



PAK Publishing Group
Growing Knowledge for Future

Proceedings Book of ICETSR, 2014, Malaysia
Handbook on the Emerging Trends in Scientific Research
ISBN: 978-969-9347-16-0

Hollowed Out or Brimming Over? :Associational Life in the Privatized Public Spaces of Manila Shopping Malls

Rowena Capulong Reyes
Colegio de San Juan de Letran

Abstract

Background: Scholars of critical tradition argue that the spatial regulations of contemporary privatized public spaces like the modern shopping malls strips the “social” out of human interactions by denying their users bases for socialization. Such pessimistic proposition has found empirical validity in numerous parts of the developed world. Although studies inquiring whether the same outcome occurs as well in developing countries remain scant, some experiences in the Philippines indicate the possibility of an active associational life inside the highly regulated spaces of the private shopping mall.

Objective: This study intends to look into the condition under which spatial governmentality facilitates social interaction.

Method: Using case study method, it examines the spatial experiences of mall users in three shopping malls in the city of Manila.

Findings: Verbal and observational data point out that purposive mall users can evade the disciplinary, deterrence, and exclusionary techniques of the shopping mall and thus pursue their own social activities and interests in the presence of facilitating persons, locales and occasions.

Lessons Learned: The cases involved in this study reveal that, at least in the context of the Philippines, spatial regulations do not universally and consistently eventuate in some lamentable outcome but rather, when conditions permit, result in a more empowering and interactive spatial condition. The findings therefore lend empirical credence to the assumptions of some scholars regarding the power of human agency to reconstruct, reproduce and reinterpret public spaces.

Keywords: Spatial regulations, Socio-spatial control, Associational life, Privatized public space.

1. Introduction

The devolution of power and responsibilities to local government units following the promulgation of the Local Government Code of 1991 has opened up myriad opportunities for local authorities to be inclusive and entrepreneurial in developing their capacities for public service provision (Rood, 1998; Manor, 1999; Estrella and Iszatt, 2004; Atienza, 2006). Thus, a common trend right now in local government administration is the pursuit of efficiency and competitiveness, that is, the generation of social goods at the least possible costs for the tax-paying public. This phenomenon is not exclusive to the Philippines; it is a global trend, in fact. All over the world, local governance institutions are increasingly becoming more concerned about developing and maintaining their economic competitiveness in order to attract and retain capital investments (Cerny, 1997; Harvey, 1989; Jessop, Peck, & Tickell, 1999; Swyngedouw, 1996).

This drive for efficiency has brought notable changes to the social order of thriving urban centers, in particular, to the management and organization of public spaces (Leitner, 1990; Painter, 1995; Peterson, 1995; Stewart and Stoker, 1995; Martin, McCann, and Purcell, 2003). The emphasis of the local government on income generation and cost-cutting measures has drastically reduced government support for traditional open spaces like public parks and playground. In turn, has increased the incentive for the private sector to take over the business of managing public spaces. In the city of Manila, recent years have witnessed rapid deterioration of public parks – once the site of the most important political gatherings and glamorous social events – occurring alongside the proliferation of shopping malls. As a consequence, more and more people are relocating their social activities to the much safer, cleaner, comfortable, and stylish confines of privately-ran shopping malls.

Public spaces perform a very essential social function. Generally, they serve as “geographical and symbolic centers” for human interaction (Zukin, 1995). But more than just a built environment, they also are a locus of power relations (Davis, 1986; Mitchell, 1995; Merry 2001). It is in public spaces “where ‘the public’ is formed and thus social and cultural rules governing public behavior predominate” (Mitchell & Staehelli, 2007). As such, whoever controls these spaces controls the production and reproduction of certain rules of the social or political game including the process of social interaction. Foucault (1991) refers to this as “governmentality” (See also Ewick, 1998; Perry & Sanchez, 1998; Perry, 2000; Sanchez, 2001; Voyce, 2006). Given the regulatory and constitutive nature of public spaces, as Foucauldian scholars suggest, what is then its implication to the associational life of people who frequently access them?

The literature on critical urban geography and sociology presents a pessimistic answer, though. Scholars of critical tradition argue that the spatial regulations of contemporary privatized public spaces like the modern shopping malls strips the “social” out of human interactions by denying their users bases for socialization (Crawford, 1992; Caldeira, 1999; Rose, 1999; Katz, 2006). This is so because, according to the argument, these control techniques, through coercion or subtleties, program mall-users to identify themselves not with other social actors but with the culture of commodity consumption being promoted by the planners and private managers of these public spaces (Christopherson, 1994; Smith, 1998; Mitchell, 2001; Voyce, 2003; 2006). Moreover, they are deployed on purpose to maintain a socio-spatial order in which access and enjoyment is available only to those who have the ability to pay while keeping out actors and functions deemed distracting to the mall’s hegemonic operation (Mitchell & Staehelli, 2007; Goss, 1993; Gill, 1999; Button, 2003; Southworth, 2005). Thus, in view of their asocial and discriminatory orientation, contrary to what public spaces are in the past, private shopping malls do not and cannot serve as a context for meaningful public life (Sorkin 1992; Crawford 1992; Davis, 1992; Graham, 1997; Castells, 2001).

These critical studies correctly identify the exclusionary proclivities of modern spatial regulations. But, still, they offer a limited horizon for two reasons. First, these studies reflect experiences exclusive only to western societies and thus cannot fully account for the state of public life in public spaces in other areas, say, a developing country like the Philippines. This is especially true since there is a dearth of study inquiring about the relationship between public space and social life in the context of non-English speaking countries (Mitchell & Staehelli, 2007). Second, talks of decline of public life as a lamentable and inevitable consequence of the privatization of public spaces preclude the possibility of a more optimistic outcome (Avermaete & Teerds, 2007; Gaffikin, et. al., 2008). Even in some highly regulated public spaces designed for consumption and leisure countless opportunities for social interaction open up and are taken advantage of by their users on a daily basis. It is for these reasons that this work trains its analytical lens on the links between spatial order and social interaction.

The purpose of this paper is to inquire whether in the context of a highly-urbanized city in a non-English speaking developing country like the Philippines the spatial regulations of private shopping malls adversely affect or positively support the social life of its users. Specifically, it is concerned with identifying the conditions that generate and support active public interaction within privately managed public spaces.

2. Method

a. Design

To accomplish its research task, this research undertaking uses multiple case study method. The choice of case study as a method is inspired by the explanation of Merriam (1988: 2, 10). According to

Merriam, case study is an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of social phenomena... [it] is a design particularly suited to situations where it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context".

The study chose three shopping malls as sites of its research, namely: Robinson's Place in Ermita, Harrison Plaza in Vito Cruz, and Tutuban Center in Divisoria, all in the city of Manila. These malls cater to different socioeconomic sections of the population and thus represent different types of "public" and diverse responses to spatial control and restriction practices. An examination of some activities in these privatized public spaces in comparative perspective will underscore the dynamics which allow social interaction to flourish notwithstanding the strict spatial regulation. The study utilizes qualitative evidence drawn from thirteen (13) interview subjects: four (4) mall managers, and nine mall users.

Describing socio-spatial experiences in these private shopping malls required field observations. The researcher took notes and mapped the pertinent activities using video camera to register the evidences of those activities. For a three-month period, the researcher spent a whole day for each location, during working days and weekends from the opening of the establishment, 10 am, till closing, 10 pm, observing the behavior of mall-goers and even participating in their social activities, e.g., dining, strolling, etc. This was meant to facilitate a good cross comparison of uses of public spaces and behaviors of mall-goers and also, to borrow from Snow and Morrill (1993: 10), to secure "a close approximation of the empirical world", in this case, the playing out of social life inside the shopping malls.

b. Data Collection and Ethical Consideration

This study relies on verbal as well as observational evidence to clarify the connection between spatial governmentality and the status of public life in three privately managed shopping malls. To gather data and information, the researcher conducted a two-fold strategy. The first one involved what Merton, Fiske, & Kendall (1990) calls focused interview. Interview questions raised were open-ended to encourage respondents to express freely their insights and for the interview sessions to assume a conversational manner. For Kvale (1996), such mode of interview allows the researcher a greater chance to capture, understand and interpret not only experiential data but also the context of the experience itself. The second one involved taking photographs and video recording. In the view of this researcher, photographs and video recordings can help describe the significant features of the case study to readers and observers (Yin, 2009).

For the interview, first, the researcher asked the permission of the intended participants. All in all, the study had thirteen(13) respondents. The researcher duly informed the respondents that conversations were audio and video recorded for documentation and analysis purposes.

c. Mode of Analysis

In most of social science research, discovery of themes is imperative in the analysis of qualitative data. According to Ryan and Bernard (2003: 86), "[w]ithout thematic categories, investigators have nothing to describe, nothing to compare and nothing to explain."

For this study, theme identification was carried out by first transcribing the recorded interviews, expressions, and observational data into field text. Transcriptions were then carefully scrutinized. Following Borgdan and Taylor (1975: 83 cited in Ryan & Bernard 2003: 89) "topics that occur and reoccur" were classified as thematic categories. The identified themes became the basis for describing the effects of spatial governmentality to the social life of mall users in each case. Descriptions of spatial condition in one shopping mall were then examined in comparison to those of the other two shopping malls using pattern matching.

3. Findings

The study takes a critical look into the state of associational life inside the regulated spaces of three Manila shopping malls in an effort to uncover the conditions under which social interaction and encounter between and among mall users in these types of places becomes possible.

The western literature casts privatized public spaces like malls as a representation of the triumph of private social control over the associational sphere. In these regulated spaces it is assumed that

erosion of public life is most likely. However, this study found out that these pessimistic predictions do not fully apply to the three privately-managed shopping malls analyzed in this study. In all of the research sites, spatial designs meant deliberately to restrict activities and “put order on things” inadvertently create conditions that allow mall-users to express their own version of order and, in doing so, re-interpret what rightfully constitutes public space. By pursuing activities which they think are appropriately “public”, mall-users are able to play out their own social games independent from the control of the dominant forces of order – the private management and its security forces. Moreover, instead of a homogenous, empty public life, spatial regulations may eventuate, albeit unintentionally, in diverse and heterogeneous urban social sphere. Social interaction within a highly regulated space is activated due to the presence of facilitating persons, facilitating locales, and facilitating occasions.

a. Facilitating Persons

In a regulated public space like the shopping mall actions are normally monitored and restricted to support a socio-spatial order conducive to leisure and consumption. As such, the mall culture prescribes everybody to treat everybody else as consumers, as shoppers. However, these spatial practices do not always realize such hegemonic project. Under certain conditions, mall-users can elude the mall security’s overbearing control practices and actually initiate social activities these very practices often target for restriction and even removal. One of which is the presence of facilitators. Facilitators are those persons whose presence ease off tight spatial control and therefore enable mall-users to use mall spaces in ways that fit their needs and preferences. These are the children and the elderly. Children and the elderly can easily activate social exchanges among friends, acquaintances, and strangers. This is especially true since, normally, they are not targeted by the mall’s security regulations for monitoring and surveillance as it is unlikely for them to spark disruptive conducts. More often than not security personnel simply overlook many of their acts on the account of their age. On the contrary, in an effort to enhance customer service, the mall management set up common areas or spatial designs for their exclusive use thereby enabling them more to “loosen up” behavior in a “tight”, regulated space. As shared by a visitor in Robinson’s Place:

“Since mag-christmas break sa day care center ng anak ko last week, every tanghali tumatambay kami dito. Malapit lang naman bahay namin dito lang sa Escoda. Dito kasi libre sight-seeing, libre ang air-conha..ha..ha... Yung Christmas tree kasi tuwang-tuwa ang mga bata kaya dinadala ko dito. Sa bahay kasi maliit lang, eh dito ang laki-laki. Makakatakbo sila tapos picture-picture. Pagnagutom may McDo naman. Convenient talaga. At saka may mga playmates anak ko. May mga bata rin kasi naglalaro sa gilid ng Christmas tree...Oo, meron na nga ako nakilala na nanay din nong minsan nakatambay dito.”

- **Ate Cristy**, mother/mall user Robinson’s Place

This is similar to what a frequent mall-user say about his social life in Harrison Plaza:

“Dito lang ako nakatira sa Leveriza, eh dito sa Harrison malamig air con kasi, tapos pwede pa ko tumambay. May mga naglalaro dito ng dama at chess. Minsan ako ang nagdadala ng board, di ako nauubusan ng makakalaro. Pare-pareho lang naman kami na may edad na....Pwede naman dito eh. Mall ito, pwede kahit ano basta wag lang manggugulo....Oo, kakilala ko na nga mga tambay dito. Eh kami-kami nagkikita dito araw-araw.”

- **Kuya Boy**

Tenant, Harrison Plaza

Again, the same condition is observable in Tutuban Center, as verbalized by a one mall-user:

“Taga Novaliches yung grupo namin. Yan mga bata na ‘yan, ako nagtuturo ng arnis sa mga ‘yan. Pumunta kami dito para makipagpraktis sa ibang arnis groups. Sila, yan mga naka blue and red na jacket, taga Malabon. Tuwing Sabado at Linggo bumibisita kami dito para mahasa mga skills namin, lalo na yang mga gusto magkaroon ng belt at para na rin magpakita ng solidarity sa ibang arnis groups.”

- **Artemio Manalo**,

arnis instructor/mall user Tutuban

b. Facilitating Locales

Inside the mall there are locales which allow mall-users to mutually access each other and interact for purposes other than commercial exchange. These are the facilitating locales where one may not treat the other as “customer” or “shopper” but as a morally independent being capable of identifying with other social beings. Examples of these facilitating locales are the food courts, nodes, and common areas. The use of these locales facilitates informal encounters among complete strangers which may lead mall-user to freely “reinterpret” the uses and functions of these privately regulated spaces. Just being there exposes themselves to chance conversations with other mall-users.

However, social encounters here are not limited to verbal exchanges between and among friends, acquaintances or strangers. They include as well hand signals, facial expressions or bodily gestures signifying one’s recognition of the presence of the other. For instance, as observed by this researcher in all of the three malls, during lunch time when the food court is overwhelmed with activity, people mix up that strangers often bump into one another, inciting spontaneous trade of curt verbal and non-verbal expressions. Sometimes, they share a single table where, while having lunch, they exchange simple yet polite gestures with each other.

In Tutuban Center, the mall management developed a function area for healthful activities, such as aerobics and martial arts like arnis, complete with physical structures like inclined bars and swings. The mall itself sponsors events to promote these group activities, even organizing an aerobics club. The activities are open to everyone, and the use of the place is absolutely free. Every morning friends and strangers alike come to this place to jog, exercise, and later mingle with each other. According to a jogger:

“Maganda ‘tong ginawa ng Tutuban. In-open nila ang lugar na ‘to para makapag-exercise ang mga tao. Libre, walang bayad. Eto ngang t-shirt namin suot ngayon bigay ng Tutuban sa amin... Magbibigay ka lang ng ten pesos para sa aerobics instructors. Dalawa sila... Kahit sino pwede dito... Ako kasi malapit lang dito nakatira. Yung iba rin dyan lang sa mga streets dyan sa likod nakatira... Oo, dito na kami nagkakilala ng mga aerobics-mates ko eh...Pagkatapos mag-jogging pasok kami sa mall para lumamon...ha..ha..ha.. hindi, joke lang, nangangayayat na nga kami eh. Disiplina lang talaga...Every Saturday pumupunta kami dito at nagkikita-kita. Magtatayo na nga kami ng aerobics club para formal na ang grupo namin.”

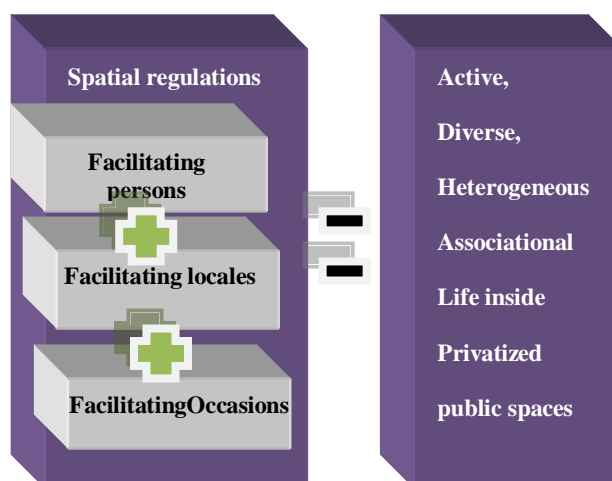
- **Ate Juliet**, jogger/mall user
Tutuban

c. Facilitating Occasions

Included in the regulatory spatial practices of the malls are props or architectural designs that evoke feelings or provide for the space an image of sophistication and urbanity, among them are furniture, art works, and others. These are not intended solely for public use but are necessary means to manipulate movement and conduct. Unintentionally, though, the presence of these props and designs stir occasions of public socialization. Their presence encourages complete strangers to talk to each other as though they were not strangers.

In all of the three malls, benches in their respective common areas constantly invite mall-users. During her field visits in Robinson’s Place, this researcher observed that some of those who sit on the benches in one of the common areas of the mall initiate small chats with strangers next to them by asking for time or asking for direction. In one occasion, this researcher observed in Harrison Plaza an old man seated on the bench asking another old man comfortably sitting beside him and reading his tabloid if he could share a page of what he was reading. In Tutuban Center, art works on display in the museum became an occasion for strangers to utter and exchange a few words to each other regarding the history of the place or their opinion about the people or the event depicted in the paintings.

Figure-1. Conditions for an active social life within a highly regulated space



4. Discussion

The literature on political theory as well as theories of spatialization view public space as an essential precondition for the health and sustainability of democratic societies. Susan Bickford (2000: 356) explains: “We can see that [public space] is also significant as a space of attention orientation, a space that shapes citizens’ sense of what people, perspectives, and problems are present in the democratic public”. But according to scholars of the critical tradition, the democratic potentials of public spaces are exploited by the upper section of society (the middle/upper classes, business owners, government along with those with decision-making powers) to redefine the meaning of public space – who belongs to the “public” and how should public space function – with the end in view of promoting their own power and economic interests. This is often done through privatization.

According to Ploeg (2006), “Privatization of public space is generally achieved through the transfer of the maintenance, security, or management rights of a space to a private entity like a business association, development corporations or homeowners association. When private interests provide security or make rules for a public space, they can directly or indirectly exclude certain groups or types of people.” It is argued that the phenomenon of privatization brings adverse effects on the associational life of the mall-users. The reason for this is that the pursuit of spatial control by planners and designers to achieve what they refer to as “good management” reduces dramatically spaces for individual self-fulfillment (Lynch and Carr, 1979; 1990).

Interestingly, the evidence gathered from the three research sites presents a relatively more optimistic sight. In all of these cases – Robinson’s Place, Harrison Plaza, and Tutuban Center – it was observed that the spatial design and order themselves, under certain conditions, empower mall-users to utilize mall spaces not just for consumption and leisure but for satisfying the requirements of socialization as well. This means the spatial governmentality of the mall does not invariably chisel passive observers and thoughtless consumers out of the mall-users. What can be interpreted, at least, from the observational data, is that mall-users respond to their spatial context by creating in their own way, borrowing from Lynch (1990) “a space full of openness without social and economic constraints” and try to produce a social experience that defies the original intention or commercial interests of the dominant forces of the mall.

a. The Case of Robinson’s Place

The ‘meanings’ of the built environment are multi-faceted and complex (Gaffikin, 2008). This is because public spaces are socially constructed and contested (de Certeau, 1984; Buck-Morss, 1990; Low, 1996). Such character of public spaces offers a plethora of chances for mall-users to evade restrictive spatial rules and interact with other mall-users outside the ethical framework of a consumer-policed space such as the shopping mall. The enabling power of mall spaces is evident even in the

highly regulated mall spaces of Robinson's Place. Among the three research sites, Robinson's Place demonstrates the strongest sense of social control and discipline.

Robinson's Place demonstrates high degree of spatial governmentality and therefore social control. Spaces are disciplined by extensive private security forces, monitored by panopticon devices directed at the containment of potential nuisance and troublesome people and conduct. Suffice it to say, it is here that exclusion and most especially the subjection of personal and collective behavior under the private interests is strongest. Nonetheless, mall-goers still manage "to act out of place", that is defy the rules and in the process create and represent a public space distinct from the original vision of the mall's private planners and managers. This is possible because embedded in the spatial order of the mall are enabling properties which inevitably activates associational outcomes once capitalized on by enterprising mall-users.

Robinson's Place is currently undergoing a process of renovation. Competition is stiff especially that newly opened malls in Manila and adjacent cities are drawing the attention even of the mall's loyal patrons. The management looks at renovation as the most viable strategy to develop the mall's competitive edge. According to the mall manager, the keystone of this development strategy is the improvement of its customer service. In line with this goal, new mall spaces were opened and furnished for the exclusive use of the elderly and children. It is here in these locales or pockets that facilitators like children and the elderly dig up wells of social encounters and interactions.

Children are more predisposed to casual conversations and informal activities with strangers and fellow children owing to their affable nature. Aside from that they are not conscious of the stiff formal rules of the mall spaces. It also helps that there are designated places for their own use where their interaction with other children accidentally initiates exchanges of verbal expressions and bodily gestures among their parents and older companions as though they are not strangers to each other.

Not only through the exploitation of these enabling locales by facilitators does social interaction occur. These enabling locales, consequently, in some occasions turn into sites of what Cavan (1996) calls "non-instrumentality", allowing variation of use of these spaces. Thus, instead of mall spaces acting as physical setting for one-faceted event – consumption – what emerges is a colorful mosaic of disparate lifestyles, the perfect example of what Lefebvre (1984) and Wander (1984) describe as "art of everyday life".

For instance, the playground for children draws together complete strangers at a single moment. Originally, the locale is intended for leisure and of course an occasion for consumption. But, due to the accidental and spontaneous interaction among facilitators – the children – and their older companions, the playground, for the entire duration of the encounter, ceases from existing as an "instrument" of the commercial intentions of the mall but an enabling occasion for public socialization. The same pattern is observed in the common area, the main lobby of the mall.

During the Christmas season a 15-foot Christmas tree was put in place in the main lobby. The architectural design is supposed to embody the season's festivity. But aside from acting as a public art, the Christmas tree also doubled as facilitator of commercial activities as its presence draw mall-users into the adjacent toy stores. Many of those who went to the area to marvel at the Christmas tree were also encouraged to take a look at and consider purchasing something from these stores. The public art that is the Christmas tree was an instant attraction for children and their parents. Here, children, strangers to each other, often run around, giggle, talk and play as if they have know each one of them for a long time. Even their jolly encounters spilled over to their parents and older companions that throughout their playful moment, mothers, complete strangers, engaged each other in casual conversations. Throughout the episode, the Christmas tree, like the playground, ceased from acting as an instrument of the mall's commercial intentions but transformed into an interactive compound, serving all along the interest of the mall-users.

But social encounter inside the mall does not only pertain to conversations and participation in collective activities by friends, peers, and acquaintances. According to Goffman (1963; 1971), what occurs between strangers passing on the street, be it an exchange of glance or simple smile, is as social as what occurs in a conversation between two acquaintances, friends, or lovers. He argues that the social encounters between strangers in an urban setting rely heavily on "expressions given off", i.e., body language or facial information as they have very little information about each other. These signals serve as the basis for their social relationship as they provide each other the necessary information as to how to behave while in each other's presence. Such level and type of social

interaction described by Goffman fills the common areas of Robinson's Place. As this researcher experienced in one of the common areas, the presence of enabling occasions, i.e., the giant Christmas tree, Christmas carols as background music, children playing around, encouraged complete strangers to congregate as well as interact by exchanging smiles and pleasantries. These simple and often taken-for-granted symbols of encounters reflect the vibrancy of social life inside a highly regulated public space; they constitute an indispensable part of social experience inside the built-environment like the private mall.

b. The Case of Harrison Plaza

The same enabling elements embedded in the mall spaces of Robinson's Place activate social activities among mall-users in Harrison Plaza.

In Harrison Plaza, the focal point of social interaction is the lobby. In terms of design, the lobby of Harrison Plaza is spacious and cozy. It was designed like an open plaza complete with long benches and lampposts. The benches are seldom empty. People of different age frequently stay there. Some use the place as a tryst, some as a meeting place. But most of them sit out the day. The lobby of the mall looks like a public plaza that when one sits on the benches she can immediately get a feeling of being in a public plaza. Naturally, the design encourages group activities that normally do not take place, in fact, not allowed in a typical commercial shopping mall. Suffice it to say, it is ideal for social encounters.

Many of the users of the lobby are "facilitators" – elderly persons who mostly are from the nearby communities of informal settlers and who frequent the place to avail of the amenities of the mall, e.g., air-conditioning and rest rooms, for free. The benches in the lobby give them a perfect place to play board games, sleep, chat and gossip about everything. Since adjacent to the lobby is an appliance center, mall-users also get free entertainment. For this reason, the appliance center serves as an enabling occasion for social interaction.

Throughout the observation period, the appliance center placed a huge speaker outside its main door and played aloud popular music. When asked by this researcher what was that for, the guard replied that it is a good way of luring customers to visit and actually buy something from the store. This researcher did not inquire whether the marketing strategy realized its intended effect, but what was certain was that the crowd sitting on the benches of the lobby was delighted, encouraging them all the more to stay longer and feel at home. There was another instance when an appliance store played a full-length movie in one of the television sets on display. A crowd of by-standers – they do not know each other – gathered in front of the store and enjoyed watching the film as if they were in front of their own television set and sitting on the couch of their own living room. From time to time the strangers spoke a few words to each other about the film they were seeing as if they knew everyone very well.

From the looks of it, that specific part of the mall has been "taken over" by its users and converted it into their own living room of some sorts. Given the background of the most of them, many of these mall-users do not intend to buy anything from the store. They were there simply to avail of the amenities of the mall. In other words, many of the mall-users behave more like "transient boarders" than paying customers. However, because of the spatial design and the environment surrounding the lobby, it became an enabling locale, an "interactive compound" where mall-users from different walks of life, friends and complete strangers alike, do not just passively sit out the hours but also put on display their personal values. Moreover, aside from being a built environment for commercial exchange, the mall serves as well as a refuge for many who, because of their socioeconomic conditions, are denied of the same favorable spatial context elsewhere.

Though it was never the plan of the private mall designers and managers to attract people who could "colonize" the lobby, the mall-users "appropriated" the place and imposed their own rules and version of order as though it was their "own" public space. In part, the management's limited capability to neatly control the mall premises plays a big factor for such occurrence. Yet because of this, by accident, the mall has a variety of use for different people. Accordingly, instead of being manipulated by the spatial order, the mall-users manipulate the mall spaces using their social experience as template. Seen this way, the lobby of Harrison Plaza becomes not simply an environment independent of the material existence of its users, but simultaneously, following Massey (1992), an environment experienced and conceptualized through the organization of social life.

c. The Case of Tutuban Center

Among the three commercial malls, Tutuban Center has the most favorable spatial condition for an active public life. What made this so is its spatial regulations. By all measures, the management's view towards what constitutes as social activities and public behavior is a complete departure from that of typical private shopping malls where strictly consumption-related activities are the only tolerable public behavior. In fact, Tutuban Center itself designed spaces to encourage the active participation of its patrons in urban social life. For instance, the managers opted to develop the wide vacant spaces beside the mall building into a function area for healthful activities, such as aerobics and martial arts like arnis, complete with physical structures like inclined bars and swings. The mall itself sponsors events to promote these group activities, even organizing an aerobics club. The activities are open to everyone, and the use of the place is absolutely free. Every morning friends and strangers alike come to this place to jog, exercise, and later mingle with each other. Also, every weekend the mall invites different arnis and martial arts groups all over Metro Manila to practice and stage a demonstration fight to entertain the public.

Moreover, Tutuban Center, on special occasions, opens a portion of its space to free speech especially political speech and nationalistic expressions – an unprecedented move given the restrictive nature of the private shopping malls. Proof to this is the recent memorandum issued by the management enjoining employees and tenants to participate in the flag raising ceremony every Monday morning in front of the main shopping center where the statue of Andres Bonifacio stands. According to the management, this mall regulation is enforced in fulfillment of the mall's social obligation to remind the mall-going public of the historical significance of Tutuban as the focal point of the Philippines' early attempts at independence and self-determination. It is also seen as an effective marketing strategy for the mall. It is also because of the mall's historical value that the managers set up a museum inside the mall where paintings and art works depicting scenes from the Philippine Revolution of 1896 are put on display. The area is frequented by the elderly and children. Here, things on display facilitate casual conversations among visitors and mall-goers, mostly children.

Another unique enabling occasion was observed by this researcher during the celebration of Bonifacio Day, November 30, last year: The mall management approved the request of some left-leaning groups – well-known for their anti-establishment and anti-capitalist sentiments – to congregate in front of the shopping center and stage a political gathering to peacefully commemorate the birthday of the "Father of Philippine Revolution". In this case, the mall itself allowed its premises to serve as a venue for the expression of the political ideals of the gathered crowd. Leaflets and flyers were distributed while speeches were delivered throughout the demonstration. Popular politicians even attended and harangued the crowd. In attendance were the members of the political parties Bayan Muna and Anakpawis. Many passers-by and mall-goers lent a few minutes of their time to listen to the speeches. Some of the activists even approached them and discussed to them the issues they are passionately advocating.

Just like all the other private shopping malls, the management of Tutuban Center set up strategies for social control to secure the mall premises given the notoriety of the communities surrounding it as well as the socioeconomic profile of the mall's patrons. However, because of its historical significance Tutuban Center has developed a unique form of spatial governmentality.

The outcomes of the mall management's spatial governmentality unintentionally generated enabling occasions for socialization. Through these empowering designs, mall-users are able to meet new friends, strengthen bonds with neighbors and peers, and establish positive social networks with other social groups which in turn thickens what Robert Putnam (1990) refers to as social capital – interaction based on trust and reciprocity believed to be a crucial ingredient for effective economic development and vibrant democracy. It is through this spatial order as well that Tutuban Center empowers its patrons to re-conceptualize the meaning and function of public space to their individual and social lives. Thus, just like Robinson's and Harrison, Tutuban Center is not a mere passive space where people, unmindful of the world around them, find life satisfaction in the consumption of commercially-manufactured goods but an actual event itself, a living environment comprised of diverse and colorful episodes. The lived experiences of mall-users in Tutuban Center shows that physical spaces themselves in varying degrees offer opportunities for their users to construct an urban social life independent of the impositions of the dominant forces of the mall and in the process reconstruct their own everyday open spaces

But this is not to say that Tutuban Center is consciously engaged in a certain type of spatial governmentality in an effort to sire some kind of public life in this part of Manila. What accounts for this unusual spatial order in Tutuban Center, still, is its commercial logic. Presently, the shopping mall is competing with adjacent, more popular shopping centers, namely, Divisoria Mall, 168, and SM. To hone its competitive edge over these commercial establishments, Tutuban Center is using its reputation as a historical place as a cornerstone of its marketing strategy, thus, the opening of the Tutuban Museum, the weekly flag raising ceremony and the yearly commemoration of Bonifacio Day. The same motivation worked behind the management's decision to develop a portion of its space to accommodate public gatherings and social activities. These decisions are all meant to encourage consumption; yet inadvertently they activated an urban social life not seen in any other privatized public spaces in the city of Manila, and perhaps the country.

4. Lessons Learned

This study showed that while privatized public spaces like shopping malls are engaged in spatial governance to promote a kind of order and discipline supportive of its commercial and profit-seeking nature, still, contrary to claims of critical sociologists and urban geographers, they do not universally eventuate in a standardization or homogenization of human behavior leading to a precipitous decline of urban public life. Under certain conditions, a more optimistic outcome is possible, that is, the activation of a vibrant, diverse urban public life. Public spaces provoke different meanings and sensations to different people who access them. That is why the regulatory designs and disciplinary practices of the malls "loosen up", allowing the spaces themselves to be reinterpreted by mall-users in the light of their needs and preferences and used as a context for the conduct of their everyday life.

There can be no gainsaying that maintaining order and discipline inside a popular destination such shopping malls has its own efficiency and security benefits. However, equating order and discipline in public spaces with good, quality urban living is not only counter-productive but dangerous to social order itself in the long run. Public spaces have different use and function to different people. Thus, spatial design and planning should facilitate an environment that fit the preferences and needs of their users, not only of their owners. This seems to be counter-intuitive given that shopping malls though accessible to the public remain private properties. But in the context of public spaces that remain under the control and supervision of the city government of Manila, this is a crucial step towards a cost-efficient public space management.

Privatizing public spaces might generate funds for the fulfillment of the city's myriad social obligations. But the local government must realize that open spaces for autonomous social activities is just as important as health or education services. Quality living environment includes open spaces where residents can satisfy their need for active social interaction and public life. Local public policy, financing and design control therefore should support the protection and improvement of innovative public spaces which promote interaction between diverse communities of the city. Regarding this matter, a partnership with the private sector holds promise. Both sectors possess their respective comparative advantages in managing public space. Both can work together to plan, design, implement, and maintain public spaces that do not only generate profit but also fulfill a very important obligation to the residents of the city. What are the aspects of this partnership and how can this be brought into fruition is an area worth exploring by future researches.

References

- Avermaete, T. & Teerds, H., (2007). Architecture positions on the public sphere. The 2007 Delfi Lecture Series, 19(2): 8-23.
- Barkin, S., Ryan, G. & Gelberg, L., (1999). What clinicians can do to further youth violence primary prevention: A Qualitative Study. *Injury Prevention*, 5: 53-58.
- Bickford, S., (2000). Constructing inequality: City spaces and the architecture of citizenship. *Political Theory*, 28(3): 355-76.
- Button, M., (2003). Private security and the policing of quasi-public space. *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 31: 227-237.

- Calderia, T., (1999). Fortified enclaves: The new urban segregation in theorizing the city: The new urban anthropology reader, edited by Setha Low. Rutgers University Press.
- Castells, M., (2001). The space of flows in the castells reader on cities and social theory, edited by I. Susser. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Crawford, M., (1992). Contesting the public realm: Struggles over public space in Los Angeles. *Journal of Architectural Education*, 49(1): 4-9.
- Christopherson, S., (1994). The fortress city: Privatized spaces, consumer citizenship in post-fordism: A Reader, edited by A. Amin. Oxford University Press.
- Davis, M., (1992). Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of urban space in variations on a theme park: The New American city and the end of public space, edited by Michael Sorkin. New York: Hill and Wang.
- De Certeau, M., (1984). The practice of everyday life. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Ewick, P., (1998). Punishment, power and justice in justice and power in sociolegal studies, edited by Bryant G. Garth and Austin Sarat. Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Gill, T., (2001). Putting children first. *Architects Journal*, 39(27): 103-12.
- Goffman, E., (1963). Behaviour in public places: Notes on the social organization of gatherings, Free Press New: York.
- Goss, J., (1993). The magic of the mall: An analysis of form, function, and meaning in the contemporary retail built environment. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 83: 18-47.
- Graham, S. and Marvin, S., (1996). Telecommunications and the city: Electronic spaces, urban places. New York: Routledge.
- Harvey, D., (1989). From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: The transformation of urban governance in late capitalism. *Geografiska Annaler*, 71: 3-17.
- Harvey, D., (1997). The new urbanism and the communitarian trap. *Havard Design Magazine Winter/Spring*: 1-3.
- Jessop, B., Peck, J. & Tickell, A., (1999). Retooling the machine: Economic crisis, state restructuring, and urban politics in the urban growth machine: Critical perspectives two decades later, edited by A. Jonas & D. Wilson. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Katz, C., (2006). Power, space, and terror: Social reproduction and the public environment. In the politics of public space edited by Setha Low and Neil Smith. New York: Routledge.
- Kvale, S., (1996). Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Lefebvre, H., (1991). The production of space. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Leitner, H., (1990). Cities in pursuit of economic growth: The local state as entrepreneur. *Political Geography Quarterly*, 9: 146-170.
- Lofland, L. H., (1998). The public realm: Exploring the city's quintessential social territory. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Lynch, K., (1990). The openness of open space in city sense and city design: Writings and projects of Kevin Lynch, edited by T. Banerjee & M. Southworth. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Martin, D., McCann, E. and Purcell, M., (2003). Space, scale, governance, and representation: Contemporary geographical perspectives on urban politics and policy. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 25(2): 113-121.
- Massey, D., (1992). Politics and space/time. *New Left Review*, 196: 65-84.
- Merry, S., (2001). Spatial governmentality and the new urban social order: Controlling gender violence through the law. *American Anthropologist*, 103(1): 16-29.
- Mitchell, D. & Staeheli, L., (2007). Locating the public in research and practice. *Progress in Human Geography*, 31(6): 792-811.
- Mitchell, D. & Staeheli, L., (2001). Postmodern geographical praxis? Postmodern impulse and the war against homeless people in the 'postjustice' city in postmodern geography: Theory and Praxis, edited by C. Minca. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Painter, J., (1995). Regulation theory, post-Fordism, and urban politics in Theories of urban politics, edited by D. Judge, G. Stoker, and H. Wolman. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

- Perry, R., (2000). Governmentalities in city-scapes: Introduction to the symposium. Symposium on city-spaces and arts of government. *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 23(1): 65-73.
- Perry, R. & L. Sanchez, (1998). Transactions in the flesh: Toward an embodied sexual reason. In *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society*, edited by Austin Sarat and Patricia Ewick. Stanford, CT: JAI Press.
- Peterson, P., (1995). Who should do what? Divided responsibility in the federal system. *The Brookings Review*, 13: 6–11.
- Rose, N., (1990). *Governing the soul: The shaping of the private self*. London: Routledge.
- Rose, N. & P. Miller, (1992). Political power beyond the state: Problematics of government. *British Journal of Sociology*, 42(2): 173–205.
- Rose, N., (1996). *Inventing our selves*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rose, N., (1999). *Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge UK.: Cambridge University Press.
- Sanchez, L., (2001). Enclosure acts and exclusionary practices: Neighborhood associations, community police, and the expulsion of the sexual outlaw. In *between law and culture: Relocating legal studies* edited by David Theo Goldberg, Michael Musheno and Lisa C. Bower. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Smith, N., (1998). Giuliani time: The revanchist 1990s. *Social Text*, 57,: 1-20.
- Snow, D. & Morrill, C., (1993). Reflections on anthropology's ethnographic crisis of faith. *Contemporary Sociology*, 32: 8-11.
- Sorkin, M., (1992). See you in disneyland. In *variations on a theme park: The new American city and the end of public space*, edited by M. Sorkin. New York.
- Stewart, J. & Stoker, G., (1995). *Local government in the 1990s*. London: MacMillan.
- Swyngedouw, E., (1992). The mammon quest: 'Glocalization,' interspatial competition and the monetary order: The construction of new spatial scales in Cities and regions in the new Europe: The global-local interplay and spatial development strategies, edited by M. Dunford & G. Kafkalas. London: Belhaven.
- Voyce, M., (2003). The privatisation of public property the development of a shopping mall in sydney and its implications for governance through spatial practices. *Urban Policy and Research*, 21(3): 249-262.
- Voyce, M., (2006). Shopping malls in Australia. The end of public space and the rise of consumerist citizenship? *Journal of Sociology*, 42(3): 269-286.
- Woods, P., (2006). *Successful writing for qualitative researchers*. London: Routledge.
- Yin, R., (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. London: SAGE.
- Zukin, S., (1995). *Cultures of cities*. Oxford: Blackwell.