. However, in order to realize the other possibilities of the city, we must understand its dynamics.

It is easy for a city to become the engine for the imposition of a monolithic world order. As a center that dominates the political and economic landscape, as the machinery that gathers the economic resources and capacities of its environs, the city becomes the center of governance, the hub of economic activity, and the cultural center. In order to sustain itself, it transforms all the communities that are connected to it geographically, economically, and/or politically into subsidiary communities that exist mainly for the city and its economic needs. The city is then a machinery for hegemony creation and facilitates the reduction of other communities into the totality of the world economic and political order. Today more than ever, rural populations have been "drawn into the urban nexus" (Gilbert and Gugler 1992, 62). Hardly any community exists separately from the influence of the city and its commerce which is necessarily connected to the web of world cities.

The primary aim of this work is to discuss the "essence" of the city in a Heideggerian sense. Its aim is to articulate a frame for understanding what is referred to here as the presencing of the city as it shapes human dwelling today in order to be able to understand how they have developed worldwide. Certainly, each city is unique and must be discussed individually. However, the enframing of Westernization must be articulated in order for us

to understand the underlying enframing with which the imposed upon struggle. Only then will the author work to show how this frame can help us understand the reality of the megacity that is Metro Manila.

The Urban Monoculture and the Web of Reduction

One way to understand the global commerce which the city serves to coordinate into a totality is to understand how it has become a consolidated system of production, demand creation, and delivery. In this system, various cities have been reduced to nodes which can ensure that demands are immediately identified and products can be created and delivered immediately. Institutions in the city ensure that needs are identified and even maintained and that products are immediately sourced and supplied so that wealth can be produced. In order to realize this, a system of cities that provide one aspect or the other of this commerce exists. This system of cities ensures that capital flows freely, that labor is organized, that the non-urban areas provide raw material and even labor, and that agricultural systems are aligned to the network (Dear and Flusty 1998, 61). Thus, it is true that the city has the tendency to flatten. Certainly, it is capable of generating variety and excitement, with its myriad products for consumption and its ever-changing entertainments. However, its variety must conform to the demands of the global market. It is the same ethos of global styles and values that shapes what we like to wear, how we like to live, what is our staple and what is the exotic, including what we use as markers for a good life. This can be seen as the "imposition of global imperatives on local economies and culture" (61). This imposition could be characterized as the emergence of "monocultures of exportable strawberry or broccoli in lieu of diverse staple crops grown for local consumption and the appearance of high end, high rise buildings indistinguishable in form and occupancy from (and often in direct communication with) luxury housing built atop homeless encampments elsewhere in the world" (62–63). The city in such a web is described by Dear and Flusty as "a geographically disjointed but hyperspatially integrated monoculture, that is, shuffled same set amid adaptive and persistent local variations" (63).

Dwellers of the modern urban world belong to a monoculture, indeed. It is a totality whose conception of a good life, development, civilization, and good governance is necessarily similar for those that belong to it. Certainly, not all cities are perfectly adapted to this global, urban rationality, but all cities that belong to the web of this rationality are in some form or another being educated and assimilated in its ways. Only in this way can the global commerce be made fluid. In such a case, the city exists to facilitate the incorporation of all civilizations to this global order. Unfortunately, this engine for world civilization development could also speed the extinction of mankind. Increasingly, we see how unjust and unsustainable systems are being promoted by this web of cities. Urban life is very demanding of food beyond subsistence, such that it consumes and wastes much of the world's production. By its urban way of living, it consumes much of the world's energy and produces much of its greenhouse emissions. Cities are, after all, where planes fly from and fly to and consume the most meat. Cities also cause directly (in their expansion) or indirectly (by their resource extraction) the destruction of the world's forests and jungles. There are no alternative cities because cities mainly transmit and further the systems of the worldwide web of Western consumption and development such that it is no longer seen as a Western way of commerce. This makes it difficult for humanity to imagine other possibilities that may be more just and sustainable.

Yet, as we stated, the city is a hub for innovation. This is particularly true because the city attracts the largest population of peoples and the most varied. People come to the city because economic opportunity is most concentrated here. As traditional communities and economies of subsistence are transformed into modern cash and consumption economies, migration to the city become more and more necessary because the greatest opportunities to earn cash are concentrated here. Even if the informal dwellers live in dire conditions in the city, being employed only rarely, living in slums that lack access to basic services like water and electricity, and being exposed to hazardous living conditions in dangerous locations, most people who have migrated to cities say they are better off in the city (Dear and Flusty 1988, 64). Their capacity to access work that pays cash is higher in the city. There, they also

have access to health, education, and even basic utilities—much more, specifically, than if they were living in rural communities. This concentration of opportunity is only logical since cities are the nodes that facilitate the expansion of the world economy. Thus, cities are populated by various peoples attracted to the opportunity of being incorporated into the world economy and its dominant rationality.

For this reason, cities can be said to be a multiverse of rationalities composed of people coming from various cultures. It is a hub that attracts people from various rationalities that are not necessarily Westernized, but are drawn by the success of the Westernized world in providing a way of life that the West has determined to be good. In the city, people of various worlds come to engage the dominant, Western-defined rationality that will provide incomes and services that people will need to flourish in the globalized world order. In their peripheral societies, the means to acquire these needs are difficult. The opportunities for cash generating activities are lessened the farther one is from the city. This is because people who live in the peripheral worlds often do not know how the dominant system works and are easily exploited by those who function best in this central world—a result of the fact that the latter possess a degree of connectedness to the global economic system which the former do not have. Thus, as much as cities gather the multiplicity of peoples that are attracted to them, they also serve to shape the hegemony of the dominant economic rationality and tend to marginalize rationalities that do not or cannot subscribe to the economic and political systems it seeks to consolidate. Many of these marginalized people populate the city as its source of cheap labor. However, because the city attracts this plurality of rationalities, it also bears the potential for breaking the hegemony of the dominant rationality.

A History of Reduction

The birth of cities already bears this dialectic of multiplicity and hegemony. The emergence of the city is tied closely to the development of agriculture during the Neolithic period (Bairoch 1988). With the discovery of new methods of farming which eventually led to surplus production, more people could live in smaller

land areas. These more densely populated communities “became centers for the technical and social innovation that gave rise to civilization” (Bairoch 1988, 336). Greater production also allowed for the freeing of the labor of persons who could develop other areas of human commerce such as manufacturing, art, research, and governance. Because of this, larger and larger communities of people engaged in the exchange of produce, ideas, and labor. Thus, greater inventiveness and innovation was made possible. The drivers of innovation were born of the commerce of a greater number of persons freed from the search for sustenance who could engage each other in large centers of human exchange. The cities, being centers of trade, attracted various persons from other centers of innovation and invention, so that ideas were exchanged and shared more freely and quickly. Bairoch further claims that the city “unquestionably encourages innovation itself in the broadest sense of the word and its diffusion” for the following reasons:

First, the higher population density in cities facilitates human contacts, thereby accelerating the flow of information. Second, the diversity of urban activities quite naturally encourages attempts to apply or adopt in one sector (or in one specific problem areas) technological solutions adopted in another sector. Third, cities tend to concentrate educational activities that throughout history have combined teaching and, if not research in the modern sense of the term, at least a certain systematic reflection. Fourth, the urban milieu provides a natural refuge for original spirits ill at ease in rural areas where the pressure to conform is, as a rule, stronger. Last but not least, the city is, par excellence, the point of contact with other cities by way of trade and through migration of artisans, laborers, and clerical and administrative staff between different cities. (336).

The other driver for innovation was the possibility of creating surplus value. With the surplus of production, trade could be carried out as a focus of human activity, and with this commerce, certain groups of people could begin to gather the surplus produce and create profit. Naomi Miller and Wilma Weterstorm have been quoted by Roberts as saying, for instance, that surplus “produced an impetus toward developments we associate with civilization: urbanization, a high degree of economic specialization, and social

inequality” (Roberts 2009, 11). Eventually, the cities became the centers of wealth accumulation, while the countryside became the source of natural resource extraction and raw food production. People who could gather the surplus created by the new systems were therefore able to use the cities as centers of accumulation and consumption.

Perhaps, this is why one of the defining characteristics of the city is its separation from nature (Tuan 1978, 1). Tuan attempts to define the universal aspects of cities thus:

Cities, then, may be ranked according to how far they depart from farm life, from the agricultural rhythm of peak activity in the warm half of the year, and from the cycle of work during the day and of sleep at night. At one end of the scale we have the village subordinate to nature; at the other, the city that does not know how it is fed, that comes alive in winter and slights the daily course of the sun. (1)

Urban life is defined more than anything by its being less determined by nature and more by the human capacity to shape nature or the “anthropocentric reconfiguration of natural processes and their products” (Dear and Flusty 1988, 60). This is because the city exists to extract resources from nature, and then to transform these resources into commodities. The people of the city do not *directly* extract the resources from nature, however. The rural areas are engaged in this activity. But the city exists to gather these resources into tradable goods. The city, to emphasize, only handles commodities that can directly be transformed into wealth. From their beginning, cities have existed for a kind of commerce that exploits nature’s resources which are extracted for it by its neighboring rural communities. This exploitation of nature eventually leads to the exploitation of the peripheral communities that serve the city. We can see the evolution of this relationship of extraction clearly in the evolution of Metro Manila.

The urban centers in the Philippines are certainly the centers of commerce and wealth creation. They continue to hold the preeminent position they have held since their creation in colonial times: that is, as the main links between the local people and the wider world market. However, before the coming of the Spaniards, there

was no urban life to speak of in the country (Bairoch 1988, 48). Certainly there were large centers of trade, one of the largest being the settlement that was to become the city of Manila. However, this was not a city or urban center as these are defined by those who study cities, but a large agricultural or fishing community (49). Large settlements in pre-Hispanic Philippines were mostly centers of trade where some form of production existed but these settlements were also as involved in the production of their own food and the gathering of their own raw materials. In fact, most of the archipelago's populations dwelled in productive communities that engaged in trade with each other. Before the coming of the colonial powers, there was no center of political or economic power that ruled large territories or a conglomeration of communities such that this same center extracted its needs from the territories it dominated. The Spanish colonial interests, however, changed all this.

At the onset of colonization, with the creation of semi-urban centers, where the *poblacion* was the center and the peripheries were known as the *barrio* (Francia 2010, 67–68), we begin to see the imposition of an alien rationality upon the local populace. From subsistence communities, the natives are forced to live in towns where their own production and livelihood is tied to the interests of the ruling elite. At first, they produce in order to pay the tributes of the colonial administration, and later they will begin to change their farming and land ownership patterns to supply the cash crop trade which emerged in the nineteenth century. Persons who were used to planting subsistence crops in *barangay* commons for theirs and their clan's needs were forced to plant cash crops first in plots assigned to them in the outskirts of the newly created towns and later in haciendas owned by the friars and Spanish crusaders and officials or administered by Chinese-Filipino mestizos. This colonial transformation dispossessed the people because it enlisted them into a system where they had no control over the means of production, as these were, by that time, technically owned by the crown and later by the economic elite who participated in the international cash crop trade system. In early colonial times, whatever the natives produced was taxed by the crown, and because people were restricted from their free movement, trade was essentially

prohibited (Abinales and Amoroso 2005, 61). In this way, the local economy was reshaped to serve not the people at the grass-roots, but the Spanish colonial enterprise. Communities of people who could support their way of life according to their systems of production and solidarity were transformed to a vulnerable class that existed to serve the colonists and enrich them. People who lived in *barangays*, whose social and economic capital was based on clan relations, were, as a result, forced to live in larger communities which served tribute and resource extraction. Even their traditional leaders (who ruled the people according to a system of mutual protection and support) were transformed by the Spaniards to petty elite who collected tributes and taxes for the crown and eventually, these traditional leaders were able to acquire some of the former communal lands for their private gain—a move made possible by their knowledge of the colonial system and the natives' confusion over the Spanish concept of land ownership (Abinales and Amoroso 2005, 57).

With this process of reduction, which Abinales and Amoroso (2005, 60) refer to as a “major socio economic rupture with the past in a relatively short time” (mostly within the sixteenth century), the creation of urban centers were made possible. What was created during the Spanish colonial period was a system of forced labor, tribute, and church contributions that drained the locals of their resources in order to support the continuing colonization of the islands and Spanish trade (Abinales and Amoroso 2005, 62). To quote the authors,

Effects included population decline, the abandonment of cleared and cultivated fields, and the disruption of interisland trade. Yet the new state, as described above, was determined to collect tributes, now owed to the Spanish king in compensation for the conquest, conversion, and rule of the Philippines. More practically speaking, the influx into the cities of foreign soldiers, missionaries, officials, and traders put greater demand on food production. Resettlement therefore included a new land-tenure and land-use system. (60–61)

Thus, the *reduccion* process which began the whole conquest and transformation of the local world is aptly named. As the word

denotes, it succeeded in reducing the otherness of the local populace, their economic, political, and dwelling systems to the totality which was the Spanish colonial mechanism. The colonial enterprise hoped to reduce all otherness to a system of the same so that the totality served the interests of the colonizer. Ways of dwelling and engaging nature and other people were disrupted so that the people could support a system they neither benefited from nor desired. It also created a system where the center of commerce was supported by the populace that did not benefit from its existence. Because the pre-Hispanic Philippine civilization had no urban systems, the imposition of urban systems therefore meant the imposition of an other lifeworld on the native population which was disruptive to the native economic and social systems. It also conscripted the whole archipelago's population into a system which served the commerce of the capital as a portal to the world economy.

At the center of this process of reduction was the city of Manila. Up to the seventeenth century, native communities supported the population in Manila as the center of the Spanish administration and the Galleon Trade. However, with the coming of the seventeenth century, the city grew into a cosmopolitan center that drew not only its sustenance from the production of the countryside, but also, eventually, even the cash crops it traded to the outside. This meant that the small farms (later haciendas) would exist to supply cash crops to the city of Manila and later Cebu and Iloilo with tradable crops that the natives could not use for their own sustenance. As Filipinos were drawn deeper and deeper into the cash economy for health, education, taxation, and other needs, and as they were deprived of the means of earning a living in their own hometowns, they were drawn more into the ambit of the city of Manila which provided income-generating opportunities for the natives. This is especially true because their being drawn to the cash crop production system and the cash economy led to the loss of their lands to people who were providing them with cash loans. As a result, these same Filipinos would eventually have to pay for with their productive land (Abinales and Amoroso 2005, 81).

The city of Manila grew dramatically with the rise of the export of cash crops, as well as when the city became the major source

of cash incomes. At this point, the provinces existed as the peripheries that supported the economy of the center. People were drawn to Manila because they lost their land, and then ended up working for the landed elite who exploited them with low wages and unfavorable share cropping conditions (80–81). Abinales and Amoroso claim that “The uneven impact of these economic changes devastated rural populations” (83). We can say that the growth and development of the urban center was fed by this devastation of the rural populations. The rural populations, of course, had many reasons for migrating to the city, but all their reasons could be rooted in the fact that most incomes worth earning are concentrated in the city and people in the rural peripheries were exploited by the elite who controlled the opportunities for earning. These opportunities are available to them due to their connection to the global, export economy. Things have not changed much today, except that urban centers seem to have decisively justified their central position in societies. They are “legitimized” by the “ideology of capitalism” for their contribution to the nation's GNP. Urban centers are still “parasitic” upon the rural areas for their growth and development (Gilbert and Gugler 1992, 14–15). The difference is that today there is an interlinked network of cities all serving the world economic system that extracts resources from the resource rich rural areas (15).

It is important to note that the urbanization of the non-Western world was rooted in the “intrusion of industrial capitalism and imperialism” which built the economies of the Western world (16). This describes the development of Third World cities up to the twentieth century:

Throughout the “traditional world” Europeans destroyed, transformed, or distorted indigenous civilizations. The newly founded cities reflected the new power structures and exercised functions relevant to the interests of Europe. They were beginning to become part of a world economic and social system. (16)

Cities in the third world emerged as a response to the need of global capitalism for raw materials and markets as well as a source of labor. The people from traditional rural communities

were conscripted into this far-reaching system and were rendered as a marginalized people dependent on the cities for survival and income generation because their land and traditional sources of their basic needs—notably the land and the natural resources it provided were already appropriated for the needs of the global market.

The Cracks in the Concrete World

As cities are developed to become hubs of the global market, they are made to bear the uniformity of consumer societies. Thus, world-class malls have opened to sell the same brands or brands that emulate the styles of Western fashions, world-class homes have been built according to the living standards of the cosmopolitan city dwellers, and world-class educational institutions are established according to the scientific and academic standards set by Western gatekeepers of legitimate knowledge. Even businesses are established according to systems and mechanisms determined by Western praxis. As cities develop, they Westernize. After all, development equates to Westernization. The elite populations of cities begin to mimic the Western or global means and modes of expression, the global lexicon of the good life, as well as adapt values and aspirations of the world's elite. However, Berner points out that

The city's integration into the global society does not take place in toto—only its social, economic, and spatial parts. Most obvious are the changes at the highest level. Managers and professionals concentrate in places that can be viewed as parts of a single world city rather than of the city they belong to in a geographical and administrative sense. (2010, 2–3)

In the city, there are enclaves of modernity or global culture that host the commerce of the dominant, Westernized populations. These enclaves are closed off by walls and policies. These realms function according to the rationality of the global city and its requirements.

However, as the world globalizes and adapts to modern ways, there are populations within the city that are arguably still of the traditional world order, to a lesser or greater extent. These are

populations that find the cosmopolitan systems alien to their rationalities (Lowder 1986, 36). The global city can only exist with the cheap labor provided by the labor of its partially westernized or non-westernized populations. In Metro Manila, since its Americanization at the turn of the century, peoples from traditional communities have flocked to the city to provide this labor. Attracted by the opportunities to earn incomes more easily accessible in the city, they came to build communities in spaces available to them (Alcazaren, Ferrer, and Icamina 2010, 8). These peoples of traditional, rural communities have established communities in abandoned places of the original city or in undeveloped lands within or at the peripheries of the expanding metro. For instance, as the Manila elite moved from Intramuros to other parts of the city, the landless moved into the derelict buildings of the walled city. They also lived in the peripheries of factories and later along the edges of walled villages of the wealthy families (53). These centers of what Alcazaren calls centers of informality, or the centers of an other way of dwelling, mirror the ways of dwelling born from their traditional ways of living. These are communities of face-to-face networks of solidarity bound by kinship ties and mutual care networks (Alcazaren, Ferrer, and Icamina 2010, 65). As much as this is a strategy for survival, this is also a way of being that they chose to preserve because as they build their homes in the cracks of the Westernized city, at the same time they seek a sense of the good community and a sense of their shared self (Berner 2010, 9). Local slums in the Philippines were structured according to the *barrio*. Their communal structures were built according to traditional communities with similar social capital networks; there, houses echoed the architecture of the *bahay kubo* or nipa hut, and their spaces were built in such a way that repeats, in confined spaces, the commons of rural communities. The slums of Metro Manila, meanwhile, are the cracks in its global, developed facade. These are the spaces where the other to Western development rationalities quietly assert their subversive presence. On the other hand, the informal settlers brought with them their own rural rationalities, and this is true even for those who already dwelt within the environs which would be included or reduced to the metropolis. Places such as Payatas, Diliman, and Marikina—which were mainly

agricultural lands—bore populations which were rural in their lifeworlds and rationalities. One aspect of their lifeworlds that reflects this encounter is their very dwellings and communal systems.

When squatter colonies were formed, they shaped these differently from the city planners' conception of a shared living space. In Ferrer's (2010, 131) study of informal housing, he points out that the typical rural poor in the turn of the century took on the aspects of the *bahay kubo* and the social life it engendered. The rural migrants or the populations incorporated into the growing city took with them their own community structures and "conceptions of space" (132). He notes that "The first 'informal settlements' dwellings themselves mimicked bahay kubos with bamboo and thatch replaced by discarded plywood and tin" (132). Not only did the actual dwelling mimic the *bahay kubo*, it also mimicked the extension of the inside to the outside where the actual dwelling extended beyond the structure to the outside spaces which were the parts of the dwelling where one met neighbors, washed clothes, played games, and relaxed to watch the day go by. In a traditional home, the outside was as important as the inside as a dwelling place, and the house was designed to open to the community which was the extension of their home. This is entirely different from the dominant, Westernized conception of habitable dwellings with private spaces clearly delineated from the outside. It does not reflect the structures of independence that value individuality and privacy that the modern homes of the urban dweller structure. The traditional homes of informal dwellers, up to this day, reflect not only the sparse space in the city where the poor have to insert themselves, but also their valuing of community and social capital.

Another manifestation of how the enclaves of informality are different from the dominant rationality of the city is how they "plan" their dwellings. The formal government has established codes for the number and size of windows, number of steps in relation to use, types of doors, foundations, and supports including the number of square meters are necessary for a person to be able to dwell properly. The marginalized, in contrast, clearly do not conform to these building codes. They have their own building codes based on a complex multiplicity of considerations, including the possibility of unpredictable eviction and demolition; thus, all materials must

be transferable or recyclable, and spaces must have multiple use, since in the first place there is not enough space. Thus, they have no room dividers, and in order to also maximize space and keep communal channels open, they have no clear structural division between the private and public spheres. Ferrer writes,

The mystery of informal settlement community building lies, not where architects and planners expect it—on understanding abstract concepts of physical forms and spaces—but in understanding and earning from the informed process that created them. The key it seems, would be to discover the 'timeless ways of building' and to understand and apply the principles inherent in the natural process of development to the design and planning of socialized housing and lower-income commodities. (2010, 141)

There is also an other rationality in their process of growth. Communities and homes grow *paunti-unti* or a bit at a time based on what materials are at hand, what they can afford at a particular time, the landscape, and community configurations based on kinship ties and whatever alliances may exist in the community. The design of homes and communities are based on communal patterns of solidarity and mutual help, specifically. Even if it seems to the dominant rationality that there is no order to their use of space or their aesthetic, there is a clear order. For example, they have spaces for communal reflection (the *sari-sari* store and porches that extend to the alleys) and spaces for recreation (mini-basketball courts) which are placed and designed according to their own concerns. Alcazaren, Ferrer, and Icamina (2010, 79) note how "long spaces become the settlement's main street, a series of public plazas, markets, playgrounds, and extensions of living rooms for the residents. The nature of the space is non-linear and is set by the function, the users, days of the week, and the time of day." Thus, railways become gathering places and main thoroughfares. Because these are shared spaces, they are constantly negotiated. This is why government planning and impositions disrupt the community. It disrupts the community aspiration to foster solidarity and social capital formation when it imposes the dominant meaning of space and land use, as well as the design of local populations.

I only discuss the informal settler in this essay because, as the world consolidates the web of cities to serve global production, consumption, and wealth creation, and as this system leads us to perdition with the multiple crises it has caused—like the corrosion of topsoil, the extinction of multiple species, the end of potable water, and especially global warming—we need fissures in the hegemony to show us another way of being in the world. The existence of informal settlements, or settlements of informality in the city that seeks to reduce all otherness to the totality of the worldwide web of cities that serve global commerce, thereby signals the reality that not all peoples can be reduced to this single rationality. In fact, their existence signals the truth that the other will always reassert itself in the fissures of the cemented whole. Like grass growing in the cracks of pavements, the other lifeworld that is other than the Westernized totality, will always assert itself, and the systematic rationality cannot fully encompass the dwellings of peoples. There will always be competing conceptions of the good and humane dwelling. And as cities exist today, with the powerful assertion of the dominant, global rationality, the other rationalities can only exist in the fissures or the margins of cities. However, as we come to realize that this dominant rationality and its logic of development is potentially destructive of our species, it needs to be meaningfully challenged.

Of course, this does not mean that the spread of Western rationality and its systems has not allowed for new possibilities of human flourishing. Certainly, it has. The quality of human life has arguably improved and new possibilities of realizing human existence have clearly been realized because of the spread of Western civilization and the dominant global system. However, the dominant rationality that supports and is supported by the global network of cities has clearly reached an impasse. The global city network and the production and consumption system it supports has led to today's more threatening crises. Global warming and all its accompanying effects, the destruction of the world's biomes, and the threat to humanity of the loss of potable water, arable land, and the antecedent social unrest are all caused by this global economic system supported by the global city network. We need, as a result, new perspectives to respond to these crises. However, the only solutions

that are being posed are often entrenched within the global order that created the problem in the first place. Its solutions are always drawn from traditional Western conceptions of development and growth-driven economies.

The infusion of other perspectives and points of view are necessary to enrich the dominant rationality's conception of the good society. The city, being a dynamic center of a plurality of rationalities, bears the possibility of stimulating the awakening of rationalities to other ways of thinking civilization because of its capacity to be a center of discourse of the multiverse of rationalities. From the beginning, it has been the central hub that gathers all kinds of people in concentrated spaces to bring about the most intense exchange of ideas. The cities can again play the role of hothouse of innovation by genuinely facilitating the discourse between rationalities. The city must be able to create systems of discourse between rationalities at the center and the periphery. But these systems of engagement must also be just systems of dialogue in order to genuinely enrich the dominant rationality. As they exist today, the marginalized exist only in the peripheries of the discourse that shapes the global world order. They must be placed at the center of the discourse because the global world order that has appropriated their world is also potentially adversely reshaping their world and they must have a say in reforming the global world order, as it is also this order that has usurped their lifeworlds without their freely given consent.

This essay engaged the realities of informal communities that dwell in the city because these communities best illustrate how the city attracts other rationalities and admits the flourishing of these rationalities in its peripheries. In their flourishing, these rationalities become part of the multiplicity of voices that shape the city. However, as they are structured today, cities only admit these other voices in their peripheries. As we have seen, they find a way to build communities that make sense to them within the structures imposed by the dominant rationality. They have no place in shaping the dominant rationality in a significant way and thus leave intact the destructive tendencies that the global economy supports. This is a concrete metaphor of how the other rationalities that strive to shape a human world order can discourse with the dominant

system.

But if humanity is to creatively engage the catastrophic changes that face us, we must be able to create a free space for the discourse of various rationalities that will help humanity critique the dominant vision of development the network of cities support. If cities manage to be the nodes of free discourse, this can initiate genuine reform. As nodes of discourse, cities will open the just discourse of rationalities to the global system of cities engaged in commerce. Thus, cities, which are the nodes of hegemony, can be the very instrument that breaks the global hegemony to create a new world order that is just and sustainable.

We must ask ourselves though if this is possible. Can the city be the dynamic host of a fair and just discourse? Perhaps, but this will be difficult. The city is already structured according to a dominant rationality and its logic. It is already oriented to favor the legitimacy of that rationality. Thus, its governments, its civil societies, its universities, and its enterprises all exist to support its own reason. Perhaps, it is truly incumbent upon the margins, to the others who are not completely of this web of global urbanity, to break open the logic of the urban for it to accept the possibilities of other ways of dwelling. This may happen when we realize that our cities are not sustainable and we are driven to look to other rationalities to ensure our survival. But hopefully, before that painful time comes, the other rationalities will find a way to bring new perspectives to the web of cities that have caught us in the logic of extinction.

Endnotes

1. This work was made possible by funding from the Philippine Higher Education Research Network (PHERNet).
2. This is a running argument in Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (London: Penguin Books, 2011).
3. In this essay, I shall retain the word the West to refer to that civilization that colonized the world in the last 400 years. Although, for some critics, especially Western trained ones, the use of the word is a simplistic generalization, the author believes that it is useful for this essay. The primary reason, the author will argue, is that these civilizations, which are being imposed in the global world order, were primarily developed in the colonizing nations in Western Europe. The essay will reflect on how the cities built in the colonized nations were primarily created as outposts for the extraction of

resources for Western defined economic growth and development. These cities were built as centers where people from Europe or European-based civilizations could live in the alien climes in ways that approximated what they understood were human lives, in order for them to have outposts for commerce—mainly economic, but also cultural and political. Moreover, the author still subscribes to the idea of a Western civilization because the colonized worlds experienced a profound imposition of alien cultures that were disastrous to them. This dislocation of the lives of vast populations was accomplished to serve the flourishing or development of the imposing peoples. Thus, it is still useful for this paper to refer to the historically colonizing countries as coming from the Western civilizations. These are the civilizations that have organized the global economy as it exists today, as a system of production-consumption-wealth-accumulation that has at its core the enframing technologies, as well as production and wealth accumulations systems developed by and imposed by the colonizing West. Although effectively the frame of all existing civilizations, they are still experienced as alien and other.

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REMMON E. BARBAZA

The City as Illusion and Promise¹

“Die Wüste wächst. Weh dem, der Wüsten birgt.”
– F. Nietzsche

“Although it looks like a tomato, it’s kind of a notional tomato.
It’s the idea of a tomato.”
– from the documentary film, *Food, Inc.*

SA SIMULA, siya’y isang kalansay na nakatalalan sa hangin. Isang matayog, buhaghag na bunton ng patapong mga piraso ng tablang gato, mabukbok, mabitak, masalubsob, pilipit, kubikong, na pinagpaku-pako nang patayo, pahalang, patulibas, kabit-kabit nang walang wawa, tulag ng kahig-manok sa lupa, at dito’t sisingit ang mga tadyang na bakal at ang mga yero at mga playwud at mga lawanit upang saluhin ang buhos ng labusaw na halo ng tubig, graba, buhangin, semento, at ang malabsang sangkap ay sisiksik at titigib sa hulmahan, matutuyo, titigas, yayakap sa mga tadyang na bakal at sa mga bitukang tubo. Bawat buhos ng malabsang sangkap ay karagdagang laman ng kanyang katawan, karagdagang guhit sa tutunguhing anyo. Unti-unting paglapad at pagtaas ng katawang konkreto. Kikinisin siya, damdamitan ng salamin, tisa, marmol at pormika, hihilamusan ng kulay upang umalindog ang kanyang balat. At sa kanyang ganap na pakaluwal ay bibinyagan siya, at ang pangalan niya’y iuukit sa tanso.

Sa simula, siya’y isang kalansay na nakatalalan sa hangin. Pagyayamanin siya, maglalaman at lulusog sa dilig ng pawis at dugo. At siya’y matatayo nang buong tatag, lakas at tibay, naghuhumindig at nagtutumayog sa kapangyarihan, samantalang sa kanyang paana ay

naroon at lugmok, lupaypay, sugatan, duguan, nagtingala sa kanyang kataasan, ang mga nagpala sa kanya.

Sa simula, siya'y isang kalansay na nagpapahabag, at nagwakas na isang makapangyarihan, palalong diyos. (Reyes 2007, 1–2)

[In the beginning it was a skeleton struggling in the air. A towering, loose heap of thrown-off pieces of rotten wood, worm-ridden, split, splintered, twisted, cubiform, nailed standing, jutting, crossing, senselessly cobbled together, like chicken scratches in the dirt, and here will joint the steel ribs, galvanized iron, plywood and particle board to catch the turbidly flowing mixture of water, gravel, sand and cement, and the pulped material will squeeze into and overflow the mold, dry, harden, embrace the steel ribs and the pipe intestines. Every pour of pulped material is added flesh on its body, an added line to the intended figure. The skeleton of wood will slowly be swept away as the concrete body slowly widens and rises. It will be polished, dressed in glass, tile, marble and formica, facewashed with color to pretty its skin. And at its complete birth it will be christened and its name engraved in bronze.

In the beginning it was a skeleton struggling in the air. It will be enriched, fattened and given health by the watering of sweat and blood. And it will stand in perfect stability, strength and sturdiness, erect and towering in power, while at its feet are—and prostrate, collapsed, wounded, bloody, faces turned upwards to its height—the ones who shoveled it.

In the beginning it was a pathetic skeleton; in the end a powerful, arrogant god. (Scalice [Trans.] 2016)

The paragraphs quoted above *in extenso* are from the opening pages of Edgardo M. Reyes's contemporary classic Filipino novel, *Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* (*In the Claws of Light*), made even more popular by its 1975 film adaptation (*Maynila sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* or *Manila in the Claws of Light*) by the acclaimed director Lino Brocka.

How does it happen that what was once simply a “pathetic skeleton” in the end is transformed into “a powerful, arrogant god”? In Reyes's depiction of the building that was just erected, something is being shown and something else being covered over. Something is deliberately manufactured and made to appear, while another is being hidden behind. When one walks, for instance, on the streets of the central business district of any city, one will likely be

surrounded by shiny and glitzy high-rise buildings and skyscrapers, which evoke progress, affluence, modernity, and power. For sure, to some extent what they portray are true, but not entirely the truth. For such material realities as shiny, modern high-rise buildings could not have come to be without the power and capabilities of the workers who built them through their physical and mental powers. One can have all the money in the world, and the best engineers and architects, but without these construction workers, these buildings will not come to be. They do not grow on their own like trees, or sprout like wild plants. They have to be deliberately built and erected, through the work of human hands.

Reyes's graphic description of the illusion that is the city is for sure informed by Marxian thought, specifically that of alienation. We know, however, that Marxian thought is premised on materialist metaphysics, so that all reality is reducible to the material, including the realities in which the human species finds itself. While it remains to be one of the most, if not the most, tenable theory of the material basis of the human condition—with all its drama and contradictions—it cannot, however, go beyond the question of how such a material reality appears to the human being, particularly as worker. Nor can it consider the question where the compulsion to build these magnificent structures, at such great human cost, might come from. For it is not the case that the material “just lies there,” and the human being simply apprehends it. Rather, the human being, as worker for instance, already stands in a prior relation to the material world, a relation that is not of his own making.

When Marx depicted the fate of the *Gattungswesen* or species-being, he did so while still within the presupposition of a particular being or realm of being—namely the material, as the basis of all reality, in quite a logical and no doubt rigorous manner. But the material alone cannot account for this consciousness of the species-being, nor can it allow us to consider what we mean when we say that “matter simply is,” as if that begs no further question.

Heidegger was one such thinker who ventured to think, by way of phenomenology, within the realm of being, as well as the relation of being that is prior to whatever it is that the human being concerns itself with, whether in everyday material concerns, or in philosophical questioning. Thinking the city as an illusion through

the thoughts of both Marx and Heidegger might yield even richer insights. In Heidegger's widely influential essay, "The Question Concerning Technology," we read the following passage:

The forester who, in the wood, measures the felled timber and to all appearances walks the same forest path in the same way as did his grandfather is today commanded by profit-making in the lumber industry, whether he knows it or not. He is made subordinate to the orderability of cellulose, which for its part is challenged forth by the need for paper, which is then delivered to newspapers and illustrated magazines. The latter, in their turn, set public opinion to swallowing what is printed, so that a set configuration of opinion becomes available on demand. (1977, 18)

The passage speaks of subordination, one that is kept hidden from the one who is subordinated. At the same time, it speaks of an illusion: "*to all appearances* [the forester] walks the same forest path in the same way as did his grandfather" (emphasis supplied). It only appears to the forester and to anyone observing him that he is doing exactly what his grandfather did in the past. But in reality, he is made subordinate to something else. Perhaps he knows it, perhaps not. In any case, it is only an illusion that everything is as it used to be.

The illusion is not only about what today's forester does. The illusion also concerns the distinction between the city and the province. It only appears that everything is as it used to be between the city and the province, but in reality, both the city and the province are subordinated to something else. Both have been coopted, subsumed under something more decisive and powerful that holds sway over everything. And if the distinction between the province and the city is dissolved by virtue of their common subordination, so too, the city as city and the province as province. It only appears so that in our present age, there are still cities and there are still provinces.

To be sure, it is not only Heidegger who points to such an illusion concerning the city and the province. For instance, David Harvey reminds us that "it was Lefebvre's central conclusion that the city we had once known and imagined was fast disappearing and that it could not be reconstituted" (2012, xiv). Furthermore, "Lefebvre also

saw that the relation between the urban and the rural—or as the British like to call it, between the country and the city—was being radically transformed, that the traditional peasantry was disappearing and that the rural was being urbanized" (xv).

The staggering implication is clear, as Harvey cannot avoid to state: *the city no longer exists*. The "right to the city," if not the city itself, becomes "an empty signifier" (xv).

What if, indeed, the city as we know it no longer existed? What if it is now merely an illusion? These questions no doubt may strike readers as outrageous, or simply empty provocations. They fly in the face of general estimates of the growing population in urban areas, which put the figure anywhere between 50 and 70 percent of the total population in the world. And the trend points toward a steady increase, and not decrease.

Of course, one can simply dismiss this provocation by saying that it all depends on what we mean by "city," and that depending on one's definition of the city one can affirm its existence, or, along with Lefebvre and Harvey, declare its non-existence. The question of the city's existence therefore would seem to be simply arbitrary, as arbitrary as the definition which one happens to adopt.

But perhaps definitions are not the place to begin our present inquiry. Our reflection might just bear more fruit if, instead, we proceed from the shared experience of the city, its common conceptions, and then from there determine what we can make of Lefebvre's and Harvey's prognosis, especially its implications for our future.

For now, we can also look at it this way: the city both does and does not exist. Like most of the food that we eat, we say, of course, that we have food on the table. But when we consider, for example, that in all likelihood the chicken meat we eat comes from poultry that had been fed arsenic-containing drugs meant to promote growth of chicken but are otherwise known to be toxic to humans, then in another real (and more crucial) sense, we can also say that the food on our table is not really food, but poison. It just looks like food, but it really is poison, its harm albeit not instant but gradual and imperceptible (Peng et al. 2017).

In the 2008 documentary film, *Food, Inc.*, investigative reporter Eric Schlosser points to a sampling of food items we normally

purchase at the supermarket, saying, “There are no seasons in the American supermarket. Now there are tomatoes all year round, grown halfway around the world, picked when it was green, and ripened with ethylene gas. Although it looks like a tomato, it’s kind of a notional tomato. It’s the idea of a tomato.” Knowing the process through which much of our food go through until we consume them, we realize that indeed what we call food is in reality not food, but poison. They make us sick. The animals that are raised like they were products in factories are sick the whole time (the chickens, for one, are kept in dark tunnels, never seeing light), from the time the chicks are hatched from eggs, to the point when their bodies are “engineered” to produce bigger breasts to meet the demand for white meat (in the movie the chickens are shown to have grown so heavy they could barely make three steps at a time, and just drop on the ground in exhaustion), and finally when they end up on our plates for us to consume.

One is reminded of the controversial and widely misunderstood passage in “The Question Concerning Technology,” where Heidegger (1977, 15) says that “agriculture is now the mechanized food industry,” and thus essentially is not concerned about feeding us or providing us with food, where food is still understood as the nourishment of the human body by something that promotes its potential for well-being and flourishing.

In the same documentary film, there are hints of the disappearance of the distinction between the city and the province, between the urban and the rural, when the former encroaches upon the latter and organizes it in such a way as to meet its demands and requirements. In *Rebel Cities*, Harvey claims that “the traditional city has been killed by rampant capitalist development, a victim of the never-ending need to dispose of overaccumulating capital driving towards endless and sprawling urban growth no matter what the social, environmental, or political consequences” (2012, xv–xvi).

What if, like the tomato in the supermarket, the city that we assume we live in is no longer really a city, but merely the idea of a city? What if the city is now indeed merely an illusion?

The question of whether the city no longer exists—far from being an empty preoccupation of philosophers who have nothing better

to do and never heeded Marx’s eleventh thesis on Feuerbach—at least forces upon us to inquire into what the city is to begin with. For only when we come to an understanding of what the city is, can we come to a decision whether indeed it no longer exists, as well as in what sense, and therefore remains nothing more than just an illusion.

What is at stake in raising this question, viz., whether the city still exists, or whether it is now simply an illusion? The answer should eventually emerge to be clear: everything. In so far as urban life is the life majority of the global human population live, and in so far as the trend points toward greater and greater urbanization, in so far as this way of life shapes every aspect of our human existence—our ways of producing and consuming, the ways we educate, entertain, and maintain ourselves, etc., etc.—then everything is at stake in raising the question.

But let us first consider the city according to common experience and conception, which precedes any theoretical consideration of its existence or non-existence. How do we conceive of and experience the city? First of all, we recognize a feeling of ambivalence concerning the city as it stands in relation to nature. On the one hand, the city is walled off from nature. Nature, with all things wild and untamed in it, is kept at bay. On the other hand, the city does not want to be completely severed from nature, and wants to keep itself “green” by ensuring that a substantial part of it is devoted to parks and greenery.

Thus, the first experience and conception of the city is in relation to nature, whether for or against it, or ambivalent toward it. The city is conceived of and experienced with reference to nature. One might say that the farther one is from the city, the closer one can be to nature. The man-versus-nature dichotomy is likewise reflected in the city’s ambivalence toward nature in so far as the city is built by man. City-versus-nature is a specific instance of man-versus-nature. These dichotomies are also expressed in the opposition between nature and nurture, where nurture is distinguished by the human factor.

One might thus see the city-province, urban-rural, town-country dichotomies in relation to nature. Between the city and the province, it is the province that we experience ourselves as being closer

to nature. The farther from the city, the more we are in the province, the closer are we to nature. But since the province itself is not nature that is completely tamed, perhaps we can think of the province as somewhere in between nature and the city, though decidedly closer to nature than it is to the city.

The geographer Yi-Fu Tuan indeed has proposed distance from nature as the least arbitrary criteria in determining whether, and to what extent, a place is a city. Thus, instead of a clear-cut and black-and-white distinction between the rural and the urban, what we have, rather, is a spectrum of cities according to their distance from the natural rhythm of human life:

The problem is to conceive of a scale that is least arbitrary. The one I shall explore is idea that cities are artifacts and worlds of artifice placed at varying human conditions close to nature. I assume that a life close to nature is bound to food production and to the needs of survival, that it follows closely the natural rhythms of day and night and of the seasons.

Cities, then, may be ranked according to how far they depart from farm life, from the agricultural rhythm of peak activity in the warm half of the year, and from the cycle of work during the day and of sleep at night. At one end of the scale we have the village subordinate to nature; at the other, the city that does not know how it is fed, that comes alive in winter and slights the daily course of the sun. (Tuan 1978, 1–2)

Although the measurable distance between cities, as in one that can be covered only by air travel, is longer than that between the city and the province, the city dweller who had planned “a weekend escape” into the countryside will traverse a distance that in a more profound and experiential sense is longer.

In Tagalog-speaking regions of the Philippines, the travel from the province to Manila is expressed by a single verb by itself, namely, “luwas.” Thus, *Luluwas ako bukas* means, “I am travelling to Manila tomorrow,” without even the need to mention Manila as the destination. The verb itself indicates Manila in its meaning, and at least in modern times is not used in any other way. We learn from linguists and other language experts that the word originally comes from “luwásan,” which refers to the place where the river

waters flow, the opposite of which is “hulò;” that is, where the waters are flowing from (Almario, 2014).

Still, “traveling to Manila” does not fully capture what is expressed in *luwás*, for the verb does not just mean to travel, but even more so connotes the trip to a distant place, one which requires a significant amount of psychological will and readiness to embrace the interruption of one’s accustomed way of life, both of which are demanded by the journey. It is thus no ordinary travel, but travel to the Other of the province. And after this interruption in one’s life, one returns home. One says “Uuwi ko” (I am returning home) after the *luwás*.

In what way does the city represent and embody the Other of the province? From the perspective of the province, the city is the site of progress and modernity, of science and technology. We speak of “city-smart,” pointing to the liberal and smart ways of the urban dweller, as opposed to the naïve and backward *probinsiyano*. The Filipino slang *promdi* is used derogatively or condescendingly to refer to people who came “*from the* (hence the *promdi*) province.” Thus, the city appears to possess the allure, glitter, and glamor of modernity, as well as holds the promise of redemption from stagnation in the rural life. Always on the move, teeming with color and brimming with excitement, the city is a place that never sleeps.

On the other hand, from the perspective of city dwellers who are stressed out by their job, the province is the place where they can retreat into, a refuge close to nature, and thus is also a venue for feeling rejuvenated and recharged. It is, therefore, a venue that will hopefully help city dwellers feel refreshed upon their return to work. Close to nature itself, the province offers the opportunity for harassed urbanites to slow down and once again be immersed in his or her surroundings—a stark opposite to the experience in the city where there seems to be a need for people to wear blinders (like those worn by carriage horses) in order to be constantly focused only on the immediate task, and thereby unable to linger and be conscious of one’s immediate environment, let alone gain a broader perspective of it as a whole.

Considered from the perspective of the origin of the city vis-à-vis the province, the question thus arises: experientially and conceptually, is the city the city in so far as it is not the province? That is

to say, can the city be conceived and experienced without relation to the province? Or vice versa?

Viewed historically and etymologically, the city-province dichotomy is not the same as those between urban and rural, or even town and country. Moreover, it is not without reason that the origin of the word “province” (Latin, *provincia*, of unknown origin) came a century after the origin of the word “city” (from the Old French *cite*, derived from the Latin *civitas*, “citizen”), from the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries respectively. The city is a political community established on the basis of a shared identity and common political goals and economic aspirations. The province, which connotes “charge” or “territory” (i.e., territory of a city), has its origins in empires, particularly the Roman empire. As a territory of the empire, the province is an appendage of the city, colonized in the service of the city to provide natural resources and human labor. Even in contemporary usage, the word “province” refers to expertise (that is, authority), as when one speaks of a certain research topic as falling within his or her province. As an expert on the topic, he or she has the authority to speak about it.

But now, whichever way we conceive of the relationship between the city and the province (something that demands a separate and more thorough study), what if, following Lefebvre and Harvey, the distinction no longer exists in so far as the city, and as well the province, is now but a mere illusion?

If we are to proceed from the same assumptions on which the analyses of Lefebvre and Harvey are based, especially the claim that “rampant capitalist development” led to the dissolution of the city as we knew it, and with it the levelling of the distinction between the city and the province, then we have to look squarely into the question of capitalism, including the ways by which indeed it “killed the city.”

Within the natural world, when left to its own devices (that is, without human intervention), one observes a constant process of production and consumption. For instance, we know that photosynthesis is a natural process by which oxygen is generated, that is to say, produced. It is a process by which a green plant, as it is exposed to light, converts water and carbon dioxide into food. Animals, too, consume the oxygen produced through this process.

Adult birds, for their part, have to “work” and “produce” food for their birdlings to consume. If birds do not do the work of the day, as it were, if they do not make the effort to gather worms, their birdlings would have nothing to consume.

In many different ways and in various degrees of complexities, we see this cycle of production and consumption in nature. Left to its own devices, nature manifests a seamless cycle of production and consumption, a beauty in itself that does not fail to inspire awe in the human observer, provided he takes time to linger and open his eyes to such natural processes unfolding before him. In such a constant cycle, where matter is neither created nor destroyed, there is neither overproduction nor overconsumption. Nature finds its own balance. *Nature is its own balance.*

Interestingly, similar to Yuan above, Heidegger also points to the preservation of the natural rhythm of human life in discussing the “fundamental character of dwelling” as one of “sparing and preserving.” He writes,

Mortals dwell in that they receive the sky as sky. They leave to the sun and the moon their journey, to the stars their courses, to the seasons their blessing and their inclemency; they do not turn night into day nor day into a harassed unrest. (Heidegger 1971, 147–48)

When this natural rhythm, this delicate balance between production and consumption, is disrupted, then we run into a problem. When humans, for example, engage in overproduction or overconsumption, then the balance is disrupted, and both nature and humans are affected. Capitalism, especially the unbridled kind, is almost synonymous to consumption, or more specifically, to consumerism (although one might argue that the expression “unbridled capitalism” is redundant, since it can be established that it belongs to the nature of capitalism to run unbridled). Capitalism does, after all, thrive on consumerism.

Take the case of Metro Manila. Each year, thousands of Filipinos migrate from the provinces to the megacity, in search of the good life. But many of them end up in urban poor communities, eking out a living in whatever way they can, mostly through informal labor, or else through employment in basic services or factories.

When in 2013 I interviewed some of the members of an urban poor community near the border between the cities of Caloocan and Navotas, who were temporarily sheltered in an evacuation center along a major road and awaiting to be transported (in fact hauled in dump trucks), I asked them why they left their homes and families in their province, only to face a life of uncertainty, as they do now, not knowing what was in store for them as the government moved to clear the area of the makeshift shelters. One of them replied, “It is much harder to be poor in the province than in the city.” Indeed, since many of them do not own the land they till in the provinces, and without any other property, they are driven by necessity to flock to the city, where at worst, even a day’s worth of scavenging can give them an income to survive for at least a day. Many others are creative enough to land in all sorts of odd jobs or engage in informal entrepreneurships, like selling various commodities to motorists held captive by monstrous traffic jams on main thoroughfares: items such as water, cigarettes, and in some places even toys and gift items.

But one cannot help but ask: why do the farmers, the ones who produce food, literally through their labor, end up not having food on the table? Why are the ones who produce food left with nothing to consume? Conversely, why are the ones who do not produce (by this I mean the production of basic needs sufficient for a decent, human life), the ones who enjoy excesses of resources, and are also the ones who engage in a frenzy of consumption, way beyond what they could actually consume?

Can it be said, in an age when the city is but an illusion, when the distinction between the city and the province has been dissolved, that the city is the place where people consume but do not produce? And conversely, the province is the place where people produce but have nothing to consume? For how else do we account for farmers who have no food on the table, or carpenters and construction workers who build high-rise condominium buildings and mansions in plush subdivisions but have themselves no house to live in? Or health workers who cannot afford medical care and hospitalization?

Does the city, as it is now (or, as it is not), embody the disruption of the balance between production and consumption? If so,

how do we restore the balance? From where we are now, where capitalism has ravaged both city and province, how can we reimagine the possibility of the flourishing of both city and province in a way that fosters and maintains this delicate balance between production and consumption?

Such questions, of course, are not merely scientific in nature (economics, ecology, etc.). They are also eminently a question of justice. If so, we are led to ask: Concerning the city, what is the task of justice? Heeding the suggestion of Lefebvre, Harvey says that “our political task . . . is to imagine and reconstitute a totally different kind of city out of the disgusting mess of a globalizing, urbanizing capital run amok. But that cannot occur without the creation of a vigorous anti-capitalist movement that focuses on the transformation of daily urban life as its goal” (2012, xvi).

Surely, “a totally different kind of a city” is hard to imagine, let alone realize. An impossibility perhaps? But then what options do we have before us? Either we settle with the illusion that is the city of our age, or reimagine and work towards the realization of new possibilities for the city, one that restores and respects the balance in nature that we have for so long forgotten and covered over with our illusions.

Whatever decision we choose to make will determine the kind of cities we will have, and with them our collective future.

Endnote

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