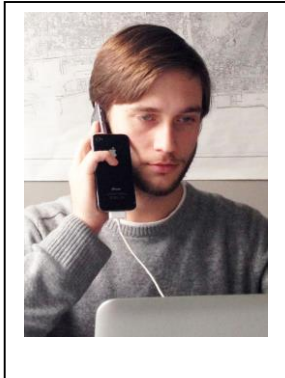# How much you spent at the Mall?

On commuters and shopping centres in Metro Manila [1]

Petter Nilsson

1 Introduction

In February 2016 I went on a study trip to Metro Manila with the department of Housing Development and Management at the Faculty of Engineering, Lund University, Sweden. Of all lectures I attended, there was one that really stood out for me: the presentation of the redevelopment of Ayala Center, a commercial area and transit station in the city Makati of Metro Manila. Mr. Joel Luna, architect and the vice president of Ayala Land, explained that the aim of the project was to create a pleasant environment for commuters while they are waiting for a chance to go home. The new transit station was a place where you could "shop and wait".

Before the lecture I was well aware and had experienced the congested traffic of Metro Manila, the overcrowded rail transit system and the never ending archipelago of shopping malls. What I hadn't thought of was the obvious opportunity of turning waiting commuters into consumers. I had seen informal street vendors making their way through a sea of congested traffic, selling snacks and sodas to make the traffic jam more bearable, but Ayala Center was on a whole other level.

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[1] The title is taken from the song "All Day" by Kanye Wests: "How long you n[…]s ball? All day. How much time you spent at the mall? All day, n[…]."

2 Literature Review

Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream by M. Jeffrey Hardwick

To better understand the retail spaces of Manila we need to start off with one of the most influential architects of the 20th century: Victor Gruen (1903-80). Gruen was the architect of the world's first enclosed mall, the Southsdale Shopping Centre (1956) in Minnesota, USA. The rise of automobiles and suburbia in the US after World War II had, according to Gruen, created "communities without hearts" (Hardwick, 2004, p. 121). The nation on wheel lacked the places for spontaneous meetings where people afoot could stroll leisurely. Gruen, who was born in Vienna, recalled the piazzas, markets and cafés of Europe, all designed in a human scale. Why couldn't this be in the US? Gruen's answer to the contemporary anarchistic and neon lit commercial spaces along the roads was the enclosed shopping centre, a mini-Europe where the suburbia residents could pilgrimage to just as millions of American tourist travelled to Europe to enjoy the streets of Paris (Hardwick, 2004, p. 121).

When Southsdale opened in 1956 the overall review was positive. Critics compared the shopping centre to everything European from the Basil of San Marco in Venice to Danish red brick. Architectural Forum wrote "that it's nothing suburban about it except its location" and that "it's more downtown than downtown itself". But one fellow architect of Gruen was not impressed; Frank Lloyd Wright described Southdale's popular garden court as "a desolated spot". To him it was "a garden court with all the evils of a village street and none of its charm" (Hardwick, 2004, p. 155).

The success of Southsdale inspired others and soon the shopping mall spread over America and the rest of the world (Gladwell, 2004). In the 1950's there were over 2500 shopping malls in the US (Kärrholm, 2012, p. 64). In the 1960's the stores in the downtowns of American cities had a hard time competing with the suburban shopping centres. Just a year after Southsdale was completed Gruen started his first downtown revitalization project in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Again, the focus was to create lots of parking space so that pedestrians could enjoy the pleasant

environment that was given to them to shop in. In short it was the start of the suburbanization of the downtown.

Retailising Space: Architecture, Retail and the Territorialisation of Public Space by Mattias Kärrholm

> *Many markets have been held in the same place for eight*
> *hundred years, and a few for over a thousand. The only centres*
> *of resort to rival them in age and importance are the churches.*

The quote by the British architectural historian Mark Girouard is from the book *Retailising Space: Architecture, Retail and the Territorialisation of Public Space* (2012) by Mattias Kärrholm. Kärrholm points out that while places for places for production, such as factories (goods) schools (knowledge) and prisons (moral), went through major changes during the 19th century, places for consumption remained more or less the same through until mid-20th century when cars became popular and architects like Gruen started to design malls. This point in the history of retail architecture marks the change from an industrial society of production to a consumer society of service. The change can also be seen in the amount of people working in retail; in Sweden that number went from 0,5 per cent in 1850 to 18-19 per cent in the end of the 20th century (Kärrholm, 2012, ch. 2).

Kärrholm strives to apply a term widely used by cultural geographers in architectural theory: territoriality. What territoriality *is* are there many different views on. Kärrholm goes through some of them in this book, and plenty more in his earlier work *Arkitekturens Territorialitet* (Kärrholm, 2004). A general definition, coherent to the French philosopher Michel Foucault's (1926-84) theory of power, would be that of territoriality as a power implemented over an area over time. According to two other French thinkers, Gilles Deleuze (1925-95) and Félix Guattari (1930-92), territories are also something dynamic, a result of an on-going *territorialisation*. Think of birds who sing songs to set the tone in their neighbourhood (Kärrholm, 2012, ch. 1).

To describe how territories of retail are produced Kärrholm use the actor-network theory of the French sociologist Bruno Latour (1947-) and the rhythmanalysis of

another Frenchman, the Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1901-91) (Kärrholm, 2012, ch. 2, 4). One of Kärrholm's examples of actants in a network synchronized with a rhythm is the pedestrian shopping street. The main actants of the street are the shops, with opening times that synchronise with the daily rhythm (set by daylight and working hours, etc.) of the potential shoppers. If the shoppers' bodily rhythm kicks in and they get tired or hungry, there are actants as benches and food stands to comfort them. Already Gruen knew that a happy and content shopper is more likely to spend money. Shops, benches, food stands, streetlights and flower pots together forms a retail network. In the black box of the enclosed mall there is even more actants to ease the shopping: elevators, escalators and climate control.

Larger homogenous territories of retail, as pedestrian precincts or malls, are dependent on scale transfers in order to be accessible to as many customers as possible. One of Kärrholm's example of a scale transfer on a micro-plane is a bike stand, where you shift between biking and walking. On a larger scale railway stations, bus stations and underground stations are typical scale transfers where "local, urban, regional, national [and] international" movements mix. Transit stations have not only become spaces for shops and food courts but also more synchronised with each other, i.e. local bus timetables synchronised with long distant trains and airport shuttles. But retail territories and malls become not only synchronized with the rhythm of the city, they also act as rhythm machines or rhythm boxes, creating new rhythms. One of Kärrholms examples is how the seasons of the mall slightly differs from the ones outside it.

> *At the mall 'autumn' begins in mid-August when the children go back to school, Christmas starts just after Halloween but is over before New Year's Eve (and not traditionally in Sweden at* Tjugondag Knut*, twenty days after Christmas) – in short, retailers use the seasons to create new rhythms shaped according to the logic of commerce. (Kärrholm, 2012)*

On top of the commercial seasons retailers also have their own calendar of commercial "holidays" such as Mother's Day, Father's Day and Valentines.

Discordant order: Manila's neo-patrimonial urbanism by Peter Murphy, Trevor Hogan

In 2014 Colin Marshall wrote an article in The Guardian called "In Manila, malls aren't passé – they are the city itself" (Marshall, 2014). 17 years before Marshall, J. Conell described the emergence of new middle-class consumer landscapes of exclusive suburbs, gated communities and tower blocks, golf courses and shopping malls, all linked by freeways and flyovers (Conell, 1999). The landscape that Conell described in the 90's was later termed as a sort of "Bypass Urbanism" in 2012 by Peter Murphy and Trevor Hogan. The network of public rail transits, flyovers, cab apps like Uber and Grab, shopping malls and exclusive residential areas forms a city itself, excluding the lower income classes and the poorer part of the population who don't have the money to buy into it.

Murphy and Hogan describes Metro Manila as a "prime exemplar 21st-century mega-city whose apparent disorder discloses a coherent order", an order they call neo-*patrimonialism* (Murphy & Hogan, 2012, p. 10). Neo-patrimonialism is a social system of patron-client relationship where "patrons use state resources in order to secure the loyalty of clients in the general population" (Wikipedia, 2016c). The term derives from the German sociologist Max Weber's (1864-1920) term *patrimonialism*, who used it describe a form of governance where all the power flows from the leader, and where armies are loyal to the leader and not the nation. Patrimonialism according to Weber is the authority of the father in a family (patriarchy), projected onto a larger social scale (Wikipedia, 2015).

What does it mean that Metro Manila is neo-patrimonial? Since there is a lack of police in Metro Manila and that the existing one is viewed with public distrust (Tan, 1995), everyone who can afford hires guards for their security. Murphy and Hogan describes this as the hiring of private armies answer to those who pays them. Further on they describe the Philippines as possibly "the first society in the world to have universalized the gated community" and that "everyone except the utterly dispossessed […] erects gates and fences and walls around their property and around themselves" (Murphy & Hogan, 2012, p. 12)

Murphy and Hogan also describes Metro Manila as an un-public city. In the informal settlements public space is left over space no one owns in contrast to

something "consciously created to reflect public order and culture" (Hogan & Hogan, 2012, p. 38). In formal parts of the metropolis public space is scare and "oddly private/public" space of shopping malls substitutes for traditional gathering places as the cathedral or the plaza. Places for consumption that at the same time is public space is nothing new, but traditionally these places like markets been intertwined with the municipal, legal and religious spheres (in medieval Europe churches functioned as protector markets). The malls of Metro Manila, with the desirable climate control, are extremely popular places of congregation that in many way, if you're a well off enough consumer, almost feel public. But the mall plaza is privately owned, privately policed and with private guards checking everyone who wishes to enter. The inside of the mall is a private place where "the theatre of the government and opposition is absent" (Murphy & Hogan, 2012, p. 13)

The private order and the public chaos of Manila goes all the way back to the Spanish colonization and the model of intra muros (Spanish for *inside the walls*), the walled Spanish city of old Manila. Intra muros was first of all a fortification to protect the port from other European colonizers, but soon it also turned into a symbolic system that strongly distinguished the good inside (government) from the bad outside (the general public) and with a strict control of what comes in and goes out. Intra muros is a model of high contrast compared to the European church-plaza model, where private and public spheres overlap (Murphy & Hogan, 2012, p. 16).

After the Spanish colonization followed an American, with a new masterplan for Manila, designed by the American architect Daniel Burnham, who also was the planner of Chicago and down town Washington DC. Burnham's design was based on an American civic model, but the Filipino society had adopted the corrupt patrimonial culture of cronyism that was introduced by the Spanish colonizers (Murphy & Hogan, 2012, p. 19). According to Murphy and Hogan this "killed Burnham's plan" and "in practical terms […] left the real estate and the social economy of Manila in the hands of powerful landed families". Many of the families had enough power to simply ignore government planning laws and implement their own (Murphy & Hogan, 2012, pp. 22, 23)

In the 1950's the wealthy Ayala Family started to develop the city of Makati. In the beginning it was a suburban landscape with single-family houses and shopping malls – much like in Gruen's America. City building became a family business in the Philippines and the Ayala's provided infrastructure and security. During the 1960's and the 70's all of Metro Manila went through a rapid urbanization and the population of Makati went from about 114 000 in 1960 to more than 372 000 in 1980. Just as the population grew, so did the economy, especially after the deregulations that followed the fall of the Marcos dictatorship. In the 1980's Ayala started to redevelop a part of Makati to a central Business district (CBD). Today Makati is the wealthiest of all cities in Metro Manila. The night-time population is around 530 000, but since a lot of people work in Makati and live elsewhere, the daytime population is estimated to be 6-8 times higher with an estimated minimum of 2.7 million people commuting in and out of the city (City Government of Makati City, 2012, p. 5). The concept of Makati CBD was later mimicked by the Ortigas family who developed a CBD, "modestly named Ortigas", in the neighbouring city of Pasig (Murphy & Hogan, 2012, p. 23). Today a third major business district of Metro Manila is under the development by an Ayala led consortium: Bonifacio Global City. Situated on a former American inner city base, Fort Bonifacio, the new CBD is developed more or less from scratch with a possibility to become an even better, more global version of Makati, further away from the Metro Manilas poorer population (Michel, 2010, p. 389).

Living the good life? The rise of urban mixed-use enclaves in Metro Manila by Jana Maria Kleibert & Lisa Kippers

While Fort Bonifacio is a big, multifunctional city, there are many projects sharing some of its features on a much smaller urban scale. In their article *Living the good life? The rise of urban mixed use enclaves in Manila*, the Dutch cultural geographers Jana Maria Kleibert and Lisa Kippers describes the phenomenon of enclave urbanism and how enclaves today are not only mono-functional and suburban or rural, but also multi-functional and urban. The most discussed enclave, and perhaps the first that comes in mind when talking about exclusive zones, is the residential suburban gated community: a neighbourhood where the dwellers provide for their own safety and infrastructure.

Another traditional enclave is the Special Economic Zone (SEZ): a zone for manufacturing, with a legal system taxes that differs from the rest of the country. SEZs are often created in rural parts of developing countries to attract foreign investments in otherwise "incompetative business environments". Just as gated communities are mono-functional zones for living, SEZs are places "of pure work" (Kleibert & Kippers, 2015, p. 4). In 1995 the development of SEZs shifted from public to private, due to neo-liberal policies that followed the paradigm shift of the World Bank in the 1970's. This resulted in an increase of SEZs in the Philippines. Later reforms allowed the creation of special economic zones for service-exports (IT-SEZs). In contrast to SEZs, IT-SEZs are situated in urban areas and in 2012 there were 174 in the Philippines, most of them in business district of Metro Manila. The services provided and exported from the IT-SEZs in the Philippines are mostly business process outsourcing (BPO), such as customer service, etc.

Kleibert & Kippers also describes a third type of enclave, the leisure enclave, which includes everything from cruise ships to theme parks and malls. As stated before malls in Metro Manila are "the city itself" and the Philippines have become a "Mall Republic" with a total 136 shopping centres, mainly located in Metro Manila. While malls in Metro Manila creates spaces of perceived security and convenience, their ultimate purpose is not the public good but to maximize the profits of the developers and leasers of retail space (Marshall, 2014; Kleibert & Kippers, 2015, p. 5).

The enclave urbanism, or the "new spatial form of post-industrial society", described by Kleibert and Kippers is a combination of three previously described features into a single enclave. Just as mono-functional enclaves, mixed-use enclaves promise security and exclusivity for the dwellers. But mixed-use enclaves strives to be all compassing and self-sufficient with housing, work and places of leisure. In Manila a mixed-use enclave typically consist of a couple of high rise condominiums, office blocks and, of course, a mall. Some mixed-use enclaves of Metro Manila, like Ayala Center or Araneta Center in Cubao, are connected to the metropolitan transit systems, while others, like Eastwood City in

Quezon or Manhattan Garden City in Makati, are dependent on their own self-sufficiency until the grade that it negates the need of commuting.

Mixed-use enclaves in the Philippines are often marketed a vague global identity. The architecture of Eastwood City is supposed to resemble Europe, New York and Miami, all at once. In the online marketing developer Megaworld Corporation describes one of the condominium towers, The Grand Eastwood Palazzo, to hold the "opulence and beauty of a European palace". And just like in New York there is a Central Park. Only difference is that the one In Eastwood City is upgraded "warm, exuberant lines of the Miami architectural style". Further on there is the *Le Grand* tower with wings named after Monet and Renoir (Kleibert & Kippers, 2015, p. 10). For someone from France, Italy or the US (or anywhere else), this mix may be sound like Las Vegas, which after all probably isn't a bad thing in this context. Most likely anything is welcome as long as it's "stylish" and can differ from the "unstylish" outside, as one advertisement goes for the mixed-use enclave of Rockwell Center in Makati (Michel, 2010).

Eastwood city is not only a live-work-play enclave, it's also one of the first IT-SEZs in the Philippines with office towers full of BPO companies. About 22 000 live in the enclave and 55 000 people work there (Megaworld Corporation, 2014). By simple math it's easy to conclude that not everyone working there lives in it. Interviews made by Kleibert and Kippers reveal that the average BPO worker can't even afford to live in Eastwood City, it would actually take three to five of them sharing a one bedroom apartment to make an affordable, but extremely cramped living. Not surprisingly most condominiums are owned by overseas Filipinos, renting them out individually or through prospering rental agencies. BPO workers live in more affordable areas and commute to Eastwood City, only to participate in two of the mixed-use enclaves features: work and play (Kleibert & Kippers, 2015, p. 12). The goal and the marketed image of a live-work-play enclave where one can walk from home to work does simply not materialize in Eastwood City. Through advertisements the BPO workers are encourage to spend their salaries on leisure activities in the enclave after their work day is over. Because even if they can't afford the whole Eastwood City experience, they can still buy in on a piece of the good life.

3 Analysis

The redevelopment of the existing Ayala station into a transit station with an attached mall fits Kärrholm's description of how a historically mono-functional space becomes retailised. The size and the money invested in it's a clear example of how important a scale transfer node is in a post-industrial city. But what differs Ayala Center from Kärrholm's description of Swedish train stations is what the resynchronization is based on. In Kärrholm's Swedish example of the train stations in Malmö, the scale transfer nodes are mainly ports where people slide through to get to the main shopping street or mall. The Triangeln train station shares its name with a shopping mall right next to it, but the station itself has no retail space and is ad-free. The Central station of Malmö has a food court, restaurants, convenience stores and pharmacy, shops that mainly are there to make it comfortable for the commuter and instead of serving other retailers under the same roof. The future transit station of Ayala Center will most of the time work as a bottleneck where commuters more or less are trapped in while waiting for a chance to get the next train. At Ayala transit station commuters will get the choice between standing in a queue for hours during manilas almost never ending rush hour, or to "shop and wait" until the traffic is less congested.

And even its most likely that commuters will be encourage to spend their money in Ayala Transit station, just as in Eastwood City, everything is not all bad. According to Mr. Luna the project will include a non-retail zone in shape of a park (maybe you will still be able to buy an ice cream). But since Ayala Land is a company with a simple goal of maximizing profit, one can only but wonder how much of it will be realised in the final project. High land prices and the opportunity to build capital accumulating shops tend to shrink the parks on privately owned property. Maybe what will be left is the optimized version of a "garden court with all the evils of a village street and none of its charms" so that exhausted shop-and-waiters can have a chillaxed minute before they go at it again.

That the new transit station at Ayala Center is a black box that affects the daily rhythm of the commuters is quite easy to understand. But Ayala Center is just one of many other boxes in the privately managed area of Makati CBD, where territorial props are distributed and controlled by the two groups Makati Commercial Estates Association and the Ayala Property Management Corporation

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(Wikipedia, 2016c). In contrary to Malmö, the streets of Makati CBD aren't public, even if they seem to be so. The streets are, just as the malls, designed to give the pedestrian client a good experience of Makati CBD. Not only the private sector has an interest in shaping the city as a product, it's also endorsed by the Filipino state who launched the city beautification program Metro Gwapo with the aim to make Metro Manila a global city attractive to foreign investors. The role model for the global city imaginaries is Singapore, the city state that went from being one of most corrupted countries in Asia in the 1950's to one of the least in the 1990's (Keefe, 2015).

The key to maintain the image of a global city seems to be the ability of control. Mr Luna gave one example of this while answering a question after his presentation. The first design strategy of Makati CBD was to mimic Wall Street, New York. This meant a strict business area without any restaurants facing the streets. Soon the streets were occupied with informal street vendors selling food. Even business people need to eat. Since the management of Makati couldn't guarantee or control the hygiene and quality of the street vendors food, the design strategy was changed to include restaurants and there by filling the gap. Another example Mr Luna gave was how buses run by an Ayala company would improve the commuter experience. All this is probably very true, but it also reflects a belief in the patrimonial system as the one way to go, as if everything would be better off, if only Ayala Corporation could control it.

The role model Singapore is known world-wide for its cleanliness and the banning of chewing gums in 1992 (Trillin, 2007). The rules and the laws of the city has successfully out planned any chaos that would possibly occur on the streets. But this order comes also with a price: soullessness. Singapore simply lacks creativity. Murphy and Hogan states that "[…] rules do not make for beauty, but for clinical precision". Further they mean that there's a built-in ceiling in "generating social prosperity through rules". But beauty can be over-stated, especially by "Western romantics that prefer the pornography of the wasteland to decent living conditions. (Murphy & Hogan, 2012, p. 27)" It is of course not as simple as public order equals no creativity and that chaos is the source of inventiveness. Chaos as the traffic in Manila or in war is by no mean preferable. But when a society is too static or too controlled, so will also the minds of its citizens be.

Contrary to Singapore, the perceived order in Manila is not public, but limited to the private enclaves and malls which apply their own rules. The inside of the malled city of Manila are a homogeneous consumer landscape that lacks the complexity of the public space and all its friction, confrontations and conflicts. There is no more citizens, only Patrons who owns and supply and clients who may live inside the global city or only work there. Then there's of course the excluded no-clients – the informal settlers that don't fit the image of the prosperous global city, who have their homes demolished and resettled north of Metro Manila, far away from the power and the money. And even if foreign investments create jobs, it's very hard to make a career based on talent or hard work in a neo-patrimonial system with a tradition of nepotism and cronyism. This in combination with more lucrative salaries abroad may be a reason why the Philippines has such a great flight of human capital, "brain drain" (The Manila Times, 2013; Gonzalez, 1992).

The Role of the Architect

Even if architecture is central in Manilas transformation from a walled city to a malled city, the architect's possibility to make impact is limited. Even if malls can be more or less beautiful, it doesn't have an effect on more important democratic matters since people first of all will be clients and not citizens inside them. And even if parks are lush, big and green in the planning process, they tend to be materialized in a smaller scale in favour for more capital accumulative retail space.

In order to be able to have a bigger impact on the creation of our cities today, the main role of the architect isn't the one as a designer, but as a lobbyist or an advisor. But even then it will be hard to make a change in a world where everything compared to profit optimization is just noise – much like how 2Chainz puts it in the Juicy J song *Bandz A Make Her Dance*: "Money talk – you ain't got none, end of discussion"

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