



Slum-fit? Or, Where is the Place of the Filipinx Urban Poor in the Philippine City?

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Abstract

Against place-based stigma and neoliberal-localism, this paper asks, where in city models does the Philippine slum fit? In doing so, this paper explores two city models: industrial and postcolonial city. But in both city models, there is undervaluation of the Philippine slum. For this reason, this paper suggests the comprador city as an appraisal and alternative to the industrial and postcolonial city models. The comprador city highlights the oppositional interest in the city. These are between the compradors and the urban poor. The former dominates and reconfigures the Philippine city and nation through its foreign ties. While many of the latter lives in the slums despite they are the labor that creates and develops the city.

Keywords

comprador; postcolonial; industrial; slum; city model



***Iskuwater* of the Philippines?**

Slums¹ are the most visible expression of the polarization of wealth and power in the city (Lieberherr-Gardiol, 2006, 276; UN-HABITAT, 2003b). Despite the slum dwellers' contribution to the city and nation (Alcazaren et. al., 2011; Berner, 1997; M. Davis, 2006; R. Simbulan, 1998; Tadiar, 2004), place-based stigma disparages slums or *iskuwater*² communities as “non-places” (Fortin, 2012), “shadow cities” (Neuwirth, [2005] 2016) and “modernity’s other” (Pinches, 1994, 25). Its dwellers are pejoratively labeled “*tambay*” (bums) (Batan, 2012), “criminals” and “non-citizens” (STWR, 2010, 26-35), even as “rascals” by a Philippine Supreme Court Justice (Galay v. Court of Appeals, G.R. No. 120132, 1995) or, as former First Lady Imelda Marcos notoriously puts it, “eyesores.”

On the other hand, the government of the Philippines (GPh) tries to solve the “slum problem”. The approach that the GPh favors is through enabling the supply of housing. However, the approach relies on funding from “multilateral” and private companies, such as the World Bank’s prescribed and showcased self-help and microcredit schemes (Karaos and Porio, 2015, 108; San Gabriel, 2012; Patiño, 2016). This is a neoliberal-localist trap or a spatial fetishization of struggles, of a group or sector, via monopoly capitalist *policy*, where the overturn of welfare and nationhood extends the profit-seeking of capital by state power (Sharzer in Cummings [2014, 237] for localism; IBON [2016, 19] and Tickle and Peck [2003, 16] for neoliberalism). This is a trap because it is uncritical to the hegemony of global capitalism and has a latent class lens (Magno, 2002; Nicolas, 2013; Papeleras, 2014). As follows, a continuing paradox plagues in our current times: fighting the urban poor³ instead of fighting urban poverty.

1 I wish to use the term slum and *iskuwater* (squatter) not in the derogatory way. Following Cassidy (2007, 11), I use the word slum as a kind of urban poverty.

2 Slum and squatters are used synonymously. However, slum is not identical with the squatter communities. The latter is based on formal, technical and legal account while the former is the generalized situation of impoverished condition of shelter and living. However, as Caoili (1982, 383) noted, “in most cases slums are also squatter areas”.

3 Following Kadamay ([2008] 2018), R. Simbulan (1998), Therborn (2012), Žižek (2008) and Worsley (1984), the urban poor is a group of classes with roots to the peasantry. This group consists workers, semi- or informal workers, lower-tiered petty bourgeois, and lumpenproletarians.



Figure 1: F(1)itting at the bottom of triangle. Photo is from UPRCP's photo archive.

A part of the solution can be sought through city models by locating those who are marginalized in the consensus of knowledge. In doing so and from the celebration of slum agency (M. Davis, 2006), slums will be an indicator in concretizing our understanding of broader social forces that perpetuate poverty in the city and society.

This paper is an initial exploration of an alternative to understand slums specific to the Philippines. Developing from the application of two popular existing city models in the Philippines, I argue that understanding slums need reframing.⁴ The reframing should foreground an active class lens and anti-colonial discourse, which link the spatial dimensions of exploitation and domination. Accepting this

⁴ This study lacks a critical and historical reading of other current models such as: world city (Friedmann 1986), informational city (Castells, 1989b), global city (Sassen, 1991), neoliberal city (cf. Pinson and Journel, 2017, 7) and more. However, in a quick scan, most of these models rely on some ICM's theoretization. Sassen's (1991) global city relies heavily on Castells' (1989b) informational city. Castells (1989a, 200), on the other hand, derived his informational city model a parallel model of the industrial city. This hastened conclusion can also be said to Friedmann's (1986) world city, as it runs structurally in unison to ICM. The neoliberal and post-Fordist city is also without exception. Reading Fordism, its aftermath, neoliberalism, and so on as policies of capitalism, cities exhibiting these policies should be demonstrated as concrete ramification of existing economic mode to city models. Certainly, without other city models there are gaps to the emerging trends of city-life. Present space limits the exploration for this paper. And so forth, although it is not straightforward and without nuanced, critique and appraisal to the existing city models can be appropriate, even though partial, to undiscussed models.

framing, through Leontidou's ([1990] 2002) and Obeng-odoom's (2014) comprador city, specific contexts of the Philippine city are highlighted. Focusing on the Philippine slum, the opposing interests of the compradors through their foreign ties wield capital and power, and the urban poor that labor in creating and developing the city are the contexts of the alternative model.

I express the idea of comprador city model in the Philippines in three parts. First, I explore two different, but not necessarily opposing, city models to the Philippine setting. I begin with the industrial city model, which argues that the urbanization is the central mechanism to understand cities. Then, I examine the postcolonial city model, a way of understanding cities from the angle of the colonized in the rummages of colonialism. Second, I reintroduce the comprador city model. The comprador city model is both an appraisal and critique to both industrial and postcolonial city models. It is a model for an active class lens that relates the social sciences to understand domination and exploitation to city life. This paper's modest goal is to propose an alternative in understanding the Philippine slum. My hope is to foreground a transformatory discourse and struggle where the exploitation and domination of the slum dwellers are valued and in the long run possibly changed for the better. The article concludes with a case study of Sitio San Roque to provide an illustrative example of Quezon City as a comprador city.

City for Whom?

Following Harvey ([1973] 2009, 238-239) and McGee (1969), the current city, through the cooperation of the state, is the condition of the control of labor mobilization, surplus product concentration, and capital monopolization. The city, therefore, should be acknowledged as a strategic site of the profound product of humanity (Park, 1929, 1), even a great part of its makers live on slums (cf. Alcazaren et. al., 2011; M. Davis, 2006; UN-HABITAT, 2003a). In interpreting cities, city models are made and utilized. City models are condensed tools of theoretical reflections which includes systematic descriptions. Models organize and explain the limits, patterns, and transformations (Le Galès, 2015c).

(In)Sufficient Industry

The industrial city is a fascinating creature after the industrial revolution. In this manner, many authors from Charles Dickens to Weber and Simmel, Park and Wirth, and even to Charles Booth wrote about the city. The industrial city model (ICM) is the model of their mutual work. Accordingly, it is a model put the primacy to the *process* of the creation of the city, or urbanization, rather than the city as *product* of urbanization (cf. Le Galès, 2015a). At the risk of oversimplification, urbanization is generated by economic advances and economic concentration through capital accumulation. Accumulation exists from workers' exploitation, while exploitation leads to impoverishment. Slums, from this perspective, are the *indirect* results of exploitation through the recurrence of the

anarchy of capital accumulation and capital-led urbanization (Engels, [1872-1873] 1977, 305).

The industrial city is an apt model when top economists and policy makers claim the Philippines is a “newly industrialized country” (Bożyk, 2006, 164; Guillén, 2001, 126; O’Neill et. al., 2005, 6). The ICM, setting aside its negative imagery, maps progress for the Philippines. However, counter-mapping ICM to the Philippines overwhelmed the creative and analytical capacity of the model. Specific Philippine contexts cannot be looked properly by ICM. These are from urban migration and its migrants’ and slum dwellers’ informal activities in the city (Alcazaren et. al., 2011; Garrido, 2013; Mabilin, 2014; Ortega, [2016] 2018; Shatkin, 2004; R. Simbulan, 1998; cf. Katznelson, 1992, 14). Also lacking are the Philippines’ geographical layout, from McGee’s (1991) *desakota* (Kelly, 1999; Ortega, 2012) to Philippine suburbanization (Camba, 2012; Ortega, [2016] 2018); and current urban politics and culture, not limited from urban commodification (Cardenas, 2014; Connell, 1999; de Guzman, 1993; Lico, 2003; Michel, 2010; Ortega, 2016; Ortega, [2016] 2018; Ramos and Ahn, 2010; Roderos, 2013; Serote, 1992; Shatkin, 2011; Tolentino, 2001) and modernization (Garrido, 2013; Ortega, [2016] 2018; Pante, 2016; Pinches, 1994; Shatkin, 2005-2006; Tolentino, 2001) to androcentralization (Devilleles, 2013; Sarmiento, 2013; Tolentino, 2001).⁵

In historical-macroeconomic fashion, de Dios and Williamson (2015, 377) tabulates the manufacturing growth of the Philippines. This is from 6.3% of the GDP in the opening of the 20th century, to its peak of 7% of the GDP in the Import-Substitution years, and 1.7% at the onset of neoliberal policy of manufacturing in the Export-Oriented Industrialization years to 3.3% from 1990-2007. Curiously, the decline of manufacturing did not match the densification of central locations in the Philippines. The intensity of densification in the Philippines is none other than urbanization in Philippine official statistics. This is because the official definition of urbanization in the Philippines tends to focus acutely on change of demography, thus lacks national developmental aspects, such as industrialization. Official data from the Philippine government (PSA, 2019b), UN DESA Population Division (2018) and ADB (Naik Singru and Lindfield, 2014, 5) chart the intensity of densification, from 27.1% in 1950 to 27-30.3 in 1960, 32.9-33 in 1970, 37.2-37.5 in 1980, 47-48.8 in 1990, 46.1-50.9 in 2000, 45.3-49.4 in 2010 and 51.2 in 2015.

From densification of central locations in the Philippines and following previous studies (Berner, 1997; Caoili, 1982; Constantino-David, 1978; Dwyer, 1964; Hollnsteiner, 1977; Jocano, [1975] 2002; Mabilin, 2014; Pinches, 1994; San Gabriel, 2012; R. Simbulan, 1998; Tadiar, 2004), Philippine urban migration and its pervasiveness are results of, *aside than anything*, rural land problem. The problem has a spatio-historical pregiven, but cannot be properly rehearsed here.⁶

⁵ To focus on Philippine slum formation and Filipinx slum dwellers with limited space, the risky neglect to other Philippine contexts is done.

⁶ See note 13.

Rather, it is enough to say that the problem has inner issues and causes that the ICM cannot accord. One of the reasons is the ICM cannot differentiate the migration in the North and migrations elsewhere.

Subsequently, after migration according to ICM, the uprooted became industrial workers. In the Philippines, using the ICM something is underlooked, especially when the above mention actually-existing urbanization is decoupled with industrialization (Chavez et. al., 2015; Clarete, 2006, 171-187; Sison, 2003, 23-24; cf. Armstrong and McGee, 1968). More than anything, there is an incapability of creating sufficient workers and industry, even the Philippine local entrepreneurs or national bourgeoisies. Close to this matter, the workers produced are unaccustomed or even inexistent to ICM. Instead of vast industrial workers, workers come and go into services, including informal economy (Clarete, 2006, 171-187; EILER, 2007, 9; Ofreño, 2014, 121; Sison, 2003, 23-24).

In the Philippine government's labor force survey of 2018, the majority are categorized in the service sector are at 56.6% while the industrial sector is 19.1% (PSA, 2019a). Scrutinizing the country's direct manufacturing workers from the whole industrial labor force, there are only 8.8% for the whole nation, in the same dataset.

If the cause and composition of slum dwellers are difficult, situating slum clearance is unenlightening. In fact, clearances are left in theory as an unavoidable conduct of capitalist accumulation and corresponding domination or Haussmann(ization) (Engels, [1872-1873] 1977, 350). Without adequate manufacturing base, which is pegged at 19.7% of the whole economy (BSP, 2019), it is puzzling how does capital penetrate and mediates in Philippine cities.

In the ICM, the dilemma emerges when concretely mapping capital and labor in actually-existing urbanization is practiced. Further, the creation and penetration of capital in the national and the urban is slippery when primary urban economic activity is based on consumption and service rather than production (O'Neil et. al., 2005). These slippery topics mark the ICM's inability to understand the global processes of imperialism's current policy. Unawareness to these, may lead to poor notions of development and power (i.e. neoliberal-localism). Thus, in situating ICM to the Philippine cities' accurate and holistic existence rises a severe gap. In contrast, the ICM's method of class analysis provides an invaluable tool, but only when unmystified to the Global North.

(Post)Colonial (Mis)Order?

If the ICM is from the North, why not examine cities from the praxes of the South. The postcolonial city model (PcCM) is this kind of model. This model examines the legacy of colonization in creating a hierarchical city that preserves and expands the Global North's dominance (Cabalfin, 2014; Galang, 2012; King, 2012, 34; Parnell, 2014). It foregrounds the agency of those in the South by critiquing the northern-centric knowledge production, which organizes the logics

that governs the city (Le Galès, 2015b; King, 2012). Some notable theorists of PcCM are King ([1976] 2007), Simon (1984), Simone (2004), Roy (2009, 2011), Robinson (2006), and Parnell and Oldfield (2014). In different fashions, they applied the theory of postcolonialism to the cities of South Africa, Indonesia and India.

At first glance, the PcCM may be fitting to Philippine cities. Since, the Philippines is subjected to a four-century colonialism. Some practitioners of the PcCM suggest the Southern slum and its clearances are the other half of the postcolonial urban process (Roy, 2009, 80). The slums in this respect are the other of development, modernization, even nationhood. These processes, from the postcolonial perspective, are “Northern fabrication”. Thus, for some PcCM theorists the struggles and subordination of urban poor are an affirmation of the inapplicability of the Northern grand theory (Cabalfin, 2014, 162-166; Roy, 2009; Simon, 1984, 501; cf. Berner, 1997, 6; Hollnsteiner, 1977). From this distinction, most PcCM theorists take a model for difference. Inward looking, the PcCM celebrates the identity and agency of urban poor against the hegemonic ontology and epistemology of the aftereffects of colonialism. PcCM is easier to be used with a retelling of Philippine history of slums. Thus, a re-enactment is pre-given.

Due to lesser inequality and nascent urbanism, there are no slums in pre-Hispanic Philippines (Doeppers, 1972, 770-771). However, in the Spanish colonial period, the Philippine slums emerged in the outskirts of Intramuros (Caoli, 1988; de Viana, 2001; Doeppers, 1998). These are places of colonial influences where laboring men and *women* (cf. Camagay, 1995), from vendors, coachmen, workers, stevedores, boatmen to fishermen, resided. In the American colonial period slums were “more or less left as it were” (van den Muijzenberg and van Naerssen, 2005, 132) and only to be congested and dispersed across the expansion of Manila (cf. Galang, 2012). In both colonial periods, Filipino slum dwellers are within the city, because of the colonialists’ need of labor (Lico and Tomacruz, 2015, 7). The only distinction is in the unrestricted continuance of surplus population with cheap and flexible labor as a foreground to the foreign-boosted economy in and after the Americans. However, despite labor need throughout the colonial era, slum clearance is a norm by securitizing and pathologizing the slum dwellers. Filipinos were pushed elsewhere because of the “dangers” they pose, both in peace and order and in health (Galang, 2012; Lico and Tomacruz, 2015, 7; Pante, 2011). Nonetheless, the influx of migration and slum creation endured, along with other contradictions of colonialism. After the Second World War and the so-called independence, migrations and slums were unresolved. Instead, slums were magnified fitting to the “contemporary kind” (Hollnsteiner, 1977, 310).

Using the post-colonial city model, the magnification can be attributed to the inheritance of new elites to the Northern grand theory (cf. Pante, 2016). The Northern grand theory created a multitude of cultures. These are from patrimonialism, bureaucratism to technocratism, by the Filipinized Northern constructs of the new elites and their adherents. The praxes of the marginalized

poor are also included, from self-help, informal economy, microfinance, to state representation.

Furthermore, from most users of PcCM, there is a consequence of the privileged act of othering that downplays social class issues. Downplaying proposes a model of substituted economics and politics to culture, that instead solving the problem offers plurality of regulation to the accustomed. As follows, the substitution neglects holistic and *crucial* structure, based from basic activity and ownership to organizational coherence of society (cf. Miliband, 1987). And, inattention to structure overemphasizes a faulty treatment to power (e.g. neoliberal-localist projects).

There is no argument that the creation of space of colonialism and its aftereffects keeps Philippine society not for most Filipinx. Thereby, otherness is a convenient tool. However, we must come and surpass the principles of otherness to solve the “slum problem” and beyond.

The Comprador City Model⁷

Unlike the above models, the comprador city model (CCM) highlights maneuvers by the national elite and its foreign ties. This model is first theorized by Leontidou ([1990] 2002) and Obeng-odoom (2014). According to Leontidou, the comprador city is “a city which colonizes the country and serves as an intermediary between local and foreign elites” (Leontidou, e-mail message to author, 6 October 2015). On the other hand, Obeng-odoom (2014, 188) uses it as a spatialization of Nwoke’s work on the Chinese Marxists’ comprador.

With Leontidou ([1990] 2002) and Obeng-odoom (2014), the comprador city model is an appraisal of the class-based approach of ICM and the anti-colonial discourse of PcCM. It is a model that is critical to the global process of monopoly capitalism while being sensitive to the local and national situation of oppositional class interests. The class-based approach of multi-faceted labor process and relations places labor at the front and center of the reproduction of social life. Meanwhile, anti-colonial discourse maps foreign domination to the everyday.

Through class perceptiveness, in the Philippine slum, in the risk of simplification, interests are between the compradors⁸ and the urban laboring classes or the urban poor. Furthermore, anti-colonial attentiveness marks capital and power of the compradors from its foreign ties and the incorporation of Philippine labor, whether formal or informal, for profit squeeze of foreign monopoly capital. With the two analytical lenses, the compradors dominates and reshapes the Philippine

⁷ Shatkin (2011, 91-93) also modeled the Philippine city by using Hutchcroft’s (1998) booty capitalism.

⁸ This model is named after the compradors (Baran, 1973, 337-342; Guerrero, [1970] 2014, 129-130; Mao, [1926] 1965, 19, 538; Taruc, 1953, 257). To do the mediation of neocolonialism, the compradors use the city to base and dominate (Bagulaya, 2006, 95; Mao, [1926] 1978, 101; Sison, 2003, 25; cf. Ortega, [2016] 2018, 5).

city and nation. While many of the urban poor lives in slums despite the labor in creating and developing the city.

The CCM is named after the compradors' placeness, desire, requirement, and extension of interest, and mediation to cityspace. The model is characterized by dominance and emergence. It is a city of dominance of informalization (Alcazaren et. al., 2011; Ofreneo, 2014), commodification (Camba, 2012; Cardenas, 2014; Connell, 1997; de Guzman, 1993; Lico, 2003; Michel, 2010; Ortega, 2016; Ortega, [2016] 2018; Ramos and Ahn, 2010; Roderos, 2013; Serote, 1992; Shatkin, 2011; Tolentino, 2001), gentrification (Michel, 2010; Ortega, 2016; Roderos, 2013; Tolentino, 2001), consumerization (Cornelio, 2014; Ortega, [2016] 2018; Sarmiento, 2013; Tolentino, 2001), repression (NCCP, 2012; Palatino, 2019; PhilRights and UPA, 2009, 81; Warburg and Jensen, 2018; cf. Althusser, 2014, 75; D. Davis, 2016;) and neocolonization (Caoili, 1982; Serote, 1991; Tolentino, 2001). Concurrently, the Philippine comprador city is of different levels of emergent struggle, contestation, and resistance from localism and populism, to rights claiming, nationalism, and anti-imperialism (Arcilla, 2018; Arellano, 2015; Carrol, 1998; Mabilin, 2014; Ortega, [2016] 2018; Palatino, 2019, 35-37; Tolentino, 2001). The dominant pattern can be demonstrated through the redundancy of malls and fast food chains, gated communities and condominiums, banks and office infrastructures, private schools, juxtaposed to government complexes, traffic, infinite public works and megaprojects, even to, all androcentric (Deville, 2013; Sarmiento, 2013; Tolentino, 2001) and religious structures (Cornelio, 2015; Sapitula, 2014).

The dominant pattern that builds the Philippine city, with the inadequate industrial capital, came from the annexation of foreign financial capital mediated by the compradors through the state,⁹ coupled with consumerism fueled especially by Overseas Filipinx Workers (OFW), Business Process Outsourcing workers, and popular lifestyles (Lobien, 2017; Ortega, [2016] 2018; Tolentino, 2001). Whereas, the large manpower that builds, operates, and develops the city came from the oblivious fact of the bargaining of labor by the urban poor. The bargaining process, maintained, headed, and transmitted by the compradors and its foreign ties, unfairly devalues the poor's labor (cf. Tolentino, 2001, 189-195). And as a consequence, attributes to the impoverishing conditions of the urban poor, from poor health, alienation to the creation of slums. In the slums, worse comes to worst when eviction comes. In many instances, the compradors are the prompters of such clearances. Making the compradors conceive a full circle of spatial domination.

The urban poor and the compradors have different interests. The former is bound to the broadest sense of improvement of humane living. The latter is driven by profit in annexation and service for foreign capital. As a consequence, spatio-

⁹ See for example Cardenas (2014) for companies and the process of hegemony of firms in Philippine cities. Then, trace the financial "partners" of these firms. An example of tracing is done in the latter part of the third heading.

historical contradiction arises (Arellano, 2015; Carrol, 1998; Ortega, [2016] 2018). Thereby, contradiction is a key in concretizing our understanding of Philippine cities. With contradiction, tracing a “social map” of the opposing classes is needed (Miliband, 1987, 333). To exemplify, the following illustrates a case of Sitio San Roque from the author’s fieldwork.

Sitio San Roque, Ayalas, and the Comprador City

Sitio San Roque

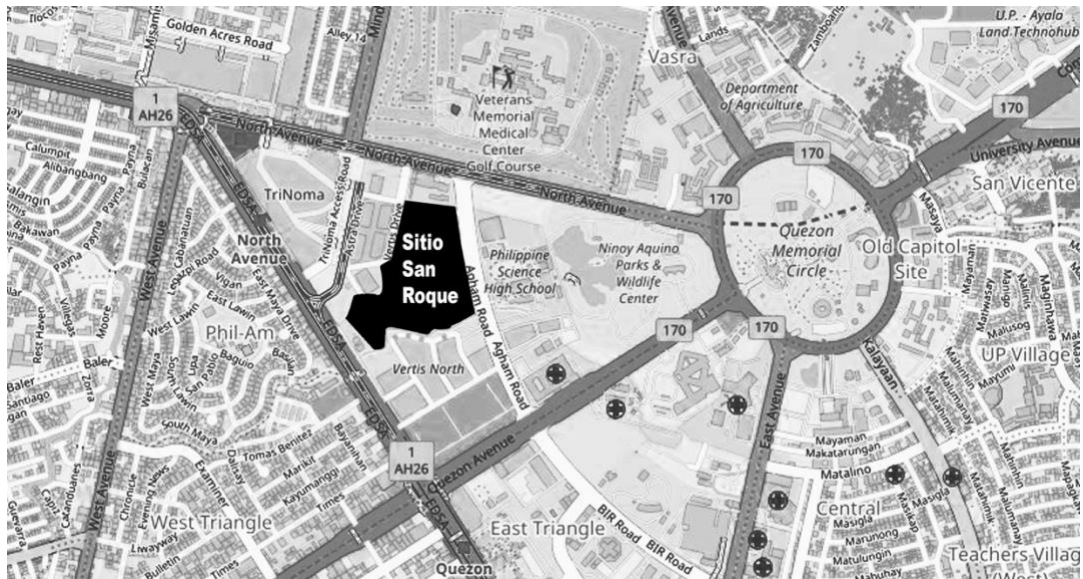


Figure 2: A partial map of Quezon City highlighting Sitio San Roque. The map is from OpenStreetMap. <https://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=15/14.6499/121.0403>

Sitio (hamlet) San Roque (Sitio) is a slum community in *Barangay* (village) Bagong Pag-asa (literally New Hope), District One of Quezon City, Philippines. It is located in the south of North Avenue, west of Agham Road, north of Quezon Avenue and east of North EDSA. It is at the heart of Quezon City, the spatially largest, most populous, and biggest city for service economy, in the Philippines’ National Capital Region. It is located less than three kilometers away from the Quezon City Hall and seven kilometers to EDSA, one of the main and longest thoroughfare in the Philippines. Its thirty-seven hectares of land are home for some 24,500 families and is managed by the National Housing Authority (NHA) (Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines, 2002; PMC, 2013; cf. NHA, 2018).

The Sitio is like any poor community in the city. It is developed over time in an “incremental and organic” process that exposes both the private and public lives of its dwellers and makers (Cabalfin, 2011, 162; cf. Alcazaren et. al., 2011). In other words, the Sitio is a community shaped out of class difference of un-

demarcated mixture of public and private humane improvements of living against the contradictions in the city and society. The community's difference of living can be vividly felt through its *homelikeness*. The Sitio is a home, even with, narrow, sometimes slippery and rugged alleys with patched houses creatively fixed with each other. Bleached and detergent smelled clothes are colorfully arranged in electric wires outside of one's house. In-door blasted stereo, out-door chatter, and laughs of mothers and other dwellers are with the ensemble of the babies' and children's giggles and cries, and barks and cries of pet dogs, cats, and roosters.

Sitio San Roque did not begin as it is. In its early years, it is grassland with adobe (Verzola, e-mail message to author, 18 August 2016). Four-fifths of the land was reputedly owned by Eulalio Ragua since 1908 (Coronel, 1988, 11; Ragua v. Court of Appeals, G.R. 88521-22, 2000). Subsequently after World War II, it was allegedly grabbed by the Tuasons and was given to the GPh (Coronel, 1988, 11; Ragua v. Court of Appeals, G.R. 88521-22, 2000). Before long, ex-HUKBALAHAPs settled (Verzola, e-mail message to author, 18 August 2016) and the steady increase of Sitio's population kicked. In the 1980s, the Sitio's population had become monumental. The momentous increase of the Sitio became a bridge for its adoption to Baranggay Bagong Pag-asa (Portus, 2005, 105). The expansion of the population is varied. A few came from the provinces. Some were from other slum areas. And others are offspring of the second to the third generation of migrants.

The population of the Sitio is home of the heterogeneous laboring classes that do different jobs and livelihoods. Some are the families of workers go to labor within and outside Metro Manila. It is worthwhile to note, some poorly paid and even underpaid workers are five to six months contractual workers for construction of buildings and services in malls and other businesses owned by the Ayalas and other compradors with their foreign ties. There are also few underpaid families of professional that reside in the Sitio, which include teachers, pharmacists, police, security guards, and other civil servants, and OFWs. In addition, like any poor community the typical families of "*tambay*" and "*rascals*" are also in the Sitio. These are the unemployed. And, if we go along with Magno (2002, 87) they are 60% of labor force. Most of these unemployed are beyond the formal employment or entrepreneurship. These are the members of the informal sector who sells or "*capitalize*" their labor to meet daily ends. They do odd, small-scale, and labor-intensive livelihood. These are from making and vending banana cues, barbecues, and other foods, rugs, clothing, and even cheap jewelry to manual laborers for labada (soiled clothes), karinderyas (food stalls), *sari-sari* (retail) stores, and construction, and drivers of tricycle, pedicabs, and other utility vehicles. However, there are also some residents who became hopeless in poverty. They willingly risk death, sanity, and injury to do illegal drug trade and other anti-social activities. Nevertheless even with few exceptions, the late Catholic Archbishop Sin conclusion is unvaryingly verified in Sitio San Roque as an example that "our

urban and national economy profits from their presence” (Sin as quoted in Berner, 1997, 4).

In spite of “profiting from their presence”, the Sitio is a metropolitan commercial zone (QCC, 2013, 24). It is a place of heavy and multi-level commercialization and privatization (QCC, 2013, 106; Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines, 2002). It is a place unintended for any hearth of the dwellers and makers of the Sitio, city, and nation. Manifestations of unintendedness vis a vis the Sitio San Roque’s laboring class status are from different tenurial statuses and housing rights claims to spatial commodification – the reproduction of space as a consequence of consecutive and systematic processes of class based interest and neocolonialism. Status are differentiated from renters, owners, sharers, keepers (*tagapangalaga*), and pawnbrokers (*napagsanglaan*). While qualification to rights are qualified for relocation, disqualified for relocation but qualified for financial assistance, and disqualified to both relocation and financial assistance.



Figure 3: Ayala's spatial commodification of Sitio San Roque. The existing Trinoma and the being built Vertis North are both owned by the Ayalas. Photo is from Ayala's Alveo Land.

<https://alveolandbyayala.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/highpark-map.jpg>

Sitio San Roque’s spatial commodification and its residents’ exclusion are not instantaneous. In the Sitio, it occurs from the continuing processes made by the Philippine state, compradors, and foreign capital. It began from the GPh’s shelter loans in 1974 up to 1987 (Payer, 1982, 327; Toussaint, 2008) and funding (Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines, 2007a, 1) from the World Bank and NHA’s revoking the reserved status of Philippine public lands (Office of the

President of the Republic of the Philippines, 1987). Preceded by UDHA's (Urban Development and Housing Act) operationalization of privatization of urban land in 1992 (Foja, 2015; KADAMAY, n.d.; Mabilin, 2014, 136). Next is the hastening privatization of Quezon City triangles in 2007 by the national and local government's legislative "good" governance (Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines, 2007a, Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines, 2007b; Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines, 2008) for "public" finance. Finally, and what is ongoing, is the realization of privatization through Public-Private Partnership (PPP) of the Sitio in 2009 (ALI, 2009, 13; Ysmael, 2009, 2).

Spatial commodification of the Sitio is a favored "development" for the Ayalas and its foreign ties to the "idle" land of the Sitio (Ysmael, 2009, 2-3). Favorability bases from the Ayalas agential annexation of foreign capital that came especially after the World Bank's fund and guidance for urban use (Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines, 2007a, 1). Favorability is applied when the Ayalas debauched their security of "development" through the deep history of networks in the GPh. That such network is being greased through the policy of national government's liberalization and deregulation of public lands and the local government's neoliberal "good" governance to secure city funds, among others. In the annexation and networking, "development"-induced displacement to the people of the Sitio is no coincidence for the Ayalas. It is a no brainer that the Ayalas, who owns over 10% of total land of Metro Manila in the sixties (Free Press as quoted in D. Simbulan, 2005, 88), will be interested even it is a "development" aggression. Because, the Sitio is a worthwhile cityspace for the Ayalas and their imperialist ties in the heart of the city, for dumping surplus capital and profiteering through businesses that ranges from real estate, casino, malls, transit, and to other ventures like outsourcing and tourism.



Figure 4: A 2010 picture of the demolition in the EDSA part of Sitio San Roque. Photo is from Ilang Ilang Quijano.



Figure 5: The barricade of Sitio San Roque residents against the demolition in 2010 led to traffic in the EDSA. Photo is from Manila Times.
<https://www.manilatimes.net/component/content/article/42-rokstories/26863-quezon-city-squatters-demolition-turns-violent-causes-heavy-traffic>

Abandoned by the government that favored the Ayalas, in 2010 an eventful slum clearance was set to the residents of the Sitio (Suarez and Abella, 2010). Provoked, the residents' frustration, rage, and consciousness culminated. They bravely set up *barikada* (barricade) that enabled them a piece of their right to the city. However, after winning — continuing today, the Ayalas with the local government of Quezon City and the national government through NHA, more than others, use different tactics as devices in evicting the different residents of the Sitio. The tactics are from series of pocket demolitions, the paradoxical coercion of consent of “voluntary” or “self”-demolition for socialized housing or cheap financial assistance¹⁰, to the malicious arrests of community dwellers with insufficient bases.

With the dwellers' misery and continued government neglect, a part of the Sitio's dwellers accepted residential units, even far away from Metro Manila (cf. Ishioka, 2016; Peña, 2011). In the relocation sites, there is limited or far from infrastructures and employment (Ishioka, 2016; Peña, 2011, 66-91). Peña (2011, 136) abruptly conclude, a “risk of impoverishment” in the relocation sites, a reason some go back to the Sitio and other poor and slum communities. Moreover, some of the Sitio's dwellers became complicit to the typical and hard to avoid neoliberal-localism of housing (IPD and CHR, 2014, 72; Peña, 2011, 51-60) and/or, alliance (Magno, 2002), from the Ayalas, the government to multilateral institutions.

¹⁰ As it have been noted not all dwellers of the Sitio are qualified for socialized housing. In 2018, in the priority area of immediate demolition in the Sitio, area J, located near to EDSA, almost half of its residents are disqualified for socialized housing. Much more, a great number from the disqualified cannot be given even the cheap financial assistance.



Figure 6: KADAMAY members help *tumbalik* a member renter's home in Sitio San Roque, which was forcedfully and *illegally* demolished without consent, socialized housing, and done during typhoon Rosita (Yuto). Photo is from the Author.

As we can see, as the apparent continuing existence of the Sitio not all residents are involved in instant and lesser-principled trades. Still, in the Sitio, some have unmoved principle of the labor's use of government land to value labor against the Ayalas' rent for private and foreign profit. For the remaining, some are grouped in KADAMAY¹¹, they continue to exist by collectively broadening their ranks. Broadening is pursued through a more democratic struggle of rights claiming, not just the long-time owners of houses but also of the different tenurial statuses of residents, such as sharers and renters. They collectively struggle from repairing houses, which upon recently prohibited by the security guards manned by

¹¹ KADAMAY is Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (National Alliance of Filipino Urban Poor). KADAMAY's struggle resists both the dominant class' neoliberalism and popular protests' localism. Instead, KADAMAY calls for a pro-poor housing and other social services program anchored to the structural causes of Philippine society [cf. KADAMAY, [2008] 2018; KADAMAY, 2007]. Focusing to the radical efforts of KADAMAY is not meant to discount the well-intended pro-poor efforts of other groups not affiliated with KADAMAY. This is rather, for both KADAMAY and other groups, a comradely critique and suggestion (see last section of the article).

the Ayalas, up to remaining, developing, and living in the Sitio. These struggles are fought in different avenues from conferences, talks, and developing and lobbying alternative development plan in the Baranggay, NHA, Presidential Commission of the Urban Poor, and even in the Quezon City Hall, to street protests in Agham Road, EDSA, or near Malacañan Palace. Furthermore, collective and individual political endurance in the struggle are also taken up. To endure, the organized residents of the Sitio deepen their analysis. Deepening is meant in rooting the class unobvious act of structural inequality of their spatial marginalization and the Sitio's spatial commodification. From a deepened analysis, housing and household problem are informed with anti-poor national issues of economy and politics, such as deregulation of oil and basic commodity price, rural land reform, labor contractualization, national election, and President Duterte's drug campaign.

The residents of Sitio San Roque struggle, fight, stay, went back, and even be complicit to hegemonic norm, because Sitio San Roque is a home to live, work, and dream. Some possible reasons behind these are the Sitio's residents' spatial practice and spatial practicality.

Spatial practice, or as Bayat (1997) terms it "quiet encroachment of the ordinary", is the general class-based act by the urban laboring classes as a factor to space. It is an act, more than often defaulting to a class unconscious non-collectivity (Bayat, 1997, 57), in creating and developing the community, city, and nation. The most vivid example to this is the proximity of work and livelihood of the resident as central reason of staying. Whereas, spatial practicality or *diskarte* is attributed to the particular set of spatial practice. The particularity is wide-ranging. These are from muddling through what can be done, use and help within the public and private spatial proximity, to extending anything that can be viable outside the immediate community, which include networking and labor flight to foreign lands. Further, these particularities are often done with lowest chance and high risks, and confined in the context and struggle of class-based marginalization. The goal of both practice and practicality amounts for the broadest sense of qualitative improvement of humane living (cf. Bayat, 1997, 59-62; R. Simbulan, 1998). These are the creative modification and cooperative endeavor carried out through individual and collective initiatives, even sometimes become counterproductive. The examples in the Sitio are from cementing alleys, creation of different kinds of bridges, plumbing for water supply, electrifications and even to tapping collective procedures and building organization against manipulated fire hazard, *tumbalik* (from *tumbang* [tumbled] *bahay* [house] *binalik* [reerected]), alternative people's development plan, and community protests, like the 2010 *barikada* of KADAMAY Sitio San Roque.

Like any space, Sitio San Roque is an amalgamation of spatial praxis. The uniqueness of the Sitio resides in its contradiction. These are the ongoing, strategic, and showcased spatial commodification for the Ayalas by the government and some "cooperative" groups; and the different modes of improvements of the urban

poor, which includes, *tumbalik*, alternative development plan, and *barikada* in 2010.

The Ayalas are Compradors

The Ayalas are compradors. Their interest should not be confused from the interest of a class-vague elite family (Pinches, 1992, 400), national bourgeoisie (Clarke and Sison, 2003, 228-230; Mao, [1926] 1965, 14; Sison in de Lima, 2003, 44), dependent, (Ferrer and Montes, 1990; Lim, 1990, 122-129) or transnational bourgeoisie (Cardenas, 2014, 56; Monsod in Glanz, 2001, 63).

Thus, to scrutinize the comprador definition and to clarify the Ayalas as such: an entity is comprador when one is part of a generalized group that has spatio-historical capital-driven partnership/s with foreign multinational and/or transnational corporation/s as well as multilateral institution/s. Whereas, in these foreign partnership/s, observable interlocks are sources of deep involvement for the promotion of foreign interests, more importantly the enduring processes of spatial fix for superprofit of financial capital export and its coexistent primitive accumulation that both prolong both the unindustrialized urban social relations, at least, and imperialism's existence (Alamon, 2017; Karl, 2017; Wang in Karl, 2017; cf. De Angelis, 2000; Harvey, 2003; Levien, 2015; Perelman, 2000). Whereas, through foreign partnership/s, the flood of foreign capital creates susceptible spatio-historical control in the processes of national and local governance. Whereas, at the very least, the economic foreign partnership and national and local political control co-constitute the placeness of basing and reconfiguring to the city as an inevitable desire, requirement and extension to exist, be effective, and dominate to the city and nation.

The enumeration of criteria emphasizes the compradors' interests remain *not* in their singularity as a capitalist class. On the contrary, they have inseparable and unceasing support to foreign capital for the preservation of their place-bound class interests. Moreover, the missing "reciprocity" in the Philippine economy is a sign they are not dependent or transnational capitalists, nor part of the national bourgeoisie. The *misreciprocity* can be examined if one considers the existence of the equivalent logical level of reproduction of labor relation, ownership and metamorphosis of capital (Ferrer and Montes, 1990, 19-26; Lim, 1990, 122-129). Further, compradors are not booty capitalists (Hutchcroft, 1998), that just take what they can in the crony and weak government. They are rather a nationally embedded element of the *compacted* Philippine political structure,¹² powered internationally as an agent of foreign interests through primitive accumulation and annexation of foreign capital (Karl, 2017; Wang in Karl, 2017, 129).

Accordingly, in a report filed by Ayala Corporation (AC), the mother company of the Ayalas, Mitsubishi controls 11.05% (Ayala Corporation, 2015, 6).

¹² One can read the Philippine Constitution's, Local Government Code's and UDHA's eloquent words to the biased "reliance" to the private sector (Rebong, 2009).

Battalla (1999) affirmed that the Ayalas and Mitsubishi have a continuing spatio-historical relationship. In addition, the Ayalas' financial flagship, Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI), is owned by 12.6% by the JP Morgan-Chase Bank (Villegas, 2000, 106). Furthermore, through business ties, an interlock can be observed. An example is the BPI's President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is a former official of the JP Morgan-Chase Bank (BPI, 2013). While Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala II, chairman and CEO of AC, is a member of both Mitsubishi Corporation International Advisory Committee and JP Morgan International Council, among others (Ayala Corporation n.d.).

Looking at Ayalas' business ventures, in agricultural and industrial sector persistence can be observed in contrast to the national and industrial development. One can also find in scrutiny, the Ayalas, as are also mediators of global primitive accumulation (Karl, 2017; Wang in Karl, 2017, 129). This can be discerned in Porac, Pampanga (Casilao et. al., 2016) or in Sicogon, Iloilo (Uson, 2017). In these provinces the Ayalas are grabbing the land to the tillers to accommodate the circulation and accumulation of foreign capital.¹³ For other Ayala investments, Ayalas' arts and culture, education, and communication companies have been melding the Filipinx culture with deep fidelity to foreign capitalism (cf. Chua, 2007). Furthermore, analyzing the Ayalas agricultural and industrial ventures with their cultural endeavors, in top of mediation of primitive accumulation, we can conclude that, in the least, the Ayalas are unconcerned in changing the existing unindustrialized Philippine urban social relation, at least.

With their economic and cultural bases, the Ayalas' influence to political governance is deeply imbedded to the Philippine state. Further, it can be observed that this secured political control, that makes them invincible today, is historically rooted since the heydays of direct colonialism of Spain and the United States (Quijano, 1952; Quezon, 2007; cf. Villegas, 2013). Thus, in 1989, the Ayalas, with like-minded real-estate compradors, easily voiced their prominent position in "leveling the reform" in the creation the National Urban Law – UDHA (cf. Rebong, 2009, 51). That after 23 years, in Singapore, the Ayalas bragged with celebratory remarks their masterminded unregulated urban Philippines (Mirasol as quoted in Lee, 2014). Making today, in Sitio San Roque, the Ayalas' arbitrary pressure to the NHA to implement the faster on-going demolition is a kind of compacted and imbedded control in the urban Philippines through the Philippine state.

¹³ The long history of rural land problem, and later concomitantly the comprador's socioeconomic enterprise created the existing plight to the Filipinx people. The plights are the limited and neglected industry, continued primitive accumulation, extended foreign capital's exploitation, landlessness. Landlessness in the provinces, in turn, caused the prevailing migration. In the cities, migration created the 80% of slum population (San Gabriel, 2012, 46), and continued creation of cheap and reserve force of labor. Furthermore, the many types of informalization of labor, including semiproletarianization, is a complication to the whole chronic process (cf. Moyo, Yeros and Jha, 2012).

Slumming in the Compradors City

This paper examined two popular city models, industrial and postcolonial, in the Philippine slum. As follows, it concludes that both models are inadequate for slum-fit, or spatial valuation of the Filipinx urban poor. However, using the ICM's class analysis and PcCM's anti-colonial discourse the CCM can be a synthesis. The comprador city model concludes the slums are manifestations of eruption (Tadiar, 2004, 81). Among the conditions of the eruption is firstly the continued exploitation, leading and transmitted by compradors and foreign imperialism to the whole Philippine society. Second, the exploitation of the compradors translates to a spatial domination to the city and nation with their foreign ties, through the state (cf. Miliband, 1987, 328). Third, the said domination is holistic and accompanied by the control of the cultural industry (arts and culture, education, media and its apparatuses and communication, etc.) (cf. Bagulaya [2006] and Bunao [2010, 46] for media; Chua [2007] for education). The control of the Philippine society promotes the elite's view and perspective to the poor (cf. Clarke and Sison, 2003; Portus, 2005, 111), that extends from neoliberal-localism to the place-based stigma.

The players of the eruption are the dominant compradors and the heterogeneous urban poor or urban laboring classes. On one hand, the compradors legitimize their power through the security of their foreign-tied capital. They extend and promote their power by being imbedded in the neocolonial state, commanding urban and societal reproduction. They create and reconfigure laws, use the police, lobby land use and "development" agendas, and even seemingly directing the GPh. While on the other hand, the urban poor are left on the waysides and evicted to the city. Exclusion is brought after the urban poor bargain their labor in the city they sweat, create, and develop. The results of different lives are the effect of opposing interests. The comprador is after by the profit of annexation and service for foreign monopoly capital. While the urban poor are towards humanely improving their quality of living. With this, the urban poor's labor and social space as part and parcel of their social class status is the subject for accumulation of the compradors' annexational greed for profit. In this paper, this is illustrated in Sitio San Roque: where the space is inhabited and labored by the Filipinx urban poor, owned by the Philippine government, and seemingly handed to the Ayalas with and through foreign capital.

Aside for the valuation of the urban poor, this model suggests an opening of theory and practice for a class conscious collectivity that is against in the default neoliberal-localist project. Accordingly, this model is against the compradors as an auxiliary to foreign monopoly capital that directs the neoliberal-localist projects. Thus, to fight for the right to the city in Sitio San Roque is to fight in class terms with the urban poor as heterogeneous laboring classes against the Ayalas as compradors of foreign imperialism which manifests the contemporary policy of neoliberalism and localist projects. However, as we can see, the compradors, like the Ayalas, is spatio-historically compacted and imbedded in the political landscape. Thus, materializing the right to the city against the comprador is to

overtake the structural bases of the compradors in the Philippine society, most importantly, foreign monopoly capitalism or imperialism (cf. Engels, [1872-1873] 1977).

Lastly, the scope of the paper is limited to Sitio San Roque. However, as suggested above, this paper's more general findings – the manifestation of dominance of compradors on cityspace, can benefit an explanation outside the Sitio. The same case of spatial reproduction can be compared in Makati, Taguig and Mandaluyong (Bretaña et. al., 2013; Cardenas, 2014; Shatkin, 2011). The same model can also be invited within Metro Manila — Las Piñas, Parañaque, Pasay, outside Metro Manila — Laguna, Cavite, Rizal, Batangas and Quezon Province, and even outside Luzon — Bacolod, Negros Occidental, Cebu, Cagayan de Oro, and Iloilo (ALI, 2013, 13-15). In addition, CCM can also be extrapolated in other Southern countries such from Malaysia (Hutnyk, 1999) to Brazil (Meade, 1997) and elsewhere.

There is much to study and struggle to truly end poverty, not just in the city. With the above, CCM is only a theoretical suggestion for an alternative; infusing this to the urban poor practice is the real challenge. Anyhow, let us be challenged by Brecht ([1932] 2001, 148), “*contradictions are our hope!*”

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