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EDITORIAL

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Editorial

Giving Due Importance to the Spatial Dimension in Governance

It is worth noting that in recent months, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines has introduced, wittingly or unwittingly, the geographical or spatial factor in her system of governance. For one, she has set-up a "Malacañang in the South," i.e., a branch office of the Chief Executive in Cebu City where she plans to hold office alternately with Manila. Her other "spatial" moves also include the transfer of the head offices of the Department of Tourism to Cebu City, the Department of Agrarian Reform to Iloilo City, the Department of Public Works and Highways to the Bicol Region, The Department of Transportation and Communications to Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga, and the Department of Agriculture to Davao City. While these decisions may be viewed as political "payments" to vested interests for helping her win during the previous election, there is no doubt that the innovative locational shift in decision-making has positive socioeconomic effects in terms of promoting decentralization and regional equity. The moves would devolve more power and spread more development impulses to the lagging regions of the Visayas and Mindanao which historically have been complaining about the impositions of "imperial" Metro Manila. Mindanao is a case in point of how a region has been exploited and siphoned off of its resources since the Spanish period by the primate city. A product of this age-old resentment is the continuing Muslim rebellion in Mindanao.

The unique moves of the Chief Executive has significant implications in Philippine socioeconomic development beyond one narrow target of her "ten-point legacy" program which involves "Decongestion of Metro Manila by forming new cores of government and housing centers in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao." The spatial administrative reorientation pointedly addresses the oft-repeated critique of geographers and urban and regional planners of the organization of the departments under the executive branch based on sectoral orientation. They say that the sectoral division of labor does not really hit the targets of poverty, unemployment and inequality alleviation. They posit that perhaps the nomenclature of the different departments should be place- or space-based. There is merit in this, considering that when one talks about the targets of development efforts he cannot help asking for the location of such targets. However, considering the problem of operationalizing this concept and the fact that it goes against the global practice of sectoral organization in the Cabinet, the next best thing that can be done

under the circumstances is what the President plans to do. People in Metro Manila afflicted with Michael Lipton's "urban bias" would, of course, raise howl against this. The loss of metropolitan dominance and the erosion of its centralizing power would be hard to accept. But there is a need for people to break away from their incrustations of bias, narrow-mindedness and selfishness if the country has to move on. Still, the manner by which these administrative locational transfers will be operationalized by the President and her advisers are being observed by students and observers of Philippine development. If effective and successful, it could serve as a new socioeconomic development model that involves a strong regional development approach.

Meliton B. Juanico

ICT and the Barangays: Two Case Studies in the Philippines

Ma. Divina Gracia Z. Roldan*

Introduction

In Asian developing countries like the Philippines, there have been government efforts to introduce ICT in business, education and governance. Recognizing the importance of ICT in the country's development, the Philippine government has undertaken steps to ensure that the country will be an active player in the field. The goal is to make the Philippines an e-services hub in the Asia Pacific region.

This paper illustrates a case study of two ICT initiatives in Cebu City, Philippines, which seek to bridge the domestic digital divide. While e-government initiatives are usually initiated by the Philippine national government, this case study was spearheaded by nongovernmental organizations and initiated from the community level. The *barangay*, being the basic political unit in the Philippines, is the target beneficiary of these NGO-led initiatives to ensure that the benefits of ICT reach the grassroots.

One such initiative is dubbed as the BarangayNet project, which involves government, private and NGO sectors with the view that ICT can help link local communities to the global economy and transform them into active participants in nation-building. Another is the setting up of a community information center by the World Corps Volunteers-Philippines in far-flung communities deprived of information and communication facilities. This is the first stage of setting up an e-government infrastructure in the municipalities and mountain barangays of Cebu, Philippines.

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In examining the requisites of making e-government work in the community, the paper shall tackle the factors that facilitate and impede these initiatives, particularly those concerning human and institutional infrastructures. This will lead to a discussion of who in the domestic digital divide are excluded, and what are the reasons for exclusion. While the computing and telecommunication infrastructures are essential to e-readiness in the community, some cultural factors that facilitate and restrain the implementation of ICT shall be discussed in the paper to shed light on the problems and opportunities inherent in introducing computer technologies into cultures with little previous experience of them. The paper also explores the use of cell phones in barangay work by soliciting ideas from selected barangay officials concerning cell phone and Internet use in relation to their work.

The importance given to ICT is linked to the notion that it “is an emerging means by which Filipinos can promote forms of advocacy and solidarity. Globalizing technologies like email and the World Wide Web need to be appropriated in local terms and ways for these local forms of utilization make IT a culturally enriching experience. IT has become more than just a convergence of electronic communication technologies... it facilitates a discourse of negotiated utilization, power, and consensus building among Filipinos (Sy, 2001:309).”

Additionally, “ICTs increase connectivity — across organizational boundaries and between governments and citizens”. It “is used to create a new delivery channel. As a result, citizens will be able to access government services from their homes or offices (e.g, they may be able to file income tax returns online or order government documents)... new infrastructure and databases might be used to create new forms of connectivity: to provide new information services, promote smart government and enhance public accountability... and to extend public space in ways that might promote consultation and dialogue and between citizens and their governments” (Lenihan, 2002:27).

It is argued that “the Internet thus could quickly become more than a tool for disseminating documents. It could become a venue for discussion, debate, and engagement -- an extension of democratic public space. Such a dialogue could be very inclusive. It is possible to hold comprehensive, ongoing consultations with a wide array of citizens and/or stakeholders on policy issues on the Internet (Lenihan, 2002:32).”

Aside from the Internet, cell phones, which “have become a major icon of Philippine life”, are “ultimate expressions of global modernity and complex connectivity” (Pertierra, 2002:150). Texting, specifically, “combines the immediacy, informality, and

affectivity of speech with the reflectiveness, control and anonymity of writing". While "it may transmit information but rarely deepens understanding", it has shown its political use in the case of EDSA 2 where people were mobilized to replace the graft-ridden Estrada administration.

The optimism on the political use of ICT tools, particularly the Internet, is tempered with the assertion that "after controlling for educational and political interest, there is little evidence of an effect of internet use on political knowledge". "Those who seek political information online are generally well-informed to begin with, politically oriented, and heavy users of media... the internet supplements and complements rather than replaces traditional sources of political information. [And] often the Web is a supplementary medium through which conventional news organizations distribute information available through other means" (Di Maggio, 2001:320).

ICT Indicators and Signs of Digital Divide

A look at some ICT indicators in Southeast Asia would show manifestations of the digital divide across countries in the region.

Table 1. Internet Users, Internet Rates, Telephone Lines and Total Estimated PCs in Selected Southeast Asian Countries.

Selected Countries in Southeast Asia	Internet Users ('000)	Internet Rate (US\$) 2001	Main Telephone Lines (per 1000 households)	Total Estimated PCs (per 1000 persons)
Indonesia	4400 (2002)	12	37	11
Malaysia	3700 (2000)	5	199	126
Philippines	2000 (2000)	24	40	22
Singapore	2260 (2002)	-	472	508

Source: ITU, World Telecommunication Development Report 2001 and Nua Internet Website

The table above shows that among the neighboring Southeast Asian countries, the Philippines registered the lowest number of internet users, the highest internet rate, and second to the last in the number of telephone lines and total estimated PCs. These figures suggest much-needed push in making ICT available to the populace.

In terms of Philippine data, it is estimated that to date, there are around 3.5 million Filipino Internet users, 50 Internet service providers and 1,500 Internet cafes in the Philippines (Toral, 2002). Around 400 Philippine websites with its own domain name exist and 90% of these websites are commercial web pages. Table 2 below shows the number of Internet users and Internet cafes in selected Philippine cities.

Table 2. Internet Users and Internet Cafes in Selected Cities

City	Internet Users	Internet Cafes
Baguio	30,000	50
Cagayan De Oro	20,000	50
Catanduanes	5,000	2
Cebu	250,000	400
Davao	70,000	180
Dumaguete	100,000	50
Iligan	10,000	20
Iloilo	15,000	200
Manila	1,000,000	300
Ozamiz	10,000	20
Tacloban	10,000	20
Zamboanga	10,000	20

Source: Toral, 2002.

Based on Digital Filipino figures on Internet usage in selected cities, Cebu ranks next to Manila, with the former having 250,000 Internet users while Manila has 1 million. Next to Cebu is Dumaguete having 100,000 Internet users. The rest, namely, Davao, Baguio, Cagayan De Oro, Catanduanes, Iloilo, Tacloban, Zamboanga, and others have an average number of 70,000 to 10,000 internet users.

It must be noted that ICT infrastructure is generally located in urban areas, which explains why ICT access is heavily concentrated on cities. Yet within the cities themselves, certain segments of the population such as children, women, and the elderly are still behind in terms of having access to and fully utilizing the benefits that ICT has to offer.

A number of initiatives have been introduced by the national government to develop the use of ICT in the areas of business, commerce, education, and governance.

Embodied in the Philippine Medium-Term Development Plan are policies to promote IT infrastructure development, electronic commerce, and electronic data interchange in public networks. The Government Information Systems Plan dubbed as the "Philippine Government On-Line Program" was later on adopted as a specific framework to make government more accessible in all levels through ICT. Together with the IT Action Agenda for the 21st Century (IT 21) prepared by the National Information Technology Council in 1997, the vision for the Philippines to become Asia's knowledge center was set.

These were reinforced with the enactment of the E-Commerce Law (Republic Act 8792) in June 2000, enabling government and the private sector to use electronic transactions in commercial and non-commercial activities. This law particularly mandates all government offices to accept electronic data messages and documents in their transactions within a two-year period from the effectivity of the act (Torralba, 2001).

Another major push for ICT in the Philippines was the creation of the Information Technology and E-Commerce Council (ITECC), a policy-making body headed by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to promote ICT in the Philippines. The ITECC is composed of 10 government-sector representatives from key departments involved in IT development, and eight private sector representatives. Five strategic committees are formed to tackle information infrastructure development, human resource development, legal and regulatory issues, business development, and e-government implementation (Escalante, Jr., n.d.).

Complementing the national e-government effort is the Electronic Governance for Local Government Units (eLIGU) project, spearheaded by the National Computer Center together with the Department of Science and Technology the ITECC that aims to enable municipal governments to adopt computerization for improved quality of public service. The components of the project are: (1) the conduct of a nationwide e-governance readiness survey; (2) establishing web presence for all 79 provinces, 110 cities, and 1,496 municipalities in the country; (3) developing open source, web- and GIS- enabled application systems supporting the LGUs' revenue collection; (4) creation of ICT data standards for LGUs to promote interoperability and interconnectivity among and across systems and databases in the government; (5) assistance in information systems strategic planning; and (6) increasing appreciation of ICT as a tool to enhance governance through advocacy.

While there are efforts to institute e-government on the national level, efforts are wanting in the barangays or local communities. This is where NGO-led community-based ICT initiatives such as the Barangay.Net and the Community Information Center projects come in.

Developing E-Barangays

The *barangay* is the Philippines' basic socio-political unit. Over time, its meaning has evolved from that of the longboats (*balangay*) used by early settlers in the archipelago to that of a geopolitical unit from the colonial times up to the present. With the entry of information technology, the emergent barangay is that which is an online community, transcultural, and extra geographic (Sy, 2001). For the barangay to evolve into a cyber or e-barangay, a look at two ICT initiatives in the local community level will be helpful. The first initiative – the Barangay.Net project – was piloted in a progressive, urban barangay – Barangay Lahug - in uptown Cebu City. The second initiative is the Community Information Center project piloted in Barangay Sudlon II which is a mountain barangay found in Cebu's watershed protected zone.

The Barangay.Net Project and Barangay Lahug

The Barangay.Net project was conceptualized with the aim of setting up telecenters in communities that would serve as a one-stop resource center for constituents to access barangay information and other subject-specific information such as health, education, agriculture, environment, and enterprise development, among others. The project was piloted in August 2002 in eight barangays in Cebu City, with Barangay Lahug as one of the first recipients.

The Barangay.Net group's vision is to be the prime catalyst to bridge the digital divide by providing ICT applications and services to the barangays to spur sustainable development. Its mission is to work towards creating a network of barangays maximizing the use and benefits of ICT to forge a mechanism for community development.

Pilot barangays were provided with a computer that is connected to the Internet and three software applications: the online barangay clearance system, the online business name information system, and the online real property tax information system. Technical assistance is also provided with the help of government and private sector partners in the project. The project's beneficiaries have expanded to the neighboring city of Mandaue, covering 27 barangays and the city of Escalante in the nearby island of Negros Occidental, covering 21 barangays.

In the case of Barangay Lahug, it was chosen to showcase the project having embarked on a computerization project in 2000, and given its active leadership and reputation for effectively managing community affairs. Barangay Lahug is in the north district of Cebu City and is considered as one of the progressive barangays in the city. Prior to its involvement in the Barangay.Net project, its computerization drive resulted in the setting up its own computerized barangay clearance system. It had acquired six computers through its own initiative having sought the help of the private sector and through its own allocation of internal revenue allotment funds.

On top of the barangay clearance system, other information systems that have been computerized are blotters and complaints, voters' list, business permits, residents' profile, and basic barangay information which can be accessed through their own website www.lahug.gov.ph. Having a local area network in place, information sharing can be done among barangay officials and personnel.

Barangay Lahug has coordinated with the Commission on Elections for barangay mapping in time for the national elections in 2004. This is to ensure efficiency in the conduct of elections through a computerized list of registered voters.

Among the benefits that are cited in computerization are easy access to records on complaints, hearing and amicable settlement of cases, and fast issuance of clearances, which also aid in securing peace and order in the community. The additional computer obtained through the Barangay.Net project is allowed for public use mostly by students and young professionals who do research, encoding, job search, and e-mailing for employment purposes.

The Community Information Center (CIC) and Barangay Sudlon II

The CIC was set up by World Corps-Philippines as a way of bringing ICT to far-flung communities to improve their socioeconomic conditions. World Corps-Philippines' mission is "to mobilize young people to become effective social entrepreneurs, community leaders, and global citizens." The organization focuses on access to information/internet resources and renewable energy. This is achieved by means of providing training to youth leaders in the community who become World Corps Professionals. ICT applications are introduced for e-governance, e-commerce, and e-communications in communities.

The first of the three CICs in the province of Cebu was piloted in Barangay Sudlon II, a mountain barangay of Cebu City. Sudlon II is located in Cebu's protected watershed area and is 36 kilometers away from the city capitol. It is the only barangay in the area with a means for communication (i.e., two telephones within a 15 kilometer radius). The main livelihood of the people in Sudlon II is farming. It is a producer of vegetables sold in the city proper.

The CIC is located temporarily in a one-story training hall owned by the Sudlon II Farmers Livelihood and Training Services (SUFALTRAS). The facility is located on top of a hill, which is about 2 kilometers away from the marketplace.

The project partners for Sudlon II are the Cebu Partners Committed to Environmental and Economic Management (Cebu PCEEM), the SUFALTRAS, Sudlon II Farmers Market Cooperative, the Sudlon II barangay council, CITE, Rotary Club of Cebu Capitol North, and the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company.

The CIC has a fax machine, four computer units, a printer, CD-ROMs, and other informational materials for its electronic library. The services available in the center are digital photography (for ID processing), document replication (photocopying), electronic library, desktop publishing, printing, scanning, CD burning, and communication (incoming and outgoing calls). Fees for these services allow the operations of the center to be self-sustaining.

Exploring Other Possibilities: Cell Phone Use and Barangay Work

As an alternative to the Internet, the cellphone can be another tool for barangays to facilitate service delivery. It can be especially useful to those which lack computer facilities but have access to cellphones and whose locations are within cell site reach. It can also supplement online communication or transactions for barangays with computer and Internet capability.

Since Barangay Lahug is located in the city and near existing cell sites, its officials are able to use the cellphone for work in the barangay. It is even used more often than the Internet. Calling by cellphone is preferred over texting because it achieves faster results despite the fact that texting is cheaper. Text messages are received from barangay residents regarding trouble in the sitio, garbage collection, job requests, and other complaints. While the cellphone is useful to communicate with co-workers and residents in the performance of their duties, the *pulong-pulong* (assembly or meeting) is still considered the best way to communicate compared to telephone use, posters, bulletin board, and texting.

For Sudlon II, majority of its officials do not use the cellphone because its location in the mountain area is out of cell site reach. Almost all of them, however, think that the cellphone is useful to communicate with workers and residents in the performance of their duties and prefer it to the Internet. Similar to officials in Lahug, the *pulong-pulong* is to them the best way to communicate with co-workers and residents in dealing with barangay matters.

Two other barangays (one urban, another rural) can also be cited as they underscore the significant use of cellphones in barangay communication and service delivery.

For Barangay Zapatera, an urban barangay belonging to the north district of Cebu City, the cellphone is an important communication link to its officials. Barangay chairperson Frank Benedicto introduced its use in barangay work when he assumed office in the mid-1990s. Around the barangay are signs informing the public that they can get in touch with the barangay office and chair through specific landline and cellphone numbers. Barangay Zapatera, although having computers, does not have an Internet connection and use them mainly for encoding purposes. Most officials do not use the Internet for barangay work. Instead, all officials use the cellphone for work, prefer texting, and receive messages from residents regarding complaints, suggestions, and tips on matters such as, uncollected garbage, unlighted lamp posts, and dubious persons in the community. Texting is believed to be the best way to communicate with barangay members.

Barangay Poblacion, for its part, a rural barangay that is another CIC site, is in the municipality of Sogod in the northern part of Cebu. It is located about 65 to 70 kilometers away from the city with hardly any access to ICT infrastructure. The barangay, however, is near a cell site, which can allow its officials to use the cellphone mainly to coordinate with co-workers. The cell phone is apparently used more often than the Internet. Texting is preferred over calls because it is cheaper. Nevertheless, the *pulong-pulong*, like in the two other barangays previously cited, is considered the best way to communicate with barangay members on important issues.

Cell phones help bridge the space between barangay residents and officials in urban and rural areas. There is potential in maximizing their use to address especially urgent needs of members in the community; more so in cases where the resident/sender prefers not to have face-to-face communication for safety reasons (e.g., in emergency situations, reporting dangerous people in the barangay). For rural, as well as, urban yet unconnected barangays, the cell phone offers possibilities for access to service and information. It is also more economical compared to computer installation in barangays. (Given the present government auditing system, restrictions are imposed on barangays in the use of their budget for

purchase of computers.) Cell phones, specifically texting, however, have limitations in the amount of information that can be sent. Moreover, its use for the delivery of service within the barangay depends on the available infrastructure/cell site in the area. Communities that are not within the infrastructure's coverage are certainly part of those digitally, as well as, "cellularly" excluded.

Assessment

The two separate initiatives complement each other in that the purpose essentially is to facilitate service delivery to the barangays through ICT. However, the differences lie in terms of the nature of barangays targeted as beneficiaries, the areas in which technology is most needed and the project approach in introducing ICT (see Table 3 below).

Table 3. Barangay Lahug and Barangay Sudlon II

Differences	Barangay Lahug (Barangay.Net)	Barangay Sudlon II (Computer Information Center)
Nature of barangay	* urban barangay	* rural mountain barangay
Usefulness of technology	* prior exposure to ICT	* no previous exposure to ICT
	* efficiency in records management	* for communication marketing of goods
Project approach	* 1st stage: provision of equipment	* 1st stage: training of community workers, needs assessment, community work
	* 2nd stage: monitoring, training, social preparation	* 2nd stage: provision of equipment

Barangay Lahug is an urban barangay with more resources and with prior experience with ICT. E-government software was already developed by the barangay even before its involvement in the project. Government participation in the project is also felt more because of the presence of its partners such as the city government, the Department of Science and Technology and the Office of the President in the Visayas. The project in itself is being considered by ITECC as a possible e-government model.

The usefulness of technology in Barangay Lahug is seen in the move by the barangay to manage its records efficiently, be it in the handling of cases or complaints, issuance of clearances, or registration for elections. The e-government applications are mainly for the use of officials and staff. Only a few residents use the Barangay.Net computer (averaging from 10-15 users a month). While this is supposed to be made available for public use, a few access it (usually students and young computer literate people seeking jobs) because of the following probable reasons: it is not widely known in the barangay that this service is offered to the public, there are still segments of the barangay population that are not knowledgeable in ICT, some households have their own PCs, and others can use computers in internet cafes that proliferate in the city.

In Barangay Sudlon II, on the other hand, technology is needed more for communication especially by farmers in selling their produce to buyers in the city; and for educational purposes especially among the students in the barangay. This is why the project proponent, World Corps – Philippines, through its needs assessment, endeavored to install first a public telephone in the CIC and to have incoming calls activated so that communication for livelihood purposes would be possible. There are more users of the facility in the CIC compared to that of Barangay.Net in Barangay Lahug probably because the center is the only place where computers are available for public use in the whole barangay, and there is generally a lack of PCs or Internet cafes in the area. The cheap rates in services offered are most welcome given the fact that income levels in Sudlon II are much lower compared to those in Barangay Lahug.

The approach of Barangay.Net is different from that of the World Corps-Philippines. The Barangay.Net provided equipment in the first stage of the project followed by monitoring of the use of the facility, training, and social preparation. The World Corps-Philippines, on the other hand, did social preparation work first and immersed itself in the community, training barangay volunteers; after which equipment needed by the community was installed.

The CIC approach seems more effective because the concern on sustainability is addressed. By enabling the center to have its own income-generating scheme through affordable fees for services offered, the operations of the center is ensured. Moreover, through community organizing previously done by the project proponent, the barangay officials, as well as the residents, found the introduction of the ICT through the center easily acceptable.

Push and Pull Factors

From these two experiences, the facilitative factors are:

- The involvement of NGOs together with other stakeholders, such as local organizations, cooperatives, and the barangay council;
- Support from local leaders and the community; and
- Espoused values in the barangays such as community empowerment, service, cooperation, and efficiency.

As seen in these two projects, the main institution that acts as a means for increasing awareness and facilitating e-governance are the project proponents belonging to the non-governmental, private sector. Their roles are important because they serve to bridge the gap in the community where national ICT initiatives fail to reach.

The restraining factors for these ICT initiatives are:

- The limited access to the facilities by some sectors in the community, namely, children, women, and the elderly because of lack of knowledge in ICT;
- Prevailing perception among the elderly that computers are more for the youth than for them and the elderly's resistance to learn new technology;
- Turfing, competition, and resistance to collaborate with project proponents by some local organizations.

Who Are Excluded? Who Are Included?

Despite the fact that ICT and e-government have been introduced nationwide, the digital divide still exists in the local level as seen in Sudlon II. In contrast to Barangay Lahug, which is located near the city government, Barangay Sudlon II, prior to the CIC project, had not been reached by ICT and e-government due to its geographical distance from the city center. Moreover, the inability of the barangay to adopt ICT on its own is also influenced by its lack of resources and poor economic status.

Because of the distance of Barangay Sudlon II from the city, they have been "excluded" from technological developments that could help them improve their livelihood. As a project beneficiary, instead of them going out, technology is now "brought in" to them, making them feel a part of the new economy.

The representative from Cebu PCEEM, a CIC project partner, noted the detrimental way of thinking by some organizations when a project is implemented – that it is “theirs” being the ones who initiated it. He said that this mode of thinking is not beneficial. In the case of the CIC project in Sudlon II, it is a cooperative effort by many shareholders, and so it should be viewed as “Ato ‘ni” (meaning it is “ours”). A sense of ownership is emphasized among the project partners and the community.

In Barangay.Net, the facility has to be made more accessible to the public. Officials and personnel mainly use e-government applications. Although it works well in the effort to provide more efficient service to the constituents, the e-government stage in which the barangay is in is still in “static information” and has not yet evolved into what Lenihan and Hanna (2002) refer to as “transactional services” in which an interactive mechanism is created so citizens are able to complete transactions online; nor is it in the final e-government stage of “online communities” where citizens can interact with their government officials online. More computers for public use and continuous training are needed in order to achieve the last stage of the continuum (having online communities), which is envisioned in the project.

ICT may be instrumental in bringing about a cosmopolitan orientation among barangays and may have an impact upon local identities by the broadening of awareness beyond geographic and cultural boundaries. Seeing information not only as a public resource but also as an extension of public space, identities beyond national borders to that of a larger world community are made possible. However, there seems to be hardly any evidence of growing cosmopolitan identities within the barangays examined since the level to which ICT is used remains focused on local community concerns. For example, the two ICT initiatives address basic and immediate local needs such as, providing basic communication, documentary services to the residents and developing information systems for real property taxation and residents’ ID. For a cosmopolitan identity to take place, it is necessary that ICT tools such as the Internet and the cell phone be used to produce a more engaged and interactive citizenry. Apparently, much is still to be done in order for this to be achieved.

Conclusion

The Barangay Net and CIC projects are still in their initial stages. While these projects are promising in addressing community needs and in bridging the domestic digital divide, they face the challenge of sustainability and making ICT benefits reach those who are left behind in the divide--children/out-of-school youth, women, and the elderly. The key success factors are institutional support from private sector, local government, and the community. Among the cultural factors that facilitate such ICT initiatives are openness to technology by the community leadership and the local populace (with the youth as change agents), as well as, the spirit of cooperation and service by project partners and the community. The factors in the cultural environment that may impede such initiatives are resistance to change and resistance to collaboration.

The role of social entrepreneurs such as the Barangay.Net Alliance, Inc. and World Corps-Philippines is important in introducing technology to barangays. While the digital divide is an important issue facing e-government, it is hoped that through such community-based initiatives, e-government services could be made available to citizens to promote equal opportunities.

Areas for future research include an analysis of the evolution of e-governance and prospects for e-democracy in the Philippines, perceptions of constituencies on the viability and effective use of cellphones in government affairs, and the creation of public space and cosmopolitan identities in local communities.



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Environmental Education for Peace, Justice and the Integrity of Creation

Glenn D. Abblitt*

Introduction

The recent terrorist attacks in New York, Kenya, Bali and the Philippines have unquestionably been horrific and require an urgent response. However, at the same time, the responses of the world's dominant leaders, particularly those in the First World, need to be considered and questioned on a number of levels. The brinkmanship and hegemony of these First World leaders ignores and conceals the root causes of the violence and also fails to acknowledge the devastation being caused to people and places, particularly in the developing world as a result of responding to violence with yet more violence.

Herein lies an essential role for education and for environmental education in particular, whose brief it is to respond to issues which threaten the welfare of the planet and all its inhabitants. A critical approach to environmental education would also lead to action to transform the world to one characterized by genuine justice and peace for all

Global Conflicts and the Environment

While global terrorism struck the First World on a large scale with the attack on the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001, terrorism is by no means a new phenomenon in the majority world. In Vietnam, the Persian Gulf Afghanistan and the Philippines, to name but a few, people and the environment have long been the victims of violence and terror carried out in the name of peace and democracy.

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The forgotten victims of these conflicts have been the farmers and indigenous people, the poorest of the poor whose voices have never been heard, and the non-human inhabitants of the deserts and forests in which these conflicts have been fought. Fighting these wars in the name of development, peace and democracy has concealed the underlying motivation of the aggressors, which has been to gain control of the world's dwindling finite resources including water, forests, food and oil. A recent article by Sandy Tolan in the Los Angeles Times claims that the US war on Iraq has less to do with weapons of mass destruction than it has with gaining control of the world's second largest reserves of oil. Australia, too, would benefit from access to cheaper oil and would then continue to be one of the world's major producers of greenhouse gases per capita. As for "weapons of mass destruction," let us not forget America's use of napalm and Agent Orange to destroy the rainforests of Vietnam, and the use of depleted uranium weaponry in Iraq during the Gulf War of the early 1990's.

Terrorism and the Environment in the Philippines

Since its initial colonization by Spain in the 16th century and subsequently by the US and Japan, the Philippines has been exploited for its abundant forest and ocean resources. This exploitation has been accompanied by an invasion of lands occupied by indigenous people throughout the country and the lands of Muslim populations in the southern Philippines. The colonizers have progressively attempted to replace the "primitive" agricultural practices of indigenous people with imported and unsustainable farming techniques. These invasions were, and are still being implemented with the use of terrorizing force, forcing the indigenous people to retreat to less accessible and more fragile areas of the country such as steep mountainsides where they continue their once sustainable farming methods.

Although the Americas formally granted the Philippines independence in 1946, the hegemonic influence of the Americans remains until this day with their military "exercises" and bases. Scientific reports in the Philippines suggest that toxic chemicals from US military bases in the Philippines are polluting groundwaters and various cancer, skin diseases and spontaneous abortions have been casually linked to the toxic legacy of the American bases. Recently, the American military forces have returned to conduct "exercises" in the Muslim autonomous region of the southern Philippines to eliminate the threat of "terrorism," reportedly emanating from that part of the country. It just so happens that the southern Philippines is resource-rich and is strategically located along the busy shipping lanes of the South China Sea and oil-rich Indonesia.

As in most developing countries, the Philippines has had development plans imposed upon it by global institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and by multinational corporations. In pursuit of industrialization to compete in a global market that discriminates against developing countries, the Philippines has built large-scale hydroelectric dams and has converted peasant farmlands into monoculture agri-businesses. Large acreages of farmland have been forcibly taken from peasant and indigenous farmers and cleared to make way for export-oriented crops. Farmlands are guarded by the private armies of rich landowners and by the national military forces. Indigenous people, fisher folk and farmers in the Philippines are being terrorized by these forces throughout the country, further pushing them to the periphery of society.

The agricultural policies of the Philippines are effectively taking food out of the mouths of women and children and have taken the country from being an exporter of rice to one that is now reliant upon imported rice. The government's incapacity to feed the people is causing untold health, environmental and economic consequences for the country.

In the Philippines, and in other developing countries where a nation's natural resources and cultural heritage have been appropriated and controlled by foreign interests, the protests of the people have often been met with state-sponsored violence and terrorism to silence them.

Sean McDonagh, a long-term Catholic missionary and environmentalist in the Philippines, states that any solution to the debt crisis demands drastic changes in the current international economic, social and political order and he calls for a sustained attack on the root causes of poverty.

How We Should Respond to Terrorism as Educators

According to Paolo Freire, in our vocation as educators, teachers should join with their students to reflect upon the underlying causes of the oppression of people and together with our students we should join the struggle for liberation and act upon and transform our world. In order to do this, teachers should be teaching knowledge for transformative action rather than transmitting knowledge uncritically and telling stories that are detached from the reality of students. In this form of libertarian education, both students and teachers are simultaneously teachers and students. Freire stressed that we cannot wait for this type of education; we have to work at it in communion with each other as co-authors of action and with faith in our power to change the world out of a profound love for the world.

Taking Action: Environmental Education in the Philippines

During her work as a rural missionary in the Philippines, the late Sr Nanette Berentsen firmly believed that one needs to become active and search for the place to make a stand in community with others to empower them to realize the cause of their oppression and to change the structures that oppress. According to the Centre for Environmental Concerns in the Philippines, grassroots education is liberatory, community-based and proactive to empower oppression that they have been subjected to for centuries. An important element of grassroots environmental education is the researching of indigenous knowledge systems to find alternative ways of looking at and dealing with the problem of resource depletion and environmental conflicts.

Environmental Education for Australia

For environmental education to be closer to John Fien's concept of critical education for the environment which includes five essential elements including the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, understandings, attitudes and skills of political literacy and critical praxis, students must be empowered to become active and responsible members of society. This necessitates the establishment of more democratic roles in the classroom as advocated by Freire and the establishment of a new curriculum that is negotiated with students to enable them to work on socially useful projects which are relevant to them. The goals of environmental education are contained in UNESCO's Tblisi Declaration of 1977:

1. to foster clear awareness of, and concern about, economic, social, political, and ecological interdependence in urban and rural areas;
2. to provide every person with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment, and skills needed to protect and improve the environment; and
3. to create new patterns of behavior of individuals, groups, and society as a whole towards the environment.

Within such an environmental education program, students need to be informed of the connections between environmental degradation, human welfare and terrorism. According to Freire, the more they are challenged in this way, the more students will feel obliged to respond because they will see the challenge as interrelated to other problems within a total context that is relevant to them and gradually they will become committed to be in solidarity with the world to transform it – a world characterized by genuine peace and justice for all.



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EDSA as Public Space in the Local Urban Setting

Brenda C. Barrientos*

Introduction

Urban literature regarding public space shows evidence that there are inconsistencies and differences in the definition of public space. Consequently, there are also divergent theories as to how significant is the role public spaces play in the social processes of cities.

Public space is defined as the material space reserved for the use everyone in society. Access to it must be free and unrestricted. However, as what has been mentioned earlier, there are a variety of definitions of public spaces. The difference may be found in the manner of utilization of public spaces, designation of public spaces, and even in whom legitimate rights regarding public spaces reside.

In the article entitled "The End of Public Space?" by Don Mitchell (1995), two definitions of public spaces are provided. There are two definitions precisely because he was dealing with two sectors that use public space. As Mitchell (1995) says:

Activists and the homeless people who have used the park promoted a vision of a space marked by free interaction and the absence of coercion by powerful institutions. For them, public space was an unconstrained space within which political movements can organize and expand into wider arenas. The visions of representatives of the

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University (not to mention planners in many cities) were quite different. There was one of open space for recreation and entertainment, subject to usage by an appropriate public that is allowed in. Public space thus constituted a controlled and orderly retreat where a properly behaved public might experience the spectacle of the city.

The distinction between these two visions may be related to what Lefebvre called representational space and spaces of representation (Mitchell, 1995: 108-133). Public spaces may have emerged initially as either representational space or spaces of representation. Representational space is the appropriated and lived space whereas spaces of representation are the planned, controlled and ordered space (Lefebvre, 1991). Activists and the marginalized groups regard public spaces as representational space. For them, public space is seen as venues for social exchange, venues for expression of protests and grievances, and as important means of communication with all sectors and citizens. The government, urban planners and architects perceive public space as spaces of representation. Therefore, they seek to impose rules, regulations and actions that aim to promote order.

“Yet public spaces are also, and very importantly, spaces of representation. That is, public space is a place within which a political movement can stake out the spaces that allow it to be seen and in public spaces within which political organizations can represent themselves to a larger population. By claiming space in public, by creating public spaces, social groups themselves become public (Mitchell, 1995:108-133).

Public spaces are absolutely essential in the functioning of democratic politics (Fraser, 1990:59 -79). The need to express grievances, that are expressed through protests and other expressions of grievances are all held in public spaces. Thus, the activist's political movements and other means of expressions that address all sectors of society are all held in public space. This is a characteristic of all democratic societies.

It is important to distinguish public sphere from public spaces. Habermas and Arendt have opposing views about public space. To Habermas, public sphere is “the universal, abstract realm in which democracy occurs”. By this definition of public sphere, all sorts of communication - radio, television, telecommunications and the Internet - are definitely public spheres. This implies that the public sphere is growing at a very rapid rate and that public sphere is immaterial. Arendt, however, argues that public spaces are material. According to him, a public space, “constitutes an actual site, a place, a ground within and from which political activity flows” (Fraser, 1990:56-79).

There are, however, different and opposing views about the growing significance, or insignificance, of public spaces in society. Goheen has pointed out these opposing views in his article entitled, "Public Space and the Geography of the Modern City." According to Richard Sennet, public spaces have lost their significance in the social processes in the urban city. This is because the interest of the citizenry in public spaces has diminished as it has withdrawn from active participation in debates on public issues. Sharon Zukin and Philip Ethington, however, maintain that public spaces are the preferred arena where groups of every description can achieve public visibility, seek recognition and make demands. Goheen concluded that, "The will to command public urban spaces expresses the desire of many urban groups and institutions to be acknowledged, to convey messages forcefully, and promote the legitimacy of one's cause. "The range of such expression is great and the contest for visibility and influence is lively (Goheen, 1998:479-495)." There is a need to define public spaces in the local level because the need and use of public spaces is culture-specific.

This paper examines whether or not these opposing views do apply in Philippine society using the EDSA Shrine as the study area. There has been minimal literature that deals with public spaces and their significance in Philippine society, considering that Filipinos are actually keen observers of the democratic process. A definition of public spaces in the Philippine context will also be given.

The Attributes of EDSA.

EDSA, or Epifanio Delos Santos Avenue, is the 30-km stretch that connects the cities of Pasay, Makati, Mandaluyong, Quezon and Caloocan. It was concretized during the American Period, and it was known then as Highway 54. Later, it was renamed Epifanio De los Santos Avenue in honor of a famous Filipino historian. EDSA, as a public space, has been considered the stronghold of democracy because it has been the stage of three "revolutions" that changed the path of Philippine history. In fact, EDSA no longer solely pertains to that long and wide stretch of road. EDSA has earned a temporal significance. In history books, EDSA refers to the events that changed the path of the Filipino nation. EDSA has been the stage where massive protests were held that demanded the resignation of two presidents - Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 and Joseph Estrada in 2001.

EDSA I

EDSA 1, the People Power Revolution, happened in February 21-25, 1986. This event successfully ousted the former dictator Ferdinand Marcos. It was the very first time that EDSA became known as a stage to express political views. It must be noted that at that point, the Marcos dictatorship was already in peril. This was because of the growing anger of the Filipinos resulting from events such as the death of Ninoy Aquino who was Marcos' rival, the growing Communist insurgency, and the country's economic decline. Added to these grievances is the abusive exercise by the military of its power. Two of the high-ranking military officials - Juan Ponce Enrile and Fidel Ramos quit their posts as Minister of National Defense and Armed Forces Chief of Staff, respectively. In front of international and local media, they announced that Marcos abused his powers to win the votes over Cory Aquino in the Snap Election. Rumors had it that the two wanted to earn the sympathy of the citizens, especially since their planned coup d'état had been discovered. The only military support they had was RAM (Reformed the Armed Forces Movement), which could have been surely be crushed once the Marcos troops started to move on them. They needed all the help they could get especially from the people. At 9:00 PM, February 22, 1986, Cardinal Sin, through the church-administered radio station Radio Veritas, called on all Filipinos to support Juan Ponce Enrile and Fidel Ramos who stayed in their respective offices in Camp Aguinaldo and Camp Crame. The people became watchful, not really sure what was happening. Later, at 10:30PM, Marcos appeared at Channel 4, the government-managed station and announced that they had discovered the assassination plot against him and Mrs. Marcos. To prove it, he even called on to testify a former RAM member. He warned Enrile and Ramos that heavy artillery and tanks already surrounded Camp Aguinaldo. The civilians, however, did not buy Marcos' story. Initially, there was a thin crowd at the main gate of Camp Crame and Camp Aguinaldo composed of loyalists of the two military men. But slowly, the crowd got bigger; people from all walks of life came from different directions. The crowd was composed of priests and nuns, anti-Marcos groups, old people, students, housewives, vendors, etc. Most of them were chanting "Cory, Cory, Cory!" Mrs. Aquino, however, at that time was still in Cebu, campaigning for civil disobedience. By midnight, there were approximately 100,000 people in the crowd. This crowd became a human shield that thwarted the movement of military men and their war tanks sent by Malacañang Palace to seize the group. The events that followed were truly unexpected. Radio Veritas delivered news and continued to invite people to join the crowd. Malacañang ordered the deployment of military forces to stop their broadcast, but those ordered paid no heed. The Philippines became the center of news around the world. There was even greater pressure from the United States on Marcos to give up in order to stabilize the situation.

The highest point of the revolution was when the people came face to face with the war tanks and armed military men. At 2:15 PM of the next day, the 1st Military Provisional Division headed by Gen. Tadiar was deployed from the southern portion of Manila to seize Camp Crame and Camp Aguinaldo. These Marines were instructed to disperse the people that defended the two generals and to confront Enrile and Ramos. EDSA corner Ortigas was the site of this direct confrontation between civilians and the Tadiar group. At almost 3:00 PM, these armed Marines in trucks and tanks met the crowd, which has reached about 500,000. The tanks could not push north any further because the people, despite being unarmed, were standing in their way, hand in hand. The Marines could go no further because the human shield that blocked their way did not budge from their position. With nuns and women on the first row, the people prayed and convinced Tadiar and his men to stop the operations. Finally, after much exercise of diplomacy, the Tadiar group was stopped. It was at this point that the power of the people showed itself to be stronger than the power of the armed military.

It was as if a miracle had happened when prayers and bare hands became more powerful than artillery and tanks. Because the military force seemed to weaken in front of all the civilians gathered in EDSA and due to continuing supportive efforts from both local and international media and other concerned groups, the Marcos Presidency was ousted. Hence, the event since then has been known as the People Power Revolution.

The EDSA Shrine

After the revolution, there was a great effort from the Church to build a shrine to commemorate the event. An inscription on the shrine reads (Villegas, 1999:13):

“... EDSA Shrine is the keeper of the Peaceful People Power Revolution story with its central plot of Filipino faith and heroism. The EDSA Shrine is a constant reminder of the goodness of God and the gratitude of his children.”

EDSA shrine was built on the historic intersection of EDSA and Ortigas Avenue. The Shrine was built through the efforts of Catholic devotees and financed through donations for the Catholic Church. The Shrine is very much tied with people power and is actually a private property of the Archdiocese of Manila. In addition to this, the Power Monument was also built along EDSA near the main gate of Camp Crame.

EDSA II

EDSA 2 or People Power 2 in January 2001 ousted Joseph Ejercito Estrada from Malacañang Palace. Before the end of year 2000, there were accusations of graft and corruption against Estrada. There were strong evidences proving his participation in criminal acts of graft and corruption and money laundering. As the year neared its end, a case had been filed against the President. Estrada became the first President in Philippine history to face impeachment charges. The Filipinos were once again stuck to their TV sets every afternoon, watching the trial in the Senate with the Senators doing cross-examination on witnesses regarding the alleged Jose Velarde account. The trial focused on the alleged millions of pesos deposited owned by Estrada in different banks. According to witnesses called to testify, Estrada used different names to conceal his accounts, which actually came from kickbacks from *jueteng* operations in different regions. The prosecutors and witnesses spoke of an envelope that contained relevant information about these accounts and the identity of Jose Velarde. After much argumentation between the administration and opposition senators, a decision was made to vote on whether or not to open the controversial envelope. The result shocked and disappointed many spectators since the opposition senators lost by one vote. Administration senators prevailed to keep the envelope closed. In effect, the trial lost focus because the sealed envelope, according to the prosecutors, contained the information needed to reveal Estrada's accounts. The result truly angered many civilians. They argued that the Filipinos were insulted by the actions of the senators to cover up the truth in the Jose Velarde case.

At this point, Cardinal Sin once again called on the citizens to assemble at EDSA Shrine and demand the resignation of the President. However, unlike the first People Power, the invitation did not really come solely from the Church. Civil society also had much to do with the success of the event. Political analysts also cited the power of texting in cellular phones as a means of communication and invitation to join the crowd in EDSA. According to Nuñez (2001:47):

“Overnight, people started walking toward EDSA Shrine to continue their struggle against the Estrada government. By mid-morning of January 20, 2001, Edsa Dos has grown to an angry throng of more than a million.”

The crowd was made up of different activist groups, youth organizations, Church leaders and members, and even movie stars. Once again, EDSA corner Ortigas was packed with people. This time, however, it was not to serve as human barricade to

thwart military forces. The gathering at EDSA Shrine and EDSA Monument was held to achieve one goal: to remove the incumbent President from his position, because he was corrupt and immoral. The People Power lasted for four days.

By January 21, 2001, the Philippines had its 14th president in Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. She had been sworn to her office in front of the crowd in EDSA Shrine. That event in EDSA Shrine marked another milestone in Philippine history.

EDSA 3

On April 25, 2001, hundreds of supporters of the ousted President converged at EDSA Shrine to protest the alleged illegal installation of Macapagal-Arroyo as President and to bring Estrada back to power. The crowd was mainly from the lower class that called themselves Erap loyalists. Among those present were senatorial candidates Miriam Santiago, Juan Ponce Enrile, Panfilo Lacson and Gregorio Honasan who spoke to the crowd and encouraged the protest. As Nuñez (2001:79) observed:

“The true test of the legitimacy and stability of the Arroyo administration was the EDSA 3, which turned out to be violent, as supporters of the ousted President Estrada tried to grab power from the present government in a desperate attempt to bring Estrada back in power”

The protestors enjoyed 24-hour coverage from Net25 TV Station and dzEC radio station. However, most media men did not cover the event with the same interest as they did with previous “people powers.” Even Msgr. Socrates Villegas, rector of EDSA Shrine, expressed his concern over the growing misbehavior of EDSA 3 protestors. He recounted things that the protestors did in one of his sermons in Quezon City. According to him, the protestors heaped mounds of garbage, sang and danced lustfully over the EDSA shrine marker, rammed a truck into the landscaping, and directed huge loudspeakers to the shrine door. The church leader said that these were acts of profanity and definitely illegal, since EDSA Shrine is not a public property. The Archdiocese of Manila owns the shrine, and the angry protestors must respect the rules imposed by the Church regarding the usage of the shrine. The protestors in EDSA 3 later marched toward Malacañang with the objective of ousting the newly positioned President Arroyo. However, the angry protestors encountered SWAT and military forces while on the way to the palace.

EDSA 3 lasted for five days, after negotiations between the government representatives and organizers of the event were held. Most people, until now, question whether this event in EDSA deserved to be called EDSA 3. However, the protestors proved the significance of the avenue as a means of social expression.

EDSA Celebrations

After these events that shaped EDSA's path as a public symbol, the avenue has gained a status as the stronghold of democratic actions. Nowadays, people think of "people power" or "revolution" when EDSA is mentioned. The shrine has attained significance because the assemblies were held there, through the efforts of the Church and the government. EDSA has long been considered to be the turf of democracy-loving individuals and groups.

However, recent attempts to use the EDSA Shrine as a venue for political movements were thwarted by the Church and the administration. After the shocking event EDSA 3, the EDSA Shrine was off limits to demonstrators. Civil society sectors, including Anakbayan, Bayan Muna, and other allied groups, which were then present in EDSA Dos, were absent and seem to be unsatisfied with the current administration.

The anniversary rites commemorating the first anniversary of EDSA 2 saw the absence of the parties who were active during the previous year's ouster. The celebration got off to a bad start as thousands of policemen and soldiers barred members of militant and civil society groups from entering the Edsa Shrine. In last year's celebration, the civil society groups had called for the ouster of Erap; however, they were not really in support of the Arroyo replacement. These groups included Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, Kilusang Mayo Uno and Bayan Muna. These groups are multi-sectoral parties that push for better governance and who are also keen observers of the action of the President and her administration. Another sector, apart from this group is SANLAKAS, which had opted to conduct their celebration on the People Power Monument just a few meters from the shrine. These groups carried banners and placards to urge change in Arroyo's system of governance and to express the discontent they feel against the current administration.

The protestors were not let through to join the mass celebration at the EDSA Shrine. According to the police, they were given orders not to let them through if they did not carry a permit. Another reason they cited is that the Church no longer wanted their property to be used for political purposes. The conventional means of celebration, as suggested by the Church, include a solemn mass in commemoration of People Power.

The government and Church encouraged people to respond to the open invitation of these events.

The same thing happened in the 16th anniversary celebration of EDSA I. The Church urged that they resist letting different sectors use the shrine for their political motives. The celebration was marked by solemn masses attended by few civilians. However, the famous personalities of EDSA - Cory Aquino, Fidel Ramos, etc.--were always present.

On January 20, 2003, as Cardinal Sin celebrated a commemorative mass to celebrate the second people power. Some 500 anti-riot police and at least 1,000 protesters from Bagong Alyansang Makabayan and other militant groups clashed some meters before they could reach the shrine. Protestors were told that if they had no permit to go to the shrine, they would not be let through. The group, however, insisted, that they were responding to the open invitation by Msgr. Villegas. They were dispersed using high-pressured water cannons. Sanlakas and its allied parties, realizing that they were not welcome in the EDSA celebrations, staged their commemoration rites at the Chino Roces Bridge, formerly Mendiola Street.

Militant groups boycotted the EDSA I celebrations on February 26, 2003, saying they were fed up with being pushed away from the shrine, which was the center of celebration. According to them, the deployment of military and anti-riot police around the shrine is an insult to those who fought for democracy during the Marcos regime. Indeed, the Church was very vocal about their decision never to let any groups use EDSA Shrine and once again cause it to be politicized. The government, too, seemed to be determined in keeping the solemn spirit at EDSA by deploying a very intimidating police force in full gear during political movements and protests, and in issuing the dreaded "no permit no rally" policy. According to militant groups, the Arroyo administration's tight policies against political movements are reminiscent of the Marcos dictatorship.

Graffiti and MMDA ART

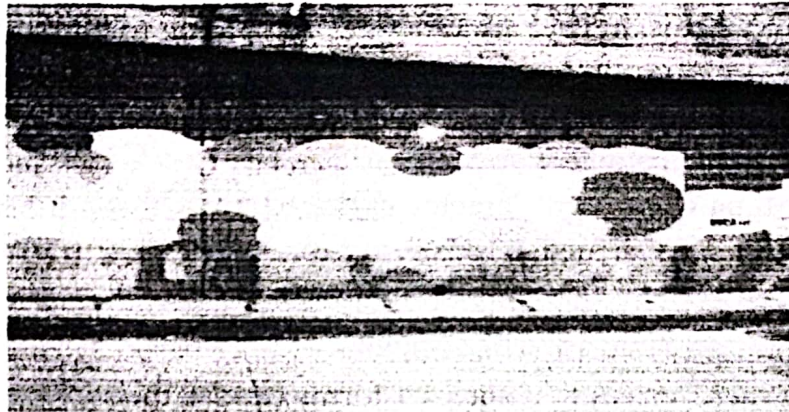
These events are not the only evidences of the clashing use of public spaces by different sectors. Even the walls along EDSA are used as venues to communicate and express strong political ideologies. The walls are important features of the social urban landscape of the nation. Walls and other highly visible surfaces are part of the public spaces that different sectors use for expression. Relative to other places like the New York Subway or Philadelphia, the graffiti in EDSA is not really that rampant. However, it is still worthy of interest and discussion. According to the Dictionary of Art (1996: 269),

Graffiti is the term applied to an arrangement of institutionally illicit marks in which there has been an attempt to establish some sort of coherent composition. An individual or individuals (not generally professional artists) make such marks on a wall or other surface that is usually visually accessible to the public. Graffiti are recognized as a way of dealing with problems of identification in overcrowded, self-denying environments, and are an outlet through which people may choose to publish their thoughts, philosophies or poem. As illegitimate counterparts to the paid, legitimate advertisements of billboards or signs, graffiti utilizes the walls of garages, public toilets and jail cells for their clandestine messages.

These walls are an alternative media of expression for activist groups like Anak ng Bayan, Bayan Muna, Sanlakas etc. Graffiti seems to be a part of the activists' ritual of expression. Using spray cans or red cement they put their chants into writing: "Oust Erap!" "Gloria, Tuta ng Kano!" "Down with Globalization!" Their grievances are written as graffiti on the highly visible walls along the avenue. Wilson Fortaleza of Sanlakas pointed out that graffiti is a cheaper medium of expression. According to him, had the marginalized groups been given enough financial capabilities, the walls would have been left untouched.

In this case, the government, through the project called "MMDA Art" is able to counteract graffiti in the metropolis. According to General Manager Robert Nacianceno, MMDA Art is a beautification project that aims to clean up the graffiti writings through an ensemble of simplified geometric figures using neon-colored paints. He pointed out that MMDA Art not only covers the activists' graffiti, but it also deliberately erases all sorts of vandalism created by gangs and other individuals whose aim is just to vandalize public areas. The project started in January 2003. The MMDA chooses painters from the roster of public aides, and in groups together with the cleaning and beautification unit of MMDA, they traverse the metropolis looking for vandalism. Even the colors used to cover up the writings are strategically chosen. Neon colors like peach, tangerine, avocado, aqua and pink are striking (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. MMDA Art at EDSA, Quezon Avenue Flyover

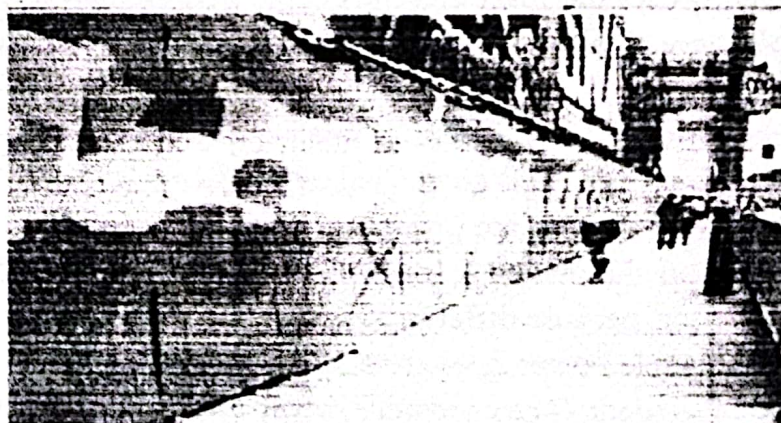


Source: Author

Art critics refuse to brand the ensemble of colors that MMDA painters call MMDA Art as art. The MMDA Art is comparable to abstract creations by painters. Some find it intriguing and look some more, hoping to see the hidden message. However, MMDA Chairman Bayani Fernando told reporters that MMDA Art

“... is our own way of appealing to people to stop vandalizing the walls, without being confrontational. If you can't tell them to stop painting on the wall, then humor them. It's our way own way of saying, “magsusulat ka rin lang ng graffiti at dudumihan and pader, gandahan mo na (2003:21).”

Figure 2. MMDA Art along EDSA, Cubao.



Source: Author

There are different views regarding the use of MMDA Art. Some conclude that they constitute an effective means to beautify the metropolis. GM Nacenciano argues that MMDA Art is, in its own right, art. According to him, the interplay of colors and shapes signifies harmony in the ensemble. However, radical views see MMDA Art as another means through which the government suppresses people's right to expression in public spaces. Anakbayan Secretary General Eleanor de Guzman and Bayan Muna Campaign Director criticized MMDA because it has deliberately distorted the meaning of art, which is to express. According to Ito (2003:4),

Metropolis as a site of struggles, subservience harbors many tales. It is within these spaces that such art forms expose their leanings: to uphold the interests of those who prioritize beautification in the face of grimmer persistence of maldevelopment, of those who would rather stare at pretty pictures than read the harsh writings on the wall. In the suppression of avenues of clamor, the time may come when it might take more than just paint to quell the rage of a people stifled.

However harsh though the comments may be regarding the quality of MMDA Art, its legitimacy as a beautification scheme could not be questioned.

Conclusion

Public spaces, in the Philippine context, are material spaces that serve as media of self-expression and as venues of social processes. They can originally be created as representational space or spaces of representations, but the creation of such spaces depends largely on the present condition and utilization of different sectors. The group that currently uses the space and the people who actually use it at this given time are the ones who give significance to the place and make it a public symbol.

This is true for the EDSA Shrine. It was initially created as spaces of representation, because it was planned and controlled by the Church. The Church and the government maintain that it is private property, hence, utilizing it requires a certain bond between the user and the owner. However, in the long run, the Shrine has become representational space, because different sectors have appropriated it for their own use. A case in point is People Power 2, wherein civil society groups had been present at the shrine to oust the President. Their presence, which contributed to the ouster of Estrada, gave civil society the privilege to utilize the Shrine any way they like, feeling that it is no longer a sole Church property, but also that of the whole community. Thus, when a policy like the "no permit, no rally" is issued the activists feel that their right to use that

space, which they regard as public, is violated. MMDA Art, as a beautification project, is thought of as another means of control by the government. According to them, these visible walls must be controlled and protected. However, militant groups see it differently. The usage of these walls is part of their democratic rights and that these walls provide the media for communicating their message to the government and the citizens. This implies that the theory that says "the need and use of public spaces is culture-specific" applies in the local setting.

The opposing view about the meaningfulness of public spaces appears to hold true in the local setting. Although the Philippines is a democratic country, Sennett's view that public spaces are getting less and less significant in the social processes is quite true. This is because more and more people are actually losing interest in political and social issues. However, it must be noted that there is still a strong predisposition on the part of civil society to utilize public spaces for communication with the local audience through political marches and mobilizations and, to a certain extent, graffiti writing. Goheen's view that struggle exists in the use and control of public spaces is also true in the local setting. Two of the key players that prove the existence of this struggle are the activists and the government. Both seek to use public space for their own good. The activists' view is that the spaces are perfect venues for communication to the masses and the expression of grievances against the ruling class. The government's view is that the spaces must be controlled and regulated for the betterment of the greater majority.



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Book Reviews

Global Cities: Post-Imperialism and The Internationalization of London

Anthony D. King. London: Routledge, 1990

Discussions on global cities form part of the geographers' continuing "love affair" and fascination with the dynamism of urban places. This interest dates as far back as the Greek period with scholarly efforts to systematically understand the progression of human settlements by classifying and categorizing cities according to different sizes, forms, functions, hierarchy and maturity. This same interest paved the way for the conduct of significant studies, the most notable of which were those of Constantine Doxiadis, whose book *Ekistics* remains a significant body of knowledge on settlement formation. This global city is equivalent to the ecumenopolis in Doxiadis' work, the most complex and most modern phase in the evolution of human settlements. The book similarly sees global cities as products of the continuing evolution and expansion of the world's key cities as compelled by their increasing role in today's globalizing capitalist community.

The Global City

A global city, according to King, is an urban mammoth whose influence encompasses not just a country or a region but a global sphere or network of nations, companies and institutions. King says that the emergence of world cities can be explained by three important global phenomena, namely: (1) the massive increase in the industrialization of capital over the last two decades; (2) the surfacing of three principal groups of global capitalist actors: the multinational corporations, international banks and outward-looking state governments; and lastly, (3) the internationalization of production, finance, administration and control of key economic units which requires strategically located headquarters for its coordinated base operations. Not only have companies been internationalized, but even states have increasingly become internationalized alongside the rise of powerful regional economic blocks like NAFTA, ASEAN, OIC and international organizations such as NATO, IMF, World Bank and the United Nations. All these developments have been associated with the growth of the international service economy that led to the emergence of global cities. To date, New York, London, and Tokyo are the three real global

cities, each with its own spheres of influence and each with its own share of economic and political command.

From Colonial to Global

The book tries to chart the transformation of London from an imperial colonial capital in the 19th century to a major global city today. History is witness to the meteoric rise and the dramatic fall of virtually all powerful cities, nations and empires. London, however, remains consistently firm and powerful in today's uncertain geopolitical and economic landscape. As the apex of world power shifted several times over geographically and economically, the book asks the question: What accounts for London's seemingly smooth, steady and continued prominence at the top of both the old and the new world order?

According to King, London's rise to a global city is smooth, steady and natural for it is simply a functional continuance of London's role at the forefront of world colonial efforts and the seat of what was once the biggest empire on Earth. Unlike New York and Tokyo, the emergence of London as a global city can be traced as far back as colonial times when London in the early 19th century was the biggest, richest and most powerful city in the whole world. By then, London's economic and political clout is so immense that it literally became the center of the Earth, exercising its muscle in territories spanning five continents and virtually all time zones.

The emergence of colonial cities under the British empire such as Hong Kong, New Delhi, Calcutta, Johannesburg, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore have contributed to London's meteoric rise to the top of the global web of cities. These cities form an extensive network that supplies London (the colonial capital) its raw materials, energy, ideas, people, services and opportunities in the process creating a megacity unparalleled in its era. Although the British network is not as strong now as it was then, it is still there. The influence of London in these cities takes on its neocolonial form with the presence of British multinational companies, banks, facilities, treaties, cultural influences, etc. This explains why London continues to enjoy the opportunities that other emerging world cities will find difficult to achieve. This also explains why London at present is a global city rivaling New York and Tokyo.

Glossing Over Neocolonialism

The book is very interesting as it builds on earlier studies and sustains the need to understand the various socio-spatial changes and societal implications of the growth and emergence of world cities. It explains London's rise to global city status and differentiates its experience with that of New York and Tokyo. The book was written in a general tone of celebration over the newfound glory and prestige of these best of world cities, particularly London. What is implied but not well-discussed in the book are the neocolonial underpinnings of the concept of global cities. The book fails to openly discuss the idea that the emergence of these global cities represents a modern form of colonial arrangement that powerful countries surreptitiously impose on poorer, peripheral nations. By discussing London's transition from a colonial to a global city, the book attempts to veer away from the colonial and neocolonial fabric of the issue and lopsidedly revels instead in what is considered as one of humanity's biggest achievement - the global city. And as we blindly celebrate the triumph of the capitalist and democratic ideals of universal equality and freedom, the analysis is highly contradictory and conceals the truth that the political and economic exploitation of poorer countries by richer ones continue up to this very day.

Mariño Deocariza

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