

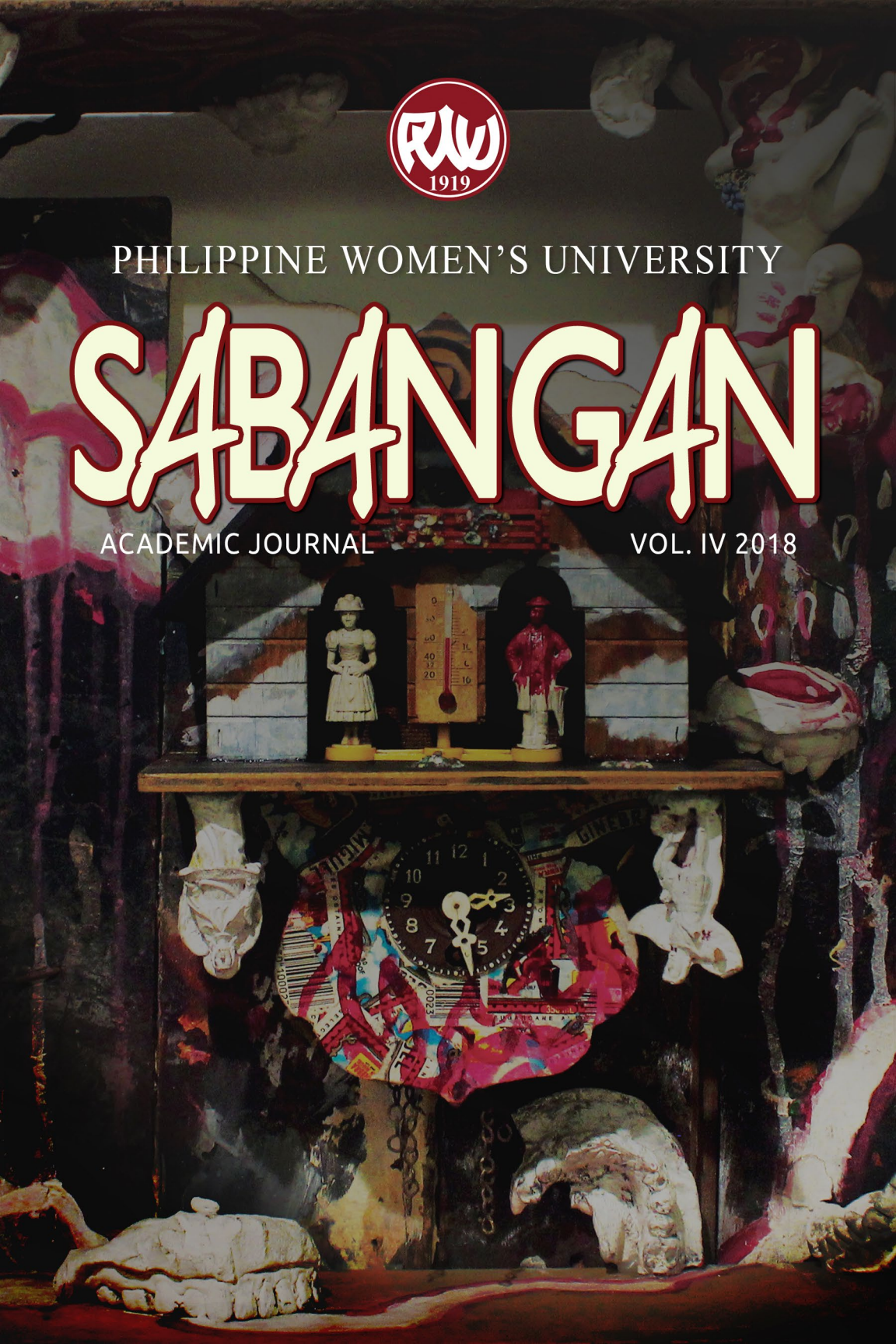


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Foreword

by **Francisco B. Benitez, Phd**

In a rapidly urbanizing world beset with aggressive development and increasing urban population, more and more people compete for shrinking space and scarce resources in cities. The poor and underprivileged find refuge in makeshift shanties and informal settlements that lack provisions of adequate water and sewerage, carved in the margins of towering and glittering skyscrapers. Cities are engines of economic growth and prosperity but cities also drive struggles for subsistence and survival. Economists trumpet the transformative power of the city, from higher revenues to improved infrastructure, but an ethnographic, humanistic analysis of urbanization exposes the tensions and trials that torment the urban poor.

This edition of *Sabangan* contemplates their nuanced experiences. The contributions of scholars to this edition enriches our understanding of the realities of urban poor families transitioning from informal housing to legal resettlement. It, however, raises questions about the necessity of resettling urban poor away from city centers, displacing them from sources of income and, more importantly, a locus of identity derived from their sense of space and place. Off-city formal housing may provide legal security and foster the sense of dignity and hope, but may also promote economic and emotional complexities, as what James Scott may call “the art of not being governed” is constrained. How do we reconcile the aesthetic, mimetic and emotional significance of in-city shelter, albeit materially inadequate, with the need for security of tenure and adequate facilities in contemporary models and aspirations for modernity and modernization? How does legal empowerment diminish the agency and autonomy of the urban poor in the otherwise anarchistic, self-improvised and self-regulated environment of informal settlements, and bring them more clearly within the ambit of the State’s governmentality? Nevertheless, the scholarly work in this edition demonstrates the enduring human ability, underpinned by faith, to adapt to, shape, and humanize environments, to enmesh urban conditions into a community.

The issues raised in *Sabangan* remind the reader of the commitment of the Habitat conferences of the United Nations, the first thereof was initiated by the late Helena Z. Benitez of the Philippine Women's University, that place the human experience of families and households at the center of settlement development. Four decades since the first Habitat conference in 1976, it remains the challenge to the State and scholars alike not to forget the human in human settlements.

Jose Francisco B. Benitez

Introduction

This issue of Sabangan (4) contains part of the doctoral thesis of Melanie Hackenfort (University of Koblenz, Germany), who conducted fieldwork in Cebu in 2011 on a housing settlement. Melanie's major concern was how to describe her informants' experiences using aesthetic concepts shared by members of the community. Anthropologists generally offer descriptions of village life using observable behaviours, eschewing the interior aspects of actions, including their aesthetic orientations. Melanie extends her descriptions of village life by including the feelings of her informants about their living conditions. Drawing on the work of MacDougall (1999) as well as Ackerman (2016), Melanie connects her own reflections and feelings with the responses of her informants. As Nader (2011) has argued, while ethnography includes descriptions of everyday life, the practice also involves a theory of description. In this case Melanie provides a description of people accepting their newly allocated houses and the corresponding feelings about material improvements as part of a wider aesthetic. The description is inscribed within a theory of aesthetics held by her informants.

Melanie's account begins with an evocative description of a ritual, combining both religious and secular symbols, involved in the allocation of a house for a family. While rituals are seen as mainly symbolic actions, in fact they often lay the groundwork for practical material accomplishments. Social structures are often underpinned by appropriate rituals (Perterra 1992). In this case, it involves the legal transfer of a house to its new owners as well as ensuring a socio-cultural appreciation of its significance. Using a biblical reference (Exodus), the ritual employs a range of symbols and actions (singing, washing of hands personal revelations) that imply and ensure a transition from a pre-liminal status to a full cooptation into the local housing community. Towards its conclusion, the actions become more explicitly religious, joyful and integrative. The ritual expresses the separation from a former existence (e.g. insecure & undignified habitation) to one whose prospects are more secure and dignified.

The detailed description of this ritual sets the stage for including apparently trivial elements such as the unceremonious behavior of its participants as well as the strong emotions felt at crucial parts, not as distractions but as essential components of an aesthetic experience constituting the ritual. Its legal ramifications as well as material consequences, important as they are, do not exhaust the reality as experienced by the participants. A complex web of feelings, sometimes contradictory, remembrances, regrets and unknown expectations also mark the event. As Ackermann (2016) argues, a written account often fails to properly represent these complexities, particularly when approached objectively. As he argues (Ackermann, 2016:32), a purely semiotic approach often disembodies knowledge which it sees as representation, resulting in an ascetic perspective on culture. The search for meaning often obscures the fact that much of social life consists of unreflective praxis.



The Exodus procession reaches the housing project and stops in front of the entrance gate.

Melanie moves on to discuss aspects of her entrance into the field. While preparation for the field attempts to foresee topics of interest for research, including possible obstacles, only one's presence in the field itself will finally shape the possibilities of any project. Melanie's initial interest in looking at the lives of scavengers proved to be impractical. Instead she decided to investigate a community nearby whose members had recently

been allocated concrete houses. These housing conditions were a great improvement, materially, from the previous accommodation in squatter communities. However, the new conditions also had certain disadvantages involving greater costs or the more difficult access to basic services like water and electricity. These last two became the focus of Melanie's research.

Water and electricity are considered basic needs of modern living but we often forget that these are relatively recent achievements. It is urban living; with its aggregated housing conditions and the necessity of earning an income that required the provision of potable water and electricity. Clean water was the major contributor in the prevention of transmissible urban diseases in the 19th century, while electricity made it possible to extend working hours. Squatter communities are adaptations to modern life, providing basic accommodation and accessible employment. But their illegal status and inadequate structures against the forces of nature such as floods generate feelings of insecurity. Allocated concrete houses, however basic, afford its residents a comparatively secure future.

These improvements are readily appreciated but other problems inevitably intervene. Expenses such as water and electricity bills and the absence of adequate employment, in addition to the often unfamiliar requirements of modern urban living, generate anxieties and even nostalgia for the freedoms of squatter life. What Melanie tries to describe is the notion of housing as a form of dwelling-in-the world, which includes not only material elements but also aesthetic preferences and even past remembrances. In a sense, a concrete house represents a containment and limitation of a life-style, unless accompanied by an adequate income. Living in the squatter community, despite all its difficulties, provides more sources for improvisation. Building materials are readily available and scavenging provides a steady income.

Melanie successfully argues against a portrayal of squatter communities as dens of iniquity, criminality and depravity, against which a picture of legal housing communities as havens of amity and progress are often contrasted. As Bourdieu (1990) has argued we should not confuse our models of reality with the reality of the model. Real communities, whether consisting of squatters or of legal home owners consist of a wide variety of peoples with corresponding virtues and vices. From a community of self-initiated labour to one of external consumption describes the transition from squatter life to housing estates. The former requires life skills stressing resourcefulness and initiative, while the latter necessitates accommodating

to paternalistic forces.

Finally, Melanie describes her departure from the field, after having been accepted into the community. This raises issues contraposed to those encountered when arriving in the field. How does one detach oneself after having established friendships and trust with informants? What forms of reciprocity exist between researcher and informant? Can anthropological fieldwork contribute to a better understanding of social inequalities? Melanie's research unravels some of the aporias encountered in simplistic accounts of development seen as improvement in material conditions. While not discounting the importance of material security provided by concrete houses, a home consists as much of aesthetic expectations, remembrances and personal touches as they do in fixed structures.

Following an established practice in Sabangan we asked recognized scholars to comment on Melanie Hackenfort's essay. Rosanne Rutten(University of Amsterdam) has conducted extensive research in the Visayan region and has published extensively in her field. Sarah Webb (Queensland University) completed her doctoral research in Palawan and is now based in Melbourne. Paul Mathews (retired scholar) is a regular contributor to Sabangan and has published in the areas of reproduction and sexuality. Maria Mangahas teaches at the Department of Anthropology, University of the Philippines, and has done prolonged fieldwork in Batanes and Davao. Their comments are included in this issue as well as Melanie's responses. As indicated by their commentaries, Melanie's essay is seen as an important and original contribution to Philippine scholarship.

This issue of Sabangan (4) also includes several book reviews. Joson Lorenzana reviews the recent publication of Anna Cristina Pertierra (2018) on the anthropology of media for a digital age. Raul Pertierra assesses Disorder and the Disinformation Society by J.P. Marshall, J. Goodman, D. Zowghi & F. da Rimini,(2015). Also included are two important reviews of earlier published works with pertinent relevance for contemporary Philippine society and culture. Niels Mulder discusses the importance of Severino, R C.&, Salazar, L. (Eds.). (2007). Whither the Philippines in the 21st Century? Rolan Ambrosio provides an extensive discussion and assessment of Colonial Counterpoint by Irving, D. R. M. (2010).

Sabangan depends on the generous support of Philippine Women's University and its President Dr. Francisco Benitez as well as the editorial and technical services provided by the Office of Lydia Benitez-Brown. With their support, Sabangan will continue publishing original and significant

contributions to Philippine scholarship.

Raul Pertierra PhD
Editor

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Excerpts from the Field

Dr. Melanie Hackenfort
Koblenz University Germany

Introduction

It is four o'clock in the morning. I hear the alarm ringing at my neighbors' place reminding me to get up. Today is a special day for the community. Six new families from different squatter areas and the dumpsite settlement next door are transferring to the housing project. Therefore, at dawn, the residents and NGO-employees perform a ritual of transfer called 'the Exodus' for the new home partners. It is the sixth batch of awardees that today undergo the ritual. When I leave my house, it is still dark in the community. I barely see the ground I am walking on. Only some houses are already illuminated. I walk up the gravel road passing by the numerous rows of houses towards the chapel and try to find my way around the numerous potholes without tripping. While walking, the smell of freshly baked bread assails my nose. It is the first time that I smell fresh bread in the community. The smell comes from the new cooperative bakery, which will be ceremonially inaugurated today and will start its business after the ritual of transfer. I pass by the lately finished building for the bakery and the Herbarium. The rooms are illuminated and above the door, a handmade paper announces the name and location of the new bakery. I keep walking towards the worship center, which is only a few meters away. A bonfire burns under the acacia tree in front of the chapel. A couple of people stand around the fireplace. The smell of fresh bread slowly mixes with the smell of burning wood and steaming coffee from a big pot above a makeshift fire. The president of the Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) and two women are busy preparing the worship center for the Exodus. They place a table with a white tablecloth at the side entrance of the chapel facing the entrance gate of the housing site. While the president checks out the sound system, the two women take a hand bell and leave the chapel. Giggling and holding on to the shoulder of the other, they walk down the two main roads of the housing site. They ring the bells to inform the people about the upcoming start of the Exodus.

One by one, the residents come out of their houses. They gather under the acacia tree to wait for the priest and the NGO employees to arrive, and to start the ritual. Two men are joking and dancing under the acacia tree. Even though it is still early in the morning, the people arriving seem to be in a good mood and excited about the event of the day.

The sun has not yet risen. The air feels cool and relatively fresh. It is not yet as heavy as it gets during the day due to the tropical heat in combination with the smoke of bonfires rising up from numerous dirty kitchens in the community and the surrounding neighborhoods. Nikita, living next door, arrives at the acacia tree with another woman from the community. They used to be neighbors. Both wear jackets, although I only wear shorts and a t-shirt. They wonder if I do not feel cold because they feel chilly. The procession of the Exodus starts outside the housing project at the chapel of San Roque which is in front of the dumpsite settlement. Just shortly before five o'clock, the priest and the NGO employees arrive and the people gathering around the acacia tree set out towards the chapel. Nikita and I join the group. It is a five-minute walk, passing by the paper manufacturing company situated on the left and a sari-sari store and the Material Recycling Facility (MRF) on the right side of the access road. At this time of the day, the access road is not yet busy: there are no garbage trucks lining up in front of the entrance gate of the MRF, and there are no employees coming from or going to work. It is even too early for the tricycle drivers who usually line up in front of the sari-sari store to wait for potential customers. The only ones busy at this time of the day are the countless cocks in the neighborhood filling the air with their morning crowing.

It is about 5 o'clock, when the group of around 50 people finally arrives at the chapel of San Roque and gathers together in a semi-circle in front of the chapel. Besides the awardees with their families and the NGO employees, the group is composed mainly of women aged 40 to 50 years - some accompanied by their children. Five women place themselves in front of the group. They wait for the priest to be prepared. When he is ready, they start praying the rosary in Cebuano. They hold the rosary in their hands and go from bead to bead with their fingers while praying. One of the women carries the figurine of Virgin Mary that usually stands in the community chapel. In the meantime, another woman distributes long, small white candles to the awardees and lights them. It is still quite dark because the sun still has not risen and the soft yellow flames of the candles cast a warm glow on the people holding them. Now, the air is filled with the melodious praying voices of the women and the crowing of the roosters fades into the background. Looking around I take some pictures of the

scene.

The awardees and their family members carry different things with them. There is Fay, who I got to know during her sweat-equity-work in the weeks before. Today she, her husband and their adopted son transfer to their new house. They carry with them a yellow plastic bag with a folded 'banig' (a woven sleeping mat) and a pillow in it, and a plastic container filled with rice (but this I only found out after the ritual). Another awardee is Trinity and her husband with their two daughters aged 4 and 5 years. For the ritual of transfer, they have brought a bucket and empty plastic containers. Trinity and her family have already lived in the housing project for a couple of months together with her mother and her younger brother. As she is expecting her third child, they applied for their own house. What she, however, does not know at this moment is that she will give birth to her baby boy the next night, their first night in their new house. After the prayer leaders have finished the first part of the Rosary, the group starts its procession towards the housing project. The priest and the woman carrying the Virgin Mary lead the procession, followed by the three prayer leaders, the awardees and their families. In the last couple of weeks, the awardees spent around 200 hours in the community to accomplish their sweat-equity work through weeding, cleaning the communal grounds and working on the construction site. The sweat-equity work is a kind of pre-service for the community, through which the awardees are to demonstrate their willingness to become an active member of the community. The procession makes its way back to the housing project and stops in front of the open entrance gate. Three women - one of the awardees, her daughter and one of the prayer leaders - step in front of the group for a prayer. The awardee's daughter holds the bible in front of her mother and the other woman provides light with a candle to read out verse 3 from the book of Exodus, Chapter 13:

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine. And Moses said unto the people: Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place.

The priest then steps in front of the group. He welcomes the awardees and their families and gives a short speech about today's event – the Exodus. Referring to the biblical Exodus, he compares the transfer of the awardees with the story of the Israelites – 'the chosen people' – fleeing

from the enslavement in Egypt to the Promised Land. After he has finished, the awardees take turns in also giving a short speech, in which they share some experiences of their former lives. They express their feeling of joy about having been selected as home partners of the housing project. Fay is the first to speak. While in tears and covering her face with a white hand towel, she expresses her gratitude to different people who helped her since she became a member of the NGO. She names the German doctors who saved her life when she had a tubal pregnancy a couple of years ago. She also expresses her gratitude to one of the NGO employees who encouraged and supported her to apply for the housing project. When she finishes her speech, still in tears, the people around me start to clap their hands. I feel a desire to go to Fay and hug her but I hold myself back thinking it might not be proper. The next who speaks is Trinity. She slowly walks in front of the group with her already big belly. She also names a couple of people who made it possible to finally move into their own house in the housing project despite her only having a small income.

While the awardees speak, I am standing in the middle of the audience. I feel the intensity of the atmosphere. It is emotionally charged. Some of the women beside me weep silently and dry their tears. The atmosphere and Fay's and Trinity's words affect me and put me in a reflective mood. I find it hard to imagine what they already went through in their lives and what this step to transfer to the housing project really means for them. I continue listening to the next awardees. Their speeches are much shorter than the first two. The last speaker is a male awardee. He seems to be very nervous, struggling with finding the right words. He takes deep breaths in between words.

After the speeches, the main part of the ritual starts with the so-called pilgrim dance. It is performed while crossing the threshold to the housing project in the following way: five rows are formed, in which the participants line up behind each other. The right hand is laid on the left shoulder of the person standing in front. Linked one to the other, the procession starts crossing the threshold by taking two steps forward and one step back. I walk in one of the middle positions trying to keep the right tempo. The man walking in front of me seems to have some difficulties keeping up. I hear Nikita giggling behind me. The procession weaves its way forward around 20m towards the side entrance of the chapel. Here, the next part of the ritual is taking place: the washing of hands and handing over of keys.

The table covered with a white tablecloth that has been placed beside the entrance of the chapel in the morning is now in use. For the washing of

hands, a black plastic washing pan filled with water and a towel is put on the right side of the table. Six keys lay besides them on the left side, each with a written piece of scotch tape on. By taking a closer look through the lens of my camera, I can read what is written on one: 'Fay'.

The priest and the project coordinator of the housing project walk behind the table. The awardees and their families line up in front of it. Here, the priest welcomes them again. He briefly explains the symbolic meaning of the washing of hands. Then, the project coordinator takes the first key and calls out the name written on the scotch tape. The called out awardee and his/her family step in front of the table. All family members are asked to wash their hands. Before handing over the key, the priest shakes hands with all family members and expresses his congratulations. Then the project coordinator gives the key to the priest, who hands it over to the new home partner. Fay is the third awardee: she, her husband and son go in front of the table to wash their hands. Her son is just tall enough to look over the table. Therefore, she helps him to wash and dry his hands. She seems to be happy but also a little bit perplexed as if she cannot yet understand what is happening at that moment.

After receiving the keys, the families walk into the chapel where, in the meantime, the residents of the housing project formed a line from the entrance up to the altar to welcome the new families. While the atmosphere at the washing table was rather tense, the atmosphere in the chapel is thrilling and joyful. The people in the church laugh and sing. They raise their arms in the air clapping and hugging each new member of the community after entering the chapel. In the chapel, the Ritual of Transfer is now being completed with the so-called 'Panumpa' – the Pledge of Occupancy. The new home partners and their families take their seats on the right side of the chapel and the other community members on the left side in testimony of this last part of the ritual. First, the priest asks everyone in the chapel to stand up. Next, the new home partners and their partners take the Certificate of the Panumpa in their left hand and raise their right hand with the open palm facing forward. Then, the new home partners read the Panumpa aloud:

PANUMPA – PLEDGE OF OCCUPANCY

"I, [name of the awardee], new resident of [name of the socialized housing project] pledge to follow the policies and laws of BEC, the Cooperative and of JPIC-IDC, Inc. here in the community.

I pledge to be active and to participate in all activities of the BEC and the Cooperative here.

I further promise to help maintain peace and orderliness in the community by respecting my neighbors and implementing good relationship to each and everyone.

I also promise to take care of my house and to maintain its cleanliness including the entire surrounding within [name of the socialized housing project].

I will take precaution to my action to be a role model to the community especially for children and youth.

So, help me God."

After reading out the 'Panumpa', the project coordinator distributes ball pens to the home partners to finally sign the pledge. Fay signs the 'Panumpa' as well. I wonder whether she read the 'Panumpa' or whether she memorized it beforehand because she barely knows how to read and write. Only later I learned that she did not apply right away for becoming a home partner of the housing project because of her poor reading and writing skills. However, one of the NGO employees encouraged her to apply and also offered to teach her. When all new home partners had signed the 'Panumpa', the project coordinator collects the certificates for the priest to countersign them in his function as executive director of the NGO. The ceremony then closes with the 'Welcome Song' welcoming the new residents to the community:

Welcome to the family / We're glad that you have come / To share your life with us / As we grow in love and / May we always be to you / What God would have us be / A family always there / To be strong and to lean on // / May we learn to love each other / More with each new day / May words of love be on our lips / In everything we say / May the spirit melt our hearts / And teach us how to pray / That we might be a true family
BRIDGE To be strong and to lean on (repeated thrice).

The women, who led the prayer during the Exodus, now form the choir. They are accompanied by one of the three communal guitar players. The sound of the guitar is transmitted via a sound system. The lyrics of the song are presented on a handwritten poster (the backside of a former calendar) fixed on a wooden self-made presentation board. Thus, everyone can join

in singing even without knowing the lyrics. In loud and joyful voices the choir begins to sing while clapping and raising their hands in the air.

THE LACK OF APPROPRIATE HOUSING

“As the world’s population continues to grow, as the cities of the Third World expand in their multi-millions, as resources become exploited and land scarce in degrees which make it progressively more difficult for individuals and families to satisfy their housing needs, there is an increasing pressure on the State and on nations to provide houses. Housing the homeless is seen as a national, even an international responsibility which can only be solved by intervention in what has been, for much of the world’s populations in the past, their own affair. Unfortunately, the solution has usually been in the form of anonymous apartments in the sky, or militaristic ranks of low-cost housing schemes. Rarely does such ‘housing provision’ take into account the culture specific communities, and the mass-produced dwelling seldom reflects the values of the family” (Oliver 1990:14).

Offering affordable housing to the poor is one of the main challenges in times of rapid urbanization especially in developing countries like the Philippines. Rural migrants move to the city in order to escape their impoverished living conditions and in the hope of a better life. Upon arrival in the city, most of them find temporary accommodation with kin or friends from the province. From the perspective of the rural migrants squatter areas offer, apart from their illegal status and poor dwelling conditions, a free or cheap place to dwell within close reach of everything necessary for daily life and thus, an opportunity to secure a livelihood in the city. However, living in a squatter area provides only a temporary solution due to the settlers’ illegal dwelling status, the low quality of their makeshift dwellings, and the poor living conditions in terms of safety and hygiene. Although there are numerous examples that show that people spend their whole lives in such settlements, it is clear that squatter areas do not provide a perspective for life “kay walay ugma” (because tomorrow might not come), as my research partners called it. This expression means that the squatter settlers do not know whether tomorrow will come. In addition to the constant threat of fire or other natural disasters, squatter settlers are exposed to the possibility of forced eviction by the government or landowners. From the government’s point of view, informal settlements pose major problems for the city. They block potential building land and are considered urban danger zones in terms of pollution and crime. That is why they are referred to as urban eyesores. In Metro Cebu, the government is tackling the problem of informal dwelling either by offering relocation sites for squatter settlers or

by providing financial compensation with free transport back to the settlers' areas of origin. Compensation payments and the return of squatters to the province do not really solving the problem of informal dwelling. This simply shifts the problem from one place to another. The relocation of squatter settlers to low-cost housing seems to be the most suitable means against informal dwelling.

Relocation projects are initiated both by the government and by private initiatives of non-governmental organizations. No matter what institution launches such projects, they all have to deal with the question of what they should offer to the beneficiaries. This question includes, on the one hand, what claims informal settlers may make and, on the other hand, what offers they should be satisfied with. These questions are based on another question: what do people need to lead a good life or to attain quality of life? Within development policy debates concerned with anti-poverty strategies, this is a central issue. In the Philippines, the government developed the so-called Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) approach:

“MBN is an approach of prioritizing primary requirements for survival, security and enabling needs. A total of ten basic needs have been formally adopted by the Philippine government as the priority consideration to attain quality of life. To address survival requirements are such needs as food and nutrition, health, water/sanitation and clothing. For security, the basic needs encompass shelter, peace and order/public safety and income/employment. For enabling purposes, basic education/literacy, people's participation and family care/psychosocial needs are deemed important to attain survival and security” (Bautista 1997: 181).

This approach is also at the heart of the socialized housing project where I conducted nine months ethnographic fieldwork. It is a relocation project of a local Philippine non-governmental organization. The NGO intends to not only provide their beneficiaries with roofs and walls to house their bodies but also to help them establish new homes and lives. As such, the NGO regards its socialized housing projects as an alternative to state-run relocation projects because of offering not only low-cost housing but also the so-called Human and Community Development (HCD) Program. With the activities involved in this program, the NGO wants to enable the residents to build up an autonomous and self-sustaining community that empowers them to pave a way out of poverty. By providing the residents with a material and social structure, they lay the foundation for a change in lifestyle. This means the chance to start a new life with a perspective for the future, which they can and have to shape themselves. During

my fieldwork, I noticed that despite the NGOs' good intentions and the improved dwelling conditions, conflicts arose between the residents and NGO employees. These were triggered by the above questions, namely what the residents can demand from the NGO and what basic provisions they must be satisfied with, since it is their responsibility to provide for themselves and to invest in their new home. These experiences form the starting point of my research project.

From the perspective of the NGO and most foreign observers, it is unimaginable to live a good life in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements because they consider it to be inhumane living conditions. This may be valid from an outsider's perspective. However, from the emic perspective of informal dwellers, the squatter areas and especially dumpsite settlements offer the urban poor an opportunity to live a (better) life in the city than in the provinces, where they might be even more affected by poverty and the lack of schooling. This is not a defense for life in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements, which lack safety, proper sanitation and hygiene. Rather, my aim is to evoke a change of perspective on the life of informal settlers and what advantages an urban niche existence can offer. Regardless of how the residents look back on their lives, they regard it as an existential part of their lives and as a necessary prerequisite for becoming a so-called partner beneficiary and ultimately a home partner of the socialized housing project.

ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK

From May 2011 until January 2012, I conducted fieldwork in the socialized housing project. It is the largest and most comprehensive resettlement project of the NGO which I joined. The NGO and especially the social workers who were assigned to the project supported my research intentions. They allowed access to their members and offered for me to stay in the so-called model house for the time of my fieldwork. This opportunity strongly shaped my research project and made me aware that ethnographic research is necessarily flexible and subject-oriented. It requires the ethnographer to make decisions on the spot and to develop research questions adequate to the phenomena showing up in the field. Living in the housing project enabled me to observe and participate in the everyday life of my informants and thus, to experience their living conditions (more or less) with my own sensuous body. As expected, the ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in compliance with the traditional methodological approach of participant observation. The sensuous experience of the researcher, through which s/he learns in the research process, plays a

central role in this methodological approach. Within anthropology, this is a fact often either taken for granted or considered as the necessary evil of ethnographic fieldwork. However, it should be considered as a potential source of ethnographic knowledge.

The present study aims to contribute to the current methodological discourse within anthropology. I will therefore discuss the potentials of aesthetic theories in the sense of aisthesis as the theory of sensory perception, first for concepts from material culture studies; and second, in more detail for the methodology of participant observation and as such for the ethnographic knowledge process. In a third step, I will outline my being-in-the-field (as I call it). It deals with common aspects of doing ethnographic fieldwork like approaching and entering the field, the dynamics within the process of conducting fieldwork, sensory experiences and the ethnographic learning process.

In order to better understand how my research partners and informants experience the new living conditions in the housing project, I considered it necessary to also take past dwelling experiences into account. This access to experience is a natural consequence arising out of the theoretical approach applied in this study, which also draws on phenomenology. Within phenomenology, experience is temporally structured in ever-shifting horizons between past and present, as well as future anticipations. I employed this temporal structure in the guideline questionnaire and finally also in the structure of the present study. It enables me to give a more holistic account of my research partners' life-worlds, which according to Miller (2008), is something that seems to have become passé in mainstream anthropology.

ETHNOGRAPHIC DATA

Ethnographic data is comprised of field experiences gathered through participant observation understood as an active engagement in the life-world under study. I documented my experiences and observations in German in 37 weekly reports. Besides participant observation, I also conducted formal and informal interviews. By informal I understand those unscripted conversations with people from the housing project with whom I talked about current topics, when we sat together, about forthcoming activities or events (e.g. a ritual of transfer, a general assembly, the visit of foreigners), or weather conditions and their consequences (e.g. flooding of squatter areas or the lack of rain causing water scarcity in the housing

project), etc. I also talked to NGO employees and associated partners about topics concerning the housing project. These conversations I documented in memos. By formal interviews I mean qualitative interviews. During my fieldwork, I conducted about 38 qualitative interviews with the support of three research assistants: 7 narrative interviews, 4 group discussions, and 27 guideline-based, narrative interviews of about two to four hours. My research assistants translated the conversations and narrative interviews from English to Cebuano and vice versa.

The narrative interviews and the group discussions, I conducted in the first months of my fieldwork. They served to learn about the different life stories of the residents of the housing project in order to develop a research question evolving out of the field. I was interested in what matters for the people and what makes a difference in their new living environment. Out of everyday experiences from living in the housing project and the first narrative interviews, I developed the guideline for the main interviews, which I conducted in the period from October until December. I call these interviews guideline-based narrative interviews, because I only used the guideline for an orientation during the interviews, and otherwise tried to be open to those topics offered by my research partners. In contrast to the initial narrative interviews, I conducted the guideline-based interviews in Cebuano with the help of my third research assistant. All interviews, I conducted in the Model House as it turned out that otherwise our conversations would have been constantly interrupted by family members, neighbors or children coming in and out. Even though, the Model House at first might have created a constructed conversational situation, in the end my research partners rather experienced it as a trustful atmosphere, which encouraged them to openly talk about their concerns and fears involved in dwelling in the housing project. The Model House thus became a special place for my informants, research assistants and me, and the guardian not only of concerns and fears but also of dreams and future aspirations. During my fieldwork, I worked together with three research assistants. My first two research assistants stopped working for me when they found proper employment. But they kept on supporting me in their free time.

All research assistants were women who live in the housing project and as such were more or less familiar with the different origins of the residents, the history and structure of the project as well as its challenges. They did not only assist me during interviews, but were my main informants and teachers; they were important gatekeepers and door openers and most of all they were my companions who also cared for me when I was ill and hospitalized. They significantly contributed to the success of my

ethnographic endeavor.

A MATTER OF LANGUAGE

A major topic requiring explanation is language not in the singular but in the plural. Languages have played a decisive role in my research project namely English, Filipino, Bisaya and German. This study is written in English, in the hope it might reach a broader readership. However, the most important reason for writing in English arises from the field, namely that at least some of my informants may be able to read this study. This would not be possible, if I would have written it in German. In the Philippines, English is, besides Filipino, the lingua franca, one of the initial reasons why I decided to conduct my ethnographic fieldwork in the Philippines. I hoped to be able to start the fieldwork without prior knowledge of the local language. This at least turned out to be true for my explorative field trip in August 2010. During this stay, I realized however that the people with whom I intended to work either do not speak English, or feel too shy or ashamed to speak to me in English. I mainly spoke English with my research assistants, colleagues and students from the University, as well as with the NGO employees and associated partners who came from all over the world. However, the people in the squatter areas, dumpsite settlements and in the housing project, as well as street vendors or taxi drivers mainly spoke Bisaya. Bisaya or Cebuano, as it is mostly referred to, is the mother tongue of about 20 million people in the Islands of the Visayas and Mindanao. Therefore, I started to learn Cebuano after my explorative field trip. In Germany, there are only few Cebuano language classes available. Hence, I had to practice it on my own with the help of Visayan language guides. When I arrived in Cebu, I took a three-week individual Cebuano language tuition. After that, I mainly learned speaking Cebuano by practicing everyday with the people around me. They were actually the best teachers. Even though I mainly spoke in English and in Cebuano during my stay in the field, I wrote my reports, notes and memos in German for practical reasons. As already mentioned, I conducted the first interviews in English and Cebuano with the help of my research assistants. However, I found the translations to be an interruption in the flow of conversations and time consuming. That is why I decided to do the guideline-based interviews in Cebuano. Only in case of misinterpretations or misunderstandings, we sometimes changed over to English. My efforts to talk to my research partners in Cebuano had a positive effect on our relationship. Speaking in Cebuano created a more respectful and trusting atmosphere.

APPROACHING THE FIELD

In 2010, I began to plan to conduct fieldwork exploring the life-world of so-called scavengers. I became interested in the aesthetics of waste and how it affects and shapes people dealing with it. This interest made me aware of the phenomenon of so-called scavengers. Those are people who make a living out of scavenging, i.e. gathering, sorting out and selling recyclables. It can be differentiated between two different kinds of scavengers: those, who wander the streets looking for recyclables to either use or sell, and those who also live on or close to a dumpsite. Martin Medina (2008) who most extensively conducted research on scavengers world-wide, traces the existence of this global phenomenon back to scarce resources, wars, and economic crises. In developmental countries, processes of rapid urbanization also play an important role in the creation of this phenomenon. For homeless and unemployed rural migrants and urban poor, dumpsites offer an opportunity to ensure their existence in the city: it offers a free place to dwell, free dwelling materials, sometimes even free food and moreover access to free resources to generate an income. Within social sciences, scavengers became of interest in the middle of the 1970s in the field of urban studies. Until recently, research projects on scavengers were mainly interested in the economic aspects of the phenomenon. Here, scavenging activities offer urban poor a niche existence within modern economy.

Most researchers are interested in the role scavengers play within the urban but also the global market. The most important works on scavengers within urban studies are the articles of Birkbeck (1979) for Columbia, Furedy (1984) who conducted research in India, Sicular (1991) who investigated the phenomenon in Indonesia, and Medina (2008) who gives an overview from a range of different countries worldwide. Within anthropology, the work of William J. Keyes (1974) and Stephan Kunz (1997) are relevant. Both conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Manila. Beside mainly economic aspects of this lifestyle, their accounts also provide a glimpse of the life-worlds of these people. However, as Medina rightly points out in his book, most research that has been done on scavengers is only based on quantitative methods and tends to be a historical. Furthermore, the main focus is most often placed on the economic relevance of this phenomenon and not so much on social and cultural aspects. There is a research gap dealing with the life-world of scavengers living on the dumpsite. Thus, I decided to conduct ethnographic fieldwork investigating the life-world of dumpsite dwellers, although I was unaware of the difficulties in doing so.

FIRST ENCOUNTERS IN THE FIELD

As mentioned earlier, exploration is an important tool within ethnographic fieldwork. It provides the conditions for a subject and process oriented research. So, in order to find out whether an ethnographic fieldwork about the life-world of scavengers is feasible, I first made an explorative field trip to the Philippines in August 2010. There, I stayed for two weeks in Manila and another two in Cebu City. In Manila, I met the anthropologist Dr. Raul Pertierra who after his retirement now lives and teaches at UP Diliman. With him, I discussed my research plans and possibilities of conducting the research in Manila. Additionally, I was able to get in touch with the German anthropologist, Stefan Kunz, who conducted ethnographic fieldwork about the scavengers of Smokey Mountain in the late 1990s. By chance, he worked at that time as a development worker in Cebu City. He suggested I visit him in Cebu to discuss my research plans and to introduce me to a local non-governmental organization (NGO) that works with scavengers. Stephan Kunz became the initial gatekeeper of my research project. He further introduced me to a German Missionary of the Divine Word, Father Heinz. He lived in Cebu for more than 20 years. Every day after 4 pm, he changed work place and tasks. He left his office and loaded his car with medicines and cookies to head for the different social hot spots of Metro Cebu. There, he visited and cared for the people (young and old) living in the streets, in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements. He finished his daily tour with a visit to the red light district situated right in the neighborhood of the main Campus of the University of San Carlos. He provided prostitutes with medical aid and contraceptives. In the two weeks of my stay in Cebu, I accompanied Fr. Heinz on his trips to different squatter areas, dumpsite settlements and to two socialized housing projects. Fr. Heinz explained the living conditions and spoke about his experiences of 25 years of street work. These excursions provided a first insight into the life-worlds of the urban poor population of Metro Cebu.

When I accompanied Fr. Heinz for the first time to a dumpsite settlement, I felt very nervous and afraid. I had no idea what to expect. How people would react to my presence and how the living conditions on the dumpsite would affect me. But the car ride took most of my fears away and I rather felt excited by the time we arrived at the settlement. The regular visits of Fr. Heinz seemed to be a fixed ritual for the dumpsite dwellers. They regularly waited for him. Mainly children and women carrying babies on their arms were already standing in line waiting for cookies and medical treatment. After everyone was supplied, Fr. Heinz took me for a stroll through the dumpsite settlement. I felt that the people very much

appreciated his weekly visits. The children greeted him with the traditional Filipino blessing-gesture, i.e. taking his hand and putting it to the forehead for receiving his blessing. This is a common gesture of showing respect to adults. As companion of Fr. Heinz, the children greeted me the same way. At first, I felt very insecure about what to do and how to behave so I just followed Fr. Heinz around. While walking through the settlement, we were being followed by numerous children who all tried to hold our hand and walk beside us. Fr. Heinz stopped at several places to greet people sitting in front of their huts to shortly listen to their sorrows. According to Fr. Heinz, about 300 families with up to 10 children each were living in the dumpsite settlement situated at the margins of a communal dumpsite that borders the sea. I was very surprised about how the families established themselves in this somewhat unreal place dominated by black and grey colors, smoky air and muddy ground and about the infrastructure of the settlement, which I actually had not expected. The huts were made of light materials either of bamboo and nipa, or of plywood, carton, and tarpaulin, built in traditional style on stilts as one- or two-room buildings. Some of the settlers raised pigs, goats, chicken and cocks. I saw women sweeping the area around the hut. Some huts were fenced, e.g. with the inside of innerspring mattresses. Some households had a TV, a sound-system and, for a few, even a refrigerator. Fr. Heinz explained that besides recyclable materials, the scavengers would also gather raffle tickets from the dumpsite and would sometimes win a TV or even a refrigerator, which they would use as a storeroom because it consumes too much electricity. The reason why I was very much surprised about this was because I had expected that the huts would not have access to electricity at all. But that was not the case. Numerous black insulated cables traversed the walkways of the settlement on the height of my head connecting the huts inside the settlement with electric meters situated along the main road. I still remember how uncertain I felt about the nature of these wires, as the settlers also seemed to use them as clotheslines. Only later in my fieldwork did I learn that people especially in the dumpsite settlements make use of telephone wires for their electricity connections. Within the settlement, we passed by several so-called Sari-Sari stores offering fresh-cooked main meals and products to satisfy basic daily needs. Furthermore, I discovered an internet-café with three computers, two videoke-bars, a basketball and volleyball court. To my surprise, the settlement was equipped like a common Filipino small-scale community. When we finally returned to Fr. Heinz' car to leave, he gave me a bottle with disinfecting lotion and told me to clean my hands in order to prevent infections especially eye-infections which many children suffer from. It was a weird feeling to clean my hands and wash the traces of numerous touching hands. On our way back, Fr. Heinz told me about all

the hardships of this way of life, about criminal activities including violence and murder.

This was my first experience of life in a dumpsite. It was a very rich but also unnerving experience. From a first glimpse, I felt that life on a dumpsite is an extreme form of existence especially regarding issues of health and safety. Nevertheless, it also appeared to be meaningful for the people. Thus, I felt encouraged to follow up my research plan. Fr. Heinz gave me a positive feedback on my research intentions and thus introduced me to the local NGO which he founded in the early 1990s. I discussed my research project and interests with the Human and Community Development workers. They expressed their interest in my research project and offered me to stay for the time of my fieldwork in one of their socialized housing projects for informal settlers and dumpsite dwellers. For practical and methodological reasons, I eventually shifted my research from the scavengers in the dumpsite to the housing community.

THE GIFT OF WATER

For my stay in the housing project, the NGO employees placed two rain barrels with a capacity of around 150l per barrel at the model house for my water consumption, as there was no running-water provision yet. This put me in a lucky situation because – as it turned out over the following weeks – I was able to collect and store more (rain-) water than I was able to consume before it would turn dirty. Having two rain barrels for a one-person-household is – as I found out after strolling around in the community – quite a luxury. For bathing, flushing the toilet and washing dishes and clothes I only consumed around 30 to 40 liters a day. In contrast, most of my neighboring households consisted of four to ten family members thus having a much higher level of water consumption. For collecting and storing water, they used a range of containers of different sizes ranging from 5 to 150 liters in capacity (only few had a large plastic or metal barrel). These were commonly placed in front of the house, usually within reach of the downpipe connected to the gutter, as well as inside the house in the kitchen and bathroom area. Thus, the kind and number of containers standing in front of the house to collect rainwater became a marker showing socio-economic differences between neighbors. In the following, I will outline this issue by taking the interaction with my neighbors as an example. In the relationship with three neighboring families, water became a central topic in our daily interaction as the following entries from my weekly report show:

Monday, June 13th, 2011: Bella informs me that I should no longer use the water in the rain barrel except for washing clothes or for flushing the toilet because there are mosquito larvae inside and the water is dirty. She asks Nanita if she wants to get some water. Nanita and Ate Carmela both living next door then empty my rain barrel and afterwards clean it out. I offer them my help but they reject it saying “namo nalang” (i.e. we do it). Sunday, June 19th, 2011: around 3.00 pm dark clouds come in and wind picks up, both promising rain. 30 minutes later, it starts to drizzle. In the hope for rain and fresh water, I empty my rain barrel with the help of Alice (the youngest daughter of Ate Carmela). The remaining water is dirty with mosquito larvae and dust. Unfortunately, it turned out to be only a slight rainfall so then I had hardly any water left. Monday, June 20th, 2011: going for a walk with Nikita in the morning. Back home, Nikita offers me to get some of their water for taking a shower because my water is ‘dirty’ (Mosquito larvae, dust); in return her mother takes water from my rain barrel to wash their clothes.

The absence of a water source in the housing project and the increased need for water inside the house created the necessity to store water in and/or outside the house. At the beginning of my fieldwork the scarcity of water at first evoked in me the attitude to minimize my water consumption. However, I quickly realized that saving water stored in containers – whether rainwater, water from the truck or from the deep well – is senseless due to the conditions of storing. Even if the containers can be covered by pieces of plywood, plastic foil, pieces of cloth, etc. after two to three days, the water transforms and turns dirty because of dust and dirt collecting on the water surface and insects emerging in the water. At this point, the water is only good for washing clothes and flushing the toilet but no longer for bathing.

Thursday, July 7th, 2011: when I pass the house of Ate Josy I see her washing clothes on the back side of her house. I ask her if she has enough water. She answers that she only has a little bit. I offer her to take water from my barrel. She thanks me and says that she will clean out the barrel afterwards adding that it is better to use the water before it turns bad. Even though I worry about having no water left for the weekend, I offer her the water. She often opens my barrel when it rains and so far I mainly offered the water to other neighbors. Thursday, August 9th, 2011: at 10.30 am, I leave my house to go to the Acacia tree. In front of my house, I meet Ate Josy and Ate Carmela. Ate Josy sits on a stool in front of her water containers and a plastic washing bowl filled with clothes. Ate Carmela stands beside her. They ask me if I still have rainwater in my barrel explaining that rainwater is ‘nindot’ (nice) to wash clothes with, especially for white linen. I take a

look in my barrels. One is at least one third full of water. I offer them to take the water and continue my way to the Acacia tree. [...]. It is around 2.30 pm. I scoop out water from the container in the kitchen to wash dishes in a bowl. The water turns out to be dirty. Mosquito larvae and dust swim in the remaining water. Thus, I first empty the container in the kitchen. I pour out the rest of the water into the toilet and clean the inside wall of the container scrubbing off the dust with a hand brush. Then, I go outside to fetch water from the barrel. The barrel is still one third full of water. A couple of things are swilling at the bottom of the barrel, which I identify as leaves, dust or sand crumps and insects. It looks as if Ate Josy and Ate Carmela did not take any water. I scoop out water from the barrel. To avoid dirt finding its way into the dipper, I carefully and slowly press the dipper to the side of the barrel and slightly dip it into the water. The scooping creates a swirl through which the dirt in the water stirs up. Before I dip the dipper in next, I wait for a moment so that the dirt deposits again on the bottom of the barrel. The last bit of water, I use to clean out the barrel. With a hand brush, I scrub the inside wall at least as far as I reach into the barrel. The opening of the barrel is only half as wide as the barrel itself and the barrel is about 1.50m high. Although I am 1.80 m tall, I hardly manage to reach the bottom of the barrel. After scrubbing, I lift the barrel up to the gully grate, move it in a light circle so that the water starts to move and the remaining dirt swirls up from the bottom. Then, I try to quickly flip the barrel from top to bottom so that the dirt washes out with the water. While emptying the barrel, Melody comes up the road on her way home. We talk briefly before she leaves saying “Molakaw ko kay naa koy daghang laba”, I have to go now, I have a lot of washing to do. In the meantime, the sky turned grey and heavy rain clouds come in from Cebu City. I hear the growl of thunder but it is still afar. I go inside the house and five minutes later, I hear the rain coming and then it is pouring. I wait for a few minutes, looking outside to check if my neighbors already are outside to catch the rain. Before I manage to go out, Ate Josy already opened the lid of my barrel. I thank her calling “Salamat” (thank you) through the open window. For the moment, there is nothing to do but to wait until the barrel is full so that I can transfer the water inside. The rain becomes heavier and the water almost shoots out of the downspout of Ate Josy. The water jet shoots over the container but not inside. As Ate Josy is not around, I take my umbrella and run outside to put the container under the water jet. Ate Lydia and Ate Carmela are busy transferring the water from container to container and inside the house. I go to Ate Lydia to offer her my help. She looks at me with big eyes replying “ayaw na, ako na lang”, meaning “you don’t do it, I’ll do it myself.” Disappointed and feeling useless, I go back inside.

With these extracts from my weekly reports, I want to highlight the social role of water in the daily interaction with my neighbors and the exchange pattern that evolved out of it. Our exchange pattern was mainly characterized by the habit that either I realized that I had too much water, or my neighbors – who had a close eye on my water reserves – informed me indirectly that they were in need of water e.g. by informing me about the condition of my water stocks. In return for my gift of water, they opened the lid of my barrel during rain showers especially when I was not at home, or they cleaned the barrel after emptying it. Through this exchange pattern (including the involved practices and objects), the social differences between my neighbors and me became more tangible arising from our common situation, namely the absence of a water source. It was a challenging experience – I guess – not only for me but also for my neighbors because of contrasting ideas about ‘my person’. This refers to how my neighbors considered me and how I considered myself. While I do not consider myself as rich, my neighbors considered me to be a wealthy Americana because I am a white woman from overseas. Even though there is a factual social economic difference between my neighbors and myself, I always made an effort not to stress it. I rather tried to do the contrary, namely, to live as similar as possible as my neighbors. Nevertheless, besides my physical appearance, a range of other facts betrayed my efforts like e.g. living alone in the model house and having two rain barrels only for my own consumption. Thus, our water exchange pattern became the most profound social scene through which I learned about my informants social and cultural behavior. In our exchanges, it was usually the case that I gave the resource (here water) against help (here e.g. opening and cleaning the barrel, etc.) from my neighbors. Sometimes, as outlined above we would also exchange my dirty water against their clean water. But it never happened the other way around. The reason was not that I was not willing to offer my help – it was rather the contrary – but that my neighbors usually refused my help arguing “ayaw na, kay bugat” or “ayaw na kay hugaw” meaning “don’t, it is too heavy/difficult or dirty”. From someone like me, they did not expect help but rather a share of my supposed wealth, in this case my water. From their perspective, offering help was what they considered the only thing they could give because of being poor. Thus, water became a social agent in our relationship. It created a social scene, which enabled my research partners to involve me in a culturally appropriate manner that not only reflected our social differences but also their socially and culturally shaped expectations of rights and obligations between rich and poor.

THE PROMISE OF CONCRETE



Interior design of the show house with built-in kitchen cupboards, stairs and wall cupboard.

A nice house in proper conditions – this is what my informants expected when they moved to the housing project. In the analysis of the interrelationship of my informants and their new houses made of concrete, I have shown that concrete positively affects my research partners' feelings towards their new dwellings. They feel proud about their nice-looking houses, which now satisfy their need for safety and thus create a prospect for the future. This feeling results primarily from the aesthetics of the house, which triggers positive effects, such as: (1) an improved sense of self, (2) a prospect for the future, (3) an improved sense of safety and (4) an improvement of the residents' general health condition.

These are the promises the residents associate with their new house. It seems as if concrete and its aesthetics satisfy their expectations of living a better life in a nice house under proper conditions. Besides concrete as structure, it is the CR –Comfort Room (toilet/bathroom) and with it the availability of indoor sanitary facilities which the residents experience as the main improvement of their living conditions. These concern such matters as (visual) privacy, hygiene and comfort, health and protection. The differences between their past and present dwelling conditions were

sensorially stressed by my informants. Through their daily practical actions and their material conditions, such as affordances and constraints, the house awakens new experiences and needs. It stimulates its residents to respond to the unfinished interior design of the house and to the specific thermal qualities of concrete in particular. In the analysis of how my informants respond to the house and its conditions, I argue that the residents appropriate their house only gradually. It is a process varying in its duration from household to household.



Housing unit in shell condition. In this condition, a housing unit is handed over to the new homepartners and their families.

Based on my fieldwork experiences of 2011 and my visit in November 2014, I identified two main modes of organization, which, I argue, reflect the state of transformation of the residents. I consider these two aesthetics as the material objectifications of the respective states of transition from the initial phase of adapting to the new material environment of the house to the phase of its appropriation. In the phase of adaptation, my informants apply habituated modes of organization, which are characterized by temporary, multipurpose and makeshift solutions; a mode of organization that is characteristic of their former uncertain informal lifestyles. I call this mode of organization makeshift aesthetics. The phase of adaptation is also the phase, within which the mutual shaping process between the house and its residents is strongly affected by the house. In this phase, the residents make themselves familiar with the materials, structure and facilities of the house and adapt habituated practices to its new conditions.

The second mode of organization I called the aesthetics of persistence, to highlight the transition from adapting to the conditions of the house and then appropriating the house in accordance with the residents' own ideas and wishes. This mode of organization reflects not only the attitude of the residents towards their house – i.e. the feeling of rather being a tenant than a homeowner – but also that they are now capable to manage the responsibilities and obligations involved in dwelling. This is a general perspective on the modes of organization in the housing project and how they can be interpreted. The case of Ate Janis, however, revealed an exception. Her case shows that the financial capabilities of the residents not inevitably are the decisive factor for appropriating the house but rather the respective consumption strategies, which seemed to change in response to the house. While most of my informants made use of discarded materials to construct or alter their former dwellings, they now prefer to use new and proper materials for the interior design. Ate Janis and her husband, on the contrary, have kept up scavenging consumption strategies, as I see it. As I have shown, this enabled them to make major alterations in the house only a few weeks after they moved in while other residents decided to put up with the shell condition of their house for months or sometimes years because of lacking financial means to buy construction materials. Reflecting on the intimate link between house and body to the interrelation between the residents and their houses, one forms the impression that when moving into the housing project not only the house is in a raw state, but also the residents themselves. While the house is fixed concrete, the residents have their own pasts and interests shaping their response in specific ways. The new residents all have their particular backgrounds and have already been socialized in a certain way.

However, in the Ritual of Transfer they leave behind their former lives and perform a ritual cleansing symbolizing their readiness to be newly shaped. That the NGO aims to – as they call it – bring about change – is based on their Human and Community Development Program (mentioned earlier). While the NGO aims to explicitly evoke transformation by a range of different activities and trainings, I argue that the built material environment and its social aesthetics likewise affect transformational changes.

By only providing members a house in its basic condition instead of a fully furnished and finished environment, the NGO aims to involve the residents in the further development of the housing project. The aim is for residents to shape the environment according to their ideas and needs so that they will be able to create a self-contained life in the future. Using MacDougall's notion of collective authorship (1999), I argue that the NGO urges its home-partners to become active authors in the creation of a social landscape which they shape according to their ideas and wishes of a future home. However, while the NGO considers the appropriation of the house part of the residents' participation process and as an investment in their future, appropriating the house from my perspective presents the major challenge for the residents in performing a change of lifestyle, especially because of the financial obligations involved. Hence, I argue that the state of development of the house actually becomes a material objectification of the state of development and thus of the state of transformation of the home-partners. I became aware of this in retrospection, following my short visit to the housing project in November 2014. It was only then that I realized that at the time of my fieldwork (in 2011), most of my informants were still in an early phase of the transition process, resulting in what I call the makeshift aesthetics of the houses.

While the further development of the house is the responsibility of the residents, the provision of a water supply system is the responsibility of the NGO. As I have shown earlier, this part of the infrastructure measures of the housing project had not yet been conclusively resolved. This meant that the residents could now enjoy the comfort of the sanitary facilities in the house, but without the provision of running water. In the next section, I will summarize how the residents reacted to these circumstances and how this has affected their assessment of their new life in the housing project.

WATER – A SCARCE AND EXPENSIVE RESOURCE

Earlier, I discussed water consumption practices (with a focus on the acquisition of domestic water) and how these are affected by the indoor sanitary facilities and the absence of a running water connection. Although the residents were used to consuming water from an external source, the dwelling conditions in the housing project create a different situation: the distance to the water source (in case of the deep well) and the use of sanitary facilities create the need to consume water in or at the house and not like previously at the source. These circumstances have further created the need to store water for the daily consumption at the house. In response to these specific circumstances (at the time of my fieldwork and before), the residents have developed three strategies of domestic water acquisition:

(1) Fetching water from a deep well, (2) gathering rain and (3) buying water from a truck.

These three strategies vary in cost, physical effort, temporal expenditure and the actual availability of water. While the last gives the residents a foretaste of the comfort of a water provision and its expenses, the former two resemble their previously habituated water acquisition practices. In this context, I argue that the absence of a running water supply has created a niche, which has offered the residents a certain freedom to act, as access to water has not yet been subject to the communal policies. This changed with the introduction of a running water supply in 2012. The example of water acquisition reveals four different levels of water consumption practices:

(1) It heightens the importance of water in the residents' new daily lives. (2) It illustrates the process by which water that used to be free is commoditized. (3) Due to the absence of a water source, water becomes part of an exchange relationship between neighbors, through which they negotiate social differences. (4) The interaction of the improved quality of the dwelling environment on the one hand and the lack of water on the other hand has the effect of changing the way in which the residents perceive, treat and value rain. What used to be a threat to life in squatter areas turned into God's blessings.

An effect of the concrete house and the communal drainage system is the protection offered against heavy rain and flooding. Natural forces, which used to be one of the primary fears of informal squatter settlers and dumpsite dwellers no longer applies. Rain now causes a certain excitement: It confirms the residents of living in a safe house, and announces the

availability of free domestic water delivered right to the house. Based on my own experience of relying on rain for domestic water consumption and on those of my informants, I argue that the experience of rain triggers aesthetic experiences in the transition process by which the residents also strongly experience the differences of their past and present living conditions regarding safety.



Variety of containers that a household uses to store water outdoors.

In summary, the missing access to running water not only changed the residents' perspective of rain, but of water in general. The residents considered it one of the major problems in their new daily routines. However, in contrast to access to electricity, water consumption presented a challenge that affected all the residents. Gathering rain became even a central feature in the development of a collective identity, something that I became aware of through my own experiences and involvement in the field. They considered me as part of the family because, like everyone else, I got up at night to collect rain. In 2014, I learned that with the introduction of a running water provision, collecting rain lost its identity-building effect. Now, access to water is no longer a matter of time and physical effort but a matter of financial prosperity and hence, like access to electricity, becomes a social marker dividing the residents into haves and have-nots. This reveals that the transition from an informal lifestyle and a niche existence to a formalized and policy-based way of life entails a transition into a thoroughly capitalistic system that slowly supersedes the mentality to live out of pocket daily.

ELECTRICITY – A LUXURY GOOD OR A BASIC NEED?

Besides access to water, access to electricity is a central matter for my informants in the transition process from life in a squatter area or dumpsite settlement to the housing project. For my informants electricity matters first as the necessary precondition to produce light, airflow, sounds and entertainment. In the squatter areas, electricity was accessible through joint efforts. As a consequence, most of my informants enjoyed electricity connections. They took electricity for granted. It was entangled in daily activities, in the interaction with others and in the organization of everyday life. Hence, they were already used to its different tastes and effects. Despite or even because of the poor living conditions in the squatter areas, in its different physical forms electricity generated a sense of well-being and comfort. Electric light especially offered alleviation in everyday life. It enabled people to perform indoor activities independent of the day-night-rhythm and furthermore produced a sense of safety as , together with electric sounds, it keeps evil spirits away. Therefore, my informants value electricity highly. Under the new living conditions of the housing project, electricity turns out to be an exclusive good due to the communal policies regulating its access. Unauthorized, i.e. joint connections are prohibited and permission to apply for an electricity connection is only granted to home-partners who prove their ability to meet their financial obligations for the house and in addition to an electricity connection. From the perspective

of the NGO, these policies shall prevent home-partners from spending their (limited) financial means on electricity bills instead of buying food for their children. From the perspective of my informants, the provision of electricity and water form the basis for a state of dwelling that they call complete. In contrast to the provision of water, the provision of electricity is a matter of empowerment in the transition process (at least as long as the provision with running water had not yet been available). In the context of the housing project, access to an electricity connection becomes a matter of good economic and social performance. While the NGO regards this procedure as part of their concept of empowerment and poverty alleviation, my research partners instead experience this procedure as paternalism. This is especially the case for those who have no electricity connection. For them, living in a nice house in proper conditions but without access to electricity has negative impacts on their satisfaction about the performed change of lifestyle. It contradicts their expectations. The restrictive access to electricity, hence, creates differences between neighbors, which become perceptible in the aesthetics of a non-electrified house. It is a socially effective aesthetic as it marks those home-partners who struggle to meet their (in general financial) obligations. At this point, the question may arise why the residents are so dissatisfied with this directive, since it goes without saying that it is necessary to be able to afford electricity. From the perspective of the residents, it is not the costs of electricity consumption that cause them to fail, but the initial connection fee, which most of them cannot afford, even if they receive permission from the NGO to apply for an electricity connection. The reason for their dissatisfaction, therefore, is that the NGO does not allow them to share an electricity connection with neighbors, as they did in the squatter settlements.

This further leads me to the relevance of considering aesthetics for the analysis of electricity consumption practices. As outlined in this study, the aesthetics of electric contrivances generate effects on a social and emotional level. For the present case study, these effects are of high relevance in order to better understand how my informants experience and feel about their performed change of life style. The analysis shows that the way my research partners evaluate their new life in the housing project is based on past and present experiences as well as on future aspirations. Hence, I argue that the experience of certain electric-based items trigger aesthetic experiences. They are embodied and are taken for granted like the advantages of electric light. In its absence people become aware of their importance for everyday life. This is one of the central features of electricity as infrastructure as defined by Star and Ruhleder (1996/1999). With regard to the interrelation of people and their dwelling environment,

the services and products offered by electric devices generate a range of effects: they trigger emotions and can transform habituated practices, which in turn (positively or negatively) can have effects on people's sense of safety and well-being. Furthermore, having or not having electricity makes social differences between neighbors perceivable especially through the aesthetics of light.

Taking the findings from the analysis together it becomes evident that the transition process from an informal, marginalized and self-organized lifestyle in a squatter areas or dumpsite settlement to an institutionalized and policy-based life in the socialized housing project is characterized by what my informants call the necessity to adjust to the new living conditions on the material, social, political and especially on the economic level. In this process, they repeatedly compare past and present living experiences and expected living conditions. As I have shown, the differences between their experiences and expectations trigger ambivalent feelings towards their new way of life varying between satisfaction, disappointment or ambivalence. This can be explained through the reasons they decided to move to the housing project. As outlined earlier, the decision to move to the housing project was less motivated by the dwelling conditions of the squatter areas and dumpsite settlements per se then out of the existential fears of not knowing if tomorrow will be secure, a fear triggered by the potential threat of forced eviction or natural forces which both entailed the probability of losing one's house and thus one's most important basis in life i.e. one's abode. For the dumpsite dwellers, the introduction of waste segregation created a further decisive factor, because as a result they lost their second most important basis in life, i.e. access to their primary source of income. Hence, from the perspective of my informants, moving to the housing project offered the only prospect of a safe dwelling place and a prospect of a future for their children, knowing well that they will have to give up the advantages of their niche existence especially with regard to economic and infrastructural advantages.

In the transition process, the need to adjust is a mutual process. Not only do the residents have to adjust to the new living conditions but also the conditions have to be equally developed in accordance with the needs, ideas and expectations of the residents. The primary need for most of the residents is to find a new reliable source of income, which enables them to earn enough money to fulfill the financial obligations of home-partners, and the extra expenses involved in dwelling in the housing project. During my visit to the housing project in 2014, it became obvious that the NGO had not yet been able to achieve this project goal. Instead of continuing to

focus on livelihood development inside the housing project, they started a cooperative with a manufacturing company in Lapu-Lapu City in order to offer the residents alternative employment opportunities. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of sufficient employment and thus income opportunities especially for those residents who, due to their low educational level or (advanced) age, have difficulties finding employment on the general labor market. While in their former niche existence they usually found a way to earn - as they called it - quick money, this is either more difficult or even impossible in the housing project because of the communal policies and its peripheral location.

With reference to what Nadeau (2002) has pointed out about BECs, it has become evident that by implementing all three types of BEC activities, i.e. liturgical, developmental, and transformative activities as basic activities of the HCD-Program, the NGO pursues an ambitious project. At the level of the health and education system, the project shows visible results through the expansion of the infrastructure and especially by providing indoor sanitary facilities. However, the housing project and its residents face extreme challenges at the developmental level. Implementing adequate developmental activities like livelihood initiatives that meet the economic needs of the residents have turned out to be most difficult. From the NGO's point of view, the housing project is their biggest project, which is based on the financial support of donors, especially from Germany, to whom they have to give account. Hence, for them, the socialized housing project becomes a question of success or failure. From the residents' perspective, on the contrary, socialized living is a question of existence, since for most of them returning to the squatter area, dumpsite settlement or province is not an option. As the biographies of my main informants show, the socialized housing project represents the final destination of their journey from rural areas to the city, a journey that has been inspired by the hope of finding employment and access to better education for themselves and/or their children. But as was the case for the Israelites, reaching the supposedly Promised Land is only the beginning of the next challenge, namely the process of adapting and asserting one's self to the new living environment and its specific conditions.

Regarding how the residents experience and value the performed change of lifestyle, I have come to the following conclusion. My informants experience the transition process as ambivalent. This is because of the comparison between past and present living conditions and the resulting advantages and disadvantages. At first, by moving to the housing project the residents experience an enhancement of their social status. While they

used to feel ashamed of their house and their living environment in the squatter areas or dumpsite settlements, they now feel proud. As I have shown, this is an effect of the material environment and the design of the housing project's infrastructure. However, this positive feeling of social enhancement is diminished in the transition process if the residents struggle to meet the new (financial) requirements and obligations as a home-partner. As a result of the prevailing communal policies, they experience a restriction in their former freedom of action, which they see in their effort to appropriate the house as well as the habituated consumption practices.

With moving to the housing project, a transformation also occurs to their member and leadership obligations in the BEC. While BEC activities in the squatter areas and in the dumpsite settlement used to be more of a welcomed leisure activity, active membership is now mandatory. Leadership activities like those of the Boards of Directors are moreover quite time consuming. This often results in a conflict between the fulfillment of membership obligations on the one hand and family responsibilities on the other. Working women are particularly affected by this. For women, the need to work mainly arises from the greater financial burden associated with living in the housing project. While informal income generating activities common in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements could well be combined with caring for the family, in the housing project this has become more difficult as it would compete with communal livelihood initiatives and furthermore would undermine communal policies. Hence, the biggest challenge for the residents is to meet the financial obligations, to adapt to the formalized and policy-based lifestyle in the housing project and hence to change habits in order to successfully perform a change of lifestyle. Even though most of the residents struggle with these new living conditions, and sometimes miss the advantages of their former niche existence, most of the residents now look ahead to the future in the good faith that God will provide.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Doing ethnographic fieldwork, even though it aims to give a holistic account of a life-world, is always only able to describe this life-world from certain perspectives. During fieldwork, my perspective shifted from that of the NGO employees – who were my initial gatekeepers, introducing me to their different projects and activities – and later to the perspective of the residents. I became a kind of mediator between these two parties. However, through living in the housing project, it is the perspective of the residents

with which I actually identified more strongly. Through my being-in-the-field, I shared everyday (sensory) experiences with my informants and learned what it means to live in the housing project. This experience included the infrastructural and social challenges involved as well as the ambivalences and contradictions arising out of a comparison between past and present dwelling expectations. It also included the project's vision and the actual life experiences. My methodological approach of participant observation based on aesthetic experiences allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the specific living conditions. Hence, I argue that considering aesthetic concepts in the methodology of participant observation is productive. It enables the ethnographer to sensitize from her/his own sensory experiences and their value for the ethnographic knowledge process. Aesthetic concepts should encourage ethnographers to take into account their sensory experiences and include them in their ethnographic data, especially those made in the early phase of ethnographic fieldwork, as this is the transition phase from living and working at home to working in the field. In addition, I suggest that the ethnographer includes selected sensory experiences in the main ethnography of her/his fieldwork in order to give the reader a more vivid impression of the life-world under study. Furthermore, it creates transparency of the research process.

In the present study, this approach profited by considering aesthetic concepts. It furthermore led to the decision to design the thesis as a theoretical, polyphonic ethnography. By applying a material cultural approach involving people and their (built) material environment as well as their consumption practices, I have argued that by transferring to the socialized housing project the residents perform a change of lifestyle that characterizes a transition from a traditional to a modern way of life. Most of my informants already set this transition in motion when they gave up their rural lifestyle as subsistence farmers for a life in the city.

Living in an urban squatter area or dumpsite settlement represents a transitional characterized by vernacular dwellings in a modern infrastructural environment. This transition highlights the advantages of an urban niche existence. By transferring to the housing project, the residents give up their traditional way of dwelling and for the first time have access to modern (indoor) infrastructure with sanitary facilities and running water as well as the security of a concrete house. This change of lifestyle is characterized by what I have called a transition from temporary and makeshift to permanent solutions as well as a change from production to consumption (Miller, 1998).

At the end of this research project the question now arises: what do the residents of the housing project generally, and particularly for my informants, gain from this ethnography? This is an important question. Now, seven years after my field work, it is unlikely that the residents of the housing project will directly benefit from my findings, e.g. in terms of a change in policies. The project is now largely completed. Since the end of 2012, the residents themselves have been responsible for shaping life in the community. However, NGO employees continue to support and advise the residents in terms of community building and livelihood development. I see the decisive contribution of this work for my informants and the residents of the housing project as the explicit recognition and appreciation of the difficult experiences in their lives. During my fieldwork, I recall several instances when residents were asked to give their experiences of squatter life at official events such as the Ritual of Transfer or visits of project partners and funding organizations. In these reports, they mainly addressed the burden and hardship of their former informal lifestyle. In the interviews, however, my informants also recalled positive aspects of their previous lives, aspects they now sometimes look back on nostalgically. My informants felt intimately linked to their former houses which they had built out of their own efforts. Their former house is a memento of their family history. In this respect, this study aims to give a more balanced and holistic account of the life-world of squatter and dumpsite settlers. It recognizes the efforts and achievements of squatter and dumpsite settlers, which are often overlooked. Taking their perspectives into account, it becomes clear that the housing project is (hopefully) the last milestone on the road out of poverty and into a better future, even if this shift also brings new challenges. Focusing on the perspective of the residents enabled me to reveal the often unintended effects of the HCD-Program. While the NGO undoubtedly intends to create liberating effects with the HCD-Program, the residents experience these as restraining and paternalistic. With the Pledge of Occupancy, the home-partners agree to behave in compliance with the Occupancy Rules and Deeds of Restrictions and furthermore to prove active membership and (in case of election) to take over leadership responsibilities. This puts the residents in a situation in which they renounce their former freedom of action and accept that they are taught how to live properly from the NGO's point of view. Through my fieldwork I gained the impression that the measures of the HCD-Program do not empower the residents, but instead make them dependent on the offers the project provides. This means that they are not taking the initiative themselves, as they have done in the past, but are waiting for the NGOs to act and suggest or direct proposals. This applies in particular to business start-up initiatives for those residents who have few opportunities to find a job on

the labor market due to their low level of education or their age. In this respect, I consider this ethnography an important contribution for relocation studies, as it reveals the emic perspective of the residents who live under the conditions of such a project and will have to spend the rest of their lives there. Therefore, the thesis aims to draw attention to the (unintended) paternalistic effects that can occur in the transition process. In this respect, my research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the sensitivities of the residents in the transition process, as it explains why ambivalent feelings can arise leading to dissatisfaction, frustration or overstrain instead of satisfaction about the change in lifestyle. Thus, my research shows that one of the biggest challenges of relocation is to find a way to deal with the conflicting interests of residents. This involves what claims beneficiaries may make and, on the other hand, what offers they should be satisfied with in order to lead a good life.

Finally, I come to the last point of doing ethnographic fieldwork i.e. how to leave the field. When doing ethnographic fieldwork, one of the first crucial questions the ethnographer is concerned with is how s/he gains access and enters the field. But how the researcher finally leaves the field usually remains unmentioned. I experienced leaving the field almost as challenging as entering the field. It was a mixture of happiness about returning home and sadness about not knowing when and if I would get the chance to return to the Philippines. During the nine months of my fieldwork, I became part of the community they collectively called Family although I was the only resident who did not undergo the Ritual of Transfer because of my only temporary stay. As my neighbors knew that I would only stay for a while, they commonly asked me “Kanus-a molakaw man ka?” (when do you leave?) Towards the end of the fieldwork, the question turned into “Kanus-a mobalik man ka?” (When are you coming back?). I usually answered the question with “puhon!” (sometime in the future). The question about my departure was usually connected with a concern about what I will do with my stuff like the sleeping sofa, the cabinet, the refrigerator or the electric oven. While some of my neighbors already announced their interest, others told me to give it to certain people in the community. To avoid disputes and resentments among the neighbors, I left these things in the model house and wrote a letter to the BEC leaders announcing that they are gifts for the benefit of the whole community. As the appropriate form of farewell, I organized two official farewell parties together with my research assistants and informants. One, in a dumpsite settlement, and another in the housing project. Both events were heartbreaking. The members of the respective BECs had prepared dance performances, farewell speeches and small gifts, and I gave snacks and drinks in return. But the celebrations

were far from over as there were two more informal farewell parties: one organized by the youths and another by the Family Group (FG) that held a bible-sharing in my house in the first week of my stay in the housing project. The FG members had prepared everything for a joyful videoke-night in the model house without me knowing about it. The night before I left, they came one by one. They brought rice, salads and 'lechon manok' (roasted chicken) as well as soft drinks for everyone. When they had finally organized a TV, a sound system and a DVD player, the party started. We celebrated almost until midnight, but the neighbors who did not feel invited complained about the noise. This last event in the model house somehow sealed my membership in the Family and made me sing videoke for the first time in my life. Since I left the housing project, the model house became a memento of my fieldwork and a guardian of numerous life stories and dreams, especially those of mine and my research assistants. While in the meantime all three of my research assistants have managed to make their dreams come true, it is now my turn.

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Commentary

Maria Mangahas PhD

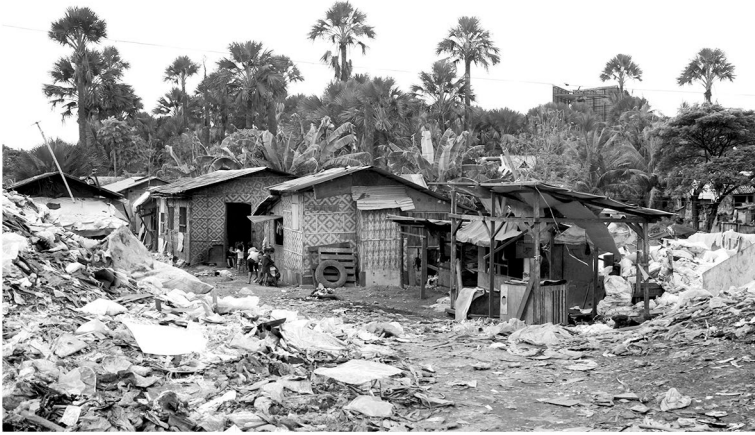
I enjoyed reading the article, especially as I also happen to be reading through field notes submitted by my students for a course on ethnography. The article would have been a useful reading for the class if it were already in print-- for initiating discussion on approaching the field, on how fieldwork is an unpredictable path to negotiate and experience, and for other discussion topics we have had in class, it serves well as candid written discussion on fieldwork as a process, which is generally rare, and accessed more often in informal occasions for 'shoptalk' conversations more akin to gossip (what my students call 'chika'). The view of the fieldworker 'from the model house' is interesting and the decision-making process relating to choice of research site, topic, living arrangements, and other concerns, as she seeks to find her way in practical as well as methodological terms in the field, is very usefully discussed. It is true that ethnographers need to establish some sort of headquarters in the field, how a space can become a zone of safety and confidentiality for research participants is also an important insight. The role of local research assistants as companions, and collaborators, is also good to point out, especially in regard to facilitating community acceptance ("door openers"), as well as personal survival for a lone ethnographer. (By the way, did she live alone in the model house? Did someone sleep with her at night? Did she wash her own clothes? On these aspects the article is not as transparent.).

My comments will center more on a few details in the article, more or less following through the flow of the text.

The translations of Cebuano I deem to be inaccurate. "Kay walay ugma" is not 'because tomorrow might not come'. It should be: 'because there is no tomorrow'. (There is no sense of 'might' or 'maybe' within the phrase.) This means not at all that the slum dwellers 'do not know' if there is a future in the slum; rather they are perhaps putting forward a statement on the inevitability of demolition, which surely comes, sooner or later, when the government puts its mind to it. Hence 'no tomorrow'. Another Bisaya

term, “puhon”, is translated as ‘sometime in the future’. This is not accurate. Puhon means ‘hopefully’ or ‘god-willing’.

(Another minor detail: the ‘dust’ in the water containers is probably algae.)



Makeshift houses on the edge of a private dumpsite near the motorway.

The characterization of slums as ‘urban eyesores’ by Metro Cebu government relates very much to aesthetics. The ugliness of a slum, aside from being painful on the eye, moreover causes embarrassment for the nation or for the local government. In decades past, important visitors to Manila such as the Pope had expressed dismay at encountering the sight of urban poverty, and Imelda Marcos (who was the governor of Metro Manila in the 80s) had therefore tried to clear away any vista of ‘squatters’ that might offend. The urban poor know they will be affected whenever foreign dignitaries come to town-- slum settlements being cleared out or high walls built to keep them out of sight, and “beautification” programs especially along the routes such foreign guests are expected to take.

I think the NGO’s perspective could have been supported with some direct quotes as well. I would like to know if change in lifestyle of the beneficiaries is consciously intended as seen in how the NGO phrased it. One also wonders how the NGO would react to the feedback from the

ethnography which draws attention to 'paternalistic' impacts of their project. This is the ethnography's significant critique (and a good demonstration of 'structure and agency').

There should be some literature cited in regard to the "current methodological discourse within anthropology", and "aisthesis as the theory of sensory perception".

Possibly it is true that there is a research gap dealing with the world of dumpsite dwellers. However there have been quite a slew of films and photography attempting to convey (or dramatize) this very reality. I think visual materials have been produced on the mountains of garbage settings since at least the 80s. Which makes me curious as to whether forms of visual demonstration might also have been attempted to help convey the points made, for instance of 'makeshift aesthetics' vs. 'aesthetics of persistence' establishing the transition from informal dwelling at the dumpsite to the formal housing; 'aesthetics of electric contrivances', etc.. Usually ethnographers do collect some visual materials (which may differ from other visual production which isn't based on extensive fieldwork).

A few details to further contextualize the transitions: how far is the housing from the dumpsite? Around when did informants' migration from rural areas to the city take place?

Commentary

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Melanie Hackenfort's vivid and insightful account of her nine-month fieldwork experience in a socialized housing project in Cebu shows how participant observation, as a research method, can offer an invaluable tool to understand meaningful processes in everyday life. Here, I will highlight several merits of this method as exemplified in Melanie's article, which relate to uncovering individual experiences (sensory, emotional) in real-life settings, detecting contrasting perspectives, and understanding micro-processes "on the ground." I include some reflections here and there.

Facts and experiences:

A social-science researcher may live for a long time in a community, share in the daily lives of the residents, and still remain primarily an empiricist, studying the who, what, how, and why of a certain issue. An anthropologist with a phenomenological and sensory approach, like Melanie, will delve deeper, trying to understand how people actually experience and "feel" their everyday lives, their immediate life worlds, and the relevant interactions they have with others – and how these experiences are closely connected to interpretations of the situation and elicited emotions. How people experience a situation inspires their actions, which makes the phenomenological approach valuable for social explanation. For instance, how does it feel to make a community and become part of this community, and how do people try to produce this feeling among themselves and others? This is the topic with which Melanie invites us into her research universe in the introductory part of her article, acquainting us with the women and men who first lived in squatter areas and dumpsites and then moved to a Christian NGO-supported housing project where they are expected to develop into an empowered community of "home partners."

Her detailed description of the “ritual of transfer” for a new batch of families that are welcomed into the community evokes the social and emotional atmosphere produced by speech, song, symbol-laden procession, value-laden handover of the house keys, hugs, tears, and laughter – in which active members of the Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC), other community members, the priest, NGO employees, and the new families all play a part. All these actions are meaningful, however trivial they may seem. These actions may create among the new arrivals a feeling of connection and commitment, solidarity and identification, with the group of residents they have joined. For the residents who welcome them, in turn, these actions may confirm and reinforce the community they have formed. In thousands of Basic Ecclesial (and Basic Christian) Communities in villages and squatter areas across the Philippines, such rituals of community, bonding and commitment have been held across the decades, adapted to local issues and concerns. The rich, graphic description in this article shows the close interconnectedness of social ties, interactions, and emotions.

Emotion work. In a seminal article, Arlie Hochschild (1979) introduced the term “emotion work,” which she defined as “the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling” (Hochschild 1979: 552). These are social acts, by people and organizations, which aim to evoke desired feelings and suppress undesired feelings. Any ideological stance, Hochschild notes, contains implicit “feeling rules,” which are guidelines for how one ought to feel in specific situations. One might argue that the Basic Ecclesial Community of the housing site in Cebu transmits certain implicit feeling rules (besides explicit behavioral rules) to match the aim of community solidarity, responsible home-partnership, and collective liberation from social and economic destitution. When differences between expected and actual feelings arise (see the ambivalent feelings and disappointments that Melanie notes among a number of community members), the organization in question will need to deal with this, possibly by focusing on the material causes, by reframing the situation, or by adjusting its emotion-work practices.

Whose sensory experiences? And how to retrieve them? Naturally, an anthropologist’s own sensory experiences in the field may not match those of the people among whom she lives. Which research methods can help retrieve people’s own experiences and feelings, recounted in their own words? As I’m not an expert in the sensory approach to fieldwork, I’m interested to hear more from Melanie about the methods she used to get at people’s “sensory perceptions” – besides her mention of participant observation and formal and informal interviews. One could think of

methods such as a “tour of the house” (however small the house may be) and a “tour of the neighborhood,” with a specific resident as a guide, who then relates how she experiences and values each part of the house (or neighborhood), including smell, sound, and the like, which may also elicit memories of certain meaningful events. This could be done individually with a selection of residents (young and old, women and men) both in their old and their new residential sites, yielding narratives that could also be compared. Speaking of comparison, I would like to hear more about Melanie’s choice of research partners (respondents), in particular concerning gender, age, and background. Do women experience and value their old and new housing sites differently from men, for instance? If so, how and why? Finally, considering the article’s phenomenological approach, the respondents’ own narratives are crucial, but excerpts of such narratives are unfortunately scarce in the text. The vivid experiential accounts in the text are primarily those of the author/anthropologist, whereas the experiences of the housing site’s residents are presented almost wholly in analyzed form, in the author’s words. Possibly this is because the article focuses on the fieldwork experience, but personally I would like to hear the respondents’ voices louder and clearer.

Uncovering contrasting perspectives:

Dominant assumptions in society are easily taken for granted, also by researchers. Participant observation can be a crucial method to detect contrasting perspectives, particularly of people whose voices are seldom heard in public debate. During her fieldwork, Melanie’s perspective “shifted from that of the NGO-employees – who were my initial gatekeepers (..) to the perspective of the residents” of the housing project, with insightful results. She notes that “from the perspective of the NGO and most foreign observers, it is unimaginable to live a good life in squatter areas and dumpsite settlements” because these actors consider the living conditions “inhumane.” By sharing in the residents’ daily lives, listening to casual remarks, having numerous informal chats, observing interactions between all parties involved, she found that residents, on some points, ranked their former squatter and dumpsite locations higher than the social housing site, in particular regarding cheap electricity (through informal connections), better location for informal-sector work, and autonomy from organizational rules. Moreover, finding that residents valued their wide room to maneuver in their previous sites, she shows why residents consider some of the “communal policies” in the housing site as constraining and “paternalistic” instead of empowering. Only by uncovering these experiences and perspectives could she detect and explain the ambivalent feelings of residents regarding

the housing project.

Tracing micro-processes of differentiation:

Differences between haves and have-nots also occur among the very poor, and though these differences may seem trivial to outsiders, they may be essential to the people concerned. By focusing on the subjective meaning of a concrete house, acceptable home interior, water and electricity for the residents of the housing project, Melanie explores what it means to residents when differentiation occurs, particularly in access to electricity. She shows how the move to the housing project improved the living conditions of residents in specific ways, but also subjected them to more formal rules and regulations, a greater dependency on the official (commercialized) market for water and electricity, and apparently also a greater dependency on the formal economy rather than the informal economy on which they had earlier depended. The NGO may have perceived these as necessary steps towards development and empowerment, but from the residents' point of view, these also created new forms of socio-economic differentiation and greater economic vulnerability for some. Such insights are particularly relevant in view of the aspirations and measures of "success" of both NGOs and project participants.

Participant observation and systematic data:

Since people operate in wider structures and networks that enable and constrain their actions and thoughts, researchers who study their daily lives up close will also need to account for such relevant social contexts. I would have liked more systematic information on this score, regarding contexts and backgrounds, to better appreciate the findings in Melanie's article. For instance, how was the social housing community organized, in terms of community management, decision-making, and policy implementation, both formal and informal? Was the BEC, the core of the residents' community, connected to the NGO? Which other social groupings were relevant? What was the total bundle of "communal policies" of the housing project which shaped the residents' opportunities, besides the ones mentioned; and were all deemed "paternalistic" or were others valued differently? For instance, considering the "improved sense of safety" associated with the new houses, did this also extend to safety from crime, did the community leadership devise rules to protect such safety, and how did residents value these? On a more basic factual level, I'd like to know what the residents' sources of livelihood were before and after their move to the housing site (for instance, did dumpsite scavengers continue with this

work?) and what the aspirations of the NGO and residents were. The socio-economic differentiation in terms of consumer patterns (regarding housing and amenities, which Melanie showed us) can hardly be separated from income differentiation. Concerning the valuable focus on the “aesthetics of the house” for the residents involved, I would have loved to read a detailed description of at least one of these houses, including the interior, with comments of its residents, both in the “phase of adaptation” and in the “phase of appropriation.” In short: analyses of experiences and systematic “facts” combined.



View of the community center in November 2014 framed by the multipurpose building on the left side, a row of houses behind the basketball court and the mini clinic and Coop-store on the right side.

Reference:

Hochschild, Arlie. 1979. Emotion Work, Feeling Rules and Social Structure. American Journal of Sociology: 85: 551–575.

Commentary

Dr. Paul Mathews

Independent Scholar, Canberra, Australia

Allow me to say first that I enjoyed reading this paper, notwithstanding the need for serious editing and a need perhaps for a little better structure.

It provides a microscopic lens of development issues mostly from the participants' point of view, and theorizes the underlying socio-cultural and political aspects of these.

It is an interesting paper and has a nice way to move into it by describing the transfer ritual. However, this, and much of the rest of the paper is a bit long, with too much detail in some cases that could be trimmed, as it's not always clear whether this "thesis" is in fact that or a novel---although an ethnography I agree can and perhaps should shade into one another, and there certainly are methodological arguments about this. But ultimately it needs to be well done and balanced in some way. Unfortunately in this paper the style could be improved. While the ethnographer's subjective inserts, reflections and subjectivity are valid, they do in this instance tend to intrude in a rather jarring way at times.

Having said that, the section on housing/concrete lacks sufficient detail. While one can get the drift of the author's descriptions and point, partly because most readers have experienced similar, it requires some further detail to understand the initial state of the house (which does come but a little late). For example, it was not initially clear why some residents had to use scavenged or new things such as plywood or tin, etc. Were the houses simply shells with no internal walls? How large were they? etc. An exemplary picture may be helpful.

In addition to that, I can well relate to where the author is going with this description and analysis, and I wonder if there may be a third stage or aesthetics, whereby residents completely bastardize the house, almost

vandalize it, not just appropriate it but impose on it. In both the Philippines and among migrants to Australia I have witnessed what seems to me a cluttering of space inside and out, and lack of thematic décor. One family I recall built an ugly fence and lined the entry path with so many plants that the path was barely useable. But others, from better socio-economics positions, shifted toward a more decorous embellishment, although distinctly Filipino—of course beauty can be in the eye of the beholder. (Some Australian aborigines have been reported to do similar bastardization, and studies of their housing might be useful in this regard.) Thus this theorizing could be better developed in the paper, and notions of perceived or subjectively-felt space be addressed.

I wonder, too, to what extent the NGO provides tangible guidance or can veto degrees or forms of appropriation, as they do with regard to sharing electric connections. One frequent feature of new housing is every Marie, Maria and May making the front of their house into a sari-sari (which has bearing on the author's comments later about income generation and employment); so, what authority does the NGO have in this?

I also want to raise the issue of hygiene, such as garbage disposal and contagious ailments or diseases. I note the houses now seem to have concrete flooring in the CR; that is all well and good, but this then creates if not perpetuates further problems. Here I am thinking of tinea, and possibly diseases such as typhus and cholera. Do residents get any training in hygiene practices? In other words, with modern structures and lifestyle can come other problems, which the author only briefly touches upon.

Essentially, people may need teaching on how to live in a concrete, new house, as I can attest from my in-laws living in my own house and friends in their own.

Overall, the paper is insightful with regard to the depiction of NGO work and new housing, as well theorizing, but seems to also want to include too much of the author's personal involvement, which comes across as a bit naïve and as amazement. While I acknowledge that the ethnographer is a part of the study, I wonder if such interruptive reflections might be better placed in a Methods section or as reflective comments at the end of chapters/sections. As it is, the structure of the paper is rather mixed. It's not a bad mix, but I would rather suggest it be refined.

But there are some quite good insights in the paper, and I'm sure many more, such as "the residents perform a change of lifestyle that characterizes

a transition from a traditional to a modern way of life. Most...already set this transition in motion when they gave up their rural lifestyle...for a life in the city." This is a more nuanced development of the old IPC papers of the 1950s-70s about transition. And, "the thesis aims to draw attention to the (unintended) paternalistic [and disempowering] effects that can occur in the transition process." Although that is an old issue, perhaps this author highlights how such relations work in practice, and offer suggestions on addressing them.



These housing units are inhabited by families who moved into the housing project in October 2008 with the first batch of awardees. They show first forms of appropriation such as the planted trees and flowers in the one-meter area in front of their unit. The attached light bulb on the outside wall of the housing unit on the right side, the power lines and the electric meter left of the house entrance also indicate that the residents of the right unit have a power connection, while the left unit is not yet connected.

I realize this 20+ page paper cannot do justice to a whole thesis and the several issues the author touches upon, but with some editing it would inspire the reading of the whole thesis, for one gets a sense the author has pushed development studies and theories to a new level, which is to be commended.

Commentary

Sarah Webb

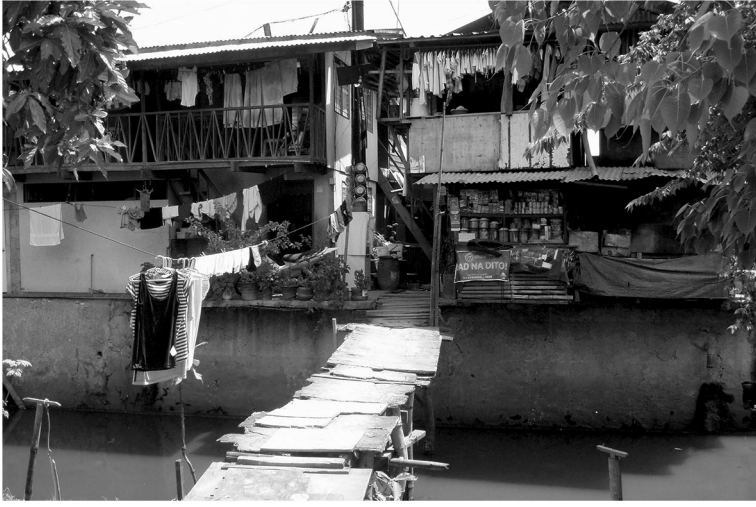
Here the author offers an ethnographic account of a housing project in Cebu, with a particular stated interest in what can be productive about attention to aesthetic elements in research on this topic. Many studies of informal settlements and scavenging practices in the Philippines have – for important reasons – focused on Metro Manila and as such it is helpful to see research investigating these subjects in other major urban settings. More than this, the article attempts to address a broader phenomenon: that despite significant criticisms and discomfort from the state, civil society and researchers, the potential lives and livelihoods which might be accessed via relocating to urban informal settlements generally (and waste sites specifically) continue to have an immense pull for migrants from the rural Philippines. The author rightly suggests that researchers wanting to understand why this is the case must consider the emic perspectives and life experiences of those who do so.

There is much that anthropological approaches can offer to understanding the contemporary dynamics of informal settlements and relocation projects in the Philippines, where historically such peoples' lives have been the subject of stigma, state punitive measures, poverty tourism and electoral politics. Certain themes of key anthropological studies appear relevant to the concerns and material presented in this article – for example, Lynne Milgram's work on the informal economy, labour and livelihoods in the Philippines and Richard Wilk's seminal contribution that conceptualising houses as significant consumer goods can assist anthropologists to understand why they are so central to livelihood decision-making.

The introduction of the article is comprised of extensive description of an event associated with the housing project, with particular emphasis on the author's own thoughts and experience. Given the author's interest in methodology and how the article's title of 'Excerpts from the field' positions

the work, I suggest it is pertinent here to consider the question, what does this description do? As anthropologists, we regularly consider how we can take the kind of descriptive writing which is an essential tool for us during the research process and transform this into a written product which has the power to more broadly convey something of the depth and nuance of our study. In this particular instance I wonder whether the description presented offers perhaps more insight into the author's experiences of aesthetics than we learn about the perspectives and experiences of the intended beneficiaries of the housing project. The former contribution is one which can be quite valuable to others, especially students, since extensive detail on this in relation to specific studies is often absent from more analytical articles and books. However, as a reader I was left wanting to know much more about the kind of biographical histories and emic understandings which I agree with the author are integral to understanding the research topic.

Some of these matters are more straightforward than others to comprehend. It is easy to imagine how those who have had free or cheaper access to water and electricity as a key feature of their daily lives might come to resent or critique shifts such as privatisation, a lack of autonomy over securing their supply, prohibitive costs and increased labour requirements – particularly in a context of resource scarcity and given the salient moral economies of provision. However, other assertions require further detail. Emphasis is placed on the importance of past living experiences and how these shape present aspirations and expectations, but this is more often discussed in general terms. Given that the intended beneficiaries are obviously a heterogeneous group with diverse past histories, it would be very useful to see this discussed specifically in terms of the trajectories of the people briefly introduced. Similarly, for an article derived from what it describes as a polyphonic ethnography, very little voice of the research participants appears here. Rather the reader is highly reliant on interpretations of their perspectives and feelings without really being able to grasp what these are based upon. Finally, to gain an understanding of the aesthetics of housing in terms of the housing project, it would have been good to see the level of description used to document the author's experiences applied to the specifics of house-making, decorating and dwelling – the practices and associated significance of which it is difficult to appreciate in the abstract.



The photo shows the access to a squatter settlement, which was built along a river. The houses directly on the river bank are located in the three-meter protection zone defined by the city. As a precaution against flooding, construction is not permitted in this zone. It is therefore only a matter of time before the city will demolish the houses.

In the conclusion the author poses a crucial question worthy of particular consideration – what might research participants gain from ethnographic investigation of informal housing and economies of waste? Those interested in further investigating this important question will also find it valuable to consult the work of anthropologist Carinnes Alejandria-Gonzalez who has been combining the tasks of rich, ongoing ethnographic research and outreach projects in collaboration with research interlocutors in Baseco, Metro Manila.

Author's Response to Commentaries

Melanie Hackenfort
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First of all I would like to express my gratitude to Rosanne Rutten, Sarah Webb, Maria Mangahas and Paul Mathews for their appreciative and critical feedback on my article 'Excerpts from the Field'. I am delighted to hear that all enjoyed reading the article although some questions have remained open. In the following, I would like to briefly respond to some of the comments and questions mentioned in the commentaries.

First, I would like to reply to the observation mentioned in the comments that my own (sensory) accounts are rather dominant in the text compared to that of my research partners. This is due to the fact that the text aims to give an insight into the methodological approach which I applied in the research and into the main findings regarding the change of lifestyle through relocation. Therefore, as noticed by Maria Mangahas, I e.g. have left out information on the conditions of my everyday life in the model house, as well as the voices of my research partners. In the thesis, I present the perspective of my research partners and that of the NGO at length in two separate chapters and furthermore in a series of interview statements in the analytic chapter dealing with the appropriation process of the house. Here, the reader finds six biographies of selected research partners presented in interview extracts and detailed descriptions of the different modes of organization and design in the process of adaptation and appropriation. In this respect, I totally agree with Rosanne Rutten that it is important to let the research partners speak for themselves instead of presenting their experiences and feelings only in an analyzed form.

'Whose sensory experiences? And how to retrieve them?' are central issues mentioned by Rutten which are closely related to the point that Sarah Webb asks: What does the description of sensory experiences do? Take for example the Ritual of Transfer which Sarah Webb has put into

question regarding whose sensory account it represents, my own or that of my research partners? It is, as she rightly identified, a sensory account of my own. In the thesis, it serves as a Prologue aiming to introduce the reader into the field by giving her/him a first sensory insight into the aesthetics of the lifeworld of the housing project. It is not meant to represent an emic sensory view. But there are numerous other sensory accounts of my research partners e.g. in the biographic chapter and which I included in the analytic chapter. Obviously, exploring the sensory experiences and perceptions of others constitutes a major challenge since it is difficult to elicit tacit knowledge. The question about it usually caused irritation. Most of the insights I actually gained unexpectedly, while hanging around with people or doing something with them, when we could immediately discuss our perceptions and experiences. In this case the potential of participant observation in establishing closeness to the research partners becomes obvious. The interpretation of these may be similar or different. For this reason I decided to present not only the sensory accounts of my research partners but also my own, in order to shed light on the fact how sensory and especially aesthetic experiences are shaped culturally and biographically.



A resident of the housing project on one of his daily walks to the deep well to fetch water. A few weeks later, he bought a tricycle to be able to transport larger quantities of water for his daily water supply.

In terms of the feelings arising in the transition process, I appreciate Rosanne Rutten's reference to *Emotion Work* by Arlie Hochschild. The concept offers an interesting approach to analyze the dynamics the NGO is dealing with in the implementation of the Human and Community Development Program. For the thesis, however, I chose to only present the perspective of the NGO by outlining its historical background and by describing the Human and Community Development Program, i.e. the implemented social structures, policies and livelihood initiatives. Although the subject of my research project is located in the field of development cooperation, the aim of the thesis is not – as questioned by Paul Mathews – to evaluate the socialized housing project and its programs, and to provide suggestions for improvement. It rather aims to describe and highlight the dynamics at work and the effects generated by such a project in order to reveal the ambivalent feelings about the change of lifestyle that arise, some-times causing conflicts between neighbors as well as between home partners and NGO employees. Nevertheless, I would certainly appreciate it if my findings would contribute to an adjustment of the communal policies or to a better understanding between the different partners involved.

Let me conclude by referring to Maria Mangahas' and Paul Mathews' question referring to the aspect of aesthetics. The terms 'makeshift aesthetics' and 'the aesthetics of persistence' are based on the changing material qualities involved in the applied modes of organization in the process of transition, like from perishable organic materials like wood to durable materials like concrete and iron. I apply these aesthetic categories only to the context of the housing project although they take the residents' habituated modes of organization and design of their former informal lifestyles into account. Paul Mathews further questioned if there is a third type of aesthetics like vandalism. In the housing project, there are signs of vandalism like doodles drawn by children on house walls or broken drain covers, etc.. While the doodles are regularly erased especially in preparation for a visit of international donors or project partners, broken or missing drain covers are rather ignored. The makeshift fences mentioned by Mathews, however, I would not include in this category. Being made from wood, these constitute simple and cost-efficient means of protection, objectifying both the residents' sense of safety and their habituated modes of marking their private space. In the phase of appropriation home partners replace these makeshift fences with concrete walls or iron grills which might appear more appropriate in relation to the aesthetics of the concrete house. In my thesis, I did not include this supposedly third aesthetics, because it did not seem to matter to my research partners in the process of changing their lives, as most of them were still in the process of adjustment. For a follow up

study, however, it would be interesting to find out if vandalism nowadays is an issue for the home partners, since they have full responsibility for the community.

***Media Anthropology for the Digital Age* by Anna Cristina Pertierra.
Cambridge: Polity. 158 pp. ISBN-13:
978-1-5095-0844-0 (pb) 2018.**

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Rapid changes in media and communication technologies in recent decades have made scholarship on and teaching of media's role in societal transformations more relevant. Disciplines such as anthropology have taken media seriously, giving rise to the anthropology of media as a thriving field of inquiry. *Media Anthropology for the Digital Age* by Anna Cristina Pertierra provides a sterling introduction to the history of modern anthropology's engagements with media. Dr Pertierra is an anthropologist and Associate Professor in Cultural and Social Analysis at Western Sydney University. Collaborating with cultural studies scholars such as Graeme Turner, she has written media ethnographies that span the Philippines and Latin America. By inhabiting a space between anthropology and cultural studies, the author writes from actual experience of interdisciplinary engagement.

In lucid prose, Pertierra introduces us to the core issues and questions of media anthropology which include its overlaps and relationship with media and cultural studies. By discussing the interactions and tensions between anthropology and media/cultural studies, the book highlights the contributions of each strand of inquiry to each other. At the core of this discussion is the contested use and role of ethnography as a method and sensibility to articulate our knowledge of media. Dr Pertierra's critical assessment of the ways the disciplines have approached and used ethnography to understand the relationship between media and society is a unique and valuable contribution of the book. Readers who are new to

or already acquainted with the field of media anthropology will appreciate Pertierra's earnest attempt to provide a diverse set of works from different societies to illustrate the exciting possibilities of media anthropology.

The book begins by introducing the premises of anthropological inquiry, namely: cultural relativism (human cultures are varied, equally valid and worthy of respectful investigation); holism (culture as complex interconnected systems); ethnographic (long-term and immersive approach to research); and the author's addition, deliberate esotericism (anthropologist's preoccupation with the unconventional) (pp. 6-9). Pertierra argues that openness among anthropologists allows for new ideas and perspectives to emerge. However, with the exception of Hortense Powdermaker in 1947, early anthropologists hesitated in studying the media (Chapter 1). Using a few but illustrative examples, Pertierra interrogates the limited reference to media in accounts of anthropologists who did ethnography in societies and places where film, newspaper or radio had already been established. She traces media's absence to the discipline's preoccupation with traditional societies and non-urban contexts. Anthropologists' inevitable encounters with modernity and globalization in their traditional field sites have spurned interest in the study of media (Chapter 2). In keeping with a holistic approach, media anthropologists such as Arjun Appadurai investigated media cultures of a people as part of other dimensions of their social life and lived experiences. Ethnography's attention to the mundane provided anthropologists an opportunity to examine how media are integrated into routines, social structures and meaning-making systems.

In Chapter 3 Pertierra discusses how other disciplines have appropriated ethnography from anthropology. For cultural and media studies, the 'ethnographic turn' or the use of ethnographic methods in investigating media and cultural practices, became a necessary intervention to trace and situate meaning-making processes (pp. 62-65). She points out the legacy of audience studies that ushered in a process of cross-fertilization between anthropology and cultural/media studies. Media scholars turned to anthropological concepts and approaches to illuminate the social and political significance of mundane media practices as well as events. Pertierra uses several examples that span cases from several continents to reflect how the ethnographic turn has also diversified our knowledge of media's place in their respective societies.

Chapters 4 and 5 examine how anthropologists and media scholars have approached the new medium of the Internet and the subsequent widespread use of mobile and social media. In Chapter 4, Pertierra surveys the works of

scholars that proposed various concepts (virtual community, cyberspace, network society) to make sense of the social and cultural spaces produced on the Internet. Early scholarship on the Internet also generated questions about how the new medium is reconstituting dimensions of social life such as identity, social relations and politics. Pertierra reiterates findings from pioneering anthropological works that have formed current assumptions about the Internet as domains of social life: That on- and offline worlds are connected (Daniel Miller and Don Slater) and that virtual worlds, as practices of fantasy, are authentic sites of ethnography themselves (Tom Boellstorff).

The author frames her discussion of mobile and social media as the emergence of intimate media (Chapter 5). Not only do they generate intimacies among people but also between digital media and their users. Building on the notion of mobile media as the most accessible communication technology in the world, Pertierra looks at the consequences of the mobile phone's embedding in everyday life, especially among less privileged and vulnerable groups. Contrary to popular discourses about the empowering potential of access to digital media platforms, ethnographic studies from China, the Philippines and India illustrate their contradictory consequences. Access to mobile media and digital platforms reinforces differential access to resources and opportunities. In the latter part of the chapter, the author turns to studies on digital media and everyday relations that have yielded new concepts to frame digital media engagements and experiences (pp. 114-117). Concepts such as media ideologies (Illana Gershon), polymedia (Mirca Madianou and Daniel Miller) and media ecology (Heather Horst et al.) provide analytical frames to theorize the connections and tensions between agents in our complex media environment.

Pertierra adds another dimension to media anthropology by describing how anthropologists themselves have used media (photographs, film, digital media) as part of and product of the process of ethnography (Chapter 6). The author takes us back to early uses of ethnographic film and photographs of pre-war anthropologists and then to the current usage of social media or web sites where ethnographic projects can be shared and publicized. Pertierra lists some collaborative projects on media anthropology that are available online for pedagogical use. In the same chapter, ethnography is further problematized through the author's discussion of television's use of ethnography and the popularization of anthropology in programs such as the BBC's *Tribe series*.

Finally, in Chapter 7, the book returns to the debate on what counts as ethnography. Pertierra acknowledges the varied ways in which the ethnographic method and anthropological theorizing have enriched and invigorated scholarship in other disciplines and media studies. However, she also cautions against its casual deployment which dilutes its quality as a method anchored in deep engagement. The author explains the position of anthropologists who recognize the changing character of field sites but remain committed to rigorous fieldwork.

In the final chapter, Pertierra reiterates the contribution of anthropology to the study of media and its continuing relevance as an approach to explain a digitally-mediated world. Pertierra's *Media Anthropology for the Digital Age* goes beyond introducing the interdisciplinary space between anthropology and media studies but also shows how their theories advance through critical engagement and collaboration. The author's thorough discussion of diverse examples of media ethnography provides readers possibilities for venturing into an exciting field of inquiry and scholarship.

Disorder and the Disinformation Society – The Social Dynamics of Information Networks and Software,
Jonathan Paul Marshall, James Goodman, Didar Zowghi & Francesca da Rimini, Routledge, London, 2015.

Raul Pertierra PhD
Philippine Women's University

According to Bruno Latour (2014) we are now in the age of Anthropocene, where human activity is the main shaper of the physical and social environment. When this age started is difficult to ascertain – it may have begun 500,000 years ago when fire was first employed or 10,000 years ago when cultivation and animal husbandry was practiced. Some anthropologists date this age to the first water pump (1710) at the start of the industrial revolution. In any case, it now seems clear that human activity is the main determinant of our physical and social world. A consequence of this fact is the increasing unpredictability of the future as human intervention becomes a major factor in shaping such a future.

An attempt to control or predict the future is associated with the early writings of the Sumerians (3000B.C.) and Egyptians (3500B.C) in their meticulous details of business transactions. Writing later expanded to include less banal and more speculative matters. During this early stage, orality was still the main repository of data and knowledge. While writing became a specialized activity, most people still relied on oral and pictorial means to access information. A major break occurred with the Gutenberg press, which ushered a much expanded source of written material. Literacy became a necessary element of life and access to information

marked the onset of modernity. The age of Anthropocene must now include Informationalism as the former's major source of intervention in both the physical and social worlds. These interventions are the basis both of order and disorder in the present period.

If the printing press marked the beginning of an informational society, more recent developments have multiplied its significance. Indeed, some writers are claiming that the internet and new media have opened revolutionary paths to human development hitherto unknown.

According to Barlow (1995:36) – “With the development of the Internet, and with the increasing pervasiveness of communications between networked computers, we are in the middle of the most transforming technological event since the capture of fire. I used to think that it was just the biggest thing since Gutenberg, but now I think you have to go back further.”

A similar claim is made by Pierre Levy: *Collective Intelligence: A Civilization* 2011: 4

“I would therefore claim that we are approaching the dawn of a new civilization whose explicit aim will be to perfect collective human intelligence, that is to say, to pursue indefinitely the process of emancipation into whose path language has thrown us. If I have worked so hard at understanding the significance of cyberspace, it is because it seems to me to be the most up-to-date tool available for improving our collective intelligence, the most recent path discovered for opening up our possibilities of collective choice”.

While the views above may be rather optimistic, there is little doubt that we have entered a new era of informationalism. The promises of the new communication media tend to stress the benefits but downplay the negative aspects of the new technology. While the ability to communicate is generally beneficial, this assumes that people have control over who, what, when and why they communicate. Often this control is beyond most users and instead the old power structures benefit by the ability to influence, shape and keep track of people's activities, particularly their digital meanderings. In a culture where consumption is an integral part of identity formation, the state and capital stand to gain more from the advances in communication than most individual users.

The book, *Disorder and the Disinformation Society*, argues that one must question who controls communicative structures and for what purposes. Our lives increasingly depend on a world generated by media images and practices - what interests motivate these images and practices? Do the

new media encourage or do they constrain the democratization of everyday life? Is it possible to remain incommunicado in a world that increasingly insists on always staying in touch?

Moreover, communicative practices take place in a world marked by virtuality and radical alterities. Increasingly, we communicate with absent others, including non-human interlocutors. While technologically mediated communication often mimics face-to-face talk, its consequences are often radically different and unpredictable. Earlier boundaries separating culture from nature are technologically transcended. The Anthropocene and Informational age marks the domination of culture over nature.

This book critically examines the basis of order in the so-called Information Society. As societies become more complex, requirements for stability, maintenance and reproduction also increase. A critical component of system maintenance is the production, dissemination and integration of information. This is particularly significant in the so-called Information society, where access to information constitutes the basis of order. But a problem immediately arises – who controls, guarantees and implements information as the basis of order. The main argument advanced by the authors is that information always and necessarily produces counter-information or disinformation. This contradicting process occurs at all levels of the production, dissemination and integration of information.

Information is both an important collective asset and a source of private profit. It has to be shared as well as guarded. While the generation and counter-generation of information occurs in all social formations, this is particularly crucial under advanced capitalism. This is due to the excessive needs for information in capitalist societies as well as its commodification. A balance between the need to share information but also to limit its distribution cannot be accomplished given the conditions of late capitalism. Side by side with the flowering of novel and subversive information is the growing attempt to censor such expressions (SOPA, PIPA, ACTA). While the Freedom of Information Bill in the Philippines languishes in congress, a law against cybercrimes has been quickly enacted. Governments seem to be more concerned about controlling the free flow of information than in guaranteeing its access. While the new media is often perceived as a threat by government officials, ordinary citizens generally see it as emancipatory. Tom Steinberg (2016) argues persuasively that only strong political pressure, rather than gentle persuasion obliges governments to embrace open data policies.

A hundred years after the industrial revolution we are on the threshold of another even more transformative period. The speed, extent and reproductivity of information challenge our notions of the original and of the past. Neither seems relevant for the present. If modernity involved a transformation of our notion of time that allowed us to think globally following the introduction of standard time, then the new media may also require a different notion of temporality. Constant connectivity negates spatio-temporal borders. Neither time nor space constrains life in the virtual present. Modern life is one of constant transit from an actual present to a virtual future.

Just as we can contact anyone, anytime, anywhere, we can also be monitored anytime, anywhere by any one of many state and commercial organizations. As soon as you turn on your computer and before you even start surfing, a host of organizations are already monitoring your activities. Technologies are not just a means of communication but also shape who we are. Our world is not only mediated but we live in and through these media of communication. As Daniel Miller (*Material Cultures*, 1997) has argued, material accumulation is not just instrumental but also symbolic. The quest for individual identity requires a growing collection of material and virtual goods. When you combine self-authorship with a consumerist culture, you enter capitalism's utopia.

While technologies extend our capacity for agency, in the process, the acting subject is increasingly fragmented. We interact with many absent others, many of whom are strangers, we join local, national and global causes, and we participate in specialized interests such as Japanese wrestling, Caribbean cooking or Spanish flamenco. Many of these online interactions are conducted individually. Moreover, the speed of technological change often does not allow sufficient time for collective norms to determine acceptable practices. Hence, children and the inexperienced are exposed to certain risks. Under these conditions, the notion of a singular, cohesive, consistent or bounded self is impossible to maintain.

As testimony of this increased agency, we are regaled with stories of ordinary people triumphing against powerful corporations and institutions. According to NICHOLAS KRISTOF (Feb. 4, 2012, *The New York Times*), a group of fourth-graders took on Hollywood and won, while a young nanny forced Bank of America to withdraw proposed bank charges. Closer to home we recall how a president (Philippine President Estrada in 2001; Pertierra, et.al, 2002) was removed by a coup d'text. These are all striking examples of agency achieved through the new media.

Furthermore, this expression of agency draws heavily on the expectations of others to whom we are increasingly and perpetually connected. It is becoming more difficult not to exercise agency, should we choose not to do so. Constant appeals from the market, the state and even close friends to exercise agency is exhausting and makes solitude impossible. According to Mark Zuckerberg (on 8 January 2010), the “age of privacy” seems to be over. We live within a paradox; the more choices we have in authoring our lives, the more dependent we become on the choices of others. The loss of solitude and privacy may be a high price to pay for this expanded agency. Perhaps it is time to reconsider the exercise of agency under conditions which are beyond our control. The conditions above shape the production, dissemination and use of information. As the authors constantly remind us, information is not just pure data but data contaminated with power, interest and profit. These are the factors which ensure that informationalism produces its own aporias.

In the 12 chapters of this book, the authors provide us with extensive references and examples of why informationalism produces both order and disorder. They begin by critiquing social theories ranging from Hobbes and Proudhon to Durkheim and Weber that mostly stress order over disorder. Even conflict is often seen as a precursor of order as the anthropologist Gregory Bateson creatively argued using examples from New Guinea. The rationalization of social life so necessary for modernity is meant to eliminate or at least to minimize disorder. Economists seem to be the most persuasive exponents of order in society but given their poor record of predicting market fluctuations make their claims suspect.

In several chapters dealing with seemingly more technical aspects of informationalism such as software design, network compatibility and computer functions, the authors provide convincing arguments and examples to show that technologies are themselves social projects open to elements of disruption due to the various hierarchies of power and control exercised by managers and technicians.

The crux of the problem with informationalism is its governing function within advanced capitalism. Data and knowledge so crucial to capitalist growth and reproduction is constrained and often hampered by the narrow requirements of immediate and exclusive profit. An irony of the information age is that while most of its highly educated workers play essential roles in advancing the system, intellectual work is often devalued.

Even cases where information sharing and retrieval can be expected to benefit all users such as peer-to-peer networks and academic researchers, disinformation arises due both to internal as well as external sources. Competition and the pressures of publication often require users not to maximize exchanges in favour of more exclusive practices. Added to this is the facility of plagiarizing sources and even fabricating data in order to favour certain theoretical positions.

The book ends by giving extensive examples of organizations using the internet to pursue issues connected with global justice. The full potential of the new media to challenge mainstream informationalism has been successfully achieved by a range of NGO's such as the People's Global Action (PGA) resulting from the opposition to the neo-liberal policies of the U.S.A. More recent expressions of similar movements are the Occupy as well as others including political opposition in the Middle East such as the Arab Spring. But even these successful examples have had to cope with internal dissensions and disinformation. They show that attempts to employ informationalism for radical transformations have their own limits.

This book is an important contribution to the literature challenging the often hegemonic claims of Information Society. Its basic thesis is relatively simple and convincing – any attempts at order generate their own aporias and result in forms of disorder. Most of the literature on the Information Society often praise its advantages and seldom mention the disruptions that are intrinsic to the new order. The gains of the growth of information cannot be denied and constitute an essential element of contemporary life. But our experience of disorder at all levels of society has to be seen as the counterpart of an imposition of information on social life. The rationalization of social life so beloved by Weber and Durkheim as they witnessed the transformations from an emergent to a mature capitalist global order has to be reassessed as its elements increasingly intrude into aspects of the inner-life world. Informationalism attempts to redefine culture in its own terms, thereby subverting the very basis of social life not dependent on purely monetary gains. Marcel Mauss' (1969) notion of the gift as an essential counterpoint to instrumental exchange is particularly apt in appreciating the significance of notions such as a public commons and open data in the age of Informationalism. This book is an important antidote to the often soporific claims of Information Society. It should be made widely available.

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***Whither the Philippines in the 21st Century?* Severino, R C., Carlos Salazar, L. (Eds.). 2007. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.**

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In an interview at the time of Corazón Aquino's administration, a UP professor lamented, 'I do not deserve this country'. Some twenty years later, at the ISEAS Conference 'Whither the Philippines in the 21st Century?' (Singapore, 13-14 July 2006), we were presented with the reasons why the good professor held that opinion.

Conferences must have names, and new centuries or millennia offer a ready source of inspiration. A university hereabout advertises, 'Towards excellence in education in the 3rd millennium', which leaves it plenty of time to achieve it. The thirteen papers presented in the present conference proceedings breathe more urgency, and leave us, only two years and an impending economic implosion later, with no sense of where the country is heading for. The desiderata that conclude most chapters are no more than lists of ifs that cannot take shape as long as the state is captured by a few self-perpetuating oligarchs.

Debilitating political system

At the same time that several of the contributions start on the hope-giving note that the Philippines is slowly achieving a rather respectable economic growth, virtually all of them then note the deadweight of a nonproductive, dysfunctional political set-up that will keep the country's masses mired in poverty and that spells no good for any sort of social development. In Rocamora's characterization, this set-up is based on personalistic, clan-based networks of local political notables that are organized in ascending

order up to the president of the republic. This corrupt, patronage-ridden system was fully institutionalized through Quezon's revision of Recto's 1935 Constitution, although some may argue that it has practically been in place since the early twenties when old and new Filipino elites could relish considerable political autonomy, or even that it dates back to Quezon's meanwhile inveterate invention of foul politicking, known as trapo-ism, that enabled him to snatch the governorship of Tayabas in 1906.

Even as Marcos attempted to change the basics that are at the roots of 'the malaise that plagues one of Asia's gifted underachievers' (2), he was too much a product of the Quezonian 'system' to stand a chance of succeeding. Whatever the chances, had he been a visionary rather than a gifted manipulator, came to naught when Aquino's Freedom Constitution (1987) fully restored the status quo ante, albeit with the provision that the voices of program-oriented politicians should be heard. At the same time, this apparent generosity on behalf of the state-owning class was muted with the clauses that party representation be restricted to 20% of the membership of Congress, and that no single party is to have more than three seats in the House.

In other words, the structural weakness of the state has consciously been built in, with the result that the rule of law remains an empty phrase, basic social services cannot be delivered, while the absence of strong institutions gives free rein to the debilitating corruption that undermines the correct execution of infrastructural projects. No wonder, therefore, that the population at large is alienated from the state, and that appeals to nationalism are doomed to fail. The only real challenges the political class faces come from the political desiderata of institutionalized religion, especially the RC Church, a disaffected, politicized military, and a radical constitutional revision.

Virtually all authors present their wish lists about amending the sorry state the country is in. A strong political society needs to be constructed; the rule of law should reign; the state must have strong institutions; economic society should be strong, too, and a flourishing civil society is mandatory. This is most exhaustively argued by Abueva in his chapter on 'Proposed Constitutional Reform for Good Governance and Nation Building', but by adopting such measures, the ruling class would legislate itself out of power. Besides, Abueva is naive when he argues that in the past, charter change could succeed because it was supported by the sitting presidents. In that way, Quezon assured himself of a second term and instituted a servile Senate as his handmaiden. Marcos's revisions were equally self-serving,

while Aquino's constitution simply restored her class to power. So, when the present president is in favor of charter change, opponents cannot but suspect her of ulterior motives.

Contents

Politics

The books first four chapters contain lucid political-science analysis. They range from Caballero-Anthony's situating the Philippines in Southeast Asia (its 'basket case') to Rocamora's well-argued chapter on why the present political set-up cannot and will not deliver. It is followed by Abueva's recommendations, and Hernandez's conclusion that a weak state and corrupted institutions provide an invitation to the military to play an interventionist, non-constitutional role.

Religion

The next two chapters, on 'Religion and Politics' and 'The Philippine Press', are descriptive, and their conclusions are not world-shattering. In the first, it is noted that under current circumstances, institutional religion is politicized and efficacious in influencing decisions. Yet, it does not tell us why it is popular among the populace (which ultimately lends it its mobilizing force). When political avenues for the expression and negotiation of demands are closed, religion may become the vehicle of protest of a disfranchised population. The Shah was brought down by it, and it played a considerable role in ousting Marcos, Suharto, and Estrada, at the same time that the Burmese junta may have to fear peaceable monks more than Aung San Suu Kyi. Be that as it may, there is no predicting of the hold of religion on the faithful whence open politics have been established.

Press

The chapter on the English-language press leaves no doubt that its shrinking readership has to contend itself with the antics of traditional politicians, scandal, and in the main ad hoc, extemporized commentary. Investigative journalism is seriously underdeveloped, and incisive analysis of national, let alone world issues is absent. Even so, journalism is a very dangerous occupation, as 'the killings [of its practitioners] are part of a systemic failure, another shameful reflection of the national "culture of impunity"' (137).

Economy

The sobering tone of the first six chapters reverberates through the five on the economy. Sicat concludes his review of 'Philippine Macroeconomic Issues and Challenges' with 'the macroeconomic fundamentals could be immensely strengthened through the pursuit of economic ... and structural policy reforms ... that need to address the liberalization of foreign capital participation' (169), and with this we are basically back at the dysfunctional political process. Such conclusions also come to the fore in Wallace's 'Investment Climate and Business Opportunities' that summarizes it neatly as, 'the biggest worry is the level of investment, which will [*italics NM*] remain far too low for a country that needs to grow' (199). No wonder that these economic considerations, plus the burgeoning population, explain Balisacan's 'Why does Poverty Persist?', while this very persistence largely explains the 'Diaspora, Remittances and Poverty' that Pernia addresses. 'The Philippine Development Record' by Hill and Piza concludes the economics section with the assessment that 'the Philippine development record must surely be judged a disappointment, in the light of its relatively favorable initial conditions and compared to almost all of its East Asian neighbors' (273).

Rebellion

The last two substantive chapters deal with the dogged persistence of the two rebellions plaguing the country for the past forty years. In the first, Abinales deals especially with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, whose pernicious activities are rooted in 'the long history of Muslim alienation from the national body politic, and the consistent failure of government efforts to address the pervasive deprivation of the Muslim provinces' (300). The author also addresses the possibility that the militants are disaffected by the feudal, hierarchical structure of Muslim society, even as they do not envision the contours of an alternative society other than the idea that 'Islam is the solution'.

The chapter by Magno contains an assessment of the New People's Army that seems to have degenerated to an extortionist racket in the service of the Communist Party of the Philippines, and that is plagued by dogmatic rigidity, and ever narrowing recruitment and logistics bases, at the same time that the once impressive front is frittering away in small cells and commands. Since the latter avoid confrontation with the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the headache they present is far from over.

Summary

The last chapter by Severino is an apt summary of the thirteen chapters, and even as some positive things need to be said in conclusion, it doesn't make for cheerful reading. It leaves the Conference's theme, 'Whither the Philippines in the 21st Century?' open: if we hope for progress, the political economy must change, but since it would deprive those who man it of their privilege, this is not likely to occur anytime soon.

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With this being the state of affairs as it is, one would like to know what it takes to break out of the vicious circle of 'going nowhere'. More than 50 years ago, President Ferdinand Marcos tried to do so by declaring Martial Law. It was not just his idea, as it coincided with the Third World's call for technocratic development that is inherently averse to popular mobilization. At that time, the broad ideas of the founding fathers of modern states in the Southeast Asian Region—constitutionalism, democracy, education for all, social justice, rule of law—had gradually vanished from the popular imagination and been replaced by the creed of economic development, with its stress on money, technology and material success. Accordingly, 'the Nation' was replaced by state and market at the same time that the ideals of nation-building and active citizenship faded in an anonymous scene ruled by political and economic expediency. As a result, civil society ideals, such as responsibility for and active participation in a shared public world, have seemingly lost their relevance in an environment where people strive for survival, caring for themselves and their immediate dependents only.

In my view, this is still where we are.

Review: Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila Irving, D. R. M. Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. X, 394 pp. ISBN 9780195378269.

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In *Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila*, D. R. M. Irving closely examines the many aspects of musical encounters between the indigenous Filipinos and Spain during the early modern period, and presents a very insightful perspective on the lived-out experiences and performances of Filipino musicians within the context of colonial worship. In his discussion, he carefully weaves a narrative that vividly portrays the various processes by which Filipino indigenous musicians performed in and navigated through the process he calls “colonial counterpoint”.

By a careful blending of ethnomusicology and historical musicology, Irving offers a new way of looking at the process of musical enculturation, particularly the transmission and transplantation of the music of Imperial Spain, not only in early modern Manila, but also in Asia. Such approach produces a well nuanced image of the musical landscape during the early Spanish colonization of the Philippines, and provides a foundational awareness of this landscape for those who seek to understand the various Christianized expressions and religious practices of the present-day Philippines. From a disciplinary perspective, this work is an interesting contribution to the new yet growing field of historical musicology—a subfield within ethnomusicology that attempts to meaningfully understand music

from across time and space.

This work spans eight chapters that are grouped into three major sections, within which Irving employs counterpoint, a compositional technique, as a metaphor for the musical development of that era, and powerfully bolsters his argument with sufficient and significant literature. Throughout the book, Irving skillfully synthesizes ethnographies written during the colonial period, descriptions of the various patterns of musical composition, incunabula about the colonial missionaries, archival material from different sources, dictionaries, and extant notated music to shed light on how a contrapuntal process facilitated the transmission and transplantation of colonial music in early modern Manila. Casting his gaze at texts “produced in the colonies or about colonies themselves” (p. 7), a strategy known as “history from below”, Irving, in effect, borrows from Reynaldo Ileto’s *Pasyon and Revolution*, and ends up claiming that indigenous Filipinos were actively and consciously subverting the Spanish colonial authorities through various musical modalities. Irving muses: “Filipino singers of the *pasyon* and performers of the [senakulo] may have subverted meanings and signifiers of the Lenten rituals approved by Church and Crown to present the central meaning of the Passion story as a symbol for struggle against social injustice—and to convey the message that suffering and self-sacrifice would eventually triumph and result in redemption” (p. 151). Without a doubt, this claim possesses the seeds or origins—which can be considered an extension—of the arguments forwarded by both Reynaldo Ileto in *Pasyon and Revolution* and Vincente Rafael in *Contracting Colonialism*.

To advance his arguments, Irving uses “counterpoint” not only as a metaphor, but a conceptual tool as well, to unravel the process of subversion and inversion of Spanish colonial music. Musical counterpoint, therefore, is a “sonic expression of hegemony” hidden in many disguised forms which Irving seeks to unlock in his work, a goal that he fortifies with evident references to Bhabha who argues that “the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority” (Bhabha 1994, p. 88). Irving eventually articulates the opinion that transculturation of music from the Iberian Peninsula by the Filipinos was a “purposeful means of coming to terms with cultural bigotry, subverting cultural and social hierarchies by minimizing difference” (p. 121).

Among the many important insights gained from reading Irving’s work on the role of the Philippines, specifically early modern Manila, is a clarification of the process of intercultural exchange and globalization of culture. He declares that “the Philippines [represented] an early modern

point of global convergence for string instruments from Asia, Europe, and also Africa” (p. 58) and “acted as a crucible for intercultural exchanges” (p. 70). This being the historical backdrop, Irving proceeds to highlight the importance of Manila as the focal point of global music dissemination, Manila being the center of trade where galleons laden with merchandise and goods from noted Asian countries weighed anchor and travelled to their different destinations. Among these commodities figured not only musical instruments but musicians themselves.

In this regard, Irving enables us to realize that the Philippines was not merely a spectator in the course of history. Her geographical location allowed the Philippines not only to be colonized but also to be globalized, to be receptive and responsive to the diverse cultural forces and influences then freely available to be transplanted in Philippine soil. The advent of different musical languages favored by this exchange triggered a multicultural dialogue. Irving, however, falls short at pinpointing a clear indication when European music became established enough to cause a radical shift in the musical practices in the Philippines. Manila, being a multicultural city, was, by that time, a musical platform for the performance of different types of music coming from different parts of the globe. Thus, considering the musical practices in Manila to be in constant flux and innovation, not only with the music brought by the Spanish colonizer, but with music from diverse cultural backgrounds then present in the city, presents no difficulty. This notwithstanding, Irving’s work is a fascinating introspection and an insightful analysis of the enculturation process by which Filipinos during the early modern times in Manila handled, absorbed, consumed, and made their own the music of their colonizer.

Underscoring the intercultural value of music and how intercultural exchanges and negotiation takes place between unfamiliar cultures through the exchange of musical instruments, vocal music, and practices. Irving enumerates concrete events that evince how this process took place in the early times of the colonization of the archipelago. Vividly, Irving, in one instance, describes the plight of some Poor Clare nuns singing their Divine Office in the galleon, and, in another, captures the expectation for hopeful outcomes when a violin was given to the raja of the Tausug people. And while the book preoccupies itself with colonial music in early modern Manila, Irving disarms the reader by proposing an alternative way of analyzing the dissemination of European musical practices and their diffusion into Philippine society. Dissemination and diffusion are no longer a purely Hispanic hegemonic process; rather, they are the joint endeavor of Spaniards and indigenous Filipinos. “Christian and non-Christian Filipinos

alike,” Irving observes, “were themselves responsible for the dissemination of these practices in areas that lay beyond the political or religious control of Spanish Manila” (p. 65-66). “Britons,” he adds, “also played a mediating role in this context” both “as visitors” and “as occupying military forces” (p. 66).

Throughout the narrative, Irving empowers counterpoint in the context of social analysis to describe how Filipinos musically subverted the colonial power. While this use of counterpoint as a social concept and a point of analogy is indeed very imaginative, Irving, however, unfortunately defocuses from the very practice of counterpoint. First, counterpoint, by its nature, has rules. These rules come to reside in the very heart of every trained composer, as this author is, and were laid down so that every composer can learn the contrapuntal practices that were already prevalent during the Renaissance, as exemplified in the music of Palestrina. Second, counterpoint species exercise frees the imagination of the composer. It is the training ground where diverse musical styles developed by means of musical luminaries such as Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy, Ravel, and Schoenberg. Thus, rules of counterpoint are meant to break down a musical barrier that hinders creativity and to welcome a diversity of styles and voices. Third, a thorough understanding of counterpoint as a process reveals that an independent dialogical process occurs in each line of the melody not only in imitative canonic imitation of the melody, which is by far the most obvious to the ear, but in homophonic texture as well. In imitative counterpoint, one voice gives a melodic material that is imitated by another voice in a different pitch level using various imitative techniques not limited to strict imitations. Various levels of imitation exist in counterpoint. And these give the composer greater freedom to explore his musical creativity—the free counterpoint, which is the Parnassus. Therefore, while Irving correctly labels the relationship between Spaniards and indigenous Filipinos as a form of counterpoint, he errs in identifying the concept of subversion and inversion not as accidental occurrences but as intrinsic elements to the contrapuntal process exemplified in the intercultural exchange and cultural dialog. Subversion of independence of voices is homophony, while independence of melody and dialogical relationship towards a coherent whole is a counterpoint.

More appropriately, the indigenous Filipino’s contrapuntal relationship with the colonial power can be viewed in terms of imitation, reciprocity, and cultural creativity. Such a way of thinking is more faithful to the rules of counterpoint since Filipino music and musicianship remained an independent voice singing together and blending with the foreign voice from

Iberia in a contrapuntally cohesive manner. Neither of the two were lost in the independence of each voice; rather, each was heard in an ongoing melodic and contrapuntal dialog. Demonstrating loyalty to the contrapuntal process, indigenous Filipinos embraced the music of their colonizer as a melodic material to imitate, subjecting the music to various contrapuntal techniques, thus concretely embodying their unique creativity. Indigenous Filipinos of that era, likewise, saw many aspects of Iberian music that were similar to their musical and cultural tradition, that absorbing this foreign music was not an exercise of replacement. Rather, it was an exercise of enrichment. Filipinos did not submit to a foreign paradigm, no. They adapted a paradigm that resembled and resonated with their pre-contact cultural sensibilities, sophisticatedly inaugurating a process of enculturation and transculturation. This intercultural exchange, therefore, can no longer be viewed as a narrative of colonial subjugation where Filipinos have not enough power and volition to make a rational choice concerning their musical lives against the supposedly hegemonic power of Imperial Spain. At best, it can be viewed within the framework of a globalization process wherein the breakdown of cultural barriers and cultural ownership ensured freedom for Filipinos to accept something as foreign as Iberian music and meld it into their own culture

Irving's study indeed successfully deepens our understanding of the colonial nature of music making in the early modern Philippines. Nevertheless, we must carefully navigate through its problematic parts, considering that his pioneering analysis continues to suggest that colonial musical practices in the Philippines developed in the backdrop of the hegemonic and coercive power of Imperial Spain. This work remains indispensable to serious scholars working on areas of historical musicology and ethnomusicology, but we must ensure that its main argument should be taken with a measure of reservation. First, Spanish missionaries did not tyrannically impose their own musical practices, as the experience of other Asian countries, such as Japan and China, demonstrate; rather, they sought to contrapuntally harmonize these practices with the cultural orientation of the people to whom Christianity was being introduced. Publications of chant manual written in Bikol, as well as other musical works that used the vernacular language, such as the Kyrie de Bacayon, incontrovertibly evince this effort. Second, the prevalent liturgical atmosphere following the Tridentine reform, by which all missionaries had to abide, figures nowhere in the discussion. Understanding the liturgical practices in early modern Manila must, at some point, hinge on the Tridentine reform, since it had a bearing on what music was allowed in the liturgy. Third, the term "Spanish" is used liberally with little qualification, for while the Spanish crown

indeed sent the missionaries under the terms of the Royal Patronage, the missionaries owed obedience first and foremost to the Pope of Rome, and allegiance to the Catholic Monarch of Spain is only secondary. Fourth, historical records show that missionaries protected the indios against the abuse of Spanish authorities. Lastly, music as a cultural practice can be absorbed by any culture just by being exposed. Such transliteration and transplantation of colonial musical practices can be said to be a product of mutual cultural contact that provided enrichment cross-culturally to the Philippines. Confirming this is their continued practice a hundred years after the Spanish occupation had ceased.

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