Entangling Manila’s Seams

Patrick de Garcia

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PATRICK DE GRACIA

ENTANGLING MANILA’S SEAMS

blurring the patchwork city’s social boundaries
Entangling Manila’s Seams
Patrick de Gracia

Advisory Group - Extra Ordinary: Architecture as a Social Instrument

Advisors - Terrance Goode
Susan Henderson
David Shanks

December 7, 2020
Syracuse University School of Architecture
The particular success of malls in Manila is partly a function of there being only one park in the centre of Manila—the sole significant public open space for family recreation—hence the people of Manila “had to find an alternative place where the family could get together at weekends” enabling Mandaluyong’s “primary thrust to promote its malls as a wholesome family place for shopping, strolling, eating, watching movies or simply being together” (Philippine Daily Inquirer 2 June 1995). In this marketing device and orientation they have proved successful. Rather than cathedrals or market places, the malls have become the new parks.

The relatively poor are largely excluded from the malls by their inability to purchase and consume, hence these are ‘pseudo-public’ spaces, in that malls represent themselves as public spaces, but do not “accept the associated responsibilities and inconveniences” (Goss, 1993, page 41).

(Connell 1999, 417 - 439)

Manila, Philippines, is a city fragmented into slums and upper-class enclaves. The adjacency of their separated development contributes to intensifying class-relations; each side is fearful of the other. On the one hand, fear of insecurity causes the wealthy to force spatial boundaries dividing social class. In contrast, these barriers have instilled a sense of discrimination within the slums (Garrido 2019). Physical boundaries materialize as walls that close off enclaves from the dangers of the street. Symbolic manifestations of the border are made apparent due to economic inaccessibility, emphasizing social stratification. The emergence of the middle class has encouraged the private sector’s growth and public space neglection. “Public” projects exhibited through freeways and malls accommodates those with capital but further estrange those who are impoverished (Connell 1999).

I’m interested in blurring the boundaries maintaining social segregation to enhance public spaces’ quality, specifically through redeveloping the shopping mall. Truly public space is where power dynamics are absent, and anybody could do anything at any time. It is a place that fulfills demands but of people with different socio-economic backgrounds. In public space, laws cannot prohibit expression as the individual should transgress society’s standards (Cuvyers 2007). By inserting the idea of social condensers into these borders, the opportunity to unite communities arises. The entanglement of seams attempts to defy the illusions of capitalism and expose society’s problems. It aims to build trust and understanding between urban actors, initiating public discourse, and humanizing Manila’s divorced population (Dolan 2018).
IDENTIFYING SEAMS

Seams as urban conditions that connect parts of the city but estranges others. It creates physical boundaries dividing disparate social classes but functions as a middle ground where the two entities can mingle.

EPIFANIO DE LOS SANTOS AVENUE

Major highway in Manila that connects the capital to surrounding provinces. Malls populate this major circulation network and cater to commuters, they are a recurring stop to the city work's travel sequence.

**Gateway Mall**
- 1,100,000 ft.²
- 264 tenants

**Glorietta**
- 2,700,000 ft.²
- 500+ tenants

**Mall of Asia**
- 4,659,600 ft.²
- 700+ tenants

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**Table:**

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<th>Area (ac.)</th>
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<th>Density (ft² per person)</th>
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SM CITY NORTH EDSA MALL

Comparable in size to the Mall of America, North EDSA is located amongst networks of transportation. Unlike its Western counterpart, malls in the Philippines feature a greater variety of program beyond retail.

Connection to the City

North EDSA’s layout responds to the conditions of its surroundings. Movement inside interacts with outside traffic to create a flow between the city and mall.

Transportation options to reach the closest mall by traveling on the road.

Commuters often need to travel through malls to reach their next stop. They’re subjected to numerous distractions in the form of retail.

Railway built along EDSA, it provides access throughout Metro Manila. Terminals for the train are located around malls, thus stimulating activity at these points.

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Railway built along EDSA, it provides access throughout Metro Manila. Terminals for the train are located around malls, thus stimulating activity at these points.
The EDSA is a physical manifestation of social conflict. Phil-Am residents would rather drive to adjacent malls than use the walkway out of fear from being ambushed by suspected thieves from San Roque.

Phil-Am’s barangay or neighborhood government has “adopted” San Roque out of a sense of pastoral obligation. It offers various services to their residents, such as eye exams, dental cleanings, and vocational workshops.

Phil-Am residents depend on San Roque for the labor needed to maintain their standard of living. They look to the slum for construction workers, handymen, laundry women, maids, and clerks.

EDSA
residential
malls

1930
1940
construction of EDSA finishes, standing for Epifanio de los Santos Avenue

1986
The EDSA Revolution occurs to upheave president, Ferdinand Marcos

2001
The EDSA Revolution II leads to the withdrawal of President Estrada

2016
Protests occur in response to President Duterte’s war on drugs

average of 2.34 vehicles access the highway daily

Phil-Am middle class enclave
community church in the enclave used by San Roque residents

San Roque informal settlement
stigmatized as criminals, vulgar, uneducated, and political dupes

EDSA as a tool for expression

Forceful police murdering lead to mourning of innocent victims on the EDSA

People’s Revolution

Initial construction, gradually expanding over the years

Corruption invited a peaceful revolution lead by a coup d’etat

Infrastructure Contextual Study
QUIAPO MARKET

Outdoor shopping area offering food and retail at low prices. Stalls populate the space between buildings, taking over the sidewalks in front of them. Customers negotiate prices with vendors who occupy lots informally.

Stalls blend into circulation, division is blurred and the corridors fosters intimate interactions.

shops and paths are clearly partitioned, products triumph over human interaction.

The market begins at a square then flows through corridors between buildings. It stitches spaces between modes of circulation, creating a lively commerce area.

Urban Activity

plaza spatially informed by church

Open-air market

tight paths for walking

Manila

North EDSA lots

Quiapo Lots

MRT

Highway

transportation

informal settlement

market

Manila

Quiapo Market

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BLURRING BOUNDARIES

**parc de la villette**
*Paris, France*

"we have read the program as a suggestion, a provisional enumeration of desirable number of activities on the site. how to design a Social Condenser based on horizontal congestion, that is the size of the park."

(Lucan 1991, 88-89)

**Bijlmermeer**
*Amsterdam, Netherlands*

"proposa for the renovation of the urban pattern of a rigid, resolutely modern complex of social housing situated to the southeast of Amsterdam...

In our opinion it is not the buildings that determine the urban quality; rather, here it is more at ground level, in the open space between buildings”

(Lucan 1991, 106-107)

**Melun-Sénart**
*Sénart, France*

"The essence of this project is a system of voids-in bands inscribed into the site...

The bands follow the path of the major streets create controlled urban elements, while others distribute the major components of the new town on the site. It is our thesis that if this system of bands is established, the town of Melun-Sénart will be guaranteed beauty, serenity, accessibility, and urban services, regardless of the architecture that is to come”

(Lucan 1991, 114)
Small Street

Gradual abandonment of buildings in this area lead to its demise. However, Fajardo’s initiative lead to the building of public buildings to reinvigorate the site. To supplement the location’s sudden growth, land was reconfigured to enhance street quality. 

(Fracalossi 2009)

A variety of small scale renovations that improve habitation in Comuna 13. These small urban gestures require minimal intervention and resources, thus creating a quick impact to impoverished populations. 

(Fracalossi 2009)

Medium Plaza

Medellín’s privately-owned public utility company, EPM, has supported projects around Medellín since Fajardo’s tenure. Their research regarding the city discovered areas lacking proper lighting, areas around water towers. Private backing allowed these places which were sources of violence to be transformed into public spaces.

(Velásquez 2020)

A variety of small scale renovations that improve habitation in Comuna 13. These small urban gestures require minimal intervention and resources, thus creating a quick impact to impoverished populations. 

(Abravanel 2017)

Gridlock

Traffic dominated planning makes blocks unattractive for pedestrians circulation.

(Henderson 2008)

Large City

Medellín Reform Case Study

Community initiative to restructure the government since the 1990’s, lead to the city’s revitalization. The mayor’s reformation relocated funding into public works which received backing from private sectors.

(Velásquez 2020)

Office of the Mayor’s

Animation

Intervention

Lighting fixtures

Public surveillance

Escalators + slides

Places of Darkness

The purple dots indicate areas with insufficient lighting around Medellín

(Velásquez 2020)

Conversion

Slides integrated into existing stairwells around the neighborhood promotes activity and discourages crime.

(Fracalossi 2009)

Plaza space

New urban condition creates circulation between surrounding buildings

(Velásquez 2020)
Located near a railway station, the park features an ‘urban forest of shadows’. Populating the area is a series of mushroom-like installations of varying diameters and heights, functioning as protection against the natural elements. The landscape features a textured pattern that acts as an informal spatial divider for stall on days market occupies the park, otherwise, it can host a variety of events.

(Saieh 2010)

Examples of spaces that blur the boundaries between shopping and the public. They create spaces usable for pedestrians amongst zones of traffic. Movement freely flows between surroundings sidewalks and these spaces.

Mollard 2020

A concrete megastructure that cuts through the city of Seoul, integrating an elevated landscape above the streetscape. This linear urban condition hosts markets and retail on the ground level which is topped by residential units. Since the 1960’s, Sewoon Sangga has created a community of local manufacturers that thrive on the project’s compactness.
their utility only serves those with capital, malls have taken the role as public spaces in Manila. This thesis aims to create fully accessible public spaces, thus transforming the malls' function.

**phase I.**
- engages multiple locations around malls situated by the EDSA
- addition of public program to boundaries unites previously alienated communities

**phase II.**
- examines the effects of phase upon a single site
- a commercial center that strives in its adjacency to thriving public spaces but no longer segregate the impoverished
- spaces designed to familiarize different social groups through interaction

**Framework of Investigation**

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Dissolving of social boundaries to create interactions between varying social classes.

site centralized upon MRT terminal in park

insertion of nodes containing public program

Nodes connected through market infrastructures

Final addition of park space and supplementary facilities

transformation of EDSA to an underpass, allowing the public to reclaim its lost space
Manila, Philippines, is a city fragmented into slums and upper-class enclaves. The adjacency of their separated development contributes to intensifying class-relations; each side is fearful of the other. On the one hand, fear of insecurity causes the wealthy to force spatial boundaries dividing social class. In contrast, these barriers have instilled a sense of discrimination within the slums. Physical boundaries materialize as walls that close off enclaves from the dangers of the street. Symbolic manifestations of the border are made apparent due to economic inaccessibility, emphasizing social stratification. The emergence of the middle class has encouraged the private sector’s growth and public space neglect. “Public” projects exhibited through freeways and malls accommodates those with capital but further estrange those who are impoverished.

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Dissolving of social boundaries to create interactions between varying social classes.
SHOPPING MALL


Body of readings that offer insight on the position of malls amongst society. Sources include a broad range of mall typologies across the globe and examples specific to the Philippines. Comparative analysis of these malls provides a better understanding of the Filipino mall’s unique relationship to its country.

FILIPINO POLITICS


Variety of sociological entries investigating social inequality in the Philippines. From qualitative to quantitative data, the research offers numerous scales regarding Filipino society. The data implicates conflict between social classes due to both infrastructural and personal conditions.

CASE STUDY

References for how a public space should function.


Precedents demonstrating the capacity of public space to affect how people can perform or interact with each other in public. Both built and speculative work, these examples portray environments benefiting its community.

Medellin


Documentation of political forces responsible for positive change in Medellin after the peak of the drug cartel that plagued the city in the twentieth century. The products of their efforts resulted in the addition of public space.

OMA


Formal strategies showcased by speculated works of the architectural firm OMA. The recurrence of linear moves in their selected works demonstrate the potential of blurring boundaries between spaces.