URBAN DISPLACEMENT PROJECT

Metro Manila

Executive

Summary

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Preface

The following poem is inspired by Carlos Bulosan's "If You Want to Know What We Are" and Barbara Jane Reyes's "We, Spoken Here 2"

> *If you want to know what we are*
> *We Manila and Makati*
> *We QC at Ka Ricky*
> *We the slums and San Roque*
> *We the barangays at Bagbag*
> *We the overseas workers and overworked*
> *We the informal and invisible*
> *We the relocated and the resistance*
> *If you want to know who we are...*

We, the authors, wrote the following report out of love. Each member of our research team has personal connections with the focus of this study: the Philippines. We are products of the Philippine Diaspora where over 6,000 Filipinas/os leave their homeland every day to work abroad to manifest a better life for their families and future generations.[1] Our team members from UC Berkeley advocated for Manila to be included in the Urban Displacement Project's (UDP) expansion to cities outside of the United States. The Philippines is an understudied research subject across disciplines in academia and practice. Because we are Filipino American graduate students in City & Regional Planning and Public Health, we saw UDP as an opportunity to reconnect with our motherland and interrogate how our fields of study can be used to support and to engage with the growing scholarship around urban planning and data science in the Philippines.

Our purpose in this research was to explore the transnational, connected processes of gentrification and displacement in Metro Manila looking not only at the experiences of Filipinos at home but also in the diaspora. In the United States, we see Filipino American communities fighting displacement in neighborhoods such as Stockton's Little Manila or San Francisco's SOMA Pilipinas. These fights should not be seen as separate from what is happening in the Philippines but rather part of a larger system of development rooted in neoliberalism and histories of colonialism and imperialism.

From March 22-30, 2019, our team traveled to the Philippines to interview scholars, professionals, government officials, and communities who are faced with the contradictions of development, exclusion, and displacement of the urban and rural poor. We want to express our gratitude to our collaborators in this research. Without your knowledge, expertise, and experience, this study would not be possible. We write this report in solidarity with the individuals and families who have been displaced in the name of progress. We see you. Maraming Salamat Po (Thank you very much).

Amiel, Caroline, James, Justine, Nicole, Svea
Manila UDP Team

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[1] Philippine Employment Overseas Administration (2016). "Overseas Employment Statistics." Retrieved May 17, 2019, from http://www.poea.gov.ph/ofwstat/compendium/2015-2016%20OES%201.pdf

Executive Summary

> *"Our spaces are gradually becoming overcrowded. A lot of urban poor hail from provinces, used to be farmers, grew up with their lands taken from them, displaced from their communities by poverty and transferred to the urban centers to find work, to acquire their own homes. If in the provinces we were evicted, here in city the urban poor are also being evicted."[2]*
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> — Erika Cruz, Kabataan Partylist

In 2016, President Rodrigo Duterte announced the creation of his new "Build Build Build" (BBB) program, a socioeconomic agenda aimed at reducing poverty from 21.6% in 2015 to 13%-15% by 2022. One of the key components in Duterte's program is to encourage and to fast-track major infrastructure projects in the Philippines by any means necessary.[3] Some describe his approach as a "Golden Age of Infrastructure" that will bolster the Philippine economy and reduce congestion in Metro Manila. In order for the construction of new medium to high-rise buildings to occur, the land must be devoid of any obstruction. In some cases, these hindrances are homes occupied by those living under the poverty line. Historically, these homes have been referred to as squatter or slum areas, with negative social connotations attached to them. In this report, we will refer to these homes as informal settlements and their occupants as informal settlers or ISFs (informal settler families).

Today, organizers like Erika Cruz, are fighting alongside informal settlers and urban poor communities that are at risk of displacement because of major infrastructure projects and other forms of development that are usually not accessible to the poor. Both local and national governments are working to provide options for ISFs to have alternative forms of housing. In the case of Quezon City (a municipality within Metro Manila, Philippines), ISFs are being relocated out of the city or in Bisketville, a socialized housing project. But informal settlers say that projects like Bisketville are not affordable. Here remain the contradictions: Can accelerated, "Golden Age" urban and rural development occur without displacement? Are government-sponsored socialized housing responsive to the needs of the poor?

The following study is exploratory research of the phenomena of gentrification and displacement in Metro Manila, Philippines. It seeks to better understand the historical, social, and cultural context of the Philippines in order to expand upon the Urban Displacement Project's (UDP) definitions and typologies of displacement and neighborhood change; and also to highlight the knowledge, activism and experiences of the communities who are resisting.

Background on the Philippines

Metro Manila is an urban region in the Philippines located on the island of Luzon, with a population of over 12.8 million resting on 239 square miles making it the densest region in the country. In the recent decade, Manila has quickly become a city of foreign investment, land

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[2] Manila Today. (2019, March 25). "QC residents opposed to Bistekville protest at city hall." Retrieved May 17, 2019, from
https://manilatoday.net/27528-2/?fbclid=IwAR3IeTmTkGl6vrqunu0o4L6Qgcw-scBFStOUcgVbwT-I55PQsbokm9a1Ie8
[3] Build Build Build. Retrieved May 17, 2019, from http://www.build.gov.ph/.

speculation, and commercial business centers that strive to be part of the Global South's catalog of "world-class cities." Yet with these forms of globalization and development emerge an increased polarization between the middle and elite classes of the Philippines and the urban poor. As Manila experiences rapid change brought about by economic potential, there is an increasing influx of domestic migrants coming to the capital region in search of employment. The number of people in Manila who cannot afford housing and therefore resort to informal settlements has increased, with the latest estimate that 37% of Metro Manila's residents live in slum areas.

Foreign influence through colonialism has left an enduring mark on Metro Manila's history and urban space. The Philippines was colonized by the Spaniards for more than 300 years, making Manila the home of the Philippines' political power and the Catholic Church. Following Spanish rule, the Philippines was an American colony for over 50 years and occupied by the Japanese for four years. This tumultuous history includes a leveling of Manila in 1945 from a bombing in World War II. Since 1946, the Philippines Republic has faced first 20 years of dictatorship and then democracy since 1986. Throughout this, there has not been a comprehensive plan for the quickly expanding Metro Manila. Because of Metro Manila's decentralized structure, private developers have been taking advantage of the lack of central planning to promote their own brand. The private sector's dominance over the vision of Metro Manila has created a form of displacement and gentrification constructed around global aspirations and public-private partnerships and the exclusion of the urban poor.

Our research focuses on two cities within Metro Manila: Makati and Quezon City that are sites of rapid development, informality, and displacement. In our report, we review the creation and maintenance of informal settlements as well as the exclusive urban enclaves that often sit beside them, identifying the key actors in the destruction of urban poor communities. These case studies build upon previous research to answer:

- How do various conceptualizations of gentrification and displacement manifest within and beyond specific geographies in Metro Manila?
- How does the post-colonial urban form, metropolitan structure, political economy of Metro Manila impact how these processes occur?
- What are the perceptions of and impacts on this phenomena by major actors: government agencies, private development, community organizations, academics, etc.?

Ultimately, this report seeks to systematize the enormous yet emerging body of work around gentrification and displacement in Metro Manila. Building on the expertise of researchers from a multitude of sectors, we aim to bring together data and insights from disparate (and even opposing) sources to provide a comprehensive analysis of these phenomena in the region.

Outline of the Report

The report will proceed as follows. The Creation of a Post-Colonial City section provides a literature review that has guided and framed our research on the processes of gentrification and displacement. The Methodology section outlines the steps in which we conducted our research starting with preliminary interviews with key informants, qualitative field ethnography, field interviews, and qualitative data research which includes the formation of our typologies.

The next section describes our Initial Observations split between primary data and secondary data gathered from statistical sources. Next, the Findings section details four themes that emerged from all our research. The Policy Recommendations section lists our initial government level recommendations to tackle the root issues of gentrification and displacement. Lastly, the Conclusion is a call to action that acknowledges the limitations in our research and recommends areas of further research.

Key Findings from the Two Case Studies

Gentrification and displacement in Metro Manila push Western definitions and epistemologies of these issues and processes. These case studies illustrate that displacement is very much tied to notions of formality and homeownership—middle-class norms that are not inclusive of all members of urban poor communities. Displacement can take different forms: disaster induced, gentrification induced and infrastructure induced. It is realized through government actions of eviction, demolition and dispossession.

As a result of our mixed-method exploratory research on how gentrification and displacement in Metro Manila, we categorized our findings into four themes:

1. A Changing Metro Manila: The Nation's Reflection of its Past & Future

   Urban development is still influenced by the colonial legacies of Spanish and American occupation in the country. The predominance of gated communities and other forms of Western-inspired exclusion through urban design are examples of this. As the country moves into the future, the aspirations of transforming Manila into a "global city" are driven and facilitated by the influx of foreign capital, particularly from the US, mainland China, and returning Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). These range from mega infrastructure projects and master-planned communities geared towards foreign buyers, expats, OFWs, and wealthy Filipinos.

2. Housing Policy and Planning: Striving for Preservation and Equitable Development

   Displacement is deeply embedded within Philippine housing policy, which is characterized as an institutionalized process through formalized evictions and relocation. Relocation is often framed as an inevitable process due to infrastructure development and disaster risk reduction and management. Forced displacement constantly sparks the debate between on-site, in-city, and off-site relocation. A majority of subsidized housing created by national government agencies are located in peri-urban areas. The private sector is taking advantage of the gaps in long-term, coordinated government planning and playing an increasing role in urban development - such as the emergence of "unsolicited" infrastructure projects (such as highways and subway lines) initiated by private developers.

3. Conflicting Viewpoints on Development and Informality

   The concept of "development" is contested in Metro Manila. For some developing exclusive spaces is seen as a sign of progress - including the sustained pipeline of

private spaces and gated communities in the Metro. The conditions of urban informal settler families (ISFs) is a polarizing and political topic. On one hand, ISFs are seen as an obstacle to development, yet are leveraged because of their strong voter turnout and political positioning in urban public officials. For some local government units (LGUs), programs such as the Community Mortgage Program (CMP) and Balanced Housing Rule (akin to Inclusionary Housing policies in the U.S.), are promising, but thus far limited in scale, solutions to housing inequities in Metro Manila.

4. Community Organizing and Resistance

Community Organizing has been a way to empower informal settlers since the 1960's and has been crucial in instilling the "right to stay" against forced resettlement. Successful efforts such as the People's Plan, which preserved land and created new social housing for communities along the flood-prone Manggahan Floodway, are examples of community-organized process that is slowly being institutionalized by various levels of government. There is a need to document this history of displacement, community organizing and resistance.

Concluding Thoughts

Although accelerated development in Metro Manila has created many jobs through the Build, Build, Build program and added to the economic growth of the Philippines, it has ultimately impacted the lives of many in the most vulnerable community in the nation, the informal settler families. Our report has only begun to reveal the experiences of people on the ground and to develop an understanding of the perspectives and roles each stakeholder believes that they play in the process.

Gentrification and displacement in Metro Manila challenge Western definitions and epistemologies of these issues and processes. These case studies illustrate that displacement is very much tied to notions of formality and homeownership—middle-class norms that are not inclusive of all members of urban poor communities. Displacement can take different forms: disaster, gentrification-, and infrastructure-induced. It is realized through government actions of eviction, demolition and dispossession. Such practices are justified or made possible by policy, investment and development. But academics, NGOs and urban poor communities are challenging these policies and practices through community organizing, engaging in processes dedicated to the formation of People's Plans, and continuing to create homes where they can.

We hope this report will add to the literature on informality, displacement, and gentrification constructed by the scholars who have guided and framed our research and will open more opportunities for others to share these stories.