

**Vibrancy of Public Spaces: Inclusivity and Participation
Amidst the Challenges in Transformative Process
in the City of Cagayan de Oro, Philippines**

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**For my parents,
Minda and Fabian**

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Acronyms

ADC – Ateneo Diplomatic Corps

ASEAN – Association of South East Asian Nations

BCPC – Barangay Councils for the Protection of Children

CDC – Child Development Centers

CDO – Cagayan de Oro

CDRRMC – CDO Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council

CDRRMF – City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund

CICL – Children in Conflict with the Law

CLUP – Cagayan de Oro Comprehensive Land Use Plan

COA – Commission on Audit

CSWD – City Social Welfare and Development

CU – Capitol University

ECCD – Early Childhood Care and Development

GIS – Geographic Information System

ICCP – Investment and Capital Corporation of the Philippines

LDCU – Liceo de Cagayan University

NCCA – National Commission for Culture and the Arts

NDRRMC – National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council

NGO – Non-government Organisation

Oro Chamber – Cagayan de Oro Chamber of Commerce and Industry Foundation,

Incorporated

OSCAR – Operation Street Children Atong Responsibilidad (Operation Street Children: Our Responsibility)

PCE – Planned City Extension

PHIVEDEC – Philippine Veterans Investment Development Corporation Industrial Authority

REACH – A joint initiative of the two international NGOs (IMPACT and ACTED) together with the United Nations Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT)

ROW – Reading on Wheels

UN-Habitat – United Nations Human Settlements Programme

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

US – United States

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

USTP – University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines

XU – Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan

1 INTRODUCTION

Urban hubs beyond the megacities are considered catalysts for social diversity and economic progress. Korff (2013), in his article *Are there Cities in an Urban Society?* places the centre of attention on medium-sized and small cities. Korff (2013) infers that, “While the global cities turn into agglomerations of communities, small cities become centres of urbanism of an urban society” (p.10). He explicates the significance of medium-sized and small cities by pointing out that while megacities are considered centres and the former are peripheries, the latter are unprogressive for they constantly tend to dominate.

Centres are always centres of orthodoxy and of domination. Not the least because any centres depends on external supply, which in turn requires ideologies of legitimation. Ignorance and arrogance get into it, because as a centre of the literati, of conventional cultivation, etc. many people regard themselves as superior to the country-bumping hillbillies at the peripheries. The peripheries are taken as irrelevant, because what is important is at the centre. However, history indicates that changes usually proceed from the peripheries. (Korff, 2013, p. 5)

According to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (2015), urbanisation mainly unfolds in medium-sized and small cities rather than in the megacities of Asia and the Pacific. The urban transition of medium-sized cities like Cagayan de Oro (CDO) contributes to the “critical trend and dynamic in the region” (p. 12). By the same token, CDO was chosen at the 2014 World Urban Forum by UN-Habitat as one of the “emerging cities of tomorrow” (E. Escobar-San Juan, 2014, p. 2). CDO was the only city in the Philippines and the second ASEAN city recognised at the forum. Furthermore, CDO ranked 6th as most

competitive city,¹ 2nd in terms of government efficiency and 6th in infrastructures in the 2015 Cities and Municipalities Competitiveness Index (National Competitiveness Council Philippines, 2015).²

CDO has achieved significance and growth. However, like all the other peripheral urban hubs, CDO lacks the human and infrastructural means for urban development. As a matter of fact, its urban poor face the adverse effects of climate change. The city is confronted with the paradox between poverty and rapid urbanisation.

Forty-eight per cent or almost half of the Filipino population settles in the cities; of the 100.98 million Filipinos, 21.9 million live in poverty (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2016). In CDO, the poverty incidence, which indicates the number of individuals who live below the poverty threshold (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2014), is at 7.7 per cent. Albeit urban poverty, the city thrives with distinct approaches that are exemplified in the public spaces. The Habermasian concept of democratic yet critical method of public opinion along with social action applies to the bustling plazas of CDO for “public spaces are supposed to function as receptors designed to absorb and modulate the full range of expressions of the societies they serve, from celebratory events to difficult forms of questioning” (Wee, 2014, p. 190). Therefore, two crucial research questions will be scrutinised in this study:

1. Why and how does the everyday public life in the plazas or parks of CDO exhibit vibrancy?

¹ CDO qualifies under the Highly Urbanised City category. CDO meets the income and population qualification of a Highly Urbanised City that is certified by the National Statistics Office.

² The National Competitiveness Council is established under Presidential Executive Order No. 571 and Executive Order NO. 44. Since 2006, the task force aims to set the criteria for competitiveness of the provinces, cities and municipalities in the Philippines (“About NCC | National Competitiveness Council”).

2. How are the marginalised included in the public spaces of CDO despite the dynamics of transformative processes?

To examine the vibrancy of the plazas as well as interpret the dynamics of transformative processes, which lead to revitalisation and inclusivity of the marginalised in the public spaces of CDO, I structure the study in the following outline. In the first chapter, I will present the state of art wherein various philosophies are synthesised. The theoretical underpinnings of both western and oriental social philosophers are then integrated throughout the succeeding chapters. The analytical framework is shown in three parts: (1) Variation of Spaces, (2) The Subject in Public Spaces and (3) The Philippine Social Spaces. In the second chapter, I will provide the methodology, which includes data collection and analysis. In the third chapter, I will exhibit the urbanisation process of CDO along with the growth of its income, trade, industry, and financial and educational establishments. In the fourth chapter, I will show the creation of urban plans, which comprise the Framework Plan, Master Plan, Comprehensive Land Use Plan, and the most recent Planned City Extension, then the actual evolution of land use for a span of five decades since the charter of CDO. In the fifth chapter, I will focus on the examination of the three public spaces or tripartite spaces in CDO: namely, Divisoria, Gaston Park, and Vicente de Lara Park. In the sixth chapter, I will analyse the vibrancy and inclusivity of the tripartite spaces. This chapter highlights three distinct yet interrelated narratives: Typhoon Washi, the Night Café, and Alternatives to Illiteracy and Criminality. The narratives define the pressing conditions of the city that are reflected and occurring in the public spaces. In the last chapter, I will conclude by summarising the findings of the research. Finally, I will integrate the facts with insights from a sociological perspective.

1.1 VARIATION OF SPACES

Architects, planners, and social scientists faced with the challenge of coming up with a framework for distinguishing the oriental public domain produced the book *Public Space in Urban Asia* (Lim, 2014). Public spaces in Asia, especially in Southeast Asian cities, are “intended to be open ended” (Wee, 2014, p. 190). They are frequently characterised as “pluralistic with visible chaotic disorder and an incredible mixture of multi-use spaces” (Lim, 2014, p. 220) to the extent that the spheres “absorb the incongruent mix of people, often including marginal classes” (Wee, 2014, p. 192). Oriental urban centres manifest “genuinely robust public space” (Wee, 2014, p. 192). The phenomenon is attributed to the extreme rate of the region’s urbanisation. Asia and the Pacific displayed a 2.7 per cent average annual rate of urbanisation from 2000 to 2010, higher than the 2.2 per cent global urbanisation rate (UN-Habitat & United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2015). In Southeast Asia, the rate of urbanisation grows at 2.8 per cent; correspondingly, 47 per cent or almost half of its population lives in cities (Department of Economic and Social Affairs & United Nations, 2014).

To further distinguish the Asian public space, Jacobs (2014) cites the hawker centre in Singapore, which “presents us with a number of hybrid spaces that are ‘public’ in ways not necessarily recognisable in Western cities” (p. 187); hawkers shape the food culture in Singapore. Likewise, in the cities of Vietnam scholars reinforce the differentiation between Western and non-Western public spaces (Drummond, 2000; Kurfürst, 2012). Kurfürst (2012) clarifies that the Western “public sphere as a sphere of political reasoning and will formation is difficult to apply to Vietnam, where the three sectors of state, economy, and civil society frequently overlap” (p. 11). The overlapping of systems nurtures that

in Asian cities the market and the state are calibrated in distinct ways, resulting in novel combinations of the hyper-regulated and laissez-faire, the planned and the informal, the marketised and the collectively provided and consumed. Into this mix come other interests that subvert and innovate across such binaries. This is why to speak in categorical terms about public space is not always useful in an Asian context, where there can be both mutability and transience. (Jacobs, 2014, p. 189)

As the authors outline the uniqueness of open spaces in urban Asia, the references to Western tradition prevail. There is not an absolute break from the influences of prominent thinkers. In fact, the authors draw from the works of Habermas, Sennett, and Lefebvre, among others.

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Jürgen Habermas (1992) traces the evolution of the public sphere from its inception, transformation, and gradual decline. Originally coined as *agora* in the city-states of ancient Greece, the public sphere accorded *bios politikos* or public life to citizens who participated in discourses. Overtime, the public sphere acquired changes particularly in the 18th to 19th century Europe. Habermas singles-out the role of the bourgeoisie or private individuals who achieved certain financial and educational status. The bourgeoisie constituted the middle class, which formulated mass consent from the data of print media i.e. newspapers, magazines and books. Habermas then brings forth the critical point where the introduction of industrial capitalism interrupted the essence of public sphere since the flow of communication homogenised public opinion. Publicity brought by print media intertwined with public relations. Habermas (1992) identifies that, “Public relations do not genuinely concern public

opinion but opinion in the sense of reputation. The public sphere becomes the court *before* whose public prestige can be displayed—rather than *in* which public critical debate is carried on” (pp. 200-201). The deliberate decline of individual critical thinking because of mass consumption resulted in diminishment of authentic public participation. Habermas critiques (1992), “The public sphere in the world of letters was replaced by the pseudo-public or sham-private world of culture consumption” (p. 160).

Richard Sennett in his book, *The Fall of Public Man* (1992), continues the argument where Habermas had left off. The historical-sociological interpretation of Habermas was augmented with a socio-psychological account of public life. Sennett maintains the theme of desolation to describe the present state of the public sphere. The most compelling evidence of decadence of *res publica* is reflected in the empty spaces of the city.

A *res publica* stands in general for those bonds of association and mutual commitment, which exist between people who are not joined together by ties of family or intimate association; it is the bond of a crowd, of a “people,” of a polity, rather than the bonds of family or friends. As in Roman times, participation in the *res publica* today is most often a matter of going along, and the forums for this public life, like the city, are in a state of decay. (Sennett, 1992, pp. 3-4)

Sennett attributes the causes of decay to the privatisation of social manners along with desolate urban designs. The effect of psychological privatisation is the deprivation of public participation. Sennett (1992) explains that this is related to the effect of increasing the privatisation of psyche. He argues that “the more privatised the psyche, the less it is stimulated, and the more difficult it is for us to feel or to express feeling” (p. 4). Private and public lives

used to be strongly connected; however, public life in the post-modern period is not seen to be as important as private life. For the most part, public space does not make sense to the citizens. The evolution of social manners from being intimate and warm to being distant and cold ensued social withdrawal.

Dead public space is one reason, the most concrete one, that people will seek out on intimate terrain what is denied them on more alien ground. Isolation in the midst of public visibility and overemphasis on psychological transactions complement each other. To the extent, for instance, that a person feels he must protect himself from the surveillance of others in the public realm by silent isolation, he compensates by baring himself to those with whom he wants to make contact. The complementary relation exists because here are two expressions of a single, general transformation of social relations. I have sometimes thought about this complementary situation in terms of the masks of self which manners and the rituals of politeness create. These masks have ceased to matter in impersonal situations or seem to be the property only of snobs; in closer relationships, they appear to get in the way of knowing someone else. (Sennett, 1992, p. 15)

Sennett agrees with Habermas on blaming the ill-effects on industrial capitalism. Impersonality intensified in overcrowded urban spaces as shown in 18th century Paris where “the city continued to fill up with people, these people increasingly lost functional contact with each other outside. There were more strangers and they were more isolated. The problem of

the square was magnified to the problem of *quartier* and neighbourhood” (Sennett, 1992, p. 135). To add more complication, rapid urbanisation encouraged massive urban plans. Public spaces were designed for the crowd, yet, remained inefficacious for the reason that the “urbanist conceives of community against the city” (Sennett, 1992, p. 294).

The advent of capitalism marked the mystification of material consumption. The great mass of urban consumers spent astronomical shopping appetite from the confines of their homes or intimate sphere where obsession of material acquisition took place up to the commercial outlets in the public spaces of the urban centres. The power of marketing subconsciously stimulates public behaviour. Mystification of goods encourages consumers to feel and act expressive of one’s individuality in the public realm but only in subtle manner. The preoccupation of goods makes the individual care less for the others who need social attention. The narrow goal is to be a consumer not to be a giver. Given these points, Sennett (1992) comments that “the world of retail commerce indicates the terms of the most basic of these puzzles, the effects and the limits of capitalism on public life, in terms of mystification and in terms of privatisation” (p. 149). In short, Sennett is unmistakably contemplating the lessons of public morality.

The preceding reviews deal with the distinction between Western and non-Western spaces as well as delineations between private and public lives. The proceeding examination sustains comprehension of public sphere dynamism in Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1991) which is fundamental in sociological discourses. Without Lefebvre’s contribution, much would be lacking in the corpus of social studies. Lefebvre transcends our understanding of space. An ordinary individual may appreciate an open space in the urban centre as it is—a plot made up of material foundations without bearing. In contrast, Lefebvre interprets the connotations of spaces—its implications, histories (excluding chronologies), and relevance to everyday life.

Space endures through history. It collects memories. It is a repository of ancient endeavours. It harbours recollections of events that impact the locality, the nation, and the world. Space, nonetheless, is no passé because it serves as a continuum of past and present configurations (Lefebvre, 1991; Mumford, 1961).

Public space is integral in urban designs. It is the outcome of the architectural output. Spatial activities resemble social articulations—entertainment or arts, economic, and political ventures. Lefebvre encapsulates the variants into a whole new perspective. To begin with, the congruence between abstract and concrete spaces is stressed.

What is called for, therefore, is a thoroughgoing exposition of these concepts, and of their relations, on the one hand with the extreme formal abstraction of logico-mathematical space, and on the other hand with the practico-sensory realm of social space. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 15)

The reconciliation of both abstract and concrete spaces leads to the conclusion that “(social) space is a (social) product” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 30). In essence,

the concept of the *production of space*, posits a theory that understands *space* as fundamentally bound up with social reality. It follows that space ‘in itself’ can never serve as an epistemological starting position. Space does not exist ‘in itself’; it is produced. (Goonewardena, Kipfer, Milgrom, & Schmid, 2008, p. 28)

The production of space results in a synthesis of the spatial concepts

consisting of three elements: representations of space, or “conceived space,” which for my purposes includes not only the drawings and images produced by the designer but the material manifestations of those designs in the built environment (i.e., urban form); representational space, “lived space” or the symbolic values produced by the inhabitants; and spatial practice, “perceived space” or the ways in which spaces are used. These elements are not independent and it is the interaction between them that results in the production of space.

(Goonewardena, Kipfer, Milgrom, & Schmid, 2008, p. 269)

Lefebvre’s concept of production of space is anchored in this thesis. The spatial triad will be constantly referenced to elucidate the interdependencies of vibrant spaces. The following literature relates to the conceptual triad.

Umberto Eco’s *Function and Sign: Semiotics of Architecture* (2005) exemplifies conceived space “by planners, architects, and other specialists who divide space into separate elements that can be recombined at will” (Goonewardena, Kipfer, Milgrom, & Schmid, 2008, p. 137). Eco (2005) illustrates how architecture possesses the ability to communicate by appropriating the theory of semiotics with the objective “to interpret functions as having something to do with communication” (p. 174). Architecture is classified into two functions—denotative and connotative. The former refers to the functional purpose while the latter relates to the symbolic insinuations. By combining both functions,

Significative forms, codes worked out on the strength of inferences from usages and proposed as structural models of given communicative

relations, denotative and connotative meanings attached to the sign vehicles on the basis of the codes—this is the semiotic universe in which a reading of architecture as communication becomes viable, a universe in which verification through observable physical behaviour and actual objects (whether denotata or referents) would be simply irrelevant and in which the only concrete objects of any relevance are the architectural objects as significative forms. (Eco, 2005, p. 176)

Eco (2005) remarks on the driving force of architecture to shape civilisation “through the operation of its system of stimulative sign-vehicles to determine what those functions and values are going to be—restricting men to a particular way of life dictating laws to events” (p. 191). In brief, the role of the architects particularly the urban designers “should be designing for variable primary functions and open secondary functions” (Eco, 2005, p. 191); notwithstanding the fact that “Architecture is a business” (Eco, 2005, p. 187). It can be possible for the architect to design a platform in public spaces for the marginalised if and only if he or she sees the origin of poverty. The architect can be a visionary and at the same time an agent of change.

Eco and Lefebvre adhere to the dimension of conceived space, albeit, the former emphasises the architect and architecture in the realm of cultural interpretation. The latter expounds on a broad sphere of interpretation that goes beyond the semiotics of architecture. Lefebvre (1976) puts forward the argument that, “Space has been shaped and moulded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process” (p. 33).

Since space occupies roles in the city, there is a necessity to shed light on historical space. It cannot be denied that *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations and Its Prospects* (1961) is momentous in the literature of urbanism. Lewis Mumford pursues answers to some

fundamental questions about the city such as its definitions, origins, functions, and future missions.

The city has not one definition but many. Throughout the book, the city takes on a whole lot of different meanings depending on the progress it makes in history. The city's origins, functions, purposes, and prospects are what define it. Originally, the city was the sanctuary, village, and stronghold. Man's first religious activities began in the sanctuaries and shrines of the cave. It soon became apparent that man had to move out and settle in a large expanse of field, for which the village provided. Since then "the order and stability of the village, along with its maternal enclosure and intimacy and its oneness with the forces of nature, were carried over into the city" (Mumford, 1961, p. 15).

In the village, Mumford emphasises the role of the woman. Her touch, maternal instincts of love and care prevailed in every aspect of domestic life. It was in the individual homes where the "woman's needs, woman's solitudes, woman's intimacy with the processes of growth, woman's capacity for tenderness and love, must have played a dominating part" (Mumford, 1961, p. 12).

History shows that the role of man overpowered the role of the woman after the union of the Palaeolithic and Neolithic cultures. This merging signalled the beginning of a societal paradigm where man took over a new position as a leader. His role in the village as a "hunter" was replaced and elevated into a protector and king of the people.

The function of the ancient city "gathered scattered organs of the common life, and within its walls promoted their interaction and fusion" (Mumford, 1961, p. 568). In other words, it was the place for organisation. Dynamic human activities abounded because the city propelled communication among the inhabitants. Thus, it was the centre of collaboration and transformation. To "draw untapped human aspirations by unifying them in a central political

and religious nucleus” (Mumford, 1961, p. 568) was the vision for the city dwellers. It was the core of religion and government.

Interestingly, Mumford and Lefebvre share parallelisms. Both locate the evolution of the city. Using Lefebvre’s terms, space is a product of history. The historical space sheds light on the metamorphosis of natural landscape into absolute space.

Architecture picked a site in nature and transferred it to the political realm by means of a symbolic mediation; one thinks, for example, of the statues of local gods or goddesses in Greek temples, or of the Shintoist’s sanctuary, empty or else containing nothing but a mirror. A sanctified inwardness set itself up in opposition to the outwardness in nature, yet at the same time it echoed and restored that outwardness. The absolute space where rites and ceremonies were performed retained a number of aspects of nature, albeit in a form modified by ceremonial requirements: age, sex, genitality (fertility)—all still had part to play. At once civil and religious, absolute space thus preserved and incorporated bloodlines, family, unmediated relationships—but it transposed them to the city, to the political state founded on the towns.

(Lefebvre, 1991, p. 48)

The aims of the city are several. Highest of these is the unification of humankind. In order to achieve unity, the city must strive to “put the highest concerns of man at the centre of all his activities” (Mumford, 1961, p. 573). The city’s role in the future must be to unify man’s inner and outer world. Another prospect for the urban world is to be the nucleus of love, not the hub for either economic or political leadership for the heart of its mission is to turn the world around

from hate, decay, and destruction to peace, unity, and love. The last but not the least among its intentions is to bring man to an understanding of himself, of the world around him, and of the past.

Despite the present intoxication prevailing in the city such as disunity, neglect, and damage, Mumford believes that the city will survive and transpire to become worthier than its current state. His belief centres on the hope that

significant improvements will come only through applying art and thought to the city's central human concerns, with a fresh dedication to the cosmic and ecological processes that enfold all being. We must restore to the city the maternal, life-nurturing functions, the autonomous activities, the symbiotic associations that have long been neglected and suppressed. For the city should be an organ of love; and the best economy of cities is the core and culture of men.

(Mumford, 1961, p. 575)

Mumford might have been overly positive in his proposition; after all, his study has focused on western cities. Though early on, he apologises for its limitations and admitted, "I have confined myself as far as possible to cities and regions I am acquainted with at first hand, and to data in which I have long been immersed" (Mumford, 1961, p. xi). In like manner, Lefebvre acknowledges the differences between Western and Oriental concepts of space. He recognises the one-sided attention on the Western perspective. And thus questioned what the Oriental concept of spaces could be.

How much can we really learn, for instance, confined as we are to Western conceptual tools, about the Asiatic mode of production, its space, its town, or the relationship it embodies between town and country—a relationship reputedly represented figuratively or ideographically by the Chinese characters? (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 31-32)

The biases of Mumford and Lefebvre obviously depict development of urban sites in Northern America and Western Europe. Now, this would lead us to question: What could have Mumford and Lefebvre proposed with respect to the cities in the developing world particularly in Southeast Asia? Would Mumford still believe so much for the cities to be transformed into “organs of love”?

There is a vast difference between the cities in the West and in Asia. In Southeast Asia, for example, there is rapid urbanisation wherein tremendous growths in population and industrialisation have been occurring since the last World War. Extreme urbanisation leads to exhaustion of natural resources and degradation of society as poverty spreads all over from the countryside to the cities.

Urbanisation is now a global process, into which developing countries are increasingly being drawn. In 1950, only 30 per cent of the world's population were urban dwellers; by 2000, this had reached 47 per cent - 2.9 billion people and by 2030 it is expected to reach 60 per cent - 5 billion people. At current rates of change, the number of people living in urban areas will overtake the number of people in rural areas by 2007. Most urbanisation is now taking place in the developing world. The urban population of the less developed regions is expected to rise

by more than 2 billion people between 2000 and 2030 from around 2 to 4 billion. (Giddens, 2006, p. 906)

Less developed Southeast Asian nations like the Philippines and Indonesia face the challenges of the informal sector. Land, housing, water, sanitation, and protection against disasters are not adequately provided to the urban poor. UN-Habitat furnishes that in 2009 the Philippines kept 40.9 per cent or 18.3 million of urban poor in the informal sector; while Indonesia took in 23 per cent or 23.3 million of the informal sector (2015, p. 75).

The culture of cities resembles the rate of urbanisation. In other words, urbanism reflects the system of the city. The examples of the Philippines and Indonesia illustrate the challenge in the system—extreme rate of urban poverty. The subsequent analyses further shed light on the culture of the marginalised in Southeast Asian cities.

The study of Hans Dieter Evers and Rüdiger Korff on *Southeast Asian Urbanism: The Power and Meaning of Social Space* (2000) scrutinises how cities achieve modernity in a dual process wherein slums alongside gated communities are accommodated. The urban poor who are discriminated in the social and spatial set-up survive by integrating themselves in the informal sector regardless of insufficient financial means. Evers and Korff emphasise how the marginalised deal with the struggles of living in cities where the complexities of urbanisation combined with globalisation and modernity lead to domination.

The process of defining the meaning of the city and concretising this within the city depends on the ability of strategic groups to dominate society and to control access to the material and artistic resources required for concretising the meaning of the city. The urban constructions are concretisations of an urban ideology of élites. Thus

changes in the configuration of élites often imply re-definitions of the meaning of the city and urban ‘re-construction’ so that the new social and symbolic demands are satisfied. (Evers & Korff, 2000, p. 17)

The Southeast Asian city faces the challenge of re-inventing itself to prevail over domination of élites. Urban re-invention is part of transformative processes. The public space offers such venue of vibrancy, which leads to revitalisation.

Through a range of actions and practices, public space can facilitate the collaboration among individuals, groups, and agencies to reinvigorate the city as a domain for public dialogue and debate. With consistent contestation and a favourable ideological climate of people-oriented openness, public space can serve as a vital tool for measuring the inclusive vibrant nature of our present contemporariness. (Lim, 2014, p. 24)

Inclusivity is equally important to vibrancy. The opportunity lies in the active participation of community members rather than the élites. Lim (2014) uncovers that, “How the city can be perceived is by the intensity of active participation of local urban citizens” (p. 22). Empowerment of the marginalised espouses that

It is only via the responses and intentional occupation of a space that it can be made public. How successful the people-oriented and grassroots generated inclusive society in a city can be measured from the provision and usage of its public space. (Lim, 2014, p. 23)

On the whole, inclusivity coupled with active participation offers opportunities of transformation amidst the challenges in the urban hierarchical system. Public spaces in cities can be venues and symbols of hope. Marginalised citizens are included in the pursuit towards social justice.

1.2 THE SUBJECT IN PUBLIC SPACES

The best way to respond to societal challenges is to concretise the idea of self-empowerment. Alain Touraine in the book *Can We Live Together?: Equality and Difference* (2000) calls the individual “the Subject”. Change emanates from the Subject. Social transformation is created when the Subject immerses himself/herself in societal engagement. Therefore, “the Subject can be a defence against social reality” (Touraine, 2000, p. 56). The instance the Subject decides to act and take on the challenge of contributing ideas or projects to combat social inequality, rippling effects transpire.

The Subject has no content but its own production. It serves no cause, no values and no law other than its need and desire to resist its own dismemberment in a changing world in which there is no order or equilibrium. (Touraine, 2000, p. 13)

Before the action takes place, the Subject must be cognisant of the opposing poles of isolation and globalisation. Touraine (2000) aptly frames, “The central conflict in our society is being waged, according to my analysis, by a Subject struggling against the triumph of the market and technologies, on the one hand, and communitarian authoritarianism powers, on the other” (p. 89). Isolation is the effect of authoritarian governance; globalisation is the cause of mass consumption brought by the neo-liberal markets and technologies of communication.

The Subject invokes an active role in the global society and local community. The Subject becomes the social actor by doing what needs to be done. The Subject does not crave for attention nor awards. There is neither flare nor drama for the Subject is not indebted to anyone. Conscience directs the purity of the Subject's action.

The Subject rushes to what is necessary. The Subject does not need to justify his/her actions because there is a lack of time to advertise (through commercial means) the point in serving the marginalised. The urgency compels the Subject.

The Subject's actions are innately decent. The Subject does not need to kneel down to solicit for blessing nor sponsorship from any religious congregation because the Subject knows what he/she possesses is the aim of every mortal. The Subject acts regardless of other's sex, religion, race, or colour. The Subject is ordinary. Yet, the seemingly insignificant gestures of social action are what define the Subject. Above all, the Subject strives to reconcile globalisation and isolation by highlighting the advantages of both opposing realities.

The Subject is both post-religious and anti-religious, both rationalist and anti-rationalising. It rejects religion because it belongs to modernity; but it also rejects all forms of positivism, both sociological and juridical, because there is an unbridgeable gap between utility and value. The Subject does not stand midway between religious thought and a utilitarian or positivist belief in progress. It is not ambivalent, and it does not alternate between loving and rejecting first progress and then the religious vision. It is self-centred, which means that the two worlds in which it is situated must be reconciled to some extent, but it also actively struggles against both worlds. The Subject is neither an

eternal being nor the humanity that [is] set free by progress. It is neither God nor man. (Touraine, 2000, p. 88)

The true spirit of democracy is realised when the Subject goes beyond the comfort zone—outside the confines of *intimsphäre* or intimate space. The moment the luxurious home or cosy room is abandoned either temporarily or permanently for the sake of social involvement, thenceforth it becomes a point of victory. On the outset, a new form of democracy “defined as the politics of the Subject, as the regime that grants the greatest possible number the greatest possible opportunity to succeed in individuating themselves, or in living as Subjects” (Touraine, 2000, p. 158) is made possible.

Living not as Subjects occurs when the comfort of private spheres is not left behind but instead shackled. If the Subject does not go out of the comfort zone, isolation is bred. An isolated community manifests excessive consumerism that is attached to mass culture. Touraine (2000) re-echoes Sennett in this statement: “Mass culture is penetrating private space and occupying more and more of it. It has the side-effect of strengthening the political and social desire to defend a cultural identity, and the end result is a new communitarianism” (p. 4). The moment of withdrawal signals a wrong turn. Desolation causes disruption of the public sphere.

The Subject exercises the right to innovative democratic practices. This signals the Subject’s choice to bridge the gaps in society. The new democratic innovation of the Subject identifies with Habermasian thought. Habermas promotes the German ideals of democracy. German citizens exercise freedom, justice, and above all open-mindedness. Democracy in Germany does not merely rest on paper (written in the constitution); democracy is practised.

This ‘procedural’ democracy is not content with formal rules; it guarantees respect for personal and collective freedoms, organises the representation of interests, formalises public debate and institutionalises tolerance. This conception is related to the idea of constitutional patriotism, which has been put forward by Jürgen Habermas in Germany. (Touraine, 2000, p. 7)

The ideals of the German society coupled with the critical role of the Subject in the public realm claim democracy as

the political form of the recomposition of the world. And the recomposition of the world is central to my argument, because I reject the dissociation of a globalised economy from fragmented cultural identities. Politics is the art of reconciling unity with diversity. (Touraine, 2000, p. 262)

The Subject volunteers without resorting to violence but only with ideas and programmes channelled through societal involvement. Touraine (2000) proposes a “*link between the idea of the Subject and the idea of a social movement*”(p. 77). The proposal allows the shift from abstract vision to concrete action. Therefore, the Subject involves in the public sphere to reconfigure the balance between unity and diversity as well as between communitarian and globalisation.

The Subject embraces the “recognition of the Other as Subject” (Touraine, 2000, p. 81). The Other is accepted with dignity and respect. Thereafter, the unison of the Subject and the Other in the public realm advances social movement. Lefebvre strengthens the argument of Touraine.

Lefebvre (1991) agrees that “interested ‘subjects,’ as members of a particular society, would have acceded by this means at once to *their* space and to their status as ‘subjects’ acting within that space and (in the broadest sense of the word) comprehending it” (p. 17).

For the public space to be completely useful and relevant, the marginalised must be counted in. Wee (2014) addresses that, “Real public spaces ought to have the capacity to provide for the full extent of the public, in any given society, from the very wealthy to the wretched” (p. 193). Touraine (2000) supports the argument by emphasising, “today’s revival of social action is taking place at the grass-roots level” (p. 301). Hence, the utility of public spaces is measured by its vibrancy that includes Subjects from all classes.

The core of perceived, lived, and conceived urban public spaces is the Subject. The city can be an *organ of love* the moment the Subject decides to take part in social movements. Once the Subject utilises the public sphere to instil social action, social space is ultimately produced. The Subject partaking in a democratic process is a step towards liberation from ignorance, corruption, ecological and human destruction, and above all from poverty. Thereafter, “subjectivation” which “begins with the rearticulation of instrumentality and identity” (Touraine, 2000, p. 158) takes precedence in the public space.

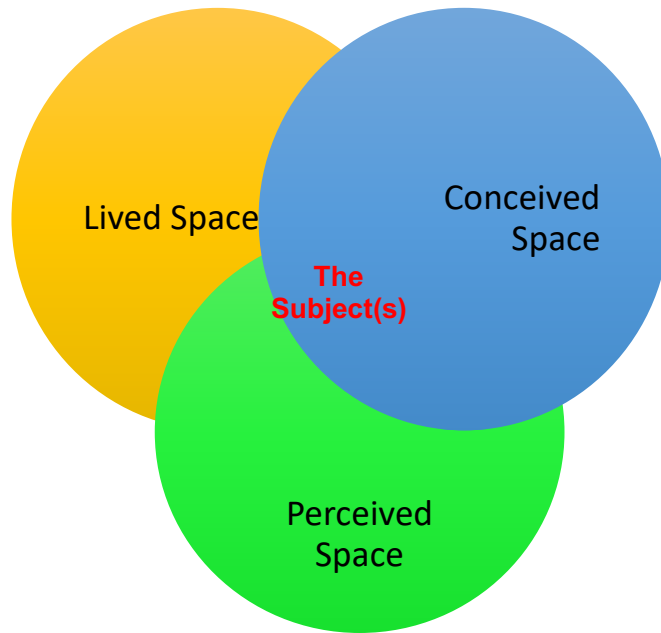


Figure 1. The Subject(s) within the Spatial Triad

I propose the idea of reconciling Western discourses such as by Lefebvre, Sennett, Touraine, Mumford, and Habermas with the urban realities in the developing state of the Philippines. The synthesis of the frameworks brings out an innovative examination of urban studies. In the following chapter the perspectives of architects, historians, and sociologists on the public spaces in the Philippines are exposed. Furthermore, it deals with reconfiguration of the historical interpretation of public spaces in the Philippines. I emphasise the original Filipino culture, which stems from aquatic traditions. The rest of the narrative points out vibrancy and fluidity of public spaces that reflect indigenous perception.

1.3 PHILIPPINE SOCIAL SPACES

The Philippines as part of maritime Southeast Asia begins with the historical narrative of thalassocracy. Mata (2010) quotes the definition of Ross (2003) on thalassocracy as “the rule (krateîn, to rule) of the sea (thálassa, thálatta in Attic). This does not mean rule by the sea, as

‘aristocracy’ means the rule by the ‘best’, which wouldn’t make much sense, but rule by those who control the sea”. The “best” refers to the few who are the aristocrats. The management of the seas, however, is not possible with few rulers. Thus, not a few but anyone can take hold of aquatic space. Not to mention, the seas in the tropics can be navigated all throughout the year. The tropical climate offers abundance of maritime life. In other words, everyday life relies on the waters (Reid, 1990). Overwhelming evidences of vibrant pre-colonial aqua culture all over the archipelago endured among various ethnicities.

Philippine culture and society emerged from maritime and riverine traditions. As a matter of fact, the names of many ethnic groups are derived from their association with water bodies, such as Tagalog (from taga-ilog, people of the river), Kapampangan (people of the coast), Tausug (people of the current), Meranao (people of the lake), Subanen (people of the river), and Iraya Mangyan (people of the upstream). The rivers, streams, lakes, and seas defined and shaped the cultural traits that developed among the people of these regions. (Castro, 2015, p. 10)

The bodies of water purvey transport and communication systems. Rivers, lakes, and seas facilitate trade among coastal and riverine communities. In like manner, the water communities expedite “hinterland trade, serving as centres for the exchange of upriver commodities such as forest products, obtained from interior tribal peoples, for imported and coastally produced pottery, cloth, and metal-ware” (King, 2008, p. 11). To summarise, aquatic spaces operate as commercial hubs for both maritime and hinterland populations.

The balangai was the primary means of transportation in the water bodies. It was the boat originally utilised by the chiefdom of Butuan in Surigao. The balangai as a tool for navigation proves the inherent cultural affiliation with aquatic space (Almeda, Jr., 1993; Castro, 2015). Employing the balangai, the chiefship of Butuan vigorously engaged in international maritime trading traditions. Almeda, Jr. (1993) reveals, “Inclusion of gold and pearls among the goods sold in such faraway places during those times by the seafaring merchants of the Philippines made the province of Surigao a likely participant in that Asian drama” (p. 37). The balangai is also the origin of the barangay, which is presently the smallest unit of Philippine government.

In the same fashion, the sultanate of Sulu dominated the pearl industry in the sea routes of Southeast Asia.

Sulu in the south was another route taken by the Shri-Visayan hordes.

Pearls caught the fancy of the lords of the new empire, and brought them to the south. Treasure hunters and pearl divers came to Sulu and when it became crowded, a situation that inevitably led to the displacement of the original settlers, the Shri-Visayans simply continued moving down the Pacific coast, ever on the lookout for sparkling pearls, until they reached Surigao. (Almeda, Jr., 1993, p. 38)

The chiefships of Sulu and Butuan possessed lush aquatic resources; albeit, “these mercantile states were neither centralised nor ‘despotic.’ They comprised a relatively footloose, ethnically heterogeneous population of merchants, small traders, and artisan” (King, 2008, p. 11). Wertheim (1980) rather identifies that the maritime states “generated a more cosmopolitan atmosphere and a greater receptivity to foreign cultural influences” (p. 11). In brief, Sulu and

Butuan exemplify the practice of thalassocracy where the “rule by those who control the sea” signify the indigenous inhabitants rather than the “despotic” aristocracy.

The waters are likewise used for day-to-day bathing, fishing, drinking, and swimming. The everyday aquatic practices developed into cultural traits. The Boxer Codex explicitly depicts the lifestyle of the Visayans³ in the 16th century.

Their houses and towns are normally built on the banks of rivers and at the edges of swamps and marshes because this is considered optimal. Both men and women bathe publicly once or twice a day, their flesh being completely exposed, though they cover their privates with their hands until the water covers them. Hence they are all extremely able swimmers, men as well as women, because they have been taught this from birth. (Souza, 2016, p. 347)

The perception of modern urban public spaces as “uncertain and fluid” (Recio & Gomez, 2013, p. 176) links back to the intrinsic aquatic relationship. Space is fluid “which various transient players claim” (Recio & Gomez, 2013, p. 176). Space is traversed by anyone who wishes to not only trade but also communicate. In this sense, space “becomes a destination in itself” (Recio & Gomez, 2013, p. 176). Space is not land-based. Castro (2015) stresses, “Philippine culture is deeply anchored in water. Water helped build the diverse and unique Filipino culture” (p. 23).

³ The Moros of Luzon are similarly described in the Boxer Codex. Accordingly, “They also establish and settle their towns in swampy land and near water and rivers, the same as the Visayans, because it is their custom to bathe twice a day, just as the latter do” (Souza, 2016, p. 363).



Figure 2. The Chamarros welcomed the Manila Galleon. Souza (2016) describes the Chamarros in the island of Ladrones (Marianas) as “most closely connected to other peoples of Austronesian origin who live to the west in the Philippines” (p. 304). The Chamarros are no different from the natives who navigate the bodies of waters in the islands of the Philippines. Their lifestyles depend on the fluidity of space. From Boxer Codex (1590). From <http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/digital/collections/items/show/93>. Copyright permission from The Lilly Library Digital Collections, Indiana University, 2019.

Pre-colonial spatial practices are evident; however, Spanish impositions altered and eventually diminished the aquatic cultural traditions. Mata argues (2010), “There is this biased perception that the Spanish conquistadores, the first Western urban colonisers, encountered a cultural void with no urban tradition. It was, in fact, colonial policy to disregard any existing cultural groups” (p. 41). The entry of foreign urban system resettled the inhabitants from fluid to permanent spaces. In contrast, fluid spaces are not confined unlike land-based urban sites. The looseness of aquatic culture was supplanted with “fixed urban centres” (Mata, 2010, p. 42). The Spanish urban designs laid out coordinated positions.

110. Having made the discovery, selected the province, county, and area that is to be settled, and the site in the location where the new town is to be built, and having taken possession of it, those placed in charge of its execution are to do it in the following manner. On arriving at the place where the new settlement is to be founded - which according to our will and disposition shall be one that is vacant and that can be

occupied without doing harm to the Indians and natives or with their free consent - a plan for the site is to be made, dividing it into squares, streets, and building lots, using cord and ruler, beginning with the main square from which streets are to run to the gates and principal roads and leaving sufficient open space so that even if the town grows, it can always spread in the same manner. Having thus agreed upon the site and place selected to be populated, a layout should be made in the following way. (The City Planning Ordinances of the Laws of the Indies, 1573)

Towns and cities became the new settlements. Its structural arrangement afforded ease of management from the perspective of the administrators. The grid pattern of streets stipulated fixed routes that led to the Catholic Church of which the primary goal was to eradicate pagan beliefs. The initial plan was to deter construction of settlements proximate to coasts and rivers; nonetheless, locations remained unchanged due to inaccessibility of elevated places. Subsequently, each town centre or *población* allocated proportion of open spaces or plazas. The design conformed to the plaza complex.

112. The main plaza is to be the starting point for the town; if the town is situated on the sea coast, it should be placed at the landing place of the port, but inland it should be at the centre of the town. The plaza should be square or rectangular, in which case it should have at least one and a half its width for length inasmuch as this shape is best for fiestas in which horses are used and for any other fiestas that should be held. (The City Planning Ordinances of the Laws of the Indies, 1573)

The plaza contained the town's crucial element—church. For the inhabitants, the church served as the locus of direction. All Catholic converts identified the church as central to their lifeworld. Hence, clerical ascendancy or otherwise referred to as theocracy replaced thalassocracy. The Laws of the Indies (1573) stipulated that the towns “should be populated by Indians and natives to whom we can preach the gospels since this is the principal objective for which we mandate that these discoveries and settlements be made”. The clergy took over the state of daily affairs. That is to say, the clergy exerted management on the political, economic, and social concerns of the entire urban population.

The setup in the Philippines reflected the situation in Spain. In the colony, the Church was even more completely under the king's control although, paradoxically enough, the clergy in the islands were more powerful than the king's official administrators because the latter were so few in number and because the friars played such an important role in the pacification campaign. (Constantino, 1998, p. 67)

The town hall, school, shops/marketplace, and residences of local elites were situated across the plaza. These prominent structures served as the primary layer of the población. The second layer comprised the ordinary residences, which were distributed within the urban territory. Therefore, both commoners and aristocrats gravitated towards the urban core.

The town centre as instigated by the church plaza complex transformed as a valid symbol and landmark for the town centre, and as a valuable tool for way-finding. The phenomenological as well as geographical

reference of town identity further developed. Points of reference and sense of place would go hand in hand. (Mata, 2010, p. 44)

Everyday life revolved around the church from the display of public executions to the spectacles of sacred observances. The call of the church bells or music served as “tool for way-finding”. The earshot sound invited churchgoers to participate in the daily Masses and myriads of religious events. The “sense of place” expressed the attachment to the church. Flores de Mayo, Santacruzán, Sinakulo and Moro-moro gratified church festivities. Baptisms, weddings, funerals and fiestas filled the cyclical celebrations. The yearly Holy Week procession was the essential of all events.

The procession, by definition, is a public and shared display of religious devotion instigated and established by Church authority. In it, the faithful, bearing aloft the religious image or sets of images, emerge from the church and, chanting prayers and devotional songs, wind their way around pre-designated streets and then return to the church. The ostensive objective of this ritual is the public display of devotion as both prayer and sacrifice. It is in the actual performance of the ritual however, together with the peripheral events of preparation and recessional, that the significance of the Diwa ng Lunan (Spirit of Place) is established. (Mata, 2010, p. 47; Ozaeta, 2010)

The procession, together with all other displays of community rituals, evinces active participation. The fluid perception of spaces continues to prevail on land-based urban system despite the reduction of aquatic spaces to fixed urban centres. Streets and plazas then exemplify

artificial fluid spaces. The festivities in urban spaces indicate continuum of traditional aquatic practices. Vibrancy continues to manifest on land-based spaces. Hence, impositions partially altered the pre-modern maritime norms. Fluid perception of spaces resurfaces even with artificial urban systems. Subconscious habits reappear even though public rituals are purely directed to the Church. Public participation denotes assimilation to external urbanism.

The process of assimilation goes on with the pacification by the Americans. Americanisation of urban spaces with modern infrastructures connotes continuity of imperial practices. Design and technologies are imported from America. As a result, implantation of imported systems resembles permanency of an artificial urban milieu.

In the pursuit of colonial modernity and scientific progress, it was necessary to install and overlay the City Beautiful master plan with technological systems such as piped water, sewage, and electricity, transportation network and public infrastructure. These technologies were not merely a material element in the production of the urban image of a rapidly-advancing American imperial city, but also constituted a critical dimension to the social production of space, implying connectivities between the native body and the city, between the social and bio-physical systems, and between the invisible and visible aspects of the urban space. (Lico, 2009, p. 66)

Superficially, urban facilities appeared to render services for locals. Upon investigation, the infrastructures monopolised movements of commodities from America to the Philippines and vice versa. Sanitation, transportation, energy, and water systems offered means of economic flows. To point out, “urban incarnation of the imperial imagination became a commodity in

itself facilitating colonial commerce and further accumulation of capital” (Lico, 2009, p. 66).

The urban strategy concurs with the singlehanded vision of Daniel Burnham. The concept of City Beautiful by Burnham was applied to Manila without public consultation in the planning process.

Burnham recommended detailed urban procedures: the development of the waterfront and the location of parks, playfields and parkways so as to promote sufficient opportunities for urban recreation to every quarter in the city; the establishment of a street system which would establish direct and convenient communication from every part of the city to every other sector or district; the zoning of building sites for various functions; the development of waterways or esteros for transportation; and the provision of summer resorts within an accessible distance from the city. The space had a central civic core: radials emanating from this core were laid over a gridiron pattern and large parks interconnected by parkways. (Burnham, 1906; Lico, 2009, p. 66)

Burnham epitomised Manila as the seat of American imperial power. He attributed grandeur, luxury, and vastness to the metropolitan image of Manila. Burnham never opted for uncomplicated and small-scale designs.

The centrepiece of the Burnham Plan was the civic core where a grand concourse emanated from the bay and terminated in an arc further inland. Here, Burnham envisioned a national capitol complex where colonnaded buildings were formally arranged around a rectangular

plaza. Radiating from this civic core was a series of tree-lined boulevards superimposed on an efficient gridiron street system. These radials divided the city into five sections and produced a street system that directed traffic efficiently up to a point where diagonals were introduced as a continuous connection between sections. (Burnham, 1906; Lico, 2009, p. 66)

Grand edifices such as the national capitol complex connote a hierarchical system of governance. Morley (2010) interprets the stellar public symbols to which “the local communities could look physically and symbolically up to their governmental institutions, and likewise the civil servants could look out to the people whom they serve” (p. 241). The public edifices further reinforce “that architecture (and design, in its overall sense) is an act of communication, a message, of which the parts or the whole can perform the double action of every communication, connotation, and denotation” (Eco, 2005, p. 194). The American urban scheme exemplifies

hierarchised, continuous, and functional surveillance that was epitomised by the ideal model of geometric architecture—the panopticon—and spatial form of normalising power. The panopticon paradigm in which built form was overtly linked to the inculcation of regulatory social norms and achievement of social reform was a colonial urban strategy aimed at creating obedient colonial subjects through knowledge of surveillance. (Lico, 2009, p. 62)

Open spaces occupy a significant part of the American urban design. Morley (2010) notes from the plan that “parks not only made urban environments prettier but also encouraged social interaction. This was understood to inspire citizens to equate civic beauty with pride, cultural cohesion, and social equality” (p. 243). In reality, the planning process excluded perspectives from the locals. According to Lico (2009), “The blueprint, however, deprived the native inhabitants of a voice in conducting local affairs” (p. 61). The paradox exposes how the locals continue to assimilate despite exclusion from a supposedly “democratic” administration.

The introduction of democracy invigorated participation in the American educational system. The administrators made sure to establish public schools in every urban centre. Mata (2010) scrutinises, “In many ways the priest, as the model of correct manner, has been replaced by the public school teacher” (p. 45). The public school was the seat of American influence. Constantino (1998) discloses that, “From an instrument of pacification, colonial education became an instrument of assimilation or Americanisation” (p. 315). The Bureau of Education records the increase of enrollees from 300,000 in 1905 to 1,750,000 in 1939 (Benitez, 1940, p. 413). The enrolment of locals depicts that “the impetus for American schools come[s] largely from within” (Moore, 1954). The locals assimilate through education in public spaces. Yet, church rituals still prevail. Hence, both Church and school multiply public participation in open spaces. The combination of the two institutions signify dual sphere of public influence. The shift of influence from the Church to the school suggests continuity of urban colonial administration.

The transfer from Spanish theocratic regulation to American “democratic” governance drives the locals to further adapt to imperial interests. The locals continue to see fluid and vibrant spaces. The locals act unconstrained in open spaces. After all, the introduction of democracy by the Americans proves to be a myth (Constantino, 1998). Unrecognition of locals in the planning process combined with misconception of democracy ascertains a false claim of

“progress”. To sum up, “state-funded city plans endorsed imperial politics and helped push the Philippines towards a path of ‘progress’ never seen before in the archipelago even though, from the Filipino perspective, the American standpoint lacked understanding of the native context” (Morley, 2010, p. 246).

Shatkin (2005) remarks, “The social inequities inherent in the colonial experience had transformed Manila into a symbol of the failures of American rule” (p. 585). Thereafter, postcolonial Philippine city succumbed to globalisation. Metro Manila is characterised by modern display of shopping districts. Bonifacio Global City in Taguig and Makati Central Business District represent examples of modernisation of public spaces vis-à-vis commercialisation. Public spaces diminish due to its conversion to modern commercial centres. Enormous spaces devoted to shopping are overt indications of not only the continuation of colonial fixation but also dependency on a global economic system.

Socio-spatial issues, such as hawking, surface in the metropolitan milieu. Hawking in public spaces is an adverse effect of globalisation. Hawkers are subject to social exclusion along with economic deprivation. Recio and Gomez (2013) attribute this to the “phenomenon called globalisation, one of whose aspects is that chain of economic relationships that binds developing economies in subservience to the developed world” (p. 175). Unequal wealth distribution on a global scale results in the proliferation of the informal economy in developing nations. Abject poverty in the Philippines compels hawkers to establish subsistence strategies on a daily basis. Hawkers are nonetheless “often unappreciated, and worse, subject to indiscriminate purges from sidewalks and other fluid spaces” (Recio & Gomez, 2013, p. 173). The risks of hawkers “include insufficient institutional support, need to care for dependents, long hours of work, and coping with the debilitating consequences of material poverty” (Recio & Gomez, 2013, p. 176). Therefore, public spaces transform into venues of the marginalised resisting against socio-economic exclusion.

Hawkers contest the occupation of public spaces, although conversely their claim is outright downplayed by state regulations. Shatkin (2005) critiques, “The Philippine government has increasingly encouraged private-sector involvement in planning and focused less attention on the development and maintenance of public space” (p. 579). The strategic location of public spaces for commercial consumption vitalises establishment of malls owned by corporate elites. As a result, “privatisation of urban development has led to the degradation of public space” (Shatkin, 2005, p. 578). The hawkers are left out in the process. The hawkers nevertheless organise themselves into associations to be recognised in the locality.

This section emphasises the reconfiguration of historical interpretation of public spaces in the Philippines. The history of public spaces in the Philippines began in water bodies from the pre-colonial era. Aquatic spaces allowed a vast venue for the practice of thalassocracy. Water bodies feed fluid spaces for transportation, communication, trade, and industry. Water bodies are the authentic spaces of the indigenous population. The archipelagic arrangement and tropical climate, together with abundant aquatic resources, provide evidence of vibrant water culture.

Spanish and American colonial policies permanently altered the original aquatic practices. The Spanish introduced theocracy along with the transfer of aquatic cultural practices to land-based urbanism. Hispanic urbanism placed the church in the hub of the town or city. The locals then devoted everyday life to the church. Despite the imposed Catholic practices, the locals continued to sense the land-based settlements as fluid spaces. The active participation in Catholic activities in the plazas connotes assimilation to Spanish impositions.

American policies put emphasis on public education along with the introduction of the concept of democracy. Massive enrolment of locals in public schools succeeded even until after the American granted independence to the Philippines. The participation in public education perpetually marked Americanisation of the locals. Colonial practices continued from

the Spanish to the Americans. Spanish theocratic traditions carried on along with the democratic concept from the Americans. Public school education combined with Catholic traditions prevailed in the plazas of the urban hubs.

Street hawking is a form of assimilation in the postcolonial urban milieu. Hawkers along with other participants in the informal sector partake in the vibrancy and fluidity of public spaces. The informal economy reflects the resiliency of the marginalised against global hegemony of formal sectors.

Indigenous perception lingers in the postcolonial period. The streets and plazas are incessantly seen, traversed and utilised comparable to water spaces. Filipinos perceive urban public spaces as fluid spaces. Therefore, social spaces in the Philippines are products of the inherent relation to water spaces.

Amidst the challenges of inheriting colonial policies, public spaces endure to be venues for innovative civic actions. Myriads of practices in public spaces other than hawking provide hope and inspiration especially to the youth. The succeeding chapters deal with various scenarios of vibrant as well as inclusive public spaces in the city of CDO.

2 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The fieldwork was conducted in CDO, which comprises a land area of 57,851 hectares. CDO lies on the southern island of Mindanao, Philippines and is the capital of the province of Misamis Oriental and the region of Northern Mindanao or Region 10. The city is bounded on the north by Macajalar Bay, on the south by the province of Bukidnon, on the west by the municipality of Opol, and on the east by the municipality of Tagoloan (The City Planning and Development Office, 2015). (See Figure 3)

The tripartite public spaces in CDO, namely: Divisoria, Vicente de Lara Park, and Gaston Park were primarily investigated. The tripartite public spaces are within the población or central business district of the city (See Figure 4). Moreover, the activities in the tripartite plazas were filmed using high definition video cameras during the daytime and night-time.

Triangulation among qualitative, quantitative, and historical methods was employed in this research study. Selected historical documents from Boxer Codex, Blair, and Robertson were interpreted through sociological lenses. The socio-historical methodology ascertains veracity of research practices. Further, the combination of the three methods supports the concept that, “Triangulation is the display of multiple, refracted realities simultaneously. Each of the metaphors ‘works’ to create simultaneity rather than the sequential or linear” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012, p. 10).

Data were gathered from two research trips. The first fieldwork was carried out for four months from December 2015 to March 2016; the second survey was from February to April 2017. Empirical data consisted of semi-structured and narrative interviews, focused group interviews, expert interviews along with participant observation. Statistical data were collected from the National Economic Development Agency, City Planning and Development Office, and National Statistics Office. Quantitative figures reinforced the qualitative data which, “emphasise the ‘thick description’ of a relatively small number of participants within the

context of a specific setting” (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 113). The data were then processed through discourse analysis wherein “a text does not mirror the world, it creates the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. xii).

Maps were obtained primarily from the Geographic Information System Office of the City Planning and Development Office. News reports from local media outfits, such as News Express, Gold Star Daily, and Sun Star Cagayan de Oro, were obtained from the Filipiña section of the Xavier University Main Library. Books, research reports, thesis, and other literature were sourced from the University Library of the University of the Philippines Diliman, the Xavier University Main Library, and the Research Institute for Mindanao Culture. Old photographs were availed from the Museo de Oro, City Archives, private collections, and websites. First-hand photographs were taken during the fieldwork.

The City Council of Cagayan de Oro generously allowed utilisation of the ordinances, resolutions, and motions. The Investment Promotions Center benevolently permitted acquisition of videos, decrees, and urban blueprints (i.e. *Planned City Extension in Lumbia, Cagayan de Oro, Revisiting and Revitalizing Divisoria in Cagayan de Oro*). Mindanao Star likewise admitted the request I made to sort out large piles of historical newsprints dating back to 1947. The news articles provided information on the political, economic, and social life of the city particularly the period following the declaration of its charter.

Spoken interviews with city residents, street tutors, artists, and the informal sector, which includes vendors, masseurs, as well as sex workers, were done either in the Visayan language or a combination of both English and Visayan. The relative ease of language allowed an atmosphere of comfort and trust. The participants confidently disclosed not only detailed habits of their everyday life but also contemplation. Empathy was thoroughly established between the respondents and the interviewer. In essence, the articulation of the respondents to the interviewer exemplified the procedure of an active interview (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

Comprehension and immersion in the field regard respondents as “the experiential experts on the phenomenon being studied” (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 107). The vendor who collects money from the toilette users in Divisoria reveals in a sympathetic manner the challenges along with the contentment of day-to-day work in the plaza. The vendor has a disability in her right hand, yet, she manages to be the breadwinner of her family notwithstanding the night-shift. She articulates both the ordinary and important spectacles transpiring in the plaza. Her visualisation of the public space aids appreciation despite the overwhelming lapses in her personal life and the social condition of CDO.

The interviews with the street tutors and artist reveal that the narratives of the respondents, such as Kerneil Balaga who teaches homeless children or Rhyan Casiño who introduces street arts/performance, “can contribute to an evolving theory, participants whose main credential is experiential relevance” (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 107). In short, the social action of the respondents proves the theory of Touraine that any ordinary individual can be the social actor or Subject.

Expert interviews consisted of formal appointments with the mayors, congressional representative, and urban planners. The hectic time schedule due to the election campaign in 2016 resulted in delays; nonetheless, the interviews were reset following several days of anticipation. Congressman Rufus Rodriguez readily made available his manuscript that features first-hand depiction of the plazas in CDO. Mayor Oscar “Oca” Moreno encouraged gathering additional explanation and data from his chief urban planner, Mrs. Eileen Escobar-San Juan. The office of Mrs. Escobar-San Juan generously provided copies of documents and the film *Cagayan De Oro Entry - Liveable Cities Design Challenge*. I then introduced the book of William Lim on *Public Space in Urban Asia* that demonstrates emerging perspectives across various fields of discipline from the academe to urban planning/architecture. In sum, the

interviews produced not only oral evidence, visual and written materials but also exchange of perspectives.

Former Mayor Vicente “Dongkoy” Emano and his son, Governor Yevgeny “Bambi” Emano, failed to respond to the letter of appointment. The requests were deliberately ignored after several follow-up attempts; nevertheless, it is fortunate that numerous credible sources filled in the information regarding the administration of the Emanos.

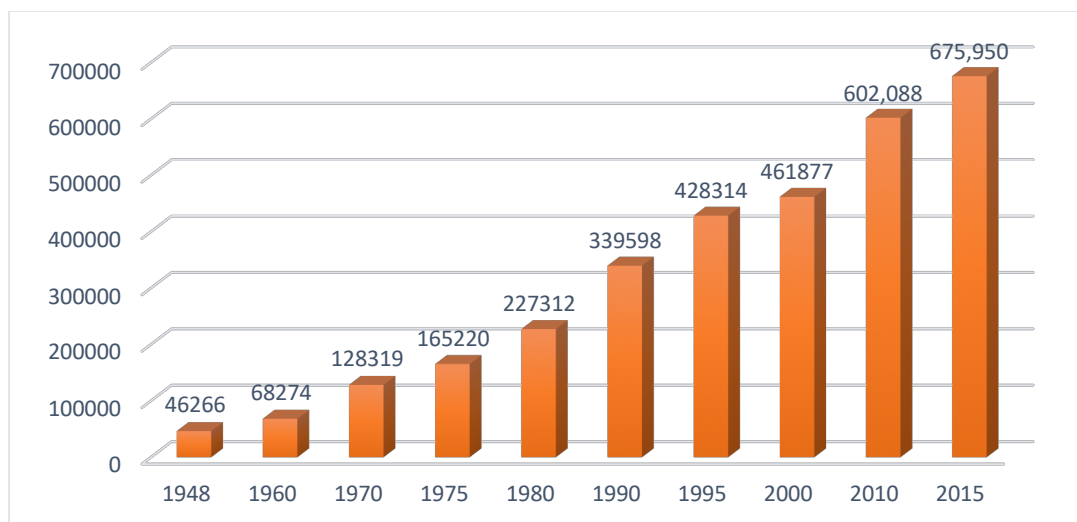
Overall, the aims of the fieldwork were almost entirely attained except the failed interview with the two public officials. The unresponsiveness of the respondents, nonetheless, failed to prevent other methods of obtaining critical information on the political condition of CDO. The corroboration of interviews and policies (i.e. city ordinances and resolutions), along with reports, aided in the reconstruction of the political narrative.

The researcher is a “bricoleur” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012, p. 10-11). To say the least, I hold the responsibility of being “adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks, ranging from interviewing to intensive self-reflection and introspection” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012, p. 10). I emphasise that the bricoleur can also be the actor or the Subject. One does not only engage intellectually but takes concrete action as well. Social action is the urgent need today particularly in the most desperate areas of society. Denzin and Lincoln (2012) encapsulate that the “political bricoleur knows that science is power, for all research findings have political implications” (p. 11). After all, the responsibility of the researcher is to reach out and endorse a “politics of hope” (Lincoln, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 2012, p. 11).

3 URBANISATION OF CAGAYAN DE ORO

The formation of CDO to a chartered city in 1950 resulted in marked change and growth. CDO was characterised by a rural landscape together with agricultural activities in the early 1950s; during the 1970s, CDO transformed into the regional gateway. Thenceforward, the city has served as the trade and service centre.

The population has rapidly ascended from 46,266 in 1948 (Department of Commerce and Industry, Bureau of the Census and Statistics, 1953) to 675,950 in 2015 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2017). CDO follows the pattern of demographic growth, which has been the typical feature of Southeast Asian cities since WWII. In-migration coupled with non-adherence to the methods of family planning (either natural or artificial) propels the high rate of demographic escalation.



Graph 1. Population of CDO 1948 - 2015 (National Statistics Office).

3.1 EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In addition to numerous primary and secondary schools, CDO caters to students particularly at the tertiary level where programmes related to business and industry are offered. The number of tertiary institutions has risen in the last three decades. There were seven in 1977, which more than doubled in 2011. The number of enrollees tripled from 14,672 in 1977 (The City Planning and Development Office, 1976) to 47,608 in 2010 (The City Planning and Development Office, 2010). This was mainly due to the increasing migrant population.

The city has four universities. Both Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan (XU) and University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines (USTP) preceded WWII while Liceo de Cagayan University (LDCU) and Capitol University (CU) commenced after CDO became a chartered city. Their contribution to the city's economic growth in terms of tertiary course offerings is highlighted.

USTP (formerly Mindanao University of Science and Technology) is the first and only state university in the city established since 1927. It was originally named Misamis Oriental Trade School. It offered vocational courses in cosmetology, dressmaking, practical electricity, furniture making, building construction, and automotive (Olarde, 1953, p. 8). Soon after, it renamed itself and reinvented its image as a centre for engineering, architecture, industrial technology, and information technology, among others.

The second oldest university founded in 1933, XU is the biggest school in the city and region. Moreover, it is claimed to be "among the best schools in the country". For these reasons, XU has provided employees for multinational companies such as Del Monte Philippines, National Steel Corporation, Pilipinas Kao, Philippine Sinter Corporation, and Nestlé Corporation, among others. Likewise, XU "alumni are found among all types of occupations in Cagayan de Oro and beyond as skilled workers, technicians, teachers, engineers, medical doctors, nurses, entrepreneurs, bureaucrats, and government employees" (Enerio, Elisabeth,

n.d., pp. 4-5).

Throughout the course of XU's history, the undergraduates have constituted the largest population as against the secondary and primary students. Its growth is attributed to the variety of courses it offers that appeal to students who want immediate employment after completion of a degree programme.

In the tertiary education, there was a change in the distribution of the students. In the 1950s, the students enrolled in Liberal Education courses; in the 1980s more students chose Commerce. In the past three decades, students chose to enrol in a course which appeared to provide them with a job right after graduation. So there was more interest in "professional" courses like Business Management, Nursing, Engineering, and Information Management. (Enerio, n.d., p. 26)

Fluctuation in the labour market and a weak national economy led to an irregular trend of enrolment, however, XU remained steadfast in its mission to produce graduates who are dedicated to the city and Mindanao. In 1999, its tertiary population added up to an estimated 10,000 students (Enerio, n.d., p. 3).

LDCU was instituted in 1955 by the Pelaez family. Seven years later in 1962, it expanded and transferred to a new location in Barangay Kauswagan. Further, three additional courses in Surveying, Sanitary, and Secretarial Sciences were added besides Commerce and Business Administration, Pre-nursing, and Law, among others. In 1998, LDCU acquired the status of a university. Rodolfo Pelaez, the owner and founder of LDCU, envisioned the school to cater to poor but deserving students, making good quality tertiary training accessible to them.

It is motivated solely to afford the hardworking, determined, and conscientious boys and girls to pursue their studies and realise their dreams by acquiring their education in a most inexpensive way with richer and broader intellect, in their quest for a better education.

(Pelaez, 1962)

Installed in 1971, CU is the youngest among the four universities and the first school in the region to offer a course in midwifery in 1973. It acquired university status in 2013. The university now has courses in Nautical Science, Marine Engineering, Civil Engineering, Nursing, Agricultural Technology, as well as Forestry (“Capitol University History,” n.d.).

The universities respond to the demands of the job market. Tertiary education produces graduates who can be employed in the various business and industrial sectors. Thus, the increasing number of enrolment and tertiary institutions has contributed to the economic growth of the city.

3.2 FINANCIAL SECTOR

The proliferation of the number of banks, insurance companies, business service, and real estate establishments illustrate the expansion of the city’s financial sectors. The strongest component includes banking and real estate. Financial centres promote investment and aid commercial transactions. In 1970, there were only 11 financial institutions. In a span of 19 years, in 1989, the number increased to 55 companies (The City Planning and Development Office, 1988). Real estate caters to housing needs as a result of the rising population. Values of real properties consistently increased from Php 21.48 million in 1958 to Php 28.48 million in 1962. Subsequently, the number of real estate lessors expanded, peaking at 635 in 1984 (The City Planning and Development Office, 1984, p. 77).

In 1990, a total of 793 financing, insurance, real estate, and business service establishments were put up in CDO. Twenty years later in 2015, the figure increased to 2,580 firms, however due to national economic problems, fluctuations occurred in some periods. Nonetheless, investment incentives and continuous influx of investment companies built a resilient economic condition. In 1995, the Investment and Capital Corporation of the Philippines or ICCP composed of several companies, such as Philamlife, Far East Bank, Regatta Properties, Mitsui, Bechtel, and Phinma, planned to construct a 360-hectare township project in CDO (“ICCP group reveal Cagayan de Oro investment,” 1995, p. 3). In 2004, CDO reached the highest collection of real property taxes in Region 10. More than its target of Php 117 million was added to the city’s income (“Oro bags real property collection award,” 2005, p. 7). Residential spaces dominated 11,554.85 hectares or 19.97 per cent of the city’s total area of 57,851 hectares in the 2015 survey of existing land use (The City Planning and Development Office, 2015, p. 4).

Year	No. of Financing, Insurance, Real Estate and Business Service Establishments
1990	793
1991	846
1992	853
1993	832
1994	1,723
1995	1,307
1996	1,074
1997	991
1998	1,045
2003	2,072
2004	1,519
2009	2,303
2010	2,376
2015	2,580

Table 1. Financing, Insurance, Real Estate and Business Service Establishments in CDO 1990-2010
(The City Planning and Development Office, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2015).

3.3 TRADE AND INDUSTRY

The multiplication of economic activities resonates with the proliferation of economic spaces, which drives the process of urbanisation. Industrial activities have prevailed from the 1970s onwards. Industrial areas occupied 72.88 hectares in 1976 or 0.15 per cent of the city's total area (The City Planning and Development Office, 1976, p. 9). Further improvement was achieved in 1988 with an increase of 96.64 hectares or 0.20 per cent of the city's total area (The City Planning and Development Office, 1988, p. 19). In 2015, it expanded to 250.67 hectares or 0.43 per cent of the city's total area (The City Planning and Development Office, 2015, p. 4).

Escalation of multi-million multinational factories up to the adjacent municipalities evinces the intensification of industrialisation. The 3,000-hectare Philippine Veterans Investment Development Corporation Industrial Authority (PHIVIDEC) has leased spaces to 30 manufacturing and service companies as of 2016. President Ferdinand Marcos directed its creation under Presidential Decree No. 538 in 1974. Philippine Sinter Corporation, Mindanao Container Terminal, Limketkai Manufacturing Corporation, STEAG State Power Incorporated, and San Miguel Foods, Incorporated are examples of its leading firms (PHIVIDEC Industrial Authority, 2016).

Year	Industrial Areas (Hectares)
1972	42.58
1976	72.88
1988	96.64
2005	133.19
2010	139.13
2015	250.67

Table 2. Industrial Areas in CDO 1972 – 2010
(The City Planning and Development Office, 1976, 1988, 2005, 2010, 2015).

The commercial area in 1972 was 142.93 hectares or 0.3 per cent of the city’s total area of 48,882,383. Four years after in 1976, it increased to 222.97 hectares or 0.45 per cent of the city’s total area (The City Planning and Development Office, 1976, p. 9). This expansion was due to the transformation of the city’s economic activities along with the promotion of CDO as the regional commercial hub; however, the national political crisis of the 1980s affected the city’s commercial growth. In 1987, it decreased to 116.06 hectares or 0.24 per cent of the city’s total area (The City Planning and Development Office, 1986, p. 18); however, a year after in 1988 it improved to 138.80 hectares or 0.28 per cent of the city’s total area (The City Planning and Development Office, 1988, p. 19). Seven years after in 1995, it further stretched to 243.73 hectares or 0.5 per cent of the city’s total area (The City Planning and Development Office, 1995, p. 26). In 2015, it added to 322.38 hectares or 0.56 per cent of the city’s total area (The City Planning and Development Office, 2015, p. 4).

Year	Commercial Areas (hectares)
1972	142.93
1976	222.97
1987	116.06
1988	138.8
1995	243.73
2010	247.81
2015	322.38

Table 3. Commercial Areas in CDO 1972-2010
(The City Planning and Development Office, 1976, 1986, 1988, 1995, 2010, 2015).

3.4 CITY INCOME⁴

CDO's income displayed sluggish improvement from Php 1.6 million in 1959 to Php 9.6 million in 1974. It was observed that the city was not as progressive as the other secondary cities like Cebu or Davao. CDO needed additional hotels and other services such as beauty salons, clothing shops, and cafés, which could cater to external investors. Such observation was disclosed in the following article:

⁴ Annual income of CDO is based on actual values. The currency in Philippine peso is not converted into Euros since there was no Euro currency in the 1950s. Further, the main purpose of this section shows the growth along with the causes of fluctuations of the city income throughout the historical periods.

The picture is one of dear paucity of outside investments, which have entered the economy of this city, as well as in the surrounding areas. However, this is not saying that the city is not progressing, as in fact it is, though such progress is without the aid of big investments injected into the city's economic stream. This is not to say also that we do not have the factors of progress; as in fact, we have; but I submit that we lack most badly the most important factor of all, namely, the entry here of badly-needed outside private investments, preferably in massive doses. (La Viña, Jr., 1963, p. 1)

In order to attract investors, the leading officials decided to reposition the economic activities of CDO to be dynamic and incremental. Thereafter, Mayor Justiniano Romulo Borja set out for a two-month study and observation in the U.S., Japan, and Central America. Borja observed and studied economic projects in Tokyo, Honolulu, San Francisco, Washington, Chicago, Tennessee, Puerto Rico, and Costa Rica. CDO grew in the right direction because of Borja's vision and commendable leadership. Borja was exposed to the methods of economic development in many cities and nations all over the world. Borja's exposure and training aided CDO to prosper economically ("Borja US-Bound Serina at Helm Acting as Mayor," 1962). Hence, the income surged to Php 23 million in 1979.

The decline of the city's income in the early 1980s owed to the political instability of Martial Law. In his handwritten letter to the public, Mayor Aquilino Pimentel, Jr lamented, "Even as to the economic prospect for '83 are bleak and the presence of the military in our part of the country is becoming more pervasive, we still have a lot of things to be thankful to the Almighty for the year just passed" (Pimentel, 1982, p. 5). In spite of the difficulties, CDO maintained its image as the destination for investors. Consequently, the income steeply increased from Php

60 million in 1988 to Php 800 million in 1999.

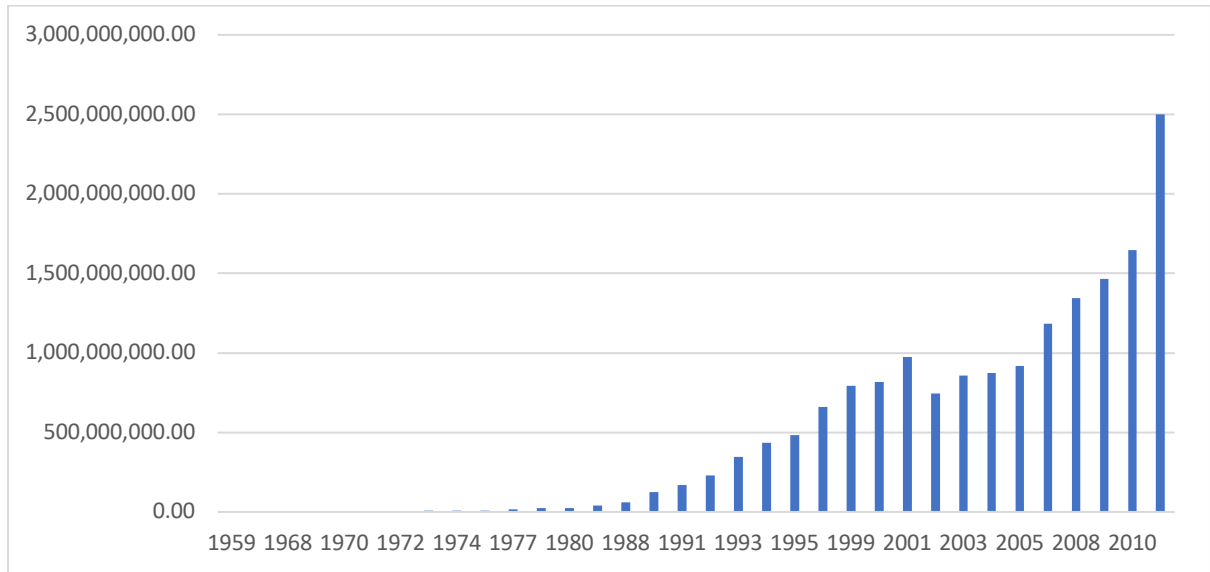
The economic upswing of the city was credited by Mayor Pablo Magtajas to the satisfactory peace and order condition. This was made possible by the cooperation between private individuals and the city government. Mayor Magtajas stated that this decade-old partnership, which started with Operation Kahusay ug Kalinaw, made possible by the City Peace and Order Council, facilitated the manpower operations and allocated resources of the government and mostly businessmen towards this endeavour. For instance, the Oro Bankers voluntarily funded the overhaul and repair of the two police cars. He gave credit to the CDO-Misamis Oriental Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, as well, which donated a pick-up vehicle to strengthen police patrolling. A memorandum of agreement between the City Hall and the private sector had actually been created to preserve peace and order. The city government, Philippine National Police, businessmen, the Oro Bankers, radio communications organisations, and Crimewatch were among the signatories (“C. de Oro’s peace and order cited as key to fast economic progress,” 1995).

The succeeding period from 2002 to 2005 underwent fluctuations attributable to the national political crises of EDSA II and III; nevertheless, Councillor Benjamin Benaldo was convinced that foreign businessmen would still invest in CDO. He conveyed that, “As long as the country gets through this economic dilemma, investors would definitely visit and do business in Cagayan de Oro as ‘we have already established our name’” (“Oro dad confident investors still prefer investing in city,” 2000, pp. 6, 11). Accordingly, the income was able to perk up from Php 1.2 billion in 2006 to Php 1.6 billion in 2010 by reason of renewed promotional concepts. CDO was promoted as the city in “Bloom, Blossom and Boom” by the administration of Mayor Vicente Emano. CDO was commended for its

bounties, resources, business climate, industrial locations, employment opportunities, linkages with other local government units and non-

government agencies, foreign relations, governance, and many more that would put the city, not only in the local, but in the world map, as well. (“55 reasons why CDO is in bloom, blossom, boom,” 2005, p. 8)

The entry of shopping malls such as Shoemart/SM City CDO, Ayala/Centrio coupled with the establishment of the German-owned coal power plant, STEAG State Power Incorporated, support upsurge of annual revenue. Moreover, the entrance of these multinational corporations signifies the expeditious globalisation of CDO. Thus, the city garnered Php 2.5 billion in 2015. CDO has been obviously expanding and growing since its inauguration as a chartered city. The urban expansion is manifested by the escalation of population, tertiary schools, trade combined with industry, particularly banking and real estate sectors. CDO’s urbanisation, nonetheless, continues along with challenges such as the myriad of urban plans. The relation between urban process and urban planning exists along the path of discontinuous continuity. At some periods, urbanisation follows through the urban plans. At other times, urban planning reconfigures with the process of urbanisation as is shown in the following section.



Graph 2. Income of CDO 1959 – 2015

(“City share from BIR allotments expected to reach P478,829.87,” 1962; The City Government of Cagayan de Oro, 1972; The City Planning and Development Office, 1988, 1995, 1999, 2002, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2015).

4 URBAN PLANS

Urban plans are blueprints for the city's socio-economic development, aesthetical design, and ecological welfare. The government in cooperation with international agencies provided excellent urban structural plans; however, they were not entirely implemented such as the *Framework Plan for the City of Cagayan de Oro* (Urban Designers Associates, Inc., 1972) and *Cagayan de Oro Comprehensive Land Use Plan* (CLUP) (City Land Use Coordinating Committee of Cagayan de Oro, 2000). As a result, the city suffered from the effects of climate change brought by typhoon Washi (locally known as Sendong) in December 2011. The city's existing land use and environmental conditions evince the consequences of unimplemented urban structural plan.

This section presents the development of CDO's urban structural plans from the time of Mayor Maximo Suniel in 1952 until the present mayoralty of Oscar "Oca" Moreno. It sets within this context the *Framework Plan for the City of CDO, Cagayan de Oro - Iligan Corridor Master Plan* (Louis Berger International, Inc., 1991a, 1991b), CLUP and the *Planned City Extension* (PCE) (E. C. Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016c). Subsequently, the transformation of the city's land use is illustrated with the employment of maps in 1953, 1992 and 2005 to underscore the actual organisation of land use within the boundaries of the city.

The onset of urban planning in CDO started with the appointment of Maximo Suniel as the town mayor in 1948 by President Elpidio Quirino. By 1952, city zoning was determined to put order in the erection or renovation of houses, factories, bridges, and other infrastructures. In the same year, the Committee for City Planning and Beautification was instituted to promote cleanliness and cooperation between citizens and city legislators. Two years later, in 1954, Mayor Borja spearheaded the creation of the city's urban planning board.

The city engineer and the representative of the National Planning Commission conducted an initial study of the urban plans in 1955. The city's developmental plan aimed to formulate

blueprints for future implementations. In 1963, the CDO City Planning and Development Board was vested with authority to design, study, and recommend suggestions for urban development projects. An official map of CDO together with zoning and subdivision ordinances, public improvement plan, health and sanitation, as well as building codes were to be formulated. Mayor Borja strongly mandated the chairman of the board to originate

from civic-minded citizens of the community preferably one who shall have the physical development of the city as a real interest and who has demonstrated by his past and present activities the ability to aid the urban development of the city. (Minutes of the Municipal Board Series of 1963, pp. 638-641)

4.1 FRAMEWORK PLAN

Borja's legacy of public service continued to live on when Reuben Canoy assumed the mayoralty in 1972. Canoy avidly supported Borja's vision in view of the fact that both adhered to the same principles of governance. Thus, it was foreseeable that Canoy followed through and accomplished the initiatives of Borja. The completion of the Framework Plan for the City of CDO turned out to be the critical juncture for the city's future planning schemes. Fr. William Nicholson, a Jesuit teaching at Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan, chaired the Planning Board. He enunciated to the Cagay-anons and city officials that

Aware of the need for a regulated and programmed development of our city, the Planning Board and its Consultants delved into research and investigations of the existing physical and environmental conditions as well as in the history of our city. The result here published is a

Framework Plan, which includes text, a series of maps, recommendations, and appendages as tools with [which] our goals may be attained. (Urban Designers Associates, Inc., 1972, p. 3)

The Framework Plan abided to certain principles. It differentiated itself from the zoning ordinances given that, “It translates in physical form established community goals and acts through recommendation and the veto power” (Urban Designers Associates, Inc., 1972, p. 5). In other words, the Framework Plan primarily considered the participation of urban dwellers.

A framework Plan, to be truly effective, embodies the desires of a community. It is borne out of community goals formulated through open discussions with the members of the community and their Planning Board. Goals then serve as objectives and planning guides for the planning recommendation. Community participation is therefore imperative. (Urban Designers Associates, Inc., 1972, p. 6)

Urban plans cannot be conceived without expertise. Yet, the expert planners solicit from the community through consultation. The mayors, Jesuit, and local and foreign designers included the public in the planning process. Thus, the Framework Plan commended inclusivity where, “People make spaces. Giving individuals the right to decide what will be best for the community might lead to greater sense of ownership and community pride” (Lee, Wui, & Hong, 2014).

The Framework Plan nurtured principles “symbolising Cagayan de Oro.” The symbol or

The four major physical elements are represented in their colour translations and shown as colour bands radiating from a horizontal line.

The horizontal line suggests a base for the physical elements in their balanced utilisation for the benefit of the city residents. All the colour bands merge into a volute-like golden dot representing the urban area. The overall form derives from an adapted capital ‘C’, the first letter of the name Cagayan and culminating in a letter O of gold symbolising Oro and combined to mean Cagayan de Oro. (Urban Designers Associates, Inc., 1972, p. 8)

The symbol conforms to “a dialectic between significative forms and codes of interpretations” (Eco, 2005, p. 181). The semiotics of the Framework Plan signifies the practice of community planning together with interpretation of modern tradition. Its vision embeds a significant symbol.

In no time, the Framework Plan was adopted under Resolution Nos. 80 and 110 in 1972. In spite of this, the subsequent administrators lacked the capacity to stick through its execution.⁵ It would have been successful if only they valued the importance of its implementation, but then they had other concerns to attend to i.e. national political crisis. Thus, it resulted in the reversal of zoning codes. In 1979, Mayor Pedro Roa approved Ordinance No. 880, which merely provided improvisations to the city’s zoning programme. Throughout the administrations of Mayors Aquilino Pimentel, Jr. (1980-1984) and Pablo Magtajas (1984-1998), there was not an effort to create a new urban plan. Mayor Pimentel did not pay sufficient attention to urban plans because he was preoccupied with problems arising from Martial Law, which affected the whole country. In 1982, the city government of CDO was urged by the Bureau of Lands Region 10 to revise the land use survey that covered not only the territory of

⁵ Former mayor Reuben Canoy acquired a serious disease while he was in office. Then, Canoy focused on the protest against the impending national crisis arising from the Martial Law. Canoy eventually published his book *The Counterfeit Revolution: Martial Law in the Philippines (1980)* to expose the regime of Ferdinand Marcos.

CDO but also the neighbouring municipalities of Opol and Tagoloan to create a “Metro Cagayan de Oro”. It was a challenge for the administrators to act at once in order not to be left behind. The clamour for urgency was expressed in a news article.

Shall we wait until such time that it would be too expensive and unmanageable to plan for an environment that is pleasurable, desirable, enjoyable, and healthful to live in? Shall we now start envisioning the environment in the year 2020 for Cagayan de Oro? (Ferraris, 1982, p. 1)

4.2 MASTER PLAN

The *Cagayan de Oro-Iligan Corridor Master Plan* was conceived by the Philippine Assistance Program Support primarily to establish the international airport as well as to facilitate agro-industrial development in the Northern Mindanao region. The cities of Iligan and CDO together with 19 municipalities were planned to act as the agro-industrial hubs for multinational corporations. It covered a 20-year period from 1991 to 2011. The project was not initiated by the city government but by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), private sectors, and national government offices such the Department of Trade and Industry, as well as the National Economic Development Authority.

The Master Plan was published in three volumes. The first volume lays down the feasibility study, which includes the assessment of socio-economic conditions and transportation network particularly the roads leading to the airport site. The second volume contains the blueprint for the airport in the specific municipality of Laguindingan, which is situated between CDO and Iligan. The third volume fit-out the geotechnical provision for the construction of the airport.

The Master Plan is beyond doubt crucial to the economic progress of CDO. The Laguindingan Airport recently opened in 2013; however, much of the plan remains to be realised. The airport began operations beyond the deadline of the 20-year plan. It has yet to cater to international flights. The municipalities continue to be unindustrialised. On a more pessimistic note, the plan, with its complete technical and visual representations, masks the partial ability of the planners. The architect(s) of the Master Plan merely “ensconces himself in his own space. He has a *representation of this space*, one which is bound to graphic elements—to sheets of paper, plans, elevations, sections, perspective views of façades, modules, and so on” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 361).

4.3 COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

The CLUP was launched under the office of the former Mayor Vicente Emano and funded by Australian Agency for International Development (AUSAID). The CLUP covered a 10-year period from 2000 until 2010. The City Council approved the design under Ordinance Number 7959-2001. Unlike the 1972 Framework Plan, the CLUP provided not only the guidelines but also the physical development and land use coverage of the city using the more precise technology of Geographic Information System (GIS). Moreover, it was not uncompromising but rather concerned with matters of practicality. The vision of the planners was to have “a peaceful, orderly, liveable city with a modern trading and service centre where there are equal opportunities for its disciplined citizens to develop and prosper in a clean and healthy environment” (City Land Use Coordinating Committee of Cagayan de Oro, 2000, p. 9). Emano was keenly aware of environmental ramifications. He perceived it as a challenge to further improve the city’s infrastructures in order to offer a better standard of living for the Cagayans. Emano acknowledged, “Growth has indeed taken a toll on the city’s environment” (City Land Use Coordinating Committee of Cagayan de Oro, 2000, p. 3).

The CLUP did not deviate from the existing structural order. Instead it aimed to replicate the actual set-up; however, it considered the growing problems of urbanisation, such as traffic and congestion of settlements. To decongest the major urban centre, which included the población and surrounding residential districts, seven Growth Centers (one in the west, three in the east, and three in the south) were disseminated and stimulated to expand through promotion of commercial activities and residential occupation. Within the selected four Growth Centers are 12 Neighborhood Centers. To abate the worsening traffic conditions, three additional bridges were planned for construction linking the western and eastern nodes. Therefore, the CLUP (2000) “simply reflect[s] and [does] not re-enforce, in spatial terms, the city’s desired niche in the hierarchy of urban settlements in the country” (p. 22).

The CLUP does not disrupt the tradition of urban planning. Rather it continues the practice where the “supposed solutions of the planners thus impose the constraints of exchangeability on everyday life, while presenting them as both natural (or normal) and technical requirements—and often also as moral necessities (requirements of public morality)” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.338).

The use of new technology such as GIS satisfies “both natural (or normal) and technical requirements” in the perception of the planners. The emphasis on ecological protection concerns “moral necessities”. Yet, the disastrous typhoon Washi happened in spite of the ecological measures. The dependence on foreign funds from AUSAID is a disguise of mendicancy. The non-implementation of the land use plan fosters a “state of ambiguity” (Roy, 2009, p. 10; Kurfürst, 2012).

4.4 PLANNED CITY EXTENSION

The aftereffects of typhoon Washi brought in a clamour for increased security from floods and reasonably priced residences. The congestion of traffic and population in the central business district adds to the necessity of a “strategic and sustainable development node in south Cagayan de Oro” (E. C. Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016c). Presently, the city government with the chairmanship of the Local Economic and Investment Promotions Officers together with the assistance of UN Habitat, Arcadis, and United Architects of the Philippines-Cagayan de Oro Chapter are designing the PCE in response to the needs of the local market. The strategy of the PCE designers “is oriented towards valorising, quantifying, and administering space, thereby supporting and legitimating the modes of operation of state and capital (Goonewardena, Kipfer, Milgrom, & Schmid, 2008, p. 137).”

The designers determine Barangay Lumbia as the site of the PCE. Lumbia is 10 kilometres away from the población, elevated at 180 mean seal level and has an area of 820 hectares. PCE envisions Lumbia as a “showcase for livability and resilience” (E. C. Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016c) after the barangay previously served domestic flights.

PCE encompasses five clusters. Institutional, commercial, residential, agro-industrial, and open recreational spaces are the primary classifications for land use. A key point in PCE highlights the provision of public spaces in three clusters. The public spaces occupy 349.72 hectares—the largest among all the other land uses. Public spaces consist of parks, easements, and public recreational areas.

PCE conforms to the CLUP and was approved by Mayor Moreno under Executive Order Number 112 series of 2015 with the title, “Creating the Planned City Extension Task Force”. The CLUP identifies Lumbia as one of the 12 Neighbourhood Centers. The members of the task force come from various sectors such as the academe, private business enterprises, non-government organisations, architects, barangay heads, government officials, and the City

Council Committees on Urban and Rural Poor. PCE is a work in progress; nonetheless, it guarantees to engage the public in the planning process (E. C. Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016b). Granted that public consultation will be carried out; thenceforward, “developmental planning process must seek to be more open and participatory” (Lee, Wui, & Hong, 2014, p. 220).



What is the Planned City Extension (PCE)?

An 850-hectare area in Barangay Lumbia, Cagayan de Oro City.

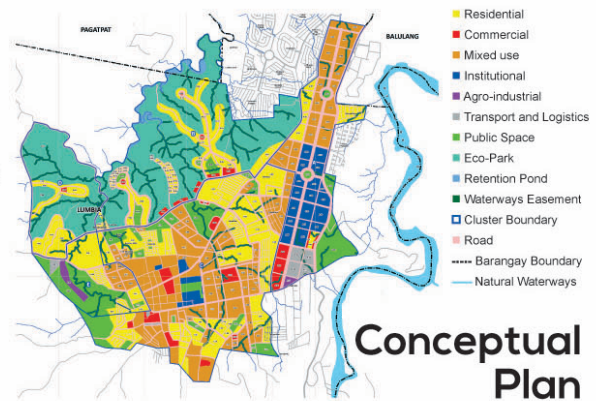
Conceptualized under UN Habitat's Achieving Sustainable Urban Development (ASUD) Project through a consultative process involving:

- The City Government of Cagayan de Oro;
- National line agencies concerned;
- Local stakeholders;
- UN Habitat;
- Arcadis (Netherlands); and
- The Cagayan de Oro Chapter of the United Architects of the Philippines (UAP).

Why Lumbia?

Lumbia is located 10 km from the city center, at the midpoint of the city's north-south axis, 180 meters above sea level.

Under the city's approved Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) Barangay Lumbia is identified for development as an economic zone.

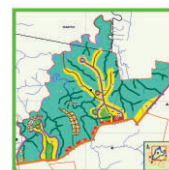


Conceptual Plan

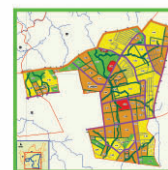
Addresses key urbanization issues

- Transport planning and traffic management
- Drainage and flood-safety
- Rising demand for safe and affordable housing
- Service and opportunities for rural barangays

THE PCE CLUSTERS

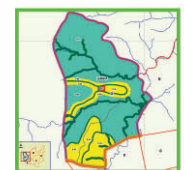


Cluster B
Affordable and Low-cost Housing



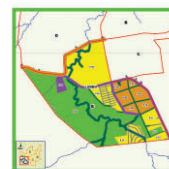
Cluster C

- Medium-density residential
- With community facilities
- Health, Education
- Low-intensity Commercial
- At least 20% Social Housing
- With connections to barangay poblacion
- Public Spaces



Cluster D

- Residential villages in terraced fields
- Water Retention Ponds
- For soil erosion control and tourism activities
- Ecotourism (biking, trekking, adventure sports)
- Mountain View Resort with convention and meeting facilities



Cluster E

- Agri-processing Complex
- With waste management facility
- Mixed Use
- Low-medium end

- housing, commercial
- Community Facilities
- Value-chain considered
- Efficient access to raw materials and markets

Figure 3. Planned City Extension in Lumbia, Cagayan de Oro City.

The plan indicates the factors and identifies Lumbia as the site of expansion. Copyright permission from Eileen C. Escobar-San Juan, 2019.

4.5 LAND USE

The Framework Plan, CDO-Iligan Corridor Master Plan, and CLUP were highly comprehensive and technical; nonetheless, they faced the obstacle of not being completely put into operation. The resulting neglect was manifested in the disorganisation of built-up areas viz. mix-up of residential, commercial, and industrial zones.

The following section portrays the changes of the city's land cover using the maps of 1953, 1992 and 2005 from the study on *Monitoring Land Use/Cover Change in the Urban Barangays of Cagayan de Oro City using GIS* (Sabines, 2006). The paper presented spatial alterations of CDO. Further, it utilised GIS to generate maps that accurately display the city's expansion and utilisation of urban space.

In the early decades following the enactment of the city's charter, CDO was characterised by rural landscapes combined with simpler economic activities. Only the población was occupied with residential units and commercial buildings. In other words, the city centre was the only built-up area while the surrounding vicinities were either forested or cultivated by farmers. Hence, there was better environmental situation considering that no industrial estates or subdivision complexes inhabited the city. The land cover in 1953 reflected these conditions.

Thirty-nine years since 1953 and 20 years since the 1972 Framework Plan was conceived, the alterations to the city's land use were extremely conspicuous. The land use in 1992 reveals non-conformity to the Framework Plan

because urban planning is based on a political process in which on the one hand the interests of those trying to use urban space profitably and on the other hand those negatively affected by development plans are involved, it is not astonishing that the implementation of the urban development plans faces severe obstacles and remains limited. (Evers & Korff, 2000, p. 13)

The occupation in the población was intensified. Built-up areas along the coast of Macajalar Bay were beginning to be visible. The northwest portion was inhabited and the northeastern division likewise followed the same pattern of expansion. However, the western zone was less populated for the reason that there was only one bridge linking it to the east—the Carmen Bridge. The second bridge—Marcos Bridge—and the national highway connecting the cities of Iligan (in the west) to CDO and Butuan (in the east) were not constructed until the 1970s.

Complex subdivisions took up the built-up areas as reported by the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board in 1992. These subdivision complexes scattered in the northern and eastern barangays such as Bugo, Gusa, Kauswagan, Macasandig, Carmen, and Bulua.

Thirteen years since 1992, the direction of the city's expansion was widely dispersed. New residential subdivisions were occurring in the southern most portions. The northern areas facing the sea were massively occupied. From 1953 to 1992 the built-up areas expanded from east to west; while from 1992 to 2005 the built-up areas extended from the centre to the south. New bridges and additional roads facilitated faster transport. In conclusion, the spatial alterations pointed how the city's physical structure differed from the designs established by the city planning office in 1972. No green open spaces or parks in the southern portion were established; instead, it was occupied by a rapidly growing number of housing complex. The northern portion was not constructed to be entirely the industrial site; instead, it was merged with residences. The población was not converted into complete commercial district; rather, it was mixed up with houses. Therefore, the actual land use exhibited a lack of direction. The ubiquitous proliferation of built-up areas indicated inefficiency of implementation. The actual land use followed none of the plans since “graphic elements involved (in drawings, sections, elevations, visual tableaux with silhouettes or figures, etc.), which are familiar to architects, serve as *reducers* of the reality they claim to represent” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 338). For the most part, the built-up areas evince domination by corporations. The growth of multi-billion peso

commercial and industrial projects such as the numerous residential subdivisions confirms that “representations of space are dominated by profit-seeking interests” (Kurfürst, 2012, p. 17).

Urban plans for CDO adhere to the perfectionist’s vision. The plans aid the elevation of the city into a regional, industrial, and commercial hub. Therefore, they can have a positive impact on economic growth.

On the negative side, the plans can be perceived as “an instrument of domination and social control that is based on the belief that social problems require scientific and technological knowledge in order to be dissolved” (Escobar, 2010; Kurfürst, 2012, p. 147). USAID funded the Master Plan and Framework Plan. The modern state of the Philippines derives its influence from the US. It is the national practice to conform to the directives from the US. The plans evidently point out the constant act of “domination and social control” by US on the Philippines. In the same manner, the sponsorship from AUSAID and UN-Habitat put forward Western urban planning techniques.

Planning facilitates the manifestation of ideology in concrete space; it is the modern instrument employed by the state to erase diversity and replace it with homogeneity or national culture. According to Louis Wirth’s (1964) definition of the city, dimension, density, and heterogeneity are its main determinants and thus, modern urban planning assists in dissolving the most crucial characteristics of the city. (Kurfürst, 2012, p. 147)

Plans distort the true meaning of the city “because it is based on illusions” (Korff, 2016, p. 28). The perfectionist planners visualise the city according to their own set of illusions. Korff, Kurfürst, Lefebvre, Wirth, Roy, Escobar, and I share the same pessimistic view. Urban plans

remain on paper. They are never implemented nor completely worked out because of underlying political and economic interests. Urban plans are made not to address the social challenges but to cater to the illusion of élites together with the hegemony of global forces.

On the positive side, planning with the genuine intention of paying attention to the pressing needs of the community particularly the informal sector assures inclusivity. The assurance of community participation in the PCE of CDO can exemplify inclusiveness where, “It is essential to take into account the perspectives of all segments of society. Doing so is particularly relevant in small and mid-sized towns where the scope for future development is greatest” (Korff, 2016, p. 28). The extent of public consultation by the chair and task force members of PCE will determine the effective implementation of the plan. The practice of urban planners must be renewed.

To make a relevant difference, planners must take an inclusive approach. The more voices they hear and the more perspectives they share, the better they can rise to the challenges. They need to take into account inconvenient truths as well as powerful vested interests. To overcome major obstacles, they will have to forge big coalitions, involving different social forces. (Korff, 2016, p. 28)

5 TRIPARTITE SPACES

Kurfürst (2012) considers that “urban symbols are public symbols” (p. 14). They convey meanings as symbols in public spaces (Kurfürst, 2012; Nas, 2011). To a greater extent, Lefebvre analyses symbols in the production of space as integral in spaces of representation or representational space.

This dimension of the production of space refers to the process of signification that links itself to a (material) symbol. The symbols of space could be taken from nature, such as trees or prominent topographical formations; or they could be artefacts, buildings, and monuments; they could also develop out of a combination of both, for example as “landscapes.” (Goonewardena, Kipfer, Milgrom, & Schmid, 2008, p. 37)

Divisoria, Gaston Park, and Vicente de Lara Park are the tripartite public spaces of CDO. The three plazas and their symbols convey meanings, which explain the past and current conditions of the city. Hence, the symbolism of the tripartite spaces implicates relevance among the city dwellers, their histories, and everyday life.

5.1 SYMBOLISM OF DIVISORIA

With absolute certainty, Divisoria is the exceptional public space in CDO. Divisoria settles at the core of the city’s población or central business district. Its importance is upheld since the early 20th century until the present. Divisoria depicts the history of the city. At the same time, it acts as a repository of everyday life of the locals. Escobar-San Juan and Pastrano (2016a)

encapsulate that, “Divisoria is every visitor’s first glimpse of the city’s character—its culture, its sense of history, its pride of place”.

In lived space or spaces of representation, “the material ‘order’ that emerges on the ground can itself become the vehicle conveying meaning. In this way a (spatial) symbolism develops that expresses and evokes social norms, values, and experiences” (Goonewardena et al., 2008, p. 37). Divisoria is full of symbols from the monuments to the giant street lamps. The symbols are integral in the daily life of the locals. The symbols are embedded in the city’s historical periods. The entire plaza typified

a symbol of the town’s progress during the American period, more so it was a picture of her migrant microcosm and an echo of Cagayan’s colonial and revolutionary past. Divisoria represented the dominance that Cagayan’s migrant class had reached. (Montalvan II & Fortich, 2004, p. 98)

Divisoria is a Spanish term that refers to a dividing line. It originally served as a fire breach which divided two areas in the población lest rampant conflagrations of houses. To avoid further accidents, the revolutionary leader and town mayor, Tirso Neri, spearheaded the establishment of Divisoria (A. J. Montalvan II, 2004; Moreno & Office of the City Mayor, 2016). Divisoria sits between two major tree-lined streets. Six “islands” or “mini parks” lie between the parallel roads. The western end is bounded by Cagayan River; the eastern end bounded by XU. Trees along with benches in every island offer venues for recreation.

The islands exhibit monuments of Filipino political figures, namely, Jose Rizal, Andres Bonifacio, Mayor Borja, and President Ramon Magsaysay. Other symbolic reminders, such as the remains of the local fighters in the Filipino-American War, are buried underneath the monument of Bonifacio. A former congressman and son of the city invokes nostalgia with a sense of belongingness in his depiction of Bonifacio's marker:

Sometimes when I happen to pass by Plaza Divisoria, I would remember my younger self playing with the Plazans, my group of friends who spent their childhood with me, climbing up and down the monument of the "Heroes de los Pueblos", which commemorated the Battle of Agusan between Cagayan Revolutionaries against the [sic] Spaniards. The Plazans reigned at the Plaza Divisoria. (R. Rodriguez, 2016)



Figure 4.
The Statue of Jose Rizal in Divisoria.
Photo taken by the author, 2016.

Mayor Borja was initially appointed by President Magsaysay and later elected as the city mayor from 1953 until his death in 1964. Borja led the expansion of CDO by relocating the public market from Divisoria to the eastern part at Cogon within the población. Borja was met with opposition in the early stage of decision since the area of relocation lay unpopulated with only cogon grass and coconuts. Notwithstanding the opposition, the Cogon Market proved to be feasible. Borja then built the City Hospital in Barangay Carmen. To say nothing of his achievements, Borja led the Mindanao Development Authority under the appointment of

President Magsaysay. The city councillors honoured Borja as “a man who was ahead of his time” (Cagayan de Oro City Council, 2012).

Borja took steps in revamping Divisoria. Borja initiated the division of Divisoria into six islands. A multi-layered aesthetic fountain bordered by Molave trees was put up on the second island from the west. The monument of Jose Rizal on the third island from the west was repositioned to align with the other statues. The old Kiosko was remodelled into a “Bandstand” together with a flagpole and the second fountain on the fourth island from the west. The first memorial in the entire country of President Magsaysay along with the engraved list of local heroes was constructed on the easternmost island. The portion where the statue stands is referred to as Magsaysay Park.

By and large, Borja aided the beautification of Divisoria. Borja’s statue in Divisoria stands out since he is the only local leader immortalised among all the other national champions like Rizal, Magsaysay, and Bonifacio. Borja’s monument is a testament to his legacy in CDO. His eminence is due to unyielding governance. His son, Court of Appeals Justice Romulo V. Borja, witnessed the leadership style of his father.

In his 11-year tenure as mayor, his pace never slackened. He was not your typical backslapping, glad-handling politician. Glum-faced and reticent, with a mien that was often described as “Viernes Santo”, he projected a tough exterior. He was a caustic wit and his speeches and remarks were littered with tongue-in-cheek comments that were often irreverent. (Cagayan de Oro City Council, 2012)



Figure 5. Statue of Mayor Justiniano Romulo Borja and the Kiosko (behind the monument). Photo taken by the author, 2016.

After the old public market was transferred to Cogon, the eminent Mayor Borja directed the erection of the Community Amphitheatre on the westernmost island of Divisoria. The Amphitheatre followed its architectural style from America's popular Hollywood Bowl. Diverse events from cultural spectacles to political rallies once thrived on its platform (Baños, 2015; Cagayan de Oro City Council, 2012). A lucid reflection denotes its social vitality.

We did not have malls then. But we had the Amphitheatre where I watched amateur singing contests like the Darigold Jamboree and the Uy Masuy—Fighter Wine Contest . . . I would also stand with fellow Kagay-anons when national and local candidates would have their rallies there. When I was in high school, I witnessed Ninoy Aquino

deliver a stirring campaign speech at our Amphitheatre. He talked about the surrender of HUK Supremo Luis Taruc, which he negotiated.

(R. Rodriguez, 2016)

Controversy plagued the Amphitheatre since the mayoralty of Constantino G. Jaraula. The city council together with the mayor mandated Resolution Number 9560-2009. The mandate primarily intended to launch a space that could accommodate public educational and cultural facilities at the rear of the Amphitheatre. Further, it reassured to rebuild the Amphitheatre. It then called for an urgent bidding (Cagayan de Oro City Council, 2009).

The project redesigned the entire westernmost island by the construction of a semi overpass, thereby demolishing the original Amphitheatre. The construction of the semi overpass went underway in 2010, a year after the resolution was approved; however, the reconstruction of the Amphitheatre has not materialised up until the present period.

A smaller yet older platform than the Amphitheatre sits on the fourth island from the western end of Divisoria. The Kiosko Kagawasan (formerly the ‘Bandstand’) serves the public as a multipurpose venue. The law enforcers who are the police, military, and traffic aides utilise the Kiosko as temporary headquarters in cases of urgent events such as transport strike, surveillance of terrorist acts and traffic, among others. The Federation of Sangguniang Kabataan (youth council) of the city offered counselling sessions in Kiosko to address the pressing problems of substance abuse, adolescent pregnancy/premature marriage, criminality, and the like (Cagayan de Oro City Council, 2006). Despite the virtuous intention, the project was not conducive. Counselling in public may be allowable; however, serenity in a private sphere is needed for full disclosure of intimate emotions by the distressed clientele.

On other occasions, the Kiosko holds free entertainment like dance and song, and live coverage of sporting events. Mayor Moreno took oath on his first and second terms before the

former Mayor and Senate President Aquilino “Nene” Pimentel, Jr. in the Kiosko. The utilisation of the Kiosko is never contested in contrast to the Amphitheatre. In any event, the Kiosko services the city.

Divisoria has since functioned as a business district that connects together several commercial pedestrian streets. The prominence of the plaza rose when

by the 1920s to the 1930s, all the big commercial establishments were on main avenue Divisoria, tree-lined and traversed by horse-drawn tartanilla and American automobiles. There was the large Paradies store, the Japanese, Chinese, and Indian shops. The Cagayan de Oro Hotel and the Plaza Hotel. A 1938 visitor to Cagayan described Divisoria as a place of “mercantile chatter.” (Montalvan II & Fortich, 2004, p. 97)

Immigrants from Japan found prospect in CDO with several shops in Divisoria.

There were some Japanese nationals who had stores, such as Taisho Bazaar at Divisoria and Y. Ozaka who operated the Cagayan Bicycle Store on the corner of Calle del Mar and Calle Legazpi. Also at Divisoria were the Japanese store Sugimoto Bicycle Store and the Japanese Bazaar. That these Japanese nationals found acceptance of the merchandise they made available to Cagayan speaks well of the culture of Cagayan at the time. (A. J. Montalvan II, 2004)

Expatriates from India earned reputation by setting up shops in Divisoria.

The merchandising business in Cagayan in the 1930s also brought Indian nationals who traded in a variety of goods. K.K. Mukhi ran the Bombay Bazar at Divisoria. There was also the Mitfa Store on Calle del Mar. But the Indian national who stayed long in town and established an Indian-Filipino family was Wadhmal Dharamdas who came from Poona, India. Dharamdas traded in Indian silk goods and men's apparel through his shop, the Indian Silk Supply, at Divisoria, on the ground floor of the Amadeo Neri residence. (A. J. Montalvan II, 2004)

Divisoria rose to greater heights in the 1960s and 70s. The names of assorted local shops are vividly recalled in the following account.

I remember the countless times I was sent to buy hot pan de sal from Ah Fat Bakery and groceries from Cagayan Grocery and Bina Tan . . . I also remember going shopping with my parents at Ludena's Store, Wadhu's Store and Dadlanis Novelty Shop. We bought our books from Our Store, which was owned by the Mosqueda's. Our school supplies were from the P.F. Roa Store, Erlinda Store and MacMang Store. I had most of my pictures taken by the Tabor Studio and the Arce Studio. The biggest hardware at the time was Mindanao Lumber & Hardware owned by my classmate George Goking's family and the Oriental Hardware owned by the Gordiels. (R. Rodriguez, 2016)

Sterling movie theatres identified the former reputation of Divisoria as the entertainment hub. The theatres reigned before the advent of malls and laser discs.

My group of friends would usually enjoy classic films such as “Ben Hur” and “The Ten Commandments” at Lyric, Avenue, and Gala Theatres. We would eat pancit at Yee's Restaurant after the movies. The other movie houses at the time were the Fox Theatre of the Tamparong's and State Theatre of the Malferrari's. (R. Rodriguez, 2016)

The symbols and symbolism of Divisoria prevail over historical periods. Korff (1993) postulates that, “Due to the relative persistence and immobility of spatial structures, they play an important role as ‘facts’ for the invention of tradition. The tradition is easily and convincingly verified by reference to remains from history” (p. 230). Divisoria is in essence a historical landmark.

5.1.2 DIVISORIA WITHIN THE URBAN PLANS

Divisoria possesses a significant component in the urban plans of CDO. As a conceived space, Divisoria conforms to the purpose of urban designers. The Committee for City Planning and Beautification as well as the City Planning and Development Board initialised the enhancement of Divisoria. A special provision of the planning board included the mayor's prerogative to appoint private citizens in the planning board. The appointed citizens represented the academe, civic organisations, labour groups, and women's groups. The emphasis on public consultation in the planning process by Mayor Borja paid off when Divisoria won the first prize in the Plaza Category National Committee Beautification Contest in 1962 (“Plaza Divisoria Snags Top Prize in National Tilt,” 1963). At this instant, Divisoria achieved nationwide prestige. The national recognition brought a new height of success to

CDO due to the inclusion of community members in city planning. Its elevation owes to the fact that

the community has a greater share in the design of their physical spaces. Development planning then becomes less prescriptive, modifies to become a more enabling process whose main role is to nurture the necessary conditions for a larger group to work together to plan the city. The city then becomes a place where citizens' assets are acknowledged, co-opted and potentials maximised. (Lee, Wui, & Hong, 2014, pp. 220-221)

The eminence of Divisoria above all other plazas in the entire nation attracts foreign urban specialists whose views add stimulus to urban plans. Craig Whitaker, an American Peace Corp Volunteer assigned in CDO in 1966,⁶ articulated the usefulness and significance of Divisoria.

There is no question of the park's centrality. If one says to a friend that he'll meet him the middle of Cagayan de Oro, that same friend knows that he means somewhere along the Divisoria. This centrality gives a focus to our city. It is the point towards which parades march, people wander on evening strolls, and in which rallies, meetings, and open-air radio programmes are held. In short, because it is a "place" and is

⁶ Craig Whitaker was the second American Peace Corps Volunteer in CDO after Stanley Friedman who came to CDO in 1963 and took part in the city planning board. Whitaker and Friedman markedly influenced the urban plans of CDO. Friedman contributed to the plan of keeping the role of CDO as the regional capital. In like manner, Whitaker collaborated his idea of public spaces for the urban plan of CDO. (Friedman, 1963a, 1963b; Whitaker, 1966a, 1966b)

centrally located it is the point in the city to which almost all public activities gravitate. It has a life of its own. (Whitaker, 1966a)

Divisoria exemplifies qualities that make it distinctly a space for aesthetical and practical functions. According to Whitaker, Divisoria is perfectly suited to the idea of Louis I. Kahn, a prominent American architect, who conceptualises that “the centre of the city is a place to go to and not through” (Whitaker, 1966a). Likewise, Zukin (1996) and Sennett (1992) equate public space to a meeting point or melting pot of various activities. Given these points, Divisoria is portrayed as

an absolutely necessary part of our downtown urban fabric. Its importance can be measured simply by saying that it is a place. To describe it we can stretch our imaginations a little and call it an outdoor room, a long large-sized room that has no ceiling and whose walls are the buildings, which line it on either side of the street. Once we look at the Divisoria in this light we can see also the streets, which lead into it as hallways or corridors to the room. (Whitaker, 1966a)

Finally, Whitaker emphasises that Divisoria fits the ideal concept of a park in an urban landscape. He highlights Divisoria where it stands in the foreground; while the rest of the city sits in the background of the schema.

The park sits as a quiet hub to the rest of the city, which is spinning around it (this effect is certainly heightened by the continuous stream of one-way traffic around it). It is as if someone placed a giant

thumbtack in the centre of our city to pin it to the landscape then started turning the rest of the city around it. (Whitaker, 1966a)

The theory, definition, and discourse of Divisoria as shown by Whitaker conform to the paradigm of Lefebvre.

Representations of space give an image and thus also define a space. Analogous to the paradigmatic dimension of language, one spatial representation can be substituted by another that shows similarities in some respects but differences in others. Representations of space emerge at the level of discourse, of speech as such, and therefore comprise verbalised forms such as descriptions, definitions, and especially (scientific) theories of space. (Goonewardena et al., p. 37)

Designs for Divisoria continued with the completion of the Framework Plan in 1972. The Framework Plan turned out to be the critical juncture in the city's planning schemes. The advent of the 1970s signalled the expeditious economic transformation of CDO. Commerce and industry dominated the economy of the city since it was promoted as the "Gateway to Northern Mindanao" (Architects, Urban Designers, and Regional Planners, 1972, p. 5). The city's industrialisation received a boost from the speedy construction of infrastructural projects which included power and water supplies, roads, public transportation, as well as seaport (Satur, 2009).

The city's reputation as the business hub in the region of Northern Mindanao paved way for designing Divisoria into a Pedestrian Shopping Mall where "improvements will be made to mould a leisurely atmosphere conducive to shopping. Kiosks, in all sorts of variety will be

constructed in the Mall with designs regulated within the frame of the Urban Design Concept” (Architects, Urban Designers, and Regional Planners, 1972, p. 20).

The economic development of the city prompts re-interpretation of the symbolic meaning of Divisoria. The design to convert Divisoria into a mall brings forth “archetypal public spaces of modernity” (Zukin, 1996, p. 188). In effect, the planned transformation signals “symbolic economy”. The modern design of Divisoria confirms that “symbolic economy is determined by growth in cultural consumption and its industries” (Kurfürst, 2012, p. 148; Zukin, 1996). It is further determined that

the symbolic economy features two parallel production systems that are crucial to a city’s material life: the *production of space*, with its synergy of capital investment and cultural meanings, and the *production of symbols*, which constructs both a currency of commercial exchange and a language of social identity. Every effort to rearrange space in the city is also an attempt at visual re-presentation. (Zukin, 1996, p. 24)

The Framework Plan primarily considers the participation of urban dwellers. The contribution of the locals, ordinary as it may be, allows redefinition of the symbolic economy of public spaces in the city (Kurfürst, 2012; Lefebvre, 2003; Zukin, 1996). For these reasons, the design for Divisoria “is geared towards attracting tourist-oriented activities in the area without forgetting the needs of local residents and shoppers for a better place to shop and relax (Architects, Urban Designers, and Regional Planners, 1972, p. 20).

Community participation extends to the vendors in Divisoria. The Framework Plan aims at “expanding the scope of vending within the park without sacrificing sanitation or cleanliness”

(Architects, Urban Designers, and Regional Planners, 1972, p. 20). The Framework Plan opposes the observation that, “Engagement with informality is in many ways quite difficult for planners. Informal spaces seem to be the exception to planning, lying outside its realm of control” (Recio & Gomez, 2013, p. 177). The planners together with the community recognised the need of the vendors for space in Divisoria. Informality was addressed. The inclusion of informal sector revealed an attempt of benevolent accommodation.

The effort to implement the design for Divisoria unfortunately came to a halt. Divisoria was never converted into a Pedestrian Shopping Mall. The cause is attributed to the political crisis the city along with the entire country went through during the period of Martial Law from 1972 until 1986. Divisoria, nevertheless, prevailed as the hub of the city without substantial alteration. The renewal of Divisoria remained an attempt. Divisoria continues to be an unaltered microcosm of the city.

The CLUP follows the consistent purpose of the preceding plans. The CLUP (2000) upholds “the major function of the city as the centre of commerce, trade, and business for Northern Mindanao” (p. 235). In order to achieve the prime objective, the CLUP (2000) appropriates the “revitalisation of old commercial hubs of the city by redevelopment of Divisoria” (p. 236). Yet, in comparison to the Framework Plan, the CLUP did not attempt to establish a comprehensive design for the rectification of Divisoria until the gentrification of the Night Café.

The Night Café was a failed renewal project for it was the primary cause of the degradation of Divisoria. The weekend festivalisation of Divisoria in the guise of the Night Café “resulted in such after-effects as the shameless stench of urine, people cavorting on the very streets, and prostitution gone rampant” (E. C. Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016a). The tolerance of the erection of masonic symbols along with the private establishment of Park Café on the easternmost island added defilement to the plaza. The owner of Park Café monopolised its operation by prohibiting the public to use the area of the coffee shop for purposes other than

purchase of its products. The Night Café along with neglect of governance by the previous city administrators compelled the present Local Economic and Investment Promotions Officers who are the chief planners “to revisit Divisoria and revitalise it in the proper way” (E. C. Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016a). A task force together with the proposal for the *Conservation Master Plan for the Development of Plaza Divisoria in Cagayan de Oro City* (E. C. Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016a) will be put into order.

The plan will embark on three objectives. First, it will “promote a sense of Pride of Place” (Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016a). Divisoria will be re-imaged as the icon of CDO’s adaptability after the devastation of typhoon Washi. It emphasises that, “Divisoria Park defines the current realities of this emerging city as it rises with resilience from disasters armed with new knowledge and technologies to weather the challenges in the years to come” (Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016a). Second, the design will “restore the city’s dignity using its heritage as currency in developing public spaces” (Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016a). Morphological study will be employed to confirm the invaluableness of Divisoria. Part of the research will be to investigate “how the demolition of the Amphitheatre at the western end of the park has affected the public polity” (Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016a). In order to effectively restore the relevance of Divisoria, “Kagay-anons’ sense of values, moral universe, and shared history” (Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016a) will be accounted. The third objective intends to “broaden public engagement and people’s ownership of the city’s landmarks.” Thus, the “city’s residents realise that their voices can have impact on developments for the city” (E. C. Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016a). Ensuing sectoral representation, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) will examine the draft of the plan. Next, the local chapters of the United Architects of the Philippines will collaborate with private business groups upon the furnishing of the plan. The NCCA will then either endorse or suggest modifications to the plan. In the final stage, the task force “will

consolidate all the inputs and then come up with the master plan” (Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016b). All things considered, the proposal assures “to be inclusive in revisiting and revitalising the city’s premier site of multicultural coming together” (E. C. Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016a).

The guaranteed inclusivity resembles *gemeinschaft*, a German description that “meant, originally, the full disclosure of feeling to others; historically it has come at the same time to mean a community of people” (Sennett, 1992, p. 310). The German principle of *gemeinschaft* listens to the needs of the community. Given that the principle is put into practice, then the “full disclosure of feelings to others” will place a “strategic and holistic plan for Divisoria” (E. C. Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016a).

Mayor Moreno approved the proposal from the chief planners under Executive Order Number 008-16 with the title “An Order Creating the Task Force: Divisoria Heritage Park, Defining Its Functions and Appointing the Members Thereof”. The task force comprises the former Mayor Reuben Canoy, city officers, members from the academe, architects, and prominent local business leaders. The infancy stage of planning reveals an inner circle of local élites who oversees the project; nevertheless, the task force is assumed to apply the principle of inclusivity in the planning process.

The PCE will strategically install the replica of Divisoria in the old runway of barangay Lumbia. The planned civic centre in cluster A will showcase the replica in the middle of other institutional infrastructures such as the city government offices, residences, commercial outlets, transport terminal, public market, and the view deck overlooking the CDO river. The PCE as an alternative hub in CDO spells clear-cut capitalist investment. The replication of Divisoria definitely adds attraction to the uptown centre. In short, the planners exploit the significance of the original Divisoria downtown.

5.2 IDEOLOGICAL SYMBOLS IN GASTON PARK

Gaston Park is named after Segundo Gastón, mayor and governor during the early American era. Gaston (as colloquially referred to by the locals) is the second most important public space in CDO since it is “the city’s de facto plaza mayor” (Alcazaren, 2016, p. D-3). It is the original plaza considering its historical duration. The history of Gaston thrives longer than Divisoria. In comparison, Gaston began in the 17th century while Divisoria emerged in the first quarter of the 20th century. The historical significance of Gaston is further related to Luneta Park where the national shrine of Jose Rizal stands in the capital city of Manila. A notable local WWII veteran recognises, “Gaston Park may have lost its past glamour just as the once famous Luneta has, but both landmarks have HISTORY written all over them” (Velez, 1991).

Gaston lies three blocks away south of Divisoria. The circular shape of Gaston differs from the rectangular design of Divisoria. In contrast, Divisoria allows better traffic than Gaston. The nationally renowned landscape architect, Paulo Alcazaren, (2016, p. D-3) criticises that the “shape of Gaston Park or plaza (as it should be called since it has more paved surfaces than green area) does little to tie the various elements that define it in a way that is pedestrian friendly” (p. D-3). The American Peace Corp volunteer shares the same observation and describes the misplacement in full detail.

Gaston Park is somewhat less successful. Its function is the same as MacArthur Park to anchor and locate a place, but here the traffic goes through the actual park (not through the actual park but between the Cathedral and the City Hall). This makes it a little more difficult to give the buildings the attention they deserve. On the way into Cagayan de Oro we must toss a glance over one shoulder to see the City Hall, then another over our right shoulder to see the church, all this while trying

to turn left into the city. To really view them well, we must cross a heavily travelled street and go to the far side of the park (once there the sight is rewarding, especially when the fountain is playing). (Whitaker, 1966, p. 5 & 8)

Unlike Divisoria or the typical Philippine plaza, Gaston possesses no statues of political figures, albeit, the ideological symbols prevail in Gaston. Saint Augustine Metropolitan Cathedral and City Hall signify Filipino ideologies. Both symbols identify not only the local saga but also the narrative of the entire nation. Eco (2005) reveals that, “Besides denoting its function, the architectural object could connote a certain ideology of the function. But undoubtedly it can connote other things” (p. 178).

The Cathedral denotes worship of Roman Catholic tenets in public space. The Cathedral uniquely connotes the origin of Filipino ideology wherefrom the issuance of royal patronage from the office of the Pope to Spanish monarchy in the 15th century legitimised the creation of churches in the Philippine colony. Henceforth, religious orders began the process of Christian evangelisation among the populace in the archipelago. Augustinians, Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, and Augustinian Recollects partitioned the colony upon the issuance of the royal cedula from the Council of the Indies (Agoncillo, 1990; Presidential Communications Development and Strategic Planning Office, 2016). The religious heads who are the proponents of the ideology of the Catholic church who “claim to have discovered an absolute are usually the same people who also pretend to be superior to the rest” (Mannheim, 2013, p. 77). The Dominican Bishop Diego Aduarte chronicled the daily Christian devotion in his manuscript entitled, *History of the Dominican Province of the Holy Rosary*. Aduarte admired “how the Indians crowd the churches at the time of confession, fast, and communicate regularly” (Blair & Robertson, 1905a, p. 189). Upon closer scrutiny, the superiority of Aduarte emerged when he referred to the converts as “Indians”. The reference to the original island

settlers as Indians or *Indios* (in Spanish) connotes derogatoriness. Therefore, the proponents of Catholicism who were the clergy dominated over the locals.

The proponents of Catholic ideas resisted opposition even among the Spanish civil authority. Archbishop Hernando de Guerrero of Manila clashed against Governor General Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera. The origin of dispute occurred in the church plaza or parvis in Intramuros where the murder by and execution of a criminal who asked for a right of sanctuary was denied by the governor. The church together with its parvis functions as a sacred space under the domination of the religious. Be that as it may, the civil authority under Governor Corcuera put into question the domination of the Church. Opposition between the two domineering powers thus inevitably produced conflict. In a letter to King Felipe IV in 1636, Corcuera accused the squad of religious orders together with the Archbishop of ganging up against him without probable cause.

The archbishop of Manila and three orders of St. Dominic, St. Francis, and St. Augustine were united against me. They went about holding meetings, as they thought by that method to avenge themselves for the injuries which they imagined that they had received because they were not granted whatever they wished or what suited their whims. They were convened in an assembly, where they must have discussed nothing else than their own restless notions and the disturbance of the community and opposition to the government. (Blair & Robertson, 1905b, p. 60-61)

The clergy held their ground in contradiction of Governor Corcuera. The attack against the character of Governor Corcuera indicated clear-cut ascendancy of the clergy. The Augustinian Friar Casimiro Diaz reviled the latter while siding with Archbishop Guerrero.

That gentleman was at once very prudent, very harsh and austere, very tenacious in his resolutions, and wedded to his own notions - which is the occasion for the greatest errors in princes; for by not yielding, in matters that self-love adopts as certain, they allow themselves to be carried over any precipice. This passion was greatly predominant in that gentleman and was the cloud that obscured other talents, worthy of esteem, that adorned him. Immediately occasions of dispute arose between the two, not because Guerrero tried to meddle with the civil government, but because the governor was trying to govern both estates, by giving unfair interpretations to several matters called by the name of "royal patronage"; these are delicate to handle, and the attention with which they ought to be treated is not bestowed on them.

(Blair & Robertson, 1905c, pp. 160-161)

Another twist in the clash came from the viewpoint of Bishop Francisco Zamudio who expressed alarm in his letter to King Felipe IV. Zamudio was concerned with the animosity between his fellow clergy and Corcuera. The scandalous pronouncements of the irritated groups of clergies affected the public who were not supposed to be part of the dispute.

They, irritated because Don Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera, who is now governing these islands, has restrained them and limited their

excesses, have united with the said archbishop, have endeavoured to impair his [i.e., the governor's] Christian actions directed to the service of God our Lord and of your Majesty, and the increase of your royal treasury. They preach in the pulpit things unworthy of that place, trying to seduce the citizens, both in that place and in their houses, irritating them and making them restless, and disturbing the peace and quiet of the community. (Blair & Robertson, 1905c, pp. 301-302)

Even with the report of Bishop Zamudio to the King, the opposing group of clergies and the archbishop managed to prevail until Corcuera went to prison for half a decade. Both Corcuera and the clergy adhered to Catholicism. In short, both were proponents of dominant ideas. In spite of their commonalities that include the Spanish race and Catholicism, the dominance of the clergy prevailed. Lefebvre (1991) delineates “dominant ideas which are perforce the ideas of the dominant class” (p. 6). Oppositions within the proponents of dominant ideas propel ideology. With this intention, the proponents appear to negotiate in the name of the Spanish king along with the Christian theology. The negotiation between the sacred Christian doctrine and the mundane role of the king emerges in the symbol of the church in the plaza. The sole ideology of the sacred and mundane (Kurfürst, 2012; Wheatley, 1969) centres on the church which “by means of analogy with Christ’s mystic body, directed solely toward the task of establishing the continuity of the state’s *corpus morale et politicum* (moral and political body)” (Agamben, 1998, p. 92).

Jose Rizal neither belonged to the dominant Spanish class nor to the Indios. Yet, Rizal with his prolific abilities coupled with European training and his family’s Ilustrado or middle-class

status, propelled the ideology of the emerging Filipino⁷ nation in the late 19th century. Consistent with the goal of enlightenment through mass education and economic development, Rizal wrote of reforms in his voluminous works. The constitution of La Liga Filipina by Rizal explicitly stated the goal of the “encouragement of instruction, agriculture, and commerce” (Blair & Robertson, 1907, p. 217). In the Manifesto before his execution, Rizal once more affirmed the quest for the “education of the people in order that by means of such instruction, and by hard work, they may acquire a personality of their own and so become worthy of such liberties” (De la Costa, 1961, p. 102). In his exile in Dapitan, Rizal built a school for boys and cooperative. Rizal ultimately put into action his ideals for the emergent nation.

Rizal together with the other leaders of the propaganda movement of La Solidaridad advocated political reforms of which the primary end was representation in the Spanish parliamentary. La Liga Filipina later adopted the goal with the declaration, “Study and application of reforms” (Blair & Robertson, 1907, p. 217). The Manifesto of Rizal repeated the idea “that reforms if they are to bear fruit must come *from above*, for reforms that come *from below* are upheavals both violent and transitory” (De la Costa, 1961, p. 102-103).

In his opposition against the Church, Rizal raised scepticism on the authority of the friars. In the letter addressed to the young women of Malolos, Rizal expressed

The deceiver is fond of using the saying that, “It is presumptuous to rely on one’s own judgment”, but, in my opinion, it is more presumptuous for a person to put his judgment above that of others and try to make it prevail over theirs. It is more presumptuous for a man to constitute himself into an idol and pretend to be in communication of

⁷ The term ‘Filipino’ originally referred to the Insulares who were the full-blooded Spanish born in the territory of the Philippines. In the social hierarchy, the Insulares were below the Peninsulares who were born in Spain from unmixed Spanish ancestry.

thought with God; and it is more than presumptuous and even blasphemous for a person to attribute every movement of his lips to God, to represent every whim of his as the will of God, and to brand his own enemy as an enemy of God. (Rizal, 1889)

The letter further condemns the practice whereby fanatical religiosity takes over the essence of spirituality. Rizal pinpoints the excessive influence of the friars over the worshippers particularly the women in their daily gestures of devotion.

You know that the will of God is different from that of the priest; that religiousness does not consist of long periods spent on your knees, nor in endless prayers, big rosarios [rosaries], and grimy scapularies [religious garment showing devotion], but in a spotless conduct, firm intention, and upright judgment. (Rizal, 1889)

The opposition between Rizal and the Church climaxed when Dominicans took control over the disposition of the estate that his family leased in Calamba, Laguna. Under the royal decree of 1890, the friars were allowed to transfer their own land holdings without the consent of the Spanish monarchy. As a result, Rizal's family suffered deportation. (Blair & Robertson, 1907)

Rizal's opposition against the Church produces "particular ideology". Mannheim introduces the concept to uncover the nature of ideology.

The particular conception of ideology is implied when the term denotes that we are sceptical of the ideas and representations advanced by our opponent. They are regarded as more or less conscious disguises of the

real nature of a situation, the true recognition of which would not be in accord with his interests. (Mannheim, 2013, p. 49)

Rizal along with his family and the rest of the aggrieved populace in the Philippines are referred to as “we” in the discourse of Mannheim. The reference to “our opponent” points to the domination of the friars. The scepticism of Rizal against the image and authority of the friars that culminated in the banishment of his family from their rented plantation revealed theocratic practices wherein the consuming interests of the Church dominated over the remaining classes.

The execution of Rizal signified national revolution in the same year of 1896. Rizal was implicated in the revolutionary movement of *Kataas-taasan, Kagalanggalangang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan* (KKK) or Katipunan that was actually led by Andres Bonifacio; nevertheless, the court of Spanish Audiencia accused Rizal of subversion. The court further cited his famous novels—*Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*—as provocative means for armed revolution. In actuality, the novels explicitly exposed social issues particularly the misconduct of the dominant class of friars.

The squad of the Spanish army executed Rizal in a public space that was previously known as Bagumbayan. Today, the spot of execution is renamed Luneta Park where the statue of Rizal signifies ideology of the nation. The ideas of Rizal versus the practice of theocracy induced revolution, which led to “total ideology” of the Philippine nation. Total ideology encompasses “an age or of a concrete historico-social group, e.g. of a class, when we are concerned with the characteristics and composition of the total structure of the mind of this epoch or of this group” (Mannheim, 2013, p. 50). The declaration of independence and establishment of the Philippine republic in 1898 were the result of the total conception of ideology. The “historico-social group” refers to the new class of Filipinos whose majority are Indios. The Filipinos’

adherence to both the exemplary deeds of Rizal as well as to the Catholic practice generates “characteristics and composition of the total structure of the mind of this epoch or of this group”.

Mindanao, which was Islamised long before the advent of Christianisation, was split into two religious territories by the latest Spanish orders who were the Jesuits and Augustinian Recollects. CDO in the east was under the latter with the leadership of Fray Agustin de San Pedro who then efficaciously persuaded Salangsang, the village chief, to transfer the old settlement from Himologan/Huluga on a cliff above Cagayan river to the present Gaston plaza. The construction of church in Gaston went through several phases after fire accidents in 18th to 19th centuries and destruction during WWII. Since then, the everyday life of the locals has revolved around the church. Moreover, the entire city along with its neighbouring towns anchors its religious practices on the church.

The great religious feast in Cagayan was that of San Agustin on August 28, a tradition established by the Recollect friars in Cagayan in 1780. The day before the feast day itself, called *visperas*, literally vespers or eve, the festivities would begin, signifying that a great day was coming. The celebration of the *visperas* also served as the municipal fiesta. On the day of the feast itself, on August 28, a grand Mass was celebrated in church. Sumptuous banquets were prepared in Cagayan households. There was a stream of visitors from out of town, and every household was filled with guests. A religious procession and a musical concert at the public plaza fronting the church would follow. (A. J. Montalvan II, 2004)

The connection between ideology and space sheds light on the identity of the Filipino. Christianity inhabits the centre of the daily life for the Catholic Filipino.⁸ The church occupies the crucial spot in the plaza. By the same token, the Filipino majority locates the church as the fundamental element in his/her identity. The church in the physical space signifies the central point in abstract space.

Particular ‘theoretical practice’ produces a *mental space*, which is apparently, but only apparently, extra-ideological. In an inevitably circular manner, this mental space then becomes the locus of a “theoretical practice” which is separated from social practice and which sets itself up as the axis, pivot, or central reference point of Knowledge. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 6)

Christianity is the “axis, pivot, or central reference point of Knowledge”. For this reason, the Catholic Filipino locates the church as the central image in his/her “mental space”. Conversely, “theoretical practice” is not “separated from social practice”. The fusion of theoretical and social practice replicates identity crisis.

A typical plaza displays both the church and statue of Rizal; however, the two symbols are separated into two public spaces in CDO. There is obviously a chasm between Rizal and the church. Rizal belongs to Divisoria while the church stands in Gaston. The division of the two symbols represents the opposition between Rizal and the Church. In like manner, the identity crisis of the Filipino reflects on the opposing symbols and its separation in public spaces. Rizal rebelled against the Church with his anti-clerical idea and campaign. In contrast, the church

⁸ The population of Filipino Roman Catholics is 74,211,896 in 2010 or 80.6 per cent of the entire national population. (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015, p. 28)

institutionalised the Christian tradition in the everyday practices of the Filipino who consciously reverts both the former and latter. The Filipino, however, is unconscious of the deep-seated rivalry between the two figures. The reverence for the opposing symbols ultimately connotes indistinguishable national identity.

The City Hall was previously known as Casa Real de Cagayan where the Spanish government officials held office. The City Hall does not exactly resemble the Capitol Complex of Burnham's plan which follows the western or European design where the "City Hall communicated with, and even manipulated, citizens, based on their central or visible location" (Kolbe, 2016, p. 71). Yet, the City Hall of CDO still holds significance. Alcazaren (2016) describes the City Hall as "modestly-sized but a very elegant structure that's been well-preserved" (p. D-3k). The marker at the entrance of the building narrates the local declaration of independence in CDO where the raising of flag, singing of national anthem, along with glorious festivities take place.

Presently, the City Hall holds the office of the mayor together with other agencies of the city government. The sibling representatives of the Second District of the city, Maximo B. Rodriguez, Jr. and Rufus B. Rodriguez, however, propose to relocate the City Hall under House Bill No. 3664, which states that the "Lumbia property can be used as site of the new City Hall of Cagayan de Oro City" (M. Rodriguez, 2016). The bill further emphasises its adherence to PCE along with the city's prospect of profit maximisation.

The congressmen filed the bill in response against the pronouncement of the Supreme Court to convert the former Lumbia Airport in the suburban portion of the city into a US military base subject to the *Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement* between the US and Philippines. The city council then reinforced the effort of the congressmen by issuing a resolution (Saliring, Orias, & Jerusalem, 2016). Moreover, urban architects oppose the relocation since

this central site has historical significance. It would probably be better (and less expensive) to rebuild the civic structures behind the old City Hall into a more integrated and efficient complex than it is today. I've seen one too many city halls lose their architectural and civic gravitas, succumbing to the temptation to build *tabula rasa* in a suburb. (Alcazaren, 2016, p. D-3)

Mayor Moreno, on the other hand, is receptive of the state treaty with the US for the reason that it would bring in revenue for CDO (Orias, 2016a). The disagreement between Moreno and the group, which includes congressmen, architects, as well as councillors, indicates evolution of particular ideology wherein US domination faces challenges from local officials.

The cylindrically shaped water tower endures since 1922. The city council converted the water tower into a city museum after passing several resolutions since 2004. After the transfer of the ownership of the water tower from the Cagayan de Oro Water District to the city government, the City Museum was established under Ordinance No. 12317-2012. The Cagayan de Oro City Heritage Council (previously the Cagayan de Oro Historical and Cultural Commission) is delegated to manage the city museum with the aim to preserve and promote historical along with archaeological data about the city. The city council (2012) assesses that the “Water Tower—the City’s oldest public building that is considered a heritage structure and is located within the area of the 1624 settlement of Cagayan—is the best place to house the City Museum”. Even with the conversion of the water tower into an essential public utility, the “City Museum stands widowed in one corner. It has an engaging enough display of memorabilia, photos, and maps, but it needs to be better integrated, urban design-wise, with the rest of the plaza (Alcazaren, 2016, p. D-3)”.



Figure 6. The Water Tower. Photo taken by the author, 2016.



Figure 7. Gaston Park in Renovation. Photo taken by the author, 2016.

Mayor Borja initiated the installation of the jet fountain in the middle of Gaston. The technology of the fountain was the first to be showcased not only in CDO but also in the entire Mindanao (Cagayan de Oro City Council, 2012). Since then, the fountain has captivated the attention particularly of the Mass-goers and visitors to important public occasions. Through the decades, however, the fountain along with the entire park deteriorated due to neglect. At one point, the Gaston fostered the “lover’s lane, jogger’s delight, snatcher’s paradise, or haven for the homeless” (Velez, 1991).

Mayor Moreno directed the rehabilitation of the fountain accompanied with the tiling of the grounds, which used to be covered with grass. The restoration took three years from 2013 until 2016 with a budget amounting to Php 15,200,000 (Euro 241.414,30). The urban planners of Moreno appraise that, “Right now, you can see there’s more usage of Gaston” (Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016). Moreover, the planners emphasise the functionality of Gaston. Students utilise the space for school practices. The residents, as well, use the plaza for physical exercise and leisure.

The secondary elements such as the Duaw (Visit) Park, Ysalina or Carmen Bridge, and the Golden Friendship Tennis Court around Gaston attract interest to the plaza. Duaw Park occupies a portion between the Cagayan River and City Hall. Moreover, Duaw Park signifies the plight of 120 locals who were outlawed by the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos in the era of Martial Law. Ysalina/Carmen Bridge that was inaugurated in 1931 maintains the connection between the western part/1st District and eastern part/2nd District of the city. Lastly, the tennis court serves as supplementary recreational space.

The primary together with the secondary elements of Gaston represent vibrancy of social space. Primary elements, such as the Cathedral and City Hall, symbolise the ideology of the Filipino nation. Secondary structures, which include the fountain, water tower, and Duaw Park,

among others, indicate utility from the past. All in all, “Gaston Park stands proudly as a mute witness to Cagayan de Oro’s colourful past and glorious heritage” (Velez, 1991).

5.3 SYMBOLIC MEANING OF VICENTE DE LARA PARK

Vicente de Lara Park (also known as MacArthur Park⁹ or Provincial Capitol Grounds) is named after Vicente de Lara, Sr. who governed the province of Misamis Oriental in the mid-20th century. The provincial government purchased the plot from a private owner proceeding WWII and thereafter constructed the park together with the rebuilding of the Provincial Capitol. The park was the latest creation after Divisoria and Gaston. It lies several blocks north of Divisoria. In terms of location and historic significance, the park is considered a secondary public space; nevertheless, its visibility prompts recognition from the public.

MacArthur Park, on the other hand, because it is not the centre of the city is laid out differently. There traffic moves along one edge. The eye turns in only one direction to view the park. Our momentum is not slowed while looking at the park; we can visually “lean” against the buildings on the other side of Del Mar Street. These buildings are like a handrail keeping us on the track and heading in a straight direction. The situation is similar to being in a darkened room. We can still move along provided we are in contact with one wall but must slow down and grope if we are in the centre. (Whitaker, 1966, p. 5)

⁹ The park is also named after the American General Douglas MacArthur who figured prominently in WWII against the Japanese. MacArthur passed through CDO before embarking to Australia in 1942. (A. J. Montalvan II, 2004)

The Provincial Capitol highlights the unique feature of Vicente de Lara Park. At the entrance of the building, a couple of copperplate markers show evidence of American legacy. The marker on the left side indicates the infrastructure was “REBUILT WITH THE AID OF THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA UNDER THE PHILIPPINE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1946”. On the right side, it specifies the date of completion in December 1950 together with the list of the provincial board members. On the bottom is displayed the captivating remark—the name of the contractor, Willkoms’ Construction. The brothers William, George, and Michael Willkom owned the construction firm after settling in with ladies from CDO since the Filipino-American war (Lluch, 2018; Roa, 2018). Further, the Willkoms were the “largest Filipino-American family ever established in Cagayan” (A. J. Montalvan II, 2004). The family persisted as local elites with direct American lineage. This fact confirms the favourable accommodation of American business interest in the aftermath of American occupation.

Whitaker rated average the placement, size, and design of the Provincial Capitol. At the same time, he suggested to take advantage of its remarkable qualities. The public space along with its elements particularly the façade of the building holds venue for community engagement.

Although the Capitol itself is not the most graceful of structures, it sets well at the end of the park and commands an excellent view from the street. Our Provincial Government also needs room for all the pomp and ceremony that is by necessity connected with it. Again the park with the Capitol as a backdrop is a perfect stage for any and all activities that take place there. (Whitaker, 1966, p. 5)

In contrast, the Provincial Capitol stands larger than the City Hall (without its recent extension buildings). The sizes of both structures, nevertheless, are less significant compared to the capitol in Manila. Notwithstanding the sizes, the three government edifices along with all other erections from the American era display a typical mixture of flair when from “manufacture of colonial architecture under the American regime was motivated by a hybridic framework, which consciously appropriated and integrated locally derived building motifs” (Lico, 2009, p. 69).

Preceding the decades of the deterioration, the park possessed

large uninterrupted stretches of pavement or grass where people can chat and children can run. These areas also have places to sit, though quite often, they are not the tiny benches we’d originally provided but the ground or grass where people can stretch their legs and talk in groups of larger than just two people. These spots are also well shaded.

(Whitaker, 1966c)

Abandonment had worn-out the elements of the park. The Provincial Capitol descended into a dilapidated edifice; its piano stand neglected in one corner. The time-worn chandelier along with the furniture lost its attraction. The dying grasses kept the ground muddy. The pond that used to be inhabited by fishes turned into a pool of trash. The couple of fountains lacked maintenance.

The rehabilitation project of former Governor Oscar Moreno transformed three-fourths of the park back to its previous state along with additional memorials. Unkempt grasses were eliminated. The grounds were tiled and regularly disinfected. To add attraction, the trees were

decorated with lights. The pond along with the building's furniture, however, remains unmaintained.

The reputed sculptor Eduardo Castrillo was commissioned by Moreno to complete a couple of monumental arts. The first monument sits at the southwest corner of the park with the heading, "TRIBUTE TO THE SLAIN MEMBERS OF THE PRESS" (Castrillo, 2010b). It is a symbol attributed to the nation's press members who were victims of extra judicial killings from the period after the Martial Law in 1987 until the administration of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in 2010. Every name of the 66 executed media practitioners is engraved on each gold-plated plaque. Freedom House (2017) identifies that the "Philippines remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists. Existing legal protections have generally failed to prevent or punish acts of violence, leading to an entrenched climate of impunity" (¶ 1).



Figure 8. The Tribute to the Slain Members of the Press.
Photo taken by the author, 2016.

The second monument stands 12.6 metres high in the centre of the park. Impressed on the monument is the title, “THE HERITAGE OF MISAMIS ORIENTAL” (Castrillo, 2010a). It is dedicated to the province particularly the proletarians. The monument “symbolises the tradition our forefathers established, their sacrifice and struggles, the beliefs and rights we have upheld and protested over generations, and the hope and indomitable spirit that helped us achieve the triumphs that we now enjoy” (Castrillo, 2010a). Misamis Oriental has a population of 888,509 (excluding CDO). The 23 municipalities of the province in the rural areas deliver major agricultural crops such as rice, corn, banana, mango, and coconut to the city (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2018). By and large, the province sustains the backbone economy of CDO. Without the agricultural supply from the province, CDO would not have developed into an urbanised centre.



Figure 9. The Heritage of Misamis Oriental.
Photo taken by the author, 2016.

Moreno introduced Salo-Tabo sa Kapitolyo¹⁰ as part of the agenda of his administration along with the renewal of the park. Salo-Tabo sa Kapitolyo was a quarterly agricultural fair held at the grounds of the Provincial Capitol. The activity showcased products from the municipalities of the province (Cabahug-Aguhob, 2007). Small and medium entrepreneurs utilised nipa huts to display culinary products, processed foods, and dry goods. The succeeding and current administration of Governor Yevgeny “Bambi” Emano innovated the agro-fair by renaming it to “Kuyamis¹¹ Festival” and rescheduled it to an annual celebration. In addition, the festival now flaunts beauty pageants such as Ms. Kuyamis and Ms. Gay Misamis Oriental to draw crowds to the park (Gorit, 2018). The festivities facilitate the province’s agro-tourism industry which is the main thrust of Emano’s administration (“8 Pillars,” 2017). In essence, the festal honouring of the productive hinterland of the city produces new meaning to the public space.

Emano’s innovation implies continuity of Moreno’s rehabilitation programme even though the former is the son of the latter’s political nemesis, Vicente “Dongkoy” Emano. Be that as it may, the rivalry between the local urban elites’ together with their clans reveals in subtle manner. For example, Emano directs the repainting of the seats around the trees and flowerpots with the colour purple. The Emanos utilise purple as their official colour of political propaganda. Moreover, Emano discontinued the thorough sanitation of the tiled grounds. The vendors observe that janitors have ceased to disinfect the tiles. Sweeping rather than regular disinfection is now employed (“Interview with a vendor at Vicente de Lara Park,” 2016).

¹⁰ Salo-Tabo means gathering in the marketplace. Kapitolyo refers to the Provincial Capitol.

¹¹ Kuyamis is a variety of sweet coconut eaten by the early settlers in the province of Misamis Oriental. It also refers to the origin of the word “Misamis.” (MisOr Web Genie, 2016)



Figure 10. The Stage in the Provincial Capitol Grounds.

The stage resembles the *salakot*, a traditional Filipino hat. The tourism slogan “Turismo MisOr (Misamis Oriental)” is displayed on the roof of the stage. The stage is decorated with purple curtain along with the photograph of Governor Yevgeny “Bambi” Emano on the tarpaulin. Photo taken by the author, 2017.

The grounds of the park stay occupied even without the festival and the thorough sanitation. At daytime, a limited number of vendors rent out spaces by paying a monthly fee to an official collector from the provincial government. During Moreno’s time, the vendors paid a minimal amount of Php 200 (Euro 3,11) per month. The fee rose to Php 600 per month (Euro 9,33) under the administration of Emano. The vendors complain against the increase since their earnings are insufficient. The average income of a vendor is between Php 200 (Euro 3,11) and Php 1,500 (Euro 23,34) per day. On top of that, the collector obliges the vendors to keep their respective areas tidy (“Interview with a vendor at Vicente de Lara Park,” 2016).



Figure 11. The Ukay-ukay (imported second-hand apparel) Vendors.

The vendors sell at the lowest price used clothes and other dry goods from abroad in their make-shift stalls in the Provincial Capitol Grounds. Photo taken by the author (2017).

Aside from vending, other daily events abound on the grounds of the park. High school students hold dance practices in preparation for class presentations. Fitness participants who are mostly employed middle-aged women band together for the Zumba workout. An instructor leads the women to aerobic movements in accordance to up-beat and blaring music at the centre of the plaza. The number of participants ranges between 20 and 50. Chess players likewise gain access to the park with allocated chess tables at the southern portion.

Incidences of crime occasionally happen at the late hours of the evening. Thieves break in and steal goods from the vendors. Murderous acts, such as knife-assaults, have been witnessed by the vendors. Prostitution, not to mention, adds to the dissenting activities in the park. Young male prostitutes anticipate at the dim corners to acquire clients for as high as Php 4,000 (Euro 62,23) or as low as Php 200 (Euro 3,11) (Lagcao, 2018).

The long-standing conflict between government forces and armed communist rebel group New People's Army forced out 187 peasant members of Higaonon, an indigenous group from the far-flung hinterlands of Sitio Camansi, Banglay in the municipality of Lagonglong, Misamis Oriental. On 30th March 2017, the group along with their families travelled all the way from the area of conflict to the evacuation grounds of the Provincial Capitol. In response, the provincial government allowed the evacuees to settle in makeshift shelters. The officials in charge of the resettlement report the government's regular supply of basic necessities such rice, sardines, and medicines. Albeit the government's allocation, the evacuees needed additional sleeping mats, clothes, detergents, and blankets. Even under the circumstances of repeated evacuation, the Higaonons are determined to return to their place of origin. Thus, they appeal for critical attention of their precarious situation from the public and the national government ("Interview with Evacuee from the Municipality of Lagonglong, Misamis Oriental," 2017).

The half-century old conflict against the communist's front compels the country's Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus "Jess" Dureza to admit that the negotiations have collapsed. In his speech at the United Nations in January 2017, Dureza sought for sustainable peace in the Philippines despite the failed talks between the negotiating panel of the government and the leftists which composed the National Democratic Front (Enobio, 2017). The quest for sustainable peace holds the key to end communist insurgency along with justice for the Higaonons.



Figure 12. The Evacuees from Lagonglong, Misamis Oriental.

A portion of the Provincial Capitol Grounds is deliberately occupied by the evacuees. The employees (in purple shirts) of the provincial government temporarily attend to the basic needs of the evacuees. The placards call for justice and peace for the refugees together with the victims in the armed conflict between the military and communist rebels.

Photo taken by the author, 2017.

By and large, the grounds of the Provincial Capitol manifest vibrant components. On the positive side, its spaces afford leisure, entertainment, agro-exhibition, refuge, sculptural arts, and the informal sector. On the negative side, the park tolerates prostitution and crimes.

Equally important is the manifestation of political rivalry between the Emanos and Moreno over the park. The provincial government holds absolute ownership of the park. For this reason, the governor manages the plans for the park. Moreno initiated the rehabilitation; while Emano reluctantly followed through due to the obvious reason of political competition. Escobar (2016), who was the head planner of Moreno's rehabilitation project, acknowledges the "territorial challenges" between the city and provincial heads. Escobar commented as regards the complete rehabilitation of the park, "Kung maayo unta ang relations, pwede unta ma work out" (If only there was good working relation, things would have worked out). Notwithstanding

the aspiration of Escobar, the public spaces in CDO point out that “Urban constructions are concretisations of an urban ideology of élites” (Evers & Korff, 2000, p. 17). Moreno and Emanó demonstrate the urban ideology of élites. After all, Vicente de Lara Park reflects the continuity of Filipino ideology, which has been disclosed from Gaston Park.

6 VIBRANCY AND INCLUSIVITY OF THE TRIPARTITE SPACES

Typhoon Washi, the Night Café, Street Arts, and Reading produce evidences of social spaces in CDO. The three interdependent phenomena substantiate the inclusivity and vibrancy of the tripartite spaces. This chapter begins with the turning point of the city when Washi ravaged in 2011. It then demonstrates the Night Café, which ended in 2013. Lastly, the current phenomenon of informal education and arts in the plazas affirm the continuous practice of vibrant and inclusive everyday public life.

6.1 TYPHOON WASHI

Socio-ecological conflicts resulting from inefficient policies, erroneous norm, environmental degradation, and climate change cause the urban poor to be extremely vulnerable to the effects of typhoons. This was the case of CDO when typhoon Washi wiped out the resettlements of the city government's housing policy. The "Piso-Piso Program" was enacted to provide dwellings for the landless and homeless populace. Only one peso (Php 1) was required to pay for a piece of housing unit. Consequently, housing projects were built and occupied in areas such as the población and barangays (districts) of Macasandig and Consolacion. When Washi hit the city in December 2011, the main victims were mostly from these places. Mostly notable were the ones dwelling in Isla de Oro and Cala-cala. The former is a fragile sandbank formation, while the latter is part of the banks of the Cagayan River. These areas are deemed not suitable for settlement and not supposed to be occupied. In fact, they are designated by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council or NDRRMC (2012a, p. 13) as no-build zones. Despite that, former Mayor Vicente "Dongkoy" Emano authorised the relocation to take place. In other words, the city government allowed poor residents to settle in disaster prone areas (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre & Norwegian Refugee Council, 2013; Ricalde, 2012a). Social housing welfare is evidently

deficient; however, there was no opposition from the urban poor until the aftermath of Washi.

By combining the theories of environmental legitimation crisis and environmental justice, this section analyses the complaisance of the city government and non-resistance of the urban poor preceding the disaster as well as the disputations between the former and latter following Washi. It further examines the policies of the city government and its reaction to the demands of the urban poor. It argues that the occurrence of an environmental crisis can be avoided through environmental justice. Empowerment, vigilance, and determination of the urban poor elicited protection from unsafe housing locations and environmental deterioration.

There are numerous scientific reports on Washi (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre & Norwegian Refugee Council, 2013; REACH, 2012; Walpole & Watkins, 2013). These studies document the affected households and interpret the flooding risks in CDO after Washi and Bopha in 2012, i.e. they merely deal with the after-effects of the typhoon(s); nevertheless, no study investigates the causes of the socio-ecological conflict prior to Washi. Hence, it is imperative to examine the causes on account of the devastating impact of Washi.

The public demonstrations in Gaston Park and Provincial Capitol Grounds were initiated by environmental and civil society movements. The protests demanded justice for the environment and victims of the typhoon. They were directed to the city mayor who negatively reacted to the demands. The protests resulted in the improvement of the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (CDRRMF). The funds partially aided the urban poor in the rehabilitation process. Thus, this case presents the extent of the environmental and civil society movements' empowerment on the urban poor affected by Washi.

Grassroots environmental movements in the Philippines actively engage in protecting the environment by empowerment. Task Force Macajalar (TFM) in CDO, the largest party chapter of the Partido Kalikasan (Green Party), has more than 2,000 members since its establishment in 1991, campaigning against logging and other environmental issues. It led the launching of

Save CDO Movement composed of Washi survivors, Church, media, civil society organisations, and other environmental advocacy groups. The movement called for “participative planning” (Corrales, 2012, ¶ 12) to ensure that the socio-ecological disaster will cease to occur in the future. On this account, the movement proves the “environmental consciousness of local communities (Ünaldi, 2013, p. 10). Nevertheless, there are few studies pointing out the significance of the role of environmental and civil society movements in the aftermath of Washi. Therefore, there is necessity to show how environmental and civil society movements in public spaces empower the urban poor following the disaster.

This study first elucidates environmental legitimization crisis and environmental justice. Subsequently, it describes the causes and outcome of typhoon Washi. It then interprets the “Piso-Piso Program” and norm of a “typhoon-free Mindanao” (A. Montalvan II, 2014) as reasons for the city government’s tolerance and non-public protest of the urban poor. The study then discusses protests and empowerment of urban poor with the civil society. After that, it examines the reaction of the city government particularly the mayor as well as the policy of disaster risk reduction and management. It also shows how CDRRMF was anomalously utilised by the city government along with the non-re-election of the mayor. It ends with the post-Washi resiliency project of the current city administration.

The crisis theory of Habermas (1973) is modified by Marshall and Goldstein (2006) by adding the ecological system as the current dimension in the environmental legitimization crisis model. They use the concept to explain the management of ecological crisis in the US, which spanned from 1960s until 1990s. They recognise citizen participation as manifested by grassroots environmental movements to be crucial in the management of ecology or avoidance of ecological crisis (Marshall & Goldstein, 2006).

The concept of environmental justice also originates from the US and later on applied in developing regions such as Southeast Asia. It is utilised as grounded expressions of ecological

protection and respect for human rights, among other rights. The principle of procedural environmental justice is then applied to convey public participation and accountability (Middleton, 2012; Schroeder, St Martin, Wilson, & Sen, 2008). Moreover, it is synthesised with environmental legitimation crisis theory to study the socio-ecological conflict in CDO.

Based on environmental legitimation crisis theory, this research takes in the correlation between the political-administrative, socio-cultural, and ecological systems. In the case of CDO, the political-administrative system or resource agency refers to the government; while the socio-cultural system pertains to the urban poor, victims of Washi, civil society, and the rest of the citizenry. The ecological system that supposedly bestows “living space” (Marshall & Goldstein, 2006, pp. 216, 217, 220) covers the disaster-prone resettlement areas. More broadly, living space anchors to the spatial triad where socio-ecological processes are reproduced in public spaces. The parks or plazas of CDO reflect the notion that, “Interaction between the social and ecological systems is dialectical, and human development and environmental change occur through a process of coevolution” (Marshall & Goldstein, 2006, p. 215).

Environmental legitimation crisis occurs in two stages. The first stage demonstrates how the city government performed legitimation function by distributing socialised housing to the urban poor. Mass loyalty was reciprocated by the latter to the former. Environmental crisis manifested when Washi devastated the social housing areas. It pointed out how the political administrative system failed to provide social welfare for the socio-cultural system. The latter in turn ceased to offer loyalty to the former. The social housing furnished by the city government failed when the urban poor in the disaster-prone areas were demolished by Washi. It then effected disloyalty of the urban poor to the city government; however, environmental justice movements crucially aided the urban poor in their quest for genuine social and ecological welfare. The government’s legitimation crisis is denoted by disloyalty (Habermas,

1973) and environmental justice movements (Marshall & Goldstein, 2006).

The second stage evinces how the urban poor together with civil society exert pressure on the government to improve policies in order to counter future environmental crisis. The improvement of policies, i.e. disaster risk reduction and management, is borne out of environmental justice. The involvement or empowerment of urban poor together with civil society in the conservation of ecology showcases respect for human rights and right to protection from environmental deterioration. Procedural environmental justice operates within these movements and principles (Middleton, 2012; Schroeder et al., 2008). Safe living spaces, i.e. secure housing project locations, are subsequently provided for the urban poor.

In essence, environmentalism and environmental justice which are demonstrated by “increasing citizen involvement can be viewed as a means for resource agencies to prevent, or at least delay, a crisis of legitimacy” (Marshall & Goldstein, 2006, p. 221). Increasing citizen involvement i.e. participative planning transpires in public spaces. The plazas or parks of CDO accommodate public participation in the pursuit of environmentalism and environmental justice.

Washi triggered an environmental crisis in CDO. It was a consequence of climate change exacerbated by ramifications of logging activities. CDOs total forest cover dwindled drastically from 15,500 hectares in 1988 to 3,800 hectares in 1998. This equates to a 75.52 per cent decrease in forest cover in 10 years (City Land Use Coordinating Committee, 2000, p. 204). The decline continued in the next decade. As little as 1,000 hectares remained in 2011 (Corrales, 2012). Deforestation coupled with intense rainfall culminated in flash floods running through the river basin of CDO in the night of 16th until early morning of 17th December 2011. These ecological factors contributed to the disaster.

According to the final report of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (2012a), “Tropical Storm Sendong was the most destructive tropical cyclone for 2011

in terms of dead casualties” (p. 3). CDO suffered the most with 674 deaths and 38,071 families/228,576 persons affected. Totally damaged houses were 7,317; while partially damaged houses were 12,635 (National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, 2012a, p. 4). REACH (2012) pointed out, “No-build zones have been declared previously but not necessarily enforced, which was why so many houses were located very near to the river systems, particularly in build-up urban areas” (p. 26). A post-Washi survey showed that CDO (among Iligan City and other places) had the highest number of totally destroyed houses in no-build zones which held an estimated number of 2,700 families or 35,000 persons (REACH, 2012, p. 26).

This obvious crisis leads to critical questions: Why did the city government tolerate the no-build zones to be inhabited and why did *not* the inhabitants protest even as they were inhabiting fragile habitations?

The “Piso-Piso Program” and the norm of a “typhoon-free Mindanao” (A. Montalvan II, 2014) serve as bases for the city government’s complaisance and non-public protest of the urban poor. In the initial stage preceding the environmental crisis, the government exhibited legitimacy by delivering the social housing project i.e. “Piso-Piso Program” to the urban poor. The latter in turn accepted the social services as indication of mass loyalty.

The Office of the City Council of CDO (2005) issued the “Piso-Piso Program” for the following reasons: firstly, the city council accused that the “different national agencies failed” (p. 183) to respond to social housing needs. Secondly, it aimed to “promote social justice” (p. 183). Thirdly, it proposed to construct housing projects “in cooperation with the private sector” (p. 183). Fourthly, it revealed shortage of housing units because of a rapidly growing urban population. The annual housing growth rate was 2.34 per cent high, demanding 124,000 housing units to be constructed in 2010. Thereafter, it set up the qualifications of individual beneficiaries as those with a monthly income of less than Php 10,000 and neither possess nor

dwelt in protected concrete shelters. Lastly, it allocated each deed of sale worth one peso (Php 1).

The “Piso-Piso Program” justified its claim to provide socialised housing to the urban poor; however, it is worth noting that each beneficiary received a deed of sale *without* a land title. This is contrary to its goal of furnishing “permanency and complete solution” (Office of the City Council of CDO, 2005, p. 183) to housing needs. It is neither permanent nor absolute without the issuance of land titles. In other words, the beneficiaries did not have legal possession of their housing units. Further, the city government’s contracts with private construction corporations were sources of controversy. In reality, the housing units were “highly overpriced” (Bagabuyo, 2012, ¶ 12). Reports disclosed “alleged misappropriated funds, with none of the promised land titles ever issued” (Montalvan II, 2011, ¶ 52).

Despite the immense controversies, there were minor complaints expressed by two out of the thousands of beneficiaries. They complained of paying Php 300 to 500 (estimated Euro 4,7-7,84) for land surveying, association, and membership fees. Additionally, they were not able to make repairs to their houses resulting in neglect of facilities (“Piso-Piso’ claimants griping on P500 fees... Beneficiaries allege they were told not to make house repairs,” 2005, pp. 1,10)

A criticism to the “Piso-Piso Program” was raised by former City Mayor and former Senate President Aquilino “Nene” Pimentel, Jr. He built a case against Mayor Emano citing lapses in the implementation of the housing project. Pimentel was later denounced by the head of the city council’s committee on urban poor as being antagonistic against the marginalised (Managbanag, 2011, pp. 1, 10).

Both complaint and criticism did not lead to public demonstration. There was no protest coming from the citizens demanding to be relocated in risk-less resettlement areas. Therefore, the resettlement project continued until the arrival of Washi.

The image of a “typhoon-free Mindanao” (A. Montalvan II, 2014) had been the norm before

the tragedy of Washi. CDO as one of the major cities in Mindanao was always perceived to be exempt from typhoons. The image was extremely pervasive to the point that occurrences of typhoons and floods were forgotten in history for the reason that the “Filipino amnesia of typhoons appears to be a cultural construct. It has been said that the collective, psychosocial personality of the Filipino is the enthusiastic character—playful but scattered, desiring freedom of happiness but avoidance of pain” (Montalvan II, 2013, p. 60).

Montalvan II (2014), a reputable local historian and journalist, disclaimed the popular image of a “typhoon-free Mindanao”. He detailed through historical reconstruction how the Manila Observatory, established by the Jesuits Federico Faura and Miguel Selga, tracks typhoons in Mindanao since the late 19th century until today (A. Montalvan II, 2014). He cited the “Great Flood of 1916” (Montalvan II, 2011, ¶ 3) in CDO where continuous rainfall for three days surged over the Cagayan River. Thus, the occurrences of typhoons before Washi are scientifically proven. Yet, the citizens refused to be convinced. They were uncritical because preceding Washi, “Cagayan de Oro is ignorant of typhoons” (Montalvan II, 2011, ¶ 25). The flash floods in January 2009 which culminated in several casualties and thousands of displaced families (“Green Bill clears House Comm,” 2009, p. 2) served as a caution; nonetheless, it did not lead to consciousness.

The critical point came in the wake of Washi. The “erroneous belief of a ‘typhoon-free Mindanao,’ a belief that can be more destructive than a real strong typhoon, if allowed to persist” (A. Montalvan II, 2014) was finally realised. The call to protect the environment not only to prevent future disasters but as well as to uphold the rights of the marginalised to be resettled in safe grounds demonstrates the involvement of citizens to impede an environmental legitimacy crisis.

The city government’s legitimation crisis manifested when Washi destroyed the social housing projects. The deficiency of the “Piso-Piso Program” indicated the government’s failure

to deliver its legitimation function. Disloyalty of the urban poor was shown through public demonstrations in the plazas and non-re-election of the city mayor. The public protests initiated by social and environmental grassroots movements, such as Save CDO Movement, Balsa Mindanao, and Gabriela, empowered the urban poor to press for secure habitations and prevention of ecological destruction.

A multitude of citizens gathered at Saint Augustine Metropolitan Cathedral in Gaston Park on 30th December 2011 to offer petitions in the Eucharist for the perished victims of Washi. The Archbishop of the Archdiocese of CDO and an advocate of environmental justice Antonio Ledesma SJ presided over the holy Mass. Afterwards, Orlando Ravanera, head of Task Force Macajalar (Silliman & Noble, 1998), exposed the environmental situation of CDO. He attributed massive logging and other destructive environmental activities as the causes of floods aside from typhoons. He then rallied, “Let’s wake up. Let’s join hands. Let’s join the Save CDO Movement” (Corrales, 2012, ¶ 9) and declared, “Let us bring back the rule of law to this city. The real power belongs to the people” (Corrales, 2012, ¶ 11).

Public procession ensued from Gaston Park up to the Provincial Capitol Grounds where the formal establishment of Save CDO Movement was fulfilled with the signatures from the assembly. The movement proposed short and long-term schemes for the displaced families. It offered immediate aid efforts. It then formulated a longstanding plan to mitigate future environmental catastrophes particularly for those urban poor living in disaster prone districts. Procedural justice took place through the call for public participation.

It further elicited strong support from social media and lawyers in Manila. Both groups accused Mayor Emano to be responsible for the deaths and displacement brought by the disaster. The lawyers aimed to prosecute Emano in court; while the social media group continued to criticise the mayor, and monitored the amount of funds for the rehabilitation process (Corrales, 2012).

The Save CDO Movement eventually filed a lawsuit against Emano for authorising housing construction in no-build zones that culminated in large numbers of fatalities. It also accused Emano of deserting his responsibility as chair of the CDO Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (CDRRMC). He failed to organise the council on the advent of Washi, completely ignoring the urgent need to respond to the calamity. The movement successfully brought the case to the Office of the President, which in turn ordered Emano to respond (“Palace urges Emano to answer complaint...’If no reply is submitted, case will still proceed ‘without taking into consideration his side of the story’,” 2012, pp. 1, 11). The determination and vigilance of the movement paved the way for environmental justice.

Survivors together with non-government organisations (NGOs) continued the protests in the public spaces. The most indigent Washi survivors organised a group called Naghugpong Grupo sa mga Survivors (United Group of Survivors). Members included vendors whose domiciles were completely destroyed (Salgados, 2012, pp. 1,11). Moreover, mothers, wives, and daughters of Washi victims united with grassroots organisations confronting the mayor in front of the City Hall at Gaston Park. Balsa Mindanao/Bulig Alang sa Mindanao (Help for Mindanao) and Gabriela are NGOs advocating environmental justice and women’s rights respectively. They demanded for speedy rehabilitation and relief distribution, suspension of large-scale logging and mining in the city, proper rehabilitation of deforested areas in CDO, prevention of expansion of agricultural plantations, as well as the establishment of decent houses and livelihood. Their environmentalism is expressed through the “call for environmental protection to prevent Sendong-like disaster from happening again” (Ricalde, 2012b, p. 10).

Civil society movements were instrumental in the pursuit for environmental justice. They induced the city mayor to answer the charges. The Disaster Risk Reduction and Management strengthened its policy, i.e. safe relocation sites, among other things.

Procedural issue of accountability was addressed. The protests and accusations prompted Emano to respond by maintaining that the city government was prepared but never expected the flood water to rise so high (Ricalde, 2012a, p. 2). He disregarded the complaint filed by Save CDO Movement by alleging it was “baseless” (“Emano views admin case as ‘politically-motivated’”, 2012, p. 1) since he “was not at fault nor contributed to the cause of the flooding” (p. 11). He blatantly recommended “that residents be allowed to return on condition that there would be a more efficient evacuation system wherein if a typhoon strikes in the future, they would leave the area immediately” (Yu, 2011, p. 2). This meant he allowed the no-build zones to be reoccupied.

On one hand, Emano was logical when he claimed to underestimate the typhoon since nobody, including the academe, Church, local and national government, and all the other citizens, foresaw the disaster. On the other hand, he cannot be absolutely innocent because, in the first place, he was the head of the disaster council. He was responsible for convening the body in order to send out warning signals and prepare for response. He should have been aware of the danger the residents would encounter should they reside in no-build zones. Hence, his neglect and failure added to the catastrophe.

The policy on disaster risk reduction and management was created to prevent calamities. It was then augmented due to procedural justice. Social and environmental movements pressed for direct political action.

The Philippines in September 2009 agreed to the Hyogo Framework by means of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response. The Philippine National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act was enacted a year later in 2010 in agreement with the international framework. Its functions comprise disaster preparedness, prevention, mitigation, response, and rehabilitation. In addition, it provided for a Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre &

Norwegian Refugee Council, 2013, pp. 32, 33).

In parallel, the CDRRMC was created in 2011 under the leadership of Emano. Its budget or CDRRMF totalled Php 84,716,331.15 (estimated Euro 1.340 million) (Office of the City Council, 2011). It increased to Php 96,851,300 in 2013 (estimated Euro 1.530 million) (Office of the City Council, 2012). The augmentation of funds provided partial support for rehabilitation since civil society groups also offered financial assistance; nonetheless, safe living spaces were assigned to the victims of the disaster.

The Representative of the Second District of CDO Rufus Rodriguez filed House Bills 00033 (Rodriguez, 2013a July 01) and 00045 (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2013b July 01). The bills imposed a logging ban in CDO and declared CDO a mining-free zone, respectively. Rodriguez blames logging and mining activities as the causes of Washi. The direct effect on the ecology prompts modification of policies. Green policy is now on the agenda.

The Church, NGOs, international NGOs, schools, and the international community held a tremendous role in the rehabilitation process. Australian Aid contributed a total of Php 55 million for temporary shelters, traumatic and/or psychological stress debriefings, and basic necessities. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) handed out US \$153,000 for 3,293 families who benefitted from food-for-work activities (National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, 2012a, pp. 15, 16; City Council of the City of Cagayan de Oro, 2012a). Civil society provides not only empowerment but also financial aid for safe living spaces, among other things.

Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan donated five hectares of land to secure safe and permanent resettlements for 550 households at Xavier Ecoville in Barangay Lumbia. The urban poor survivors participate in livelihood training programmes to sustain their means of income and augment their skills. Xavier Ecoville Multi-Purpose Cooperative organises seminars for entrepreneurial development. Skills profiling, wholesaling enterprise, micro finance credit,

food catering, propagation of ornamental plants, and manufacturing of net bags are operative in the present time (Tagupa, Legaspi, Gorra, & Montellano, 2014). The significant improvement of the survivors succeeded because of safe living spaces and environmentalism; however, sustainability is needed to ensure secure livelihood.

The Commission on Audit's (COA) report on CDO for 2012 evinced fraudulence in the appropriation of financial aids intended for the beneficiaries of Washi resettlement projects. Only Php 73,929,000 (estimated Euro 1.17 million) was utilised out of the total donation of Php 123,943,000 (estimated Euro 1.96 million). The remaining Php 50,014,000 (estimated Euro 791.000) was left unused. A total of 5,291 housing units were planned to be erected, yet, they were merely half of the entire number of totally and/or partially destroyed houses. Thus, the number of houses and facilities were insufficient to cater to the recipients (Commission on Audit, 2013, pp. 50, 51).

COA investigated the highly questionable contract as well between the city government and SCV Construction involving the Php 8,800,000 (estimated Euro 139.200) cost for 80 units of row houses. This was actually a reduction of the original budget of Php 55,000,000 (estimated Euro 870.000) intended for 500 row house units. The city government intentionally reduced the budget in order to qualify SCV Construction. COA charged SCV Construction of infringement by citing that the company was neither financially capable nor eligible to contract the original amount of Php 55,000,000 (estimated Euro 870.000). More importantly, no witnesses were present in the contract signing and SCV Construction has no business office in CDO (Commission on Audit, 2013, pp. 50, 55, 56).

COA (2014) for the second time showed evidences of fraud. The donation of Php 40,590,000 (estimated Euro 642.000) from Habitat for Humanity for the erection of 369 houses failed to materialise in the year 2013 (pp. 92, 152, 155). The report concluded

The utilisation of cash donations received by the city government for “quick disaster response” from typhoon Sendong was apparently below its normal speed, delaying and deferring the fund’s desired immediate economic and social benefits in the areas affected by the calamity, thus, violating the purpose of Section 2 of Republic Act No. 10121, otherwise known as the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010. (Commission on Audit, 2014, p. 168)

COA was instrumental in the process of procedural justice. Its duty to audit and report the allocation of funds addresses transparency and accountability. The agency exposes anomalies in the city government.

The administration of Emano was liable for the embezzlement of funds; however, the mayor denied the allegation that he collected funds from the government in his 33 years of public service and challenged the opposition to file a case against him (“P123M na donasyon para sa mga biktima ng Sendong sa CDO, saan napunta?,” 2013). Emano ran once more in the 2013 mayoralty race. It would have been his fifth term in 12 years since 1998, except that the citizens did not let him win. The vigilance of the citizens finally paid off because of increased concern for environmental protection and awareness of unscrupulous political manoeuvre. The citizens avoided a repetition of an environmental legitimacy crisis through their electoral decision.

The tragedy of Washi was not by accident alone. Complacency of the city government, naivety of the citizens, climate change, and environmental destruction were the roots of the socio-ecological conflict. The “Piso-Piso Program” proved to be insufficient because the city government did not maintain welfare as it tolerated the urban poor to live in extremely fragile grounds. Despite that, the urban poor depended on social housing services as they and the entire citizenry relied on the knowledge of a “typhoon-free Mindanao”. As a consequence, there was

no objection vis-à-vis demonstration in public spaces until Washi transpired.

The backwash of Washi ushered in an environmental legitimization crisis. The disloyalty of the citizens particularly the urban poor manifested in public protests. Save CDO Movement and other civil society groups empowered the latter to push for improvement of social welfare, environmental protection, and accountability of Emano. Funds especially from international community aided rehabilitation but then COA exposed the misappropriations by the city government.

The reaction of the city government was twofold. On one side, Emano debunked every accusation. On the other side, the CDRRMF continues to be upgraded to reduce the possibility of another calamity. Secure relocations were then constructed to avoid another disaster.

In the final analysis, environmental justice as exemplified by citizen involvement serves as a force to mitigate an environmental legitimization crisis. Survivors, relatives of deceased victims, and other supporters commemorate the anniversary of the tragedy with the slogan, “Sendong Never Again” (Llamas, 2014). Civic organisation Junior Chamber International Bai Lawanen (2012) erected a memorial wall in Gaston Park engraved with the names of the deceased to remind the public of the “memory of all those who perished during the rampage of Tropical Storm Sendong”. The city government especially issued a resolution “declaring December 17, 2012 and every year thereafter as a day of mourning and remembrance” (City Council of the City of Cagayan de Oro, 2012b).



Figure 13. The Memorial Wall in Gaston.
Photo taken by the author, 2016.

Nine typhoons entered Mindanao from 2011 to 2014 (Arguillas, 2014). One of the strongest typhoons was Bopha (local name: Pablo), which penetrated CDO in December 2012 following the same track as Washi. Unsurprisingly, the incidence was minimal compared to Washi. NDRRMC (2012b) declared only one casualty, 14 injured, 29 totally destroyed houses and 114 partly destroyed houses in CDO. Finally, the citizens opted not to re-elect Emano in the 2013 mayoral elections.

Under the new administration of Mayor Moreno, the policy includes “engagement of all stakeholders in disaster risk reduction management and community-based climate change resiliency initiative” (City Government of Cagayan de Oro, 2016, p. 8). Correspondingly, the leading city planners designed the state of the art Oro Central, which serves as a dual-purpose facility centre for evacuation and education. Oro Central is “guided by the principles of

liveability, sustainability, and resilience” (Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, Mozart, 2014, p. 9). The centre can shelter 10,000 evacuees given that it is “poised to make the city a model for disaster preparedness” (Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, Mozart, 2014, p. 7). In effect, CDO won the top prize in the Liveable Cities and Design Challenge 2014 within the city government or evacuation centre category (E. C. Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016; Liveable Cities Challenge, 2014). By the same token, the NDRRMC accorded the Gawad Kalasag Award¹² to CDO in the consecutive years 2013 and 2014. The planners foretell that “Oro Central will inspire Kagay-anons to stand tall and proud in these uneasy times of climate change” (Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, Mozart, 2014, p. 10).

Environmental legitimation crisis is alleviated not only by empowerment alone but as well as by vigilance and determination. The citizens learnt a critical lesson from Washi, which is not to allow natural disasters of that magnitude to happen again. The participation of the civil society movements in public spaces led to the resiliency of the city. Typhoons are becoming rampant in Mindanao because of climate change; nevertheless, the residents of CDO are quick to react and prepare whenever there are warning signals. Empowerment and resiliency are elements of environmental justice and environmentalism, which can be sustained as long as the society is concerned for the future. More generally, the socio-ecological process of CDO is exposed in the public spaces. Public protests and annual public commemoration in Gaston Park and Vicente de Lara Park convey procedural environmental justice in public spaces vis-à-vis perceived spaces. The upgrade of CDRRMF along with the forthcoming creation of Oro Central throw light on how living spaces are re-conceived in order to be shielded from typhoons. Lastly, the memorial wall in Gaston Park forms part of the city’s lived spaces.

¹² NDRRMC initiates the Gawad Kalasag Award to officially pay tribute to places that practice and implement the principles of disaster risk reduction management.

6.2 THE NIGHT CAFÉ

Vending in public spaces and streets has been an integral source of livelihood for minor traders in the progressive history of the city (Recio & Gomez, 2013; Zukin, 1996). The essence of vending conspicuously manifests in the current order of globalisation particularly in the region of Southeast Asia. Malaysia, for example, emphasises the role of hawkers in the local economy. The city governments cultivate the proliferation of night markets or “Pasar Malam” especially for the local residents, tourists, and young entrepreneurs (Aziz & Sapindal, 2012). Additionally, Singapore institutionalises its hawker centres because the government recognises the contribution and relation of the hawkers to their national identity. Chan & Lee (2014) illustrate that the hawker “epitomises qualities and values that harken back to the initial days of nation-building, where good, hard work was a way to a better station in life, a promise of meritocracy” (p. 98). Thus, vending in markets is a common phenomenon in the region.

In the Philippines, vendors are categorised under the informal economy, which contributes nominally to the national income; yet, the massive number of its members cannot be discounted. The Philippine Statistics Authority (2009) identifies more than a quarter or 29.6 per cent of wholesale and retail informal sector operators out of the entire 10.5 million operators in the informal sector in a 2008 survey. In CDO, the rapid stream of in-migrants who lack professional skills because of poor educational training facilitates the entry of the urban poor. A sizable number of the urban poor secure their daily income from vending. The urban poor household had an average of 5.53 members with a monthly income of Php 4,476.84 (estimated Euro 69) in 1997 (Suminguit, 1999).

Rapid urbanisation and economic growth complement the festivalisation vis-à-vis endured disorganisation on the streets and in the public spaces of CDO. The weekly festival of the Night Café took place in Divisoria for a decade from its establishment in 2003 until its abolishment in 2013. The Night Café altered the landscape of Divisoria through gentrification. The aim of

the process was primarily for financial benefits. In the end, it resulted in contestation and eventual elimination.

This narrative first discusses the drivers leading to the renewal of Divisoria. It then examines the crucial function of the city administration and the actors involved in the dispute. Lastly, it reviews the outcome following the abolishment of the Night Café.

Divisoria maintained its traditional symbolic meaning but not until the introduction of the Night Café. From time to time, the lack of political will in implementing the urban plans has led to new forms of interpretation of public space in the city. The conception of the Night Café re-interprets the symbolic meaning of Divisoria.

The Night Café significantly reflected spatial practice where the users of space or actors perceived various activities for their own advantage. Élites define and redefine images of the city (Evers & Korff, 2000; Kurfürst, 2012). The city councillors with the approval of the mayor created *Resolution Number 5779-2003* declaring CDO as the “City in Blossom, in Bloom, and in Boom”. The élites supported the legitimation by citing well-grounded socio-economic factors. Thereupon, the resolution enumerated satisfactory peace and order condition, continuous entry of foreign investments, sprawl of multi-million infrastructural projects, such as bridges, public markets, bus terminals, malls, and residential subdivisions, as determinants of the city’s economic prosperity. It highlighted the “average growth rate of investment over a five-year period from 1997 to 2002 of 6.14 per cent and Php 8.54 billion worth of investments poured in 2002 alone” (Office of the City Council, 2003a). In addition, the established image of CDO as the “Gateway to Northern Mindanao” is reinforced in the resolution.

The élites who are the authors of the resolution ultimately decided on how CDO should be portrayed. The portrait of the “City in Blossom, in Bloom, and in Boom” appertains to “urban constructions” by “an urban ideology of élites” (Evers & Korff, 2000, p. 17). The “blossoming, blooming, and booming” of CDO are “cultural strategies that initially represented the *results*

of economic development turned into strategies aimed at stimulating economic growth” (Zukin, 1996, p. 280). The construction of the images of CDO by élites coupled with the growth of investments and infrastructural programmes are the key drivers in furthering economic prospects as manifested by the establishment of the Night Café.

Mayor Vicente Emano originally conceptualised the Night Café in order to find a viable solution to informality. Emano approached vending as a “phenomenon to be managed” (Recio & Gomez, 2013, p. 177). The mayor’s “vision is power” (Zukin, 1996, p. 257) transparent on the streets of Divisoria. Emano envisioned a venue where hawkers can exhibit commodities on weekends (Palmes-Dennis, 2013). He offered an alternative for the marginalised sector in the city. As a result, his idea was supported by the city councillors who converted it into a statute.

Mrs. Escobar-San Juan, who was then the city’s consultant and event organiser, together with her team, crafted the guidelines of the Night Café. Accordingly, the city councillors fast-tracked the completion of the provision without proper consultation. Mrs. Escobar-San Juan was (2016b) told by the councillors “Kamo na bahala” (It is up to you). The remark implies compulsion. The pressure compelled her to finish the draft straightaway. She then personally submitted the document to the office of the city council. In brief, the conception of the Night Café revealed elements of mediocrity.

The city council approved *Ordinance Number 8920-2003* which legitimised the establishment of the Night Café in September 2003. The ordinance defined the Night Café as a regular weekend festivity opened to the public specifically at Tirso Neri and RN Abejuela Streets in Divisoria from 7:00 pm until 2:00 am. The Night Café permitted vendors to operate under the 2003 Cagayan de Oro City Revenue Code. Correspondingly, the ordinance laid down the rules on the set-up, lay-out, food/beverage preparation, services, sanitation, and waste disposal (Office of the City Council, 2003b). The city government, headed by the mayor and dominated by his allies in the city council, took the role to legitimise the Night Café.

The legitimisation of the Night Café uncovers reconfiguration of the mayor's vision that includes the street proprietors. The mayor together with the councillors envisioned a renewed CDO. The Night Café symbolised the renewal of the city. The renewal project of the city government redefined the symbolic meaning of Divisoria. Therefore, its completion implied gratification of the élites' ideas (Evers & Korff, 2000).

The physical renovation of Divisoria started a year after the installation of the Night Café. In October 2004, the city council through the issuance of Resolution Number 6864-2004 endorsed the designation of Divisoria as a "Business-Tourism Park". The resolution then initiated guidelines with the coordination of the City Tourism Board, Public Works and Commerce, as well as the private organisation of local businessmen known as Cagayan de Oro Chamber of Commerce and Industry Foundation, Incorporated (Oro Chamber). Moreover, the resolution recommended the furnishing of lollipop lights (giant, multi-coloured lamp posts), permanent toilettes, a dancing fountain, and paved blocks on the sidewalks. Ultimately, it "aimed at reviving Divisoria's old glory days" (Cagayan de Oro City Council, 2004b).

Renewal is manifested not only through the re-interpretation of image but also by architectural alteration. Architecture "forms the object as a system of signs, a message" (Eco, 2005b, p. 195). An architectural object keeps denotative and connotative functions (Eco, 2005a). The new objects and fixtures in Divisoria refer to architectural parts or symbols, which communicate new meaning. Their installation connotes that the Night Café in Divisoria symbolises the "blossoming, blooming, and booming" of CDO.

Zukin (1996) scrutinises that, "Culture is often reduced to a set of marketable images" (p. 263). "City in Blossom, in Bloom, and in Boom" and "Business-Tourism Park" are merchantable images for city branding. These images combined with marketable symbols such as the lollipop lights are then utilised as cultural references to reinforce economic interests. Oro Chamber partnered with the city government to foster profit-seeking interests through the

renewal of Divisoria. In other words, “People with economic and political power have the greatest opportunity to shape public culture by controlling the building of the city's public spaces in stone and concrete” (Zukin, 1996, p. 11). The Night Café profited from the practice where “culture is something that *sells*, something that is *seen*” (Zukin, 1996, p. 263).

Power in public space does not totally belong to the élites. It is important to realise that spatial practice is evident in Divisoria. Zukin (1996) succinctly addresses that, “Public space is inherently democratic. The question of who can occupy public space, and so define an image of the city, is open-ended” (p. 11). Various actors participate in public spaces. In fact, the actors partake in the contestation of public space. Kurfürst (2012) posits, “Cities are socially constructed and therefore politically contested. Conflicts between different groups are likely to arise about the shape of the landscape. This stems from the fact that a ‘unitary culture’ does not exist” (p. 62). In the context of urbanism in Southeast Asia, Evers and Korff (2000) make the case of “the struggles of different actors, who are trying to shape the city in a conscious effort, or who simply put their stamp on the city through their everyday life within it” (p. 6). In the case of the Night Café, the actors can be categorised into four groups: informal sector, mayors/city government, local citizens, and private-business sector.

As soon the Night Café began, the vendors installed makeshift stalls, chairs, tables, grillers, and patio umbrellas on the streets where locals as well as tourists gathered to eat, drink, and shop. They grilled meat and seafood especially for low-and-middle-income consumers. They displayed assorted goods such as imported second-hand apparels (i.e. *Ukay-ukay*), pirated DVDs, domestic pets, and other affordable everyday products. The Night Café was equally open to the services provided by masseurs, henna tattoo artists, prostitutes, and band players. By and large, the activities provided by the informal sector were for economic consumption. To interpret precisely, the Night Café advocated a culture of selling. Zukin (1996) contemplates that, “Culture is a system for producing symbols, every attempt to get people to buy a product

becomes a culture industry” (p. 12). The festivalisation of Divisoria created “ ‘entertainment,’ aimed at attracting a mobile public of cultural consumers” (Zukin, 1996, p. 19).

After several months of operation, the vendors began violating the rules in the ordinance. Firstly, the vendors did not follow the prescribed schedule. The rules stipulated that operation start at 6:00 p.m. and end before 3:00 a.m. In reality, the vendors set up their stalls earlier than 5:00 p.m. and their operation ended beyond 3:00 a.m. Secondly, the vendors who sold dry goods occupied the islands. Thirdly, the garbage disposal system was not followed. Worst of all, liquors were made available to minors particularly the students coming from nearby schools and universities.

The city government responded to the violations by amending the rules. First, *Ordinance Number 8948-2003* issued prohibition on the use of the islands to the vendors; it restated as well the exact operating schedule (Cagayan de Oro City Council, 2003b). Second, *Ordinance Number 9008-2003* regulated the use of umbrellas; vendors were only allowed to mount in the event of rain (Cagayan de Oro City Council, 2003a). Third, *Ordinance Number 9372-2004* prohibited alcoholic drinks to minors below the age of 18 (Cagayan de Oro City Council, 2004a).

Despite all the amendments, the official regulators assigned in the Night Café lacked the capacity to implement the guidelines. The violations continued to escalate. As a result, the Night Café elicited reactions from the locals.

The issue of Night Café has divided the locals. There are opposing sides and neutral parties. The various circles either highlight the advantages or disadvantages of the Night Café.

Supporters of the Night Café sympathise with the vendors. They reason that vendors are part of the locality and contribute to the economy. To demonstrate, a mango vendor profited as much as Php 3,000 (Euro 60) per night from the Night Café; in contrast, she earns only up to Php 700 (Euro 14) per night without the Night Café (“Interview with Street Vendors,” 2016).

To further compare, the Night Café vendor earned much higher than the urban poor household who were surveyed before the establishment of the Night Café. If the income per night from the Night Café were multiplied by eight, the monthly income of the Night Café vendor would total Php 24,000 (Euro 371,72), higher by Php 19,523.16 (Euro 302,43) than the Php 4,476.84 (Euro 69) monthly income of the surveyed urban poor household. Similarly, the Night Café vendor grossed higher earnings than the hawkers in either Gaston or Vicente de Lara Park. A vendor in either parks earns only as much as Php 1,500 (Euro 23,34) daily, which is half of what a Night Café vendor used to earn per day. To sum up, the Night Café generated livelihood and employment for the underprivileged.

The Night Café brought pride and uniqueness to CDO; it became the “trademark of CDO” (Pagapulaan Jr., 2016) as articulated by a local resident. The advocates further claimed that the Night Café revitalised Divisoria because it promoted local tourism. In effect, the city government achieved its goal of renewing Divisoria.

The opponents of the Night Café complained of several problems. First, drunken customers desecrated the local heroes (Alegre, 2013); they urinated on the statue of Andres Bonifacio, which is also the burial site of the soldiers in the 1900 Battle of Macahambus where Filipinos defeated the Americans. Urine combined with vomit on the streets, walls, fixtures, and other monuments filled the air with stench. Second, the vendors did not follow sanitation rules because there was no proper water supply. The vendors stored pails of water to be used for dish and hand washing. Piles of garbage were also left on the streets. Divisoria was plagued with filth every after the night market ended. Third, the loud music from the live bands disrupted classes in the university adjacent to Divisoria. Fourth, the closure of Tirso Neri and RN Abejuela Streets caused a traffic jam that lasted for hours; the congestion affected all drivers and passengers since both streets are the main thoroughfares of the city. Fifth, the opposers accused the Night Café of perpetrating crimes and prostitution. A female prostitute earned as

high as Php 5,000 (Euro 100) per night during the Night Café; in contrast, she collected a mere sum of Php 300 (Euro 6) per night in the absence of the Night Café (“Interview of Prostitutes,” 2016). Given these concrete points, “The limitations of the administration allow the market to emerge as the dominant mechanism for the structuration of urban space” (Evers & Korff, 2000, p. 13).

One of the locals argues that a “plaza is not for business”. He stresses that the Night Café was not a “food centre” (“Interview with Local Residents,” 2016). Instead, he proposes to find ways to set a proper venue and alternatives for the vendors. The Night Café could be transferred to another public space such as the Rotunda. Lastly, the locals suggest the need for stricter enforcement of rules in order to maintain sanitation.

It may be noted that at the beginning, the organisation of private-business sector in the city, otherwise known as Oro Chamber, coordinated with the government to endorse the Night Café; however, the group later denounced the weekly event. Oro Chamber members who own commercial establishments in the private spaces of Divisoria complained of decreasing sales since the traffic congestion discouraged clients. When the Night Café ended in 2013, the president of Oro Chamber announced, “We are happy to receive reports from our members on sales improvement” (“Oro Chamber Lauds Hapsay Dalan,” 2013). Surprisingly, the occupation of vendors in Divisoria adversely affected the profits of private enterprises. The renewal of Divisoria thus produced a paradoxical effect on legitimate enterprises.

Another private entity, Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan, equally detested the presence of the Night Café. The students inside the classrooms across Divisoria lost concentration due to the banging music groups. The university further criticised the unhealthy lifestyle the Night Café influenced on the undergraduates. By and large, the private sectors opposed the negative effects of the Night Café as it encroached on their private spheres.

The Night Café ultimately became a political issue in the mayoral election of 2013. It triggered a contestation between the two leading candidates: the incumbent Mayor Emano and Oscar “Oca” Moreno. Both contestants share similar educational and political track records. Both were former provincial governors of Misamis Oriental. The former governed from 1986 to 1995; the latter since 2004 until 2013.

Emano and Moreno possess public charisma and originate from influential political clans. The two contestants, however, differ in vision and agenda. On one hand, Emano remained with his programme to continue the Night Café and promote the slogan “City in Blossom, in Bloom, and in Boom.” On the other hand, Moreno’s campaign centred on “Hapsay nga Panggobyerno” (Orderly Governance). That is to say, Moreno aimed to put back order on the streets and in the city government. The election held a tight race where in the end Moreno won over Emano by a thin margin.

Straightaway after the victory, Moreno mobilised the programme “Hapsay Dalan” (Orderly Streets). Moreno eradicated the Night Café with his first *Executive Order 001-2013*. Oro Chamber then supported the new programme to clean up the streets in the city. To put it precisely, Oro Chamber agreed with the official order to eradicate the vendors in Divisoria in order to regain income.

The sanction immediately alarmed and threatened the informal sectors. The impact is summed up by these words: “Daghan kaayo nawad-an trabaho, nanga pasmo, nanga boang ang uban na giwala diretso na wala gi taga-i ug trabaho. Mura mig mga kawatan, kriminal” (Many lost their jobs and starved. Some whose livelihoods were abolished abruptly without prior notice and without any job prospects went crazy. We were like thieves, criminals) (“Interview with the Leaders of the Association of Massagers in Divisoria,” 2016). The afflicted further lamented, “Na apektohan gyud mi pila ka bulan. Nangita mi aha maka pamaylo ug kwarta para makalingkawas. Nag ampo gyud mi sa Ginoo na malouy si Mayor [Moreno] na taga-an mi ug

lugar” (We were affected for several months. We tried to find ways to borrow money in order to survive. We prayed to God that the Mayor [Moreno] would pity us and find a space for us.) (“Interview with the Leaders of the Association of Massagers in Divisoria,” 2016).

Notwithstanding the complaints, the mayor tightened the implementation as carried out by the enforcers. The Night Café was prohibited for the reason that “it was a tragedy” (Moreno, 2016). The mayor reiterated, “There was tremendous traffic, bad smell and even criminality” (Moreno, 2016). He further rationalised, “What happened was that the Night Café—that the intention of making Divisoria a cultural place—had been abused by too much commercialism. The Night Café became a nightmare” (Moreno, 2016). Nevertheless, the mayor assented that the Night Café was a “good idea in the beginning” (Moreno, 2016).

Moreno admits that the most challenging issue of his administration is the competition against the previous mayor. Moreno (2016) charges Emano of being the “kingpin” who dominates with the culture of impunity. Emano has not lost his influence given that the majority of elected city councillors owe allegiance to him. The prevention of the city council to release the city budget worsened the tension between the two executives. Moreno lambasts the council’s refusal to cooperate. The cases filed against Moreno by the supporters of Emano add fuel to the fire.

The following evaluation summarises the contest between the two mayors: “Kung sa masa, medyo epektibo si Emano kay daghan man pobre nakapahimulos; Pero kung koan lang may katungod sa kahapsay, mas epektibo si Moreno kay naka baton man ug kalinaw” (For the masses, Emano is quite effective since many of the poor benefitted [from the Night Café]; however, if we refer to orderliness, Moreno is more competent because peacefulness [on the streets] was achieved) (“Interview with a Disabled Vendor and Toilettte Fee Collector in Divisoria,” 2016).

Emano may have had the best intentions for both the marginalised and the privileged. The Night Café served the informal sector on the one hand, while the slogan “City in Blossom, in Bloom, and in Boom” fulfilled the promotional needs of the private-business sector on the other hand. In spite of the success of the Night Café, the weak implementation of rules and regulations encouraged disadvantageous consequences for all stakeholders.

The contestation between the political élites proves who can dominate over the public space in the city. It is important to realise that the winner depends on who gets the support of the business élites. For some time, Emano retained domination because Oro Chamber supported his vision of forwarding economic interests through cultural references. Evers and Korff (2000) stress, “The rationale for the production of space is its exchangeability and the profitable usage of space, while the administration tries to develop the cities following the rationality of their plans” (p. 13).

Then again, Emano might have underestimated the business élites and instead overestimated his influence on the masses. The moment Emano lost the support of the business élites, the momentum shifted to Moreno. Oro Chamber’s approval of Moreno illustrates a shift in control. Therefore, the partnership of political and economic élites ultimately directs the city. Evers and Korff (2000) encapsulate that, “Cities are made and experienced by the people. Not in a harmonious cooperative effort but through conflicts between those dominating and imposing their understanding of the city on those dominated” (p. 11).

The dissolution of the Night Café pushed the displaced vendors to seek other avenues, such as the semi-public spaces at Paseo del Rio or what is commonly known as the rotunda, a roundabout where one can drive through its perimeter road which occupies an estimated area of 10,000 square metres. Further, the prominent family of Dr. Jose Golez and Rafaelita Golez donated the land area to the city government (Cagayan de Oro City Council, 2000). The family then initiated the move to rent out the rotunda in order to provide an alternative venue after the

Night Café ended. The vendors paid minimal rental fee to the city government. The experiment succeeded for some time particularly during fiestas and Christmas season; nonetheless, it did not prove feasible in the end because of its inaccessibility (Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016).

Centro Mall opened a night market, Mercado de Oro, within its indoor garden months after the closure of the Night Café. Mercado de Oro was patterned after Mercato Centrale at Bonifacio Global City/BGC (Ayala/Centro Mall, 2013) in Makati city. The Ayala family corporation owns both BGC and Centro Mall along with its emerging business park. The two establishments are located in the central business districts of their respective cities. Most importantly, both business centres embody the “‘small urban spaces’, like privately managed public parks that can be refashioned to project an image of civility” (Zukin, 1996, p. 44). Both are correspondingly congruous with the “monopolistic formal players in a globalising economy” (Recio & Gomez, 2013, p. 177) since their spaces contain global brands, shops, hotels, offices together with condominiums. BGC and Centro Mall launch “an image of global power and influence” (Shatkin, 2005, p. 591). In short, both commercial hubs exhibit artificial public spaces exclusive to wealthy clients.

Mercado de Oro replicated the Night Café by following a similar weekend schedule: Fridays and Saturdays from 4:00 p.m. until 3:00 a.m. It identically promoted the selling point: “The Night Food & Lifestyle Market of Northern Mindanao” (Ayala/Centro Mall, 2013). It then utilised the pineapple icon, a trademark of Northern Mindanao where Del Monte Philippines Corporation grows the largest pineapple plantation in the country. The night market promised to offer art crafts and dishes with reasonable prices along with free live band music. Mercado de Oro accelerated the end of the Night Café; however, it excluded the vendors who could not afford the rental of mall space. The privatisation of urban spaces by the entry of malls erodes the claim of the vendors to public spaces (Shatkin, 2005). Yet, Mercado de Oro was a failed

alternative attempt for the most part due to its exclusivity of customers. The night market in Centrio Mall quickly faded owing to exclusive artificiality.

After the unsuccessful attempts in the rotunda and Centrio Mall, the mayor sought another alternative and contemplated on relocating the hawkers to Isla de Oro (Moreno, 2016). The city planners, however, noted that the planned relocation was discussed in the previous years by the heads of the local private business sector (Escobar-San Juan & Pastrano, 2016). Most importantly, the devastating effects of typhoon Washi on Isla de Oro must be seriously taken into account owing to the fact that it has been declared a no-build zone. The hawkers could face the risk of encountering disastrous floods.

None of the alternative public spaces offers a solution to the needs of the informal sector. The vendors face the challenges of accessibility in the rotunda, affordability in Centrio Mall, and security in Isla de Oro. Notwithstanding the spatial challenges among the groups of informal sector, the masseurs manage to remain legally in the westernmost island of Divisoria after their vehement protest. Moreno allowed the exemption of the masseurs owing to their work ethics, which emphasise sanitation and taciturnity. In contrast to the vendors, the masseurs occupy and leave their area without waste because they are equipped with only chairs and massage kits, which consist of oil/lotion, wooden reflexology tool, towel, and disinfectant. The masseurs desist from loud music in contrary to the vendors (“Interview with the Leaders of the Association of Massagers in Divisoria,” 2016). In conclusion, the actors from the informal sector prove that the “idea of public space cannot be guaranteed as it can only be gained through struggle and contestation” (Wee, 2014, p. 23). The appeal of the masseurs convinced Moreno. Thus, they regained their rights and won the confidence of the mayor. Kurfürst (2012) stresses “Urban landscapes are socially produced; they are the outcome of processes of negotiation between diverse social actors” (p. 110).

6.3 ALTERNATIVES TO ILLITERACY AND CRIMINALITY: STREET ARTS AND READING

The Night Café illustrated commodification of public spaces that was eventually ended by the decision of the local state. Divisoria in the aftermath of the Night Café turned non-commodified, yet, not emptied. The vibrancy of the space continues despite the erosion of its festivalisation. The hawkers were eradicated, yet, the street dwellers who are mostly children took over the spaces.

The Functional Literacy, Education, and Mass Media Survey outlines that “one in every 10 or about 4 million children and youth in the country is out-of-school” (Philippine National Statistics, 2013, p. 32). Northern Mindanao holds 9.8 per cent of the total number of six to 24-year-old elementary and secondary education dropouts. Early marriage of female dropouts, insufficient family income, and absence of self-motivation are cited as the primary causes of the illiteracy crisis (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2013).

In CDO, the dropout rate in elementary level swelled from 0.23 per cent in 2011 to 2012 to 0.73 per cent in 2012 to 2013; dropouts from secondary level meanwhile declined from 4.38 per cent in 2011 to 2012 to 3.75 per cent in 2013 to 2014 (The City Planning and Development Office, 2015). In summary, the rate of dropouts reflects the effect of poverty on education. As a result, the children and youth inhabit public spaces.

Criminality combined with substance abuse augments the challenge of poverty. The aggressive anti-drug operation of President Rodrigo Duterte significantly presses on a violent approach towards drug personalities and criminals. The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (2018) publicises that its anti-drug operations have resulted in the arrest of 123,648 drug personalities and the rescue of 649 minors. The Philippine National Police in Northern Mindanao (2018) reports a sharp decrease in the crime volume by 38.13 per cent from 5,295 crimes in 2017 to 3,276 crimes in 2018. The same holds true in CDO where total crime volume reduced from 15,960 in 2014 to 11,166 in 2015 (City Government of Cagayan de Oro, 2016).

The reduction, however, minimally resolves criminality since there is only one police officer for 666 citizens (The City Planning and Development Office, 2015a). As a result, merely 1,745 were solved out of the 11,166 crimes. The city officials admit that “minimising or eradicating criminality including drug abuse remains to be one of the major challenges to overcome” (City Government of Cagayan de Oro, 2016, p. 31).

The homeless minors are potential objects of substance abuse. In fact, a number of street children resolve to solvent sniffing (City Social Welfare and Development, 2016). “Rugby boys” or “Rugby girls” are the terms used to refer to the solvent addict street children. Rugby is a brand of solvent that is affordable and easily available from hardware stores. Vulcaseal is another brand of solvent inhaled by street children. Both solvents are utilised in order to withstand starvation.

Criminality combined with substance abuse and illiteracy presses minors to inhabit public spaces. The everyday realities on the streets illustrate extreme scenarios of marginalisation. Most street children together with their parents choose Divisoria over Gaston Park and the Provincial Capitol Grounds. The street families then prefer to occupy Magsaysay Park in the eastern most island of Divisoria. They lay worn out mats or carton paper on the sidewalks, grounds and benches to sleep at night time. At daylight, they depend on either mendicancy or toil as barkers of public transportation. They likewise engage into pickpocketing and scavenging. In sum, the daily routines of the marginalised in public spaces mirror multi-layered socio-economic crises.

6.3.1 CITY SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT

The city government addresses the crisis of street children through the City Social Welfare and Development (CSWD). The aims of CSWD include “the social protection and development of the least, the last privileged, the marginalised, and the vulnerable sectors

to become self-reliant, breaking the chain of servitude towards sustainable total development” (City Government of Cagayan de Oro, 2014). CSWD delivers services to street children with a framework and programmes based on surveys conducted by registered social workers.

CSWD reports that 319 children have been rescued from the streets from 2013 to 2016. Of this number, 38.8 per cent were females while 61.2 per cent were males. Close to half or 47.9 per cent constituted ages 10 to 13; more than a quarter or 26 per cent made up ages 14 to 17. Moreover, 52.5 per cent or 115 of the 219 street children who responded to rescue operations admitted that they had incomplete elementary education; while 22.8 per cent or 50 rescued street children had incomplete high school education (City Social Welfare and Development, 2016).

CSWD attributes the root of the street crisis to the inadequate number of Child Development Centers (CDC). Only 9,536 out of 15,466 or 61.66 per cent of children aged three to four were enrolled in CDCs in school year 2016 to 2017 (City Social Welfare and Development, 2016). A mere 183 Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) teachers served 9,248 children in 190 ECCD centres in the previous school year 2015 to 2016 (The City Planning and Development Office, 2015). CSWD acknowledges the need to construct a significant number of kindergarten facilities. The CSWD officer emphasised that the developmental stage of school children is crucial, and stressed, “Paningkamotan sa city government na tanan children mosulod sa ECCD” (The city government will exert all efforts to enrol children in ECCD centres) (Solis, 2017).

At the same time, the deprivation of education of the parents of street children illuminates the causes of the proliferation of families living on the streets. Of the 600 surveyed parents of street children, only 17.51 per cent completed kindergarten; while 53.95 per cent took elementary education. CSWD assesses that, “Parents who are deprived with basic educational training are likely less driven to ensure that their children receive proper education thus

repeating the cycle of poverty” (City Social Welfare and Development, 2016).

Parents of street children scarcely acquire knowledge on family planning methods. Consequently, they contribute to the rapid rate of population growth. Their common law relationship adds up to the difficulties of parenting. CSWD (2016) explains that the “size of the family and unplanned child-birth pacing practices are the primary reasons children get neglected and eventually drive them to become street dwellers”. Lastly, poverty incidence among the street families points out the gravity of the crisis. A family earns approximately Php 100 (approximately Euro 2) per day from either mendicancy or public vehicle dispatch.

CSWD created the framework “Operation Street Children Atong Responsibilidad” (Operation Street Children: Our Responsibility) or OSCAR based on the four rights of children, namely, survival, development, protection, and participation. The framework follows three stages to alleviate the number of street children. The “Preventive” or first phase provides programmes such as information and education campaigns on the benefits of sound marriage, ill effects of early marriages and teenage pregnancies, as well as anti-mendicancy and vagrancy. The preventive stage likewise upholds curfew for minors, standardisation of ECCD services, annual search for a child-friendly barangay as well as strengthening of Barangay Councils for the Protection of Children or BCPC (City Social Welfare and Development, 2016).

The “Curative” or second stage offers 24-hour response and rescue, temporary custodial care, and psychosocial intervention for street children besides case management. The “Developmental” or third stage puts forward formal and non-formal education for children, parent education seminars, natural family planning sessions, spiritual or values formation, skills and livelihood training, and livelihood capital for the parents (City Social Welfare and Development, 2016).

Ms. Solis (2017), CSWD officer, adds a fourth stage or “Temporary Custodial Care” that

creates institutions for at risk children and children in need of special protection. These kids are categorised into three groups: abused, labourer, and street children. CSWD then responds with specific courses of action.

The Child Abuse Response Section rescues children from forced prostitution, illegal recruitment, and abusive households, among others. Protection, treatment, and rehabilitation constitute the process of the programme. In particular, the Home Care for Girls accommodate six physically abused, 35 sexually abused, and 83 drug dependent children (The City Planning and Development Office, 2015).

The Street and Urban Working Children Program campaigns for the anti-child labour policy of the city. The programme delivers educational assistance to 160 children of wet market vendors as well as livelihood assistance to 214 parents who work as wet market vendors (The City Planning and Development Office, 2015). A centre in Cogon Public Market serves as a meeting place for parents and activity ground for the children.

CSWD further classifies street children into two groups: Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) and abandoned or neglected. The Tahanan ng Kabataan (Home of the Youth) services the CICL group. The centre provides 31 youth offenders and delinquent youth with residential care, medical or dental services, and legal, custodial and peer group counselling, among others. The Boys Town Center services 41 abandoned and neglected male children (The City Planning and Development Office, 2015). Moreover, Sagip Bata para sa Hapsay Dalan (Save Children for Orderly Streets), Pag-asa (Hope) Youth Association of the Philippines, Unlad Kabataan Program (Progressive Youth Program), Mother Theresa Foundation, Incorporated, together with Care Center for Children offer additional programmes for out-of-school youth.

CSWD establishes advocacy projects, such as the Child-Friendly Police Station, to cultivate cooperation with the police and promote a positive image of police officers. Police Station 1 in Divisoria and the Agora Police Station have won awards from an annual competition, and both

offices utilised the incentives to build playrooms inside their stations.

The approaches of CSWD resulted in 64 rehabilitees who have been reintegrated to their families. The graduates of non-formal education from Boys Town Center are employed in government offices and agricultural companies (City Social Welfare and Development, 2016). These initial results urge CSWD to implement alternative approaches to rectify the plazas.

The Oro Alagang Pamilyang Project (Oro Care Family Project) assists 10 street families in Divisoria. Ms. Sarip (2017), the project leader, stresses “family approach” to achieve total reformation. The project aims to uplift the street families economically and socially on the condition that they are totally homeless. The project centres on the reformation of the parents in order to improve family income as well as parent-child relationship.

The street families initially resisted the attempt of the social workers for fear of eviction. Eventually, the family cooperated with the assurance of vocational training for the parents, six months’ house rental (from March to September 2016), and educational assistance for the children. Henceforth, five parents completed courses in massage therapy and welding from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. Presently, the parents are employed in government agencies with sufficient wages to rent houses.

The success of the project depends on the self-motivation of the beneficiaries. Ms. Sarip (2017) attests that, “Nakita ang determination sa ila mismo” (We witnessed the self-determination of the families); in the same way, it was a “great improvement for their self-esteem”. One of the successful beneficiaries, Ms. Annabelle Yamit, convinced other street dwellers to take up technical education in order to be independently sufficient. Ms. Sarip (2017) proudly proclaims that the beneficiaries “can stand on their own and they are very vocal to share their stories”.

CSWD confronts the vicious cycle of poverty in public spaces. CSWD lives up to its role as the “Heart and Conscience of the City” (City Government of Cagayan de Oro, 2014) by

adhering to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child coupled with the provisions of Section 2 of Republic Act 7610, which outlines that the

State shall intervene on behalf of the child when the parent, guardian, teacher, or person having care or custody of the child fails or is unable to protect the child against abuse, exploitation, and discrimination, or when such acts against the child are committed by the said parent, guardian, teacher, or person having care and custody of the same.

(Congress of the Philippines, 1992)

Withal state policy and principles, CSWD admits, “The city cannot address all the needs of the children” (Solis, 2017) and can only intervene in the mitigation of street dwellers. CSWD places the absolute responsibility on the parents in as much as “Di gyud namo makita na fault siya sa child” (CSWD can never see the child being at fault for dwelling on the streets) (Solis, 2017). To a greater extent, CSWD tackles challenges involving budget cuts, political oppositions, non-cooperative barangays, and beneficiaries.

Oftentimes, street children sheltered in the centres refuse to abide by the strict daily schedules and house rules. When incidences of escape occur, the children are immediately reported to the police. CSWD defends that “If abandoned ka and neglected, di gyud mo mahawa sa centre. Pero kung naay parents mo claim, we do not have the right to keep the child. So if naay parents, ibalik gyud nimo siya sa parents” (An abandoned and neglected child is never sent away from the centre. However, if the parents want to claim their child, the centre does not have the right to keep the child. The centre has to return the child to his/her parents) (Solis, 2017). Otherwise, CSWD closely works with the barangays to monitor the absconders.

Barangays are the frontline partners of the city government. Regrettably, there are non-

supportive barangays and non-functional BCPCs owing to political oppositions wherein “not all barangays are comfortable with the new administration [of Oscar Moreno]” (Solis, 2017). Political immaturity adds to the complication. Not all the barangay officials share the same vision of serving the street children “kay para sa ila ang bata di man botante. Nganung hatagan man nila ug care?” (because, for them, children are not voters, so why bother caring for them?) (Solis, 2017).

To counter the unresponsive barangays, CSWD initiated the Search for Child-Friendly Barangay in 2014. The project rewards Php 50,000 (estimated Euro 900) to the winner. Barangay Bugo has been creating programmes for toddlers for three consecutive years as the winner (Solis, 2017; City Social Welfare and Development, 2016).

Political opposition between the city councillors and mayor resulted in the delay of budget distribution. Majority of the city councillors who support the previous administration of Emano vehemently oppose the mayoralty of Moreno. From 2013 until 2015, the city council disapproved the budget of the city thus affecting the operations of CSWD. CSWD protested, “We cannot provide the social services needed for the people” (Solis, 2017). Eventually in 2016, the budget cut was resolved. CSWD retained Php 186 million (Euro 3.34 million) for operations in 2017 (Solis, 2017).

CSWD follows state policies and universal principles. At the same time, it identifies the causes supported by empirical and statistical data. CSWD accordingly establishes strategic approaches through OSCAR in order to implement comprehensive programmes. In spite of these procedures, CSWD recognises certain shortfalls. Financial instability due to political dynamics results in suspension of operations. Moreover, recent projects prove to be experimental. For example, the Oro Alagang Pamilyang Project is considered a “trial and error” exercise (Sarip, 2017). Advocacies, such as Search for Child-Friendly Barangay or Police Station, supplement the programmes without assurance of sustainability. CSWD, nonetheless,

prevails on the promotion of the three-child policy and the implementation of Parental Responsibility Code under City Ordinance Number 13195-2017 (Cagayan de Oro City Council, 2017). Lastly, CSWD partners with NGOs, youth groups, and private organisations in establishing a network among stakeholders. Lourdes High School alumnae of 1964 sponsored the repair of Home Care for Girls. Xavier University High School alumni of 1981 contributed to the sports festival at Boys Town Center. The Ayala Foundation financed livelihood training programmes. CSWD together with Mayor Moreno favour voluntary efforts from concerned sectors (City Social Welfare and Development, 2016; Solis, 2017).

In the final analysis, CSWD contributes to the alleviation of the vicious cycle of poverty. Thereafter, the challenge is to transform the vicious cycle into a cycle of aspiration. In this manner, empowered individuals outside of government agencies instigate engagements in public spaces through arts and informal education.

6.3.2 STREET READERS AND ARTISTS

The empowered individual embodies the Subject. Touraine (2000) conceives, “The Subject is the individual's desire to be an actor. Subjectivation is the desire for individuation, and individuation can come about only if there is an adequate interface between the world of instrumentality and that of identity” (p. 57). Three Subjects, namely, Kerneil Balaga, Jhon Magkilat, and Rhyan Casiño, embody the ideals of subjectivation and individuation in the plazas of CDO. Balaga and Magkilat foster street reading; Casiño leads the cultivation of street arts. All hail from Mindanao. All trained under Jesuit education. Therefore, the Subjects are cognizant of the social realities of their origin. The cognisance of identity prepares the Subjects to set the direction of transformation in the locality. The Jesuit trained Subjects from Mindanao concretise “rearticulation of instrumentality and identity” (Touraine, 2000, p. 58).

Balaga, Magkilat, and Casiño refuse for the streets to be meaningless, to be continuously occupied by street dwellers without education and opportunity. The idea that “individuation requires the individual to assert himself as an actor who can orient and transform social life” (Touraine, 2000, p. 59) incites the Subjects to recreate the plazas into spaces with meaning. Informal education and arts in public spaces carry out substantive innovation. Hence, the action of the Subjects commences in public spaces.

The soft-spoken Kerneil Balaga is a native of CDO and the youngest among a family of six. Balaga initially took up electrical engineering then later shifted to special education. Balaga admits his weaknesses in communication and writing; nevertheless, he desires to be a teacher. Balaga enthralled in the thought of aiding children with special needs. His internship experience and voluntary work tested his patience in looking after special children. Thereafter, he has been applying the techniques he has learnt outside the university to manage illiterate children in Divisoria, Gaston Park, Agora, and Cogon and Carmen Public Markets.

Balaga has mastered the art of street tutorials with years of experience. Balaga began with only one child in 2009. Compassion propelled him to befriend more kids. Balaga started hanging out in Gaston Park with children who settle from nearby Carmen Bridge and Isla de Oro. Not long after, the kids became familiar and felt comfortable with him. The kids fondly call him “Kuya Kino”(Big brother Kino). Since then, Balaga prepares for street tutorials by primarily choosing which story books to purchase. Balaga spends more than an hour picking out each storybook. He buys the books along with pencils and paper either using his own money or from monetary donations.

Balaga spends a great deal of time scrutinising each story. Balaga selects stories that embody morals. Balaga translates the stories into the Visayan language since the books are either in English or Tagalog (except the Visayan bible stories). Balaga devotes his time at night to teaching street children following his college classes in the university.

Balaga innovates to make the stories engaging. He relates the stories to the lives of the street children. He utilises the names of the kids as the characters in the stories. Balaga gains the attention of the kids with these methods. Balaga (2016c) sums up the procedure as “teaching the kids values, preaching to them the Gospel through storytelling, praying with them, and blessing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!”

Spirituality propels Balaga to educate street children. Balaga claims having conversed with Jesus Christ in a series of dreams. In the first dream, Christ instructs Balaga to continue teaching. In the second dream, Balaga sees the face of Christ smiling at him. In the third dream, Balaga cannot see the face of Christ, yet, can hear Him. Balaga asks so many questions and Christ replies, “Just be with them” (2017a). Balaga believes Christ will sustain him to persevere in teaching the marginalised.

Balaga consistently reads the Bible gospels and attends the Mass, yet, has no plans of entering the priesthood or leading any religious youth organisation. Balaga (2016b) reflects, “Some say I’m a hero. Others say I’m an angel of God. But as for me, I’m just an ordinary man who strives hard to follow our Lord Jesus Christ”. Balaga prioritises praying for the kids knowing that most likely he will not see them again.

The kids might remember the values that I taught them through storytelling and apply them in their lives even when they are old. I can’t sustain their needs but I can be part of their experiences. I pray and hope that this little act of kindness will create a big impact in their lives.

(Balaga, 2016a)

Balaga puts confidence in the efficiency of street teaching as long as the narratives are well delivered. The brief period Balaga spends with the kids have rippling effects. The kids retain

the lessons long after they are presented. One of the kids approached Balaga and expressed, “Nagampo baya ko na makabalik ka sa Cagayan” (I prayed that you will be able to come back to CDO) (2017a). In another instance, a former street child, who is presently in 3rd year high school, recognised Balaga long after they met in one of his reading sessions.

Identically, Balaga relates how he clearly remembers a simple question from his elementary class when the teacher asked if he would offer food to a starving stranger. Balaga retains the moral from the question. Thus today, Balaga passes on the values to street children.

Balaga combines compassion and spirituality with adherence to the Philippine national identity. Balaga (2017) identifies that, “It’s my primary duty as a Filipino and as a Christian to try my very best to teach them values particularly Filipino values and Christian values”. Nationalism combined with Christian spirituality brings forth social empowerment.

Balaga categorises his students into two: motivated and demotivated. The former tremendously yearn to study; the latter show absolutely no interest. The active kid asserts, “Dani ra ko. Gusto ko makatuon” (I want to be here. I want to learn) (Balaga, 2017a). The uninterested either leaves or misbehaves by playing around and squabbling. Balaga allows the kids to quit since they are free to do so. Balaga refuses to berate. Rather, he calls the attention of the parents (as they also dwell in the public spaces) to reprimand their own children. Balaga finds this method effective since the authority to discipline belongs to the parents. Moreover, Balaga separates the sessions for reading and feeding. Balaga does not motivate by distributing snacks. Some kids such as the “Rugby boys” and “Rugby girls” take advantage of the food instead of learning; however, in some unavoidable instances passers-by give out burgers and barbeques.

Another challenge encountered by Balaga is with CSWD. Balaga observes the rescue operations whereby the social workers run after the children. Balaga witnesses the trauma of the children.

In one of the operations, a couple of social workers reprimanded Balaga. They instructed him to teach inside the classroom instead of in the plazas. The social workers noted to Balaga that street tutorial is “illegal”. Balaga was left confused and discouraged that he refrained from teaching for two weeks. To find enlightenment, Balaga inquired from a lawyer friend regarding the legality of street teaching. Balaga then requested permission from one of the private banks in Divisoria to teach in the premises fronting their establishment.

Unexpectedly, the director of CSWD called the attention of Balaga. The head then explained the social workers’ incognizance of voluntary street teaching. In the end, he commended the ability of Balaga and allowed him to resume street tutorials. After all, CSWD misinterpreted the intentions of Balaga.

The approaches of CSWD and Balaga differ. While CSWD takes the rough method, Balaga employs a soft approach. To achieve balance, Balaga and CSWD can cooperate to aid the rescue and training of street children. Balaga may act as a middleman between the kids and CSWD. Balaga can orient and eventually persuade the children to stay in the centres of CSWD.

Balaga epitomises the Subject in public spheres. His actions ripple beyond CDO. Both mainstream and social media covered his story. In July 2015, Cath Libarnes-Bagayna, a private bank employee, took a photo of Balaga teaching in the pavement along a banking establishment in Divisoria. Ms. Libarnes-Bagayna wrote the caption originally in Instagram:

I always see this guy teaching less fortunate children at Divisoria. I find it so striking, unfitting—ridiculous even, for a lone boy in his baseball cap, clean shirt and decent jeans, to actually sit on the floor with dirty, sometimes rowdy, street children without having to worry about safety and health. Rain or shine he is there, unmindful of the possibility that he might get sick. He reads them books like a big brother does—

teaching them A B Cs and colours too. I know it is rude to stare at other people's business but I did—can't help it! Until one day I finally had the courage to ask him questions.

I found out that he's a graduate of Xavier University BS [Bachelor of Sciences] in Education. Right now he doesn't have a job. He finds it very fulfilling to teach street children. He gets some of his books, crayons, and other school supplies from donors and sometimes from his own pocket. And the best part is? He does it for FREE and he is, in no way, related to any organisation. And just like that, my faith in humanity is a notch higher than it used to be. (Libarnes-Bagayna, 2015)

Soon after, the post captured the attention of netizens.¹³ Rappler, a social news network, and national media outfits, such as GMA Network and ABS-CBN Television Network, published and broadcast Balaga's voluntary street work (Buccat, 2016; GMA News, 2016; Lorenzo, 2017).

Balaga, nevertheless, prefers to keep a low profile. Balaga (2017a) shares, "Dili pasikat akong goal. Ako lang makatudlo; katabang ginagmay" (Popularity is not my goal. I simply desire to teach; to help a little). Balaga detracts from public attention. He would rather highlight other individuals and organisations that deserve public adoration.

At present, Balaga aims to reach out to other areas in the Philippines. He not only teaches but also provides first aid assistance to the wounded kids and elderlies. Balaga has plans of putting up an organisation of mobile street readers. Balaga's personal outreach is definitely developing into a social commitment.

¹³ The photo garnered 7,700 likes on Facebook as of June 2017.



Figure 14. Kerneil Balaga teaches kids in Iloilo City. From <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=470624903269873&set=pb.100009671020288.-2207520000.1527015094.&type=3&theater>. Copyright permission from Kerneil Balaga, 2019.

Jessie Jhon Mateo-Magkilat comes from Wao, Lanao del Sur in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Magkilat later studied college and worked as tertiary instructor at XU following a studentship in France. His stay for eight years in the city exposed him to the perils of illiteracy. Magkilat witnessed the worsening number of street children. Moreover, he observed the apparent rejection of admission in CSWD centres by the street children. Thus, the kids end up settling on the streets. These realities urged him to plan a programme to alleviate illiteracy among the street children.

While completing his masters at the University of Erfurt in Germany under a scholarship from Katholischer Akademischer Ausländer-Dienst, Magkilat applied for a project grant from the annual Commitment Award of Willy Brandt School of Public Policy. Magkilat partnered

with Canadian Hannah Saley in developing the goals of the project. Magkilat and Saley believe in providing “an opportunity for the community to build trust with the street children” as well as to “instil values of respect, integrity and knowledge as we inspire an attitude of lifelong learning” (Pedroza, 2015).

Magkilat and Saley gained the grand prize of the Commitment Award with their project “Reading on Wheels” or ROW in 2015, with a prize money Euro 2500. The principal venture of ROW is aimed at “improving street children’s life by bringing the joy of reading to children on the street[s] of the Philippine city of Cagayan de Oro” (“Commitment Award,” 2017). In like manner, ROW empowers the educated youth to give back to the community where they can take on an active role in the plazas of the city (Magkilat, 2017). To actualise the project, ROW teamed up with the Ateneo Diplomatic Corps (ADC), a student organisation at XU. ADC President Devin Cabatingan (2016) straightaway decided to work with ROW because “I am so passionate with children. I believe through this programme we are able to change ourselves as well as change other lives”. Cabatingan (2016) shares, “Kaning passion nako nag inflate. Nag sugod adtong pag immerse na jud namo sa among kaugalingon didto to sa area” (I felt my passion inflate. It started when we immersed in the area). Cabatingan likewise seized the opportunity for ADC to be concretely involved in community outreach programmes. Cabatingan adopted ROW as a main endeavour of ADC without doubt nor delay.

ADC established a special committee intended for the training and administration of ROW volunteers. Katrina Naguita, ROW committee head, proudly declares her enthusiasm for the project. Naguita (2016) expressed, “Street children are taught morals and lessons”. Another volunteer pronounced, “Gusto nako makita akong self to grow with ROW” (I want to see myself grow with ROW) (Baquiano-Balase, 2016).

ROW volunteers enlist in workshops prior to the actual street tutorials. Coincidentally, Balaga took employment as facilitator of the National Service Training Program at XU. Balaga

(together with another facilitator) trained the first batch of ROW volunteers in November 2015. Balaga lectured about “Community Stewardship” and “Ethics towards Children” to the volunteers (Magkilat, 2015). The student volunteers look up to Balaga for his commitment to the street children.

ROW and Balaga have the identical objective of educating street children. Not to mention, both observe the rigid method of CSWD. A ROW volunteer describes how CSWD “arrests” street children in their rescue operations. Neither ROW nor Balaga, however, blames CSWD for the proliferation of street children. Instead, both take the opportunity of utilising the plazas as venues to train unschooled children. CSWD does not offer street tutorials because the centres take over the rehabilitation of street children. ROW and Balaga, therefore, take on the role by acting as street tutors. The difference in approaches between CSWD and the street tutors rests on the treatment of the children. Street children fear the rescue operations. The children at times perceive street tutors as the social workers who seek to pull them out of the streets. The misinterpretation, nevertheless, is quickly countered by the affectionate conduct of the street tutors. ROW and Balaga employ compassion rather than impose rigid orders.

The contrast between ROW and Balaga is that the former chooses a lone venue while the latter teaches in other public spaces besides Divisoria. In terms of financial means, ROW retains adequate monetary resources from its wide network of organisational relations. Balaga, on the other hand, depends on his personal income or from individual sponsors. Balaga oftentimes faces insufficient funding, but this has never been a hindrance to him.

Every week, a number of ROW volunteers offer three-hour reading sessions particularly to five to 12-year-old street children. The volunteers bring in books and other educational materials placed in wooden pushcarts from the university to Magsaysay Park in Divisoria. Mats are then laid out on the ground where the children can assemble.

The session follows a seven-step lesson plan. First, the session opens with a prayer. Second,

the volunteers display the poster with the rules written in capital letters in order to constantly appease the children; the rules are summarised into “3Ms”: Maminaw (listen), Mag-puyo (behave), Manlingkod (sit or lie down). Third, the volunteers introduce songs to create an atmosphere of encouragement. Fourth, the volunteers read stories in Visayan or Tagalog.¹⁴ Fifth, the kids partake in simple quizzes, which are related to the stories; the volunteers show the choices of answers in white boards.

In the sixth segment, the kids practice their skills in writing and drawing. The kids learn by scribbling the basic alphabet or sketching shapes of objects. The volunteers distribute notebooks, pencils, and crayons; then they provide one-on-one assistance. Lastly, the kids eat meals usually consisting of juice and bread or siopao.

Most of the children respond with excessive enthusiasm. Naguita (2016) notes, “Ganahan gyud sila mo eskwela” (They really want to be educated). The kids manifest eagerness not only for knowledge but also for attention. The kids yearn to be embraced and listened to. The volunteers naturally reciprocate warm embraces coupled with friendly dialogues.

ROW encounters several disadvantages with the physical structure of Divisoria. Unlike the classroom, the unenclosed space in Divisoria cannot offer formality of classes. The kids freely roam on the streets. It takes some time to gather the children in a single spot. Noise coupled with air pollution from the vehicles and crowds distract the reading session. The street lamps offer insufficient illumination. Divisoria is obviously not conducive for learning; nonetheless, the children adapt despite the deficient conditions. Cabatingan (2016) contends, “There is no other place to gather the children”. More so, ROW volunteers look after the safety of the kids.

In spite of the difficulties, ROW volunteers strive to motivate the children to pursue formal education. In addition, the volunteers attempt to prevent the kids from engaging in criminal

¹⁴ In 12 June 2016, I volunteered to read two stories in Tagalog: *Ang Prinsipe Ayaw Maligo* (The Prince Does Not Want to Bathe) and “*Gusto ko ng Pansit Ngayon*” (I Want Noodles Now). The first story points out hygienic practices; The second shows the importance of healthy diet and financial responsibility. I then quizzed the kids with questions relating to the characters in the stories.

acts and addiction to drugs or other destructive vices. By and large, the volunteers adhere to the principles of democratic practices. Cabatingan (2016) asserts, “Since we are free in this country, let’s use this freedom to teach.” Cabatingan (2016) adds, “We instil the importance of education and values formation, which will really help them as they go through their daily lives”.

The contributions of ROW brought a couple of honours to ADC, such as the Ignatius of Loyola Award for Outstanding Co-Curricular Organization and AMDG (Ad majorem Dei gloriam) Award for Outstanding Student Leader in the 10th annual Magis Awards at Xavier University in 2016. The Magis Awards accord student organisations which “engage in development projects and commit to civic purpose of their chosen fields within and outside the school campus” as well as “ensure that the path undertaken by members of the university community is geared towards educating and helping others in the context of poverty, corruption, political crisis, and other relevant social issues” (Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan, 2016).

ROW recruits additional volunteers from other institutions and not-for-profit foundations. ROW partnered with the Rotaract Club of Carmen Valley in July 2016 (Magkilat, 2015). ROW is further seeking registration as a not-for-profit organisation with a board of trustees in the Securities and Exchange Commission Philippines. ROW ensures sustainability with these engagements.

The immersion in public spaces leads to conversion of not only oneself but also of the community. The street tutors prove the ability of the educated to reach out to the uneducated. The tutorial sessions in the plazas bridge the gap between the literate and illiterate. Balaga, Magkilat, and the rest of ROW volunteers embody the quintessence where

It is the sufferings of a tormented individual and relations between Subjects that allow the desire to be a Subject to be transformed into the ability to be a social actor. The Subject no longer comes into being, as it did in the classical model, by taking on social roles or winning rights or the ability to become involved. The Subject constructs itself by forcing an instrumentalised, commodified, and technological society to accept organisational principles and limits that conform to its desire for freedom and its will to create forms of social life conducive to its self-affirmation and its recognition of the Other as Subject. (Touraine, 2000, p. 81)



Figure 15. The Reading on Wheels in Divisoria.

From <https://www.facebook.com/readingonwheelscdo/photos/a.902033913226740.1073741853.898275476935917/946283902135074/?type=3&theater>. Copyright permission from Jessie Jhon Mateo-Magkilat, 2019.

Rhyan Casiño suits the typical description of an artist who wears long black curly hair and dresses in shirts with indigenous designs. As such, typical artists run counter to the norms of popular culture. Not to mention, Casiño deliberately dropped out of college. He never completed the agricultural programme in animal science at XU because his real inclination is towards arts. Casiño joined and eventually became the president of Circulo de Arte, an organisation of student artists at XU. Casiño yearned to take up fine arts; yet, none of the universities in CDO or anywhere in Northern Mindanao offered the course. He tried to enrol in the neighbouring city of Cebu but decided to return to CDO (Casiño, 2017b).

Like other artists, Casiño seeks respect and recognition of his craft despite personal challenges. At one point, Casiño could not see any career direction. Engagements with peer artists who are into illegal drugs risked his lifestyle. Looking back at the experience, Casiño (2017) points out faith as the redeeming factor by proclaiming, “Na change gyud ko when I called on God” (I was changed when I called on God). His transformation led to new perspectives. Casiño does not only detest unhealthy habits now but he also aims to bring other struggling artists into the awareness of community arts. Casiño not only performs arts but also takes in abandoned children with artistic potentials. Casiño is described as “a passionate Christian adopting street kids in his home” (Francisco, 2014). Last but not the least, Casiño writes about advancement of community art for a newspaper. Gold Star Daily publishes his weekly column “Wednesdays with Rhyan C., Art Adventures and Misadventures of Rhyan Casiño” under the section Urban Life (Casiño, 2017a).

Casiño (2017) laments the state of artists, “Diri murag sad kaayo na state kay Filipinos are so talented. Ako ga ingon, we are so talented! One indicator of that is ga daog baya ta ug international shows” (It seems we are in a very sad state here despite Filipinos being so talented. I say we are so talented! One indicator is that we win in international competitions). Casiño

(2017) identifies that in the locality, “Gamay ang opportunity ba. Least siya sa priority diba” (Opportunities are less. Art is the least priority). The causes point to the fact that

As Philippine society becomes more Westernised, particularly in the more urbanised and industrialised areas, these contexts are replaced by their exact opposite. Artistic creation becomes narrowly specialised, separate from everyday life, a glorification of the individual ego, and obsessed with commercial success. It becomes primarily a medium for technical virtuosity, sensory impacts, entertainment, and highly secular values. Art loses its magical, mythical, and mystical qualities. (De Leon, Jr., 29 July 2011a)

The deterioration of indigenous talents is apparent as

Many Filipinos who have been educated in the Western way or conditioned by the massive propaganda for Western elite and mass cultures in our midst have distanced themselves from Filipino integral or communal art to the extent of denigrating it as inferior and primitive, if not ignoring it altogether as art. Such thinking has no basis in fact and is mainly the result of ignorance and lack of exposure to the excellence of our traditional arts. (De Leon, Jr., 29 July 2011a)

Casiño (Casiño, 2017b) deplores, “Degrading sa community tungod sa art. For example, music lang atong basehan—ang mga message ilang gina promote. Classic example ‘Otso-otso,’ ‘Spaghetti.’ Wala silay sense. Unsa may sense ba? Na remember ba nato ron while ga

proliferate?” (The community has degraded due to its arts. For example, let’s take music as the basis—the message that it promotes. Classic examples are ‘Otso-otso,’ ‘Spaghetti.’ These songs have no sense at all. What is their meaning? Do we remember their messages while songs like these continue to proliferate?”

“Otso-otso” (Eight-eight) and “Spaghetti” were song raves performed by sought-after sexy dancers and show hosts in noontime variety shows from mainstream media companies such as ABS-CBN and GMA Network, respectively. The popular choices of the masses and middle-class are portrayed in the televised performances. Casiño expresses frustration over the marginalisation of art. The crassness of preferences validates the state of waning artistic talents.

The state of art, artists along with spiritual motivations, signal Casiño’s aspiration to transform the misconception of arts. Casiño (2017b) envisions “art for the community” and relentlessly believes in “using art as a psychosocial intervention for empowerment, for peace building” since the goal is to “give back to the community”. To realise the social project, Casiño (2017b) organises a pool of artists for he believes, “We can become change makers”.

Casiño chairs Dire Husi (Here Friend), which aims to band together young indigenous talents and initiate reinterpretation of arts with the maxim “Indigenous is hip”. Casiño brands the group as “marginalised talents” since majority of members are out-of-school youth from ethnicities in Northern Mindanao such as Talaandigs, Umayamnonns, and Higaonons. Casiño further elucidates the organisation does not only cater to those who possess minimal financial means but also to the ones who need emotional stability or seek spiritual renewal. The multiplicity of artistries includes painters, sculptors, bead workers, social entrepreneurs, and musicians like flutists, kubing players, drummers, and chanters. Dire Husi endeavours to achieve “a creative social enterprise, an artisan collective, a band of world musicians, a training hub, and a fair trade advocate” (Casiño, 2017b; “Dire Husi Initiatives,” 2009). The youth organisation follows the principle of inclusivity wherein

Art is integrated with everyday life and not regarded as a separate activity. It does not become a *specialism* (specialisation that is narrow or at the expense of everything else, as defined by cultural critic Jacques Barzun). It is not for the specialist alone but for everyone. This implies that there will be no special venues or spaces for art because it virtually exists wherever and whenever there is human activity. (De Leon, Jr., 29 July 2011a)

The relentless efforts of Dire Husi have produced a series of recognitions. In 2008, the British Council awarded Php 100,000 (Euro 1680) to Dire Husi for winning the grant competition “I am a Changemaker”. A year later in 2009, the group qualified for the Ten Accomplished Youth Organizations Awards Foundation, Incorporated. Then in 2010, the National Anti-Poverty Commission selected Dire Husi as the representative of the youth sector (Casiño, 2017b; Piasan, 2013). Casiño (2017) nurtures, “Nagato-o ko og collective activity. Through collective effort matagaan ta og channel. Akong strength, imong strength naa tay mahimo” (I believe in collective activity. We are given a channel through collective effort. We can do something together with my strength and your strength).

As an agent of change and chair of a youth organisation, Casiño banks on his role as mentor to budding artists. Casiño (2017) bases the principles on traditional mentorship: “Actually believer ko adtong karaan na style, katong Renaissance, katong apprenticeship, mentorship, discipleship. Dili siya naka box. Dili siya system-based. Dili siya naa sa classroom” (Actually, I am a believer of the traditional method, such as during the Renaissance when they adhered to apprenticeship, mentorship, and discipleship. It is not like you are boxed-in. It is not system-based).

Casiño cited three mentees—Casilac, Quintana, and Talampas who used to lack a sense of purpose. Axel Rose Casilac was a former drug addict and Habal-Habal (modified motorcycle carrying 4 to 8 passengers) driver. Florante ‘Paulo’ Talampas grew up on the streets and was sold by his father for Php 500 (Euro 8,40). Rusty Quintana survived the life of a street kid, drug user, and criminal. Under the mentorship of Casiño, the mentees completely abandoned their erroneous lifestyles. At present, Quintana, Talampas, and Casilac devote their time to artistic performances. Casiño, however, admits the limits of mentorship. There are instances when Casiño must decide to keep the unity of the organisation by eliminating members with egotistic tendencies. Casiño, nonetheless, continues to invest despite the challenges. Casiño fits the description of a mentor who “endows his art with as many uses and functions to ensure that it will benefit a wide community of men, women and children, and promote communal identity, well-being, and harmony” (De Leon, Jr., 29 July 2011a).

Casiño keenly observes the occupation of mendicants along with the sickening stench of urine after the expulsion of the Night Café. He (2017) regrets, “Sayang kaayo atong park” (It is too bad our park is neglected).

The declining condition of the plaza propelled Dire Husi to establish “Art Attack: Buskers Project”, wherein the members publicly exhibit artistic talents as well as handmade crafts. The performances showcase fire dancers, drummers, chanters, and human statue. The sale of indigenous products along with solicitations aid in the sustainability of the members’ livelihood, albeit the meagre profit. Casiño remarks to begin “from the bottom-up” for an artist to be flourishing.

The buskers project serves as a means to reconcile arts with the community in public spaces. Thereupon,

the only way to make it possible is to let freedom and autonomy of the arts to expand as much as they can. Only when the arts and the artists are free can they be truly useful to societies in search of new visions and construction. More than ever, we need them to realise their full potential, at their full capacity. And for that, we need them to be free as much as they can and want. The rise of artistic engagements into public and common space is transformational. (Kusumawijaya, 2014, p. 152)

Casiño (2017) encapsulates, “What we’re doing [for the youth] is maka create mi ug spark sa ila ba. Local activities, local initiative, at the same time kung ma spark ang isa og usa ka generation na apathetic. Kung maka spark ka og hope then maka encourage ka to dream. And then a person naay dream, mo resilient siya to achieve the dream” (What we are doing [for the youth] is to create a spark for them. Local activities and local initiative can spark a generation that is apathetic. If you can spark hope; then you can encourage them to dream. Someone who dreams can be resilient to achieve his/her goals).



Figure 16. The Art Attack Buskers Project in Divisoria.

The performers of the Talaandig indigenous group wear the traditional dress and dance for the public in Divisoria. From <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10155873681578976&set=pcb.10155873717033976&type=3&theater>. Copyright permission from Rhyan Casiño, 2019.

Balaga, Magkilat, Casiño along with other Subjects act as instruments of transformation in public spaces. The immersion in public spaces generate social Subjects (Lee, Wui, & Hong, 2014; Lefebvre, 1991; Touraine, 2000). The narratives of the Subjects encompass the “lived experience” (Touraine, 2000, p. 77; Zukin, 1996, p. 190). The Subjects share the same identity, at the same time display distinctions. Balaga and Casiño boast identical spiritual motivations. Moreover, both perform beyond the boundaries of Divisoria. Casiño together with Dire Husi perform in the malls of Ayala Centrio and Lim Ket Kai since shopping centres maximise opportunities and exposures. Magkilat and Casiño demonstrate good networking capabilities; hence, ascertaining chances of funding opportunities.

In the midst of the intensive anti-drug campaign, the Subjects offer an alternative strategy, which neither follows the popular majority’s legitimization of the violence nor approves the drug

war of President Duterte. The Subjects rather seek the utilisation public spaces as venues in the reduction of potential victims in extrajudicial executions. The Subjects take on the roles as tutors and artists in the reduction of dehumanised individuals in public spaces despite the violent operations against possession of abused substance.

The utilisation of public spaces to prevent children and youth from lingering in ignorance, solvent/drug addiction and poverty “‘incorporates’ social actions, the actions of subjects both individual and collective who are born and who die, who suffer and who act” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). Thus, action in public spaces illustrates democracy as part of everyday life, as a cycle of aspiration. Touraine (2000, p. 81) outlines “Democracy is based both on the recognition of basic rights which place restrictions on all social powers and on the solidarity that allows all individuals to assert that they are social Subjects”.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Vibrancy supplies the central element which delineates the distinction between Western and non-Western public spaces. There is clear-cut divergence between the two categories. On one hand, the Western public space brings into the city the archetypal conception of democracy, which then engenders the civilising order of the urban inhabitants. The Western public space follows normative values and institutionalised social standards. The West, in short, benefits from the free expression of articulations and practices (Mitchell, 2003; Qian, 2014).

On the other hand, the non-Western public space conforms to vibrancy that does not necessarily inherit the norms and institutionalisation of democratic principles from the West. In other words, there is neither homogeneity nor universality in the non-Western context. The public spaces beyond the west rather express pluralistic exercises wherein contrasting and non-contrasting elements occur at the same time, “thus catalysing processes of acknowledgement and collaboration, as well as conflict and domination” (Qian, 2014, p. 835). Multiple actors, identities, interactions, and dimensions produce the vibrancy of non-Western public spaces.

Vibrancy draws from the fluidity of perceptions and practices. Fluidity certainly induces flexibility in changing or challenging conditions. With this in mind, vibrancy denotes coherence of the broader socio-cultural, political, economic, as well as environmental transformations that take place or reflect in the urban public spaces particularly in developing nations such as in Southeast Asia. Vibrancy explicitly brings in hybridity of local and global cultures in the public realm. The emergence of both cultures produces the mix of binaries: inclusion and exclusion, sacred and mundane, historical and contemporary, as well as superficial and essential. The overlapping of Lefebvre’s spatial triad put over the framework of vibrant public space. The intersecting perceived, lived, and conceived spaces put forward multifarious possibilities.

The public spaces in this context thrive on progression that apparently brings out heterogeneous potentials from the stimulation of contradicting as well as cooperating actors who can possibly “cope with heterogeneity and multiple diversities” (Korff, 2018, p. 491). In the end, vibrancy brings forth the pursuit of democracy amidst the tribulation and affirmation in the processes. The vibrant public space actualises the “physical terrain inscribed and produced by actions of addressing” (Qian, 2014, p. 835). Therefore, the goal of vibrancy is the pursuit of democracy, which formulates civility, decency, and order to citizens. To emphasise, a working democracy aspires for open society and mutual respect along with recognition of dissenting perspectives.

This thesis examined the vibrancy of the plazas as well as interpreted the dynamics or transformative processes which led to the revitalisation and inclusivity of the marginalised in the public spaces of CDO.

The rootedness of vibrancy is traced through re-interpretation of the national historical process. The history of public spaces in the Philippines began in water bodies from the pre-Hispanic era. Aquatic spaces allowed a vast venue for the practice of thalassocracy; however, Spanish and American colonial policies permanently altered the aquatic practices. The Spanish introduced theocracy along with the transfer of aquatic cultural practices to land-based urbanism. American policies put emphasis on public education along with the introduction of the concept of democracy. Public school education combined with Catholic traditions prevails in the plazas of the cities. Amidst the challenges of inheriting colonial policies, public spaces in the post-Hispanic era continue to be perceived as fluid spaces. Hence, social spaces in the Philippines are products of the inherent relation to aquatic spaces.

The study of the past further illuminates the ideology of the nation. Ideological differences press on the chasm between opposing public figures. The symbols of Jose Rizal and the church in the plazas all over the archipelago connote deep-seated divide of the Filipino nation.

Disruption instead of continuity governs the practice of public officials. The clash between the two mayors of CDO, Emano and Moreno, demonstrates an obvious example of disruptive political practices at the local level.

The expeditious rate of urbanisation combined with challenging ordeals conforms to the transformative processes, which broaden the revelation of vibrant public spaces in CDO. Urbanisation surfaces in two directions. On one hand, it results in growth of population, trade, industry, income, along with the entry of global corporate forces. CDO earned the reputation “Gateway to Northern Mindanao” because it primarily functions as the urban hub of the region.

CDO has grown and transformed from a traditional town into an urban centre since its inception as a chartered city in the mid-20th century. CDO undergoes continuous urban transformation whereby its demography continuously expands with high rates of natural increase and streams of in-migrants; while its economic activities have modified from agricultural production to commerce and industrialisation. Elements of urban progression centres on CDO. On the other hand, a rapid urban process generates overlapping challenges and issues. CDO boldly battles climate change, poverty, illiteracy, and criminality combined with violent anti-drug operation in its current saga.

A range of actions and practices determines the vibrancy of the tripartite public spaces in CDO. The spaces in Divisoria, Gaston Park and Vicente de Lara Park parade the superficial (i.e. Miss Kuyamis pageant, Zumba physical exercise) and essential. Typhoon Washi, the Night Café, ROW, and Dire Husi exemplify the essence of the tripartite public spaces. The vibrancy of the tripartite plazas echoes Lefebvre’s spatial concept.

Space, argues French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, is not neutral or inert. Rather, it derives its meaning from the way it is used, as well as the contestations and collaborations that take place within it at any moment in time. It makes sense thus to understand a space as the sum

total of different spaces, each with different meanings and social relations. (Chong & Lin, 2014, p. 27)

Typhoon Washi and the disputations between urban poor and city government deal with socio-ecological conflicts resulting from erroneous norm, environmental degradation, climate change, and inefficient implementation of socialised housing policies. The city government enacted the “Piso-Piso Program” to provide dwellings for the landless and homeless populace. Consequently, housing projects were built and occupied in areas deemed not suitable for settlement. When typhoon Washi hit the city in December 2011, the main victims were mostly from these places. Social housing welfare is evidently deficient; however, the city government allowed marginalised residents to settle in disaster prone areas. In spite of that, there was no resistance coming from the urban poor. The erroneous notion of a “typhoon-free Mindanao” combined with the social housing programme engendered a passive attitude not only from the urban poor but also from the entire citizenry of CDO. The resistance led by environmental grassroots movements through public protests in Gaston Park and the Provincial Capitol Grounds occurred after the effects of the typhoon were encountered. The protesters petitioned for environmental justice. As a result, the urban poor were empowered to demand safe living spaces. The government along with the church, NGOs, international NGOs, schools, and international community worked together for the rehabilitation projects where secured homes for Washi survivors were built.

The integration of green policy, blueprint of Oro Central evacuation facility together with tighter implementation of the city’s programme on disaster risk reduction and management have been established in response to the catastrophe. The citizens refuse to be complaisant after grasping the lessons from Washi. The city has learnt to be vigilant and resilient. Therefore, socio-ecological crisis can be prevented through vigilance and resilience. Prevention can be sustained as long as the city possesses socio-ecological concern. CDO adheres to urban

resilience.

The festivalisation of Divisoria by the Night Café from 2003 until 2013 showcased urban renewal. Former Mayor Emano together with the city councillors enacted *Ordinance Number 8920-2003* which established the weekly Night Café. The regular event offered leisure and entrepreneurship activities. Informal sectors converged to provide dining, shopping, and entertaining activities. It strengthened the informal economy through generation of employment and livelihood. In fact, the vendors, masseurs, and prostitutes gained lofty income.

The Night Café also symbolised CDO as the “City in Blossom, in Bloom, and in Boom”. The activities and symbolism staged renewal of public space; however, they were solely intended for economic consumption. Thus, the renewal process utilised cultural references to forward economic interests.

The Night Café developed into contestation among the informal sector, residents, mayors, and the private business chamber. The informal sector fought tooth and nail to retain the Night Café after Mayor Moreno announced its demolition. The regular Night Café customers who are the residents held opposing views; they either supported retention or dismissal of the Night Café. The business circle of Oro Chamber influenced the decision of both mayors. In the early stage, Oro Chamber aided the Night Café to take advantage of the image of the city. In the later period, Oro Chamber withdrew its support because the Night Café resulted in mediocrity. Private business establishments were affected by traffic, pollution, and invasion by the vendors. In the end, the incumbent mayor decided to eliminate the Night Café, notwithstanding the retention of the masseurs who hold special consideration.

The closure of the Night Café did not produce empty spaces. On the contrary, the street children together with their homeless families continuously populate Divisoria. The CSWD hosts myriad of programmes to address the vicious cycle of homelessness, addiction, and illiteracy. OSCAR deals with strategic alternatives to alleviate abandoned and marginalised

children. Institutions such as Tahanan ng Kabataan (Home of the Youth), Mother Theresa, Boys Town Center, and Sagip Bata para sa Hapsay Dalan (Save Children for Orderly Streets) rehabilitate rescued street children and youth. Despite the multiplicity of government projects, the neglected minors visibly persist in the plazas. CSWD definitely necessitates the aid of agents outside of the government.

Empowered individuals like Jhon Magkilat, Kerneil Balaga, and Rhyan Casiño work along with novel social movements such as ROW and Dire Husi to take on proactive mobilisation against illiteracy and drug/solvent addiction. They exemplify the social agents who actively participate towards re-humanisation of street children and abandoned artists. Their selfless efforts gain recognition in the community. Kurfürst (2012) stresses “a better life for the community can only be reached through the participation of the individual. Therefore, different ideas of a better life need to be integrated into public spheres, and thus made public in order to be recognised” (p. 13).

ROW volunteers take on the role of street tutors; while Dire Husi partakes in the re-cultivation of indigenous arts and crafts. Thus, the movements implant culture over ignorance and violent tendencies (stemming from dependence on drugs and solvents). Their utilisation of the plazas as venues of alternative solution signifies urban culture of the youth in CDO. Zukin (1996) furnishes that, “Cities are identified with culture, moreover, because they so clearly mark a human-made sense of place and a human-size struggle with scale” (p. 264).

By synthesising the philosophies of Habermas, Lefebvre, and Touraine, this study elucidates that the core of perceived, lived, and conceived public spaces is the Subject. As soon as the Subject immerses himself/herself into social action, the rippling effects transcends in social space. The Subjects partaking in democratic process is an alternative step towards the mitigation of overlapping crises, which involve socio-ecological disaster, socio-economic contestation, and socio-cultural challenges.

Provided that public spaces simultaneously exhibit vibrancy and inherent democracy, the Subjects then utilise plazas as venues of social transformation. The environmental activists participate in urban resilience in the aftermath of Washi. The informal sector engaged in urban renewal that was conveyed by the Night Café. Street tutors and buskers strive to advance authentic urban culture among the marginalised youth. Altogether, the Subjects comprise the grassroots that initiate revitalisation of social spaces in the city. Touraine (2000) brings forth subjectivation as “an expression of the desire, both collective and personal, for historical action and the desire to reunify a lived experience that has been torn apart by the conflict between economic flows and cultural roots” (p. 148).

The Subjects are products of modernity and globalisation. Knowing that “the world of the economy, markets, and technologies is becoming divorced from the world of collective and individual identities” (Touraine, 2000, p. 46), the Subjects possess the will to turn around the global trend from a system based on economic domination to one based on social change. Social entrepreneurialism rather than global capitalism defines the *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld) of the Subjects.

Given that “today’s revival of social action is taking place at the grass-roots level” (Touraine, 2000, p. 301), the Subjects utilise modern technology as means to strategise innovative approaches in the city in political and cultural struggle. With this intention, the Subjects lead the revival of social action in urban public spaces with full cognisance that “within each city localised forms of urbanism evolve in combination and contrast to global urbanism” (Korff, 2018, p. 491).

Vibrant practices merit inclusivity where spaces are utilised not merely for economic consumption but more aimed at social reconfiguration (Douglas et al., 2002; Kurfürst, 2012, Lim, 2014). The tripartite plazas in CDO measure up to inclusive spaces despite catastrophe, criminality, destitution, and ignorance. The social Subjects of CDO navigate through the

transformative processes with fluid spatial perception given that their histories are rooted in aquatic practices. The overlapping crises may have left tribulation, but the Subjects paddle through with innovation, determination, and above all faith. On the whole, inclusive and vibrant public spaces endure in the everyday life of CDO.

The most compelling evidence of urban revival is the showcase of vibrancy and democracy. Consequently, the vibrant and democratic actions of the Subjects in public spaces allow for self-organisation. The prospect of grassroots organisation emerges so long as the interactive approach among citizens, government officials, and private sectors can lay the foundation for feasible cooperation. Korff (2018) determines the “idea of sustainability of active participation of citizens in urban development engenders social, economic, political as well as environmental urban structures, which control, develop, and innovate their own specific potential” (pp. 498-499).

With the intention to contribute to the idea of urban revival through cooperation with official administrators, I will recommend strategic methods for specific agents of the city government.

Firstly, CSWD may opt to cooperate with the voluntary street tutors and artists such as ROW or Dire Husi. CSWD can be aided by the civic movements in the rescue operation whereby benevolent persuasion is employed instead of compulsive arrest. The compassionate treatment by civic movements can persuade the street children to cooperate with the agents of CSWD and thereafter obediently choose to reside in the rehabilitation centres. Compulsory arrest criminalises the street children. CSWD can opt for a more humane treatment and therefore decriminalise the street children by closely working together with the civic movements.

Secondly, Mayor Moreno may opt *not* to relocate the vendors in Isla de Oro. The mayor should reconsider that the island sandbar is a no-build zone. The vendors can encounter deadly floods given that typhoons have increasingly worsened.

Lastly, Mrs. Escobar-San Juan who is the chief Local Economic and Investment Promotions Officer may opt to put significance on the contribution of the informal sector in urban planning.

The urban poor who primarily compose the informal sector should be included in the public consultation. Their existence, contribution, and desire should be recognised so that the urban plans can integrate and sustain spaces for their particular needs. Urban planning can be efficient if “societal interests can come together in constructive dialogues over spaces that ultimately must be shared” (Recio & Gomez, 2013, p. 177).

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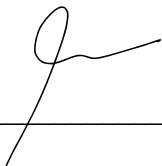
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