Track 1
Limitless cities and urban futures

Negotiating Spaces of Exception: Metro Manila’s Planned Unit Developments

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Explore an alternate future to Planned Unit Developments in Metro Manila by examining how these are created and continuously shaped by negotiations among different actors.

Outline:

1. Enclave urbanism & Planned Unit Developments
2. The Case of Eastwood City
   a. Creating a space of exception
   b. Whitening the “grey”
   c. From the margins
3. Conclusions
Enclave urbanism
Enclave urbanism

“Manila is one of the world’s most fragmented, privatized, and un-public of cities”
Enclave urbanism

- Not only defined through physical gating
- Exist in spaces that are presumed as part of an open city
- Co-opted urban movements that aim be more sustainable
- Sustainable practices are often “cherry-picked” to reflect dominant economic interests
Planned Unit Developments

- Concept originated as a reaction to the Euclidean zoning system.
- Allows for a more integrated form of development.
- Contradict existing regulations and often necessitate exceptions from zoning plans.
- Emphasizes land conversion through the art of negotiation.

In Metro Manila:
- Vaguely defined at the national level
- Little evidence of regulatory measures
- Primarily through discretionary bases
- Exists as exceptions

Enclave urbanism
Eastwood City
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Creating a space of exception

Eastwood City
Eastwood City

Creating a space of exception

"We don’t know what’s happening inside Eastwood. Only [the developer] knows that."
-City Planning Official

Benefits for developer
- Approval of desired development with few restrictions
- Economize space and maximize profit

Benefits for local government
- Spur economic growth
- Revenues to the city and officials
- Services to citizens with little investment
Creating a space of exception

Deregulated system of negotiations:
- The local government uses land policies as bargaining tool
- The developer presents desirable resources
- The public?

“Deregulation indicates a calculated informality, one that involves purposive action and planning, and one where the seeming withdrawal of regulatory power creates a logic of resource allocation, accumulation, and authority.”

- Roy
“I like it. Why will you not like a place that has everything?”
-Brgy. Bagumbayan Resident

“It is close to where I live. Very convenient. It can be reached through walking... It’s close by and has everything I need... It’s clean. It’s comfortable.”
-Nearby Resident

“Distance-wise, it’s close to my house. It’s the closest business district. For most of my colleagues also, [proximity] is the reason they work here.”
-BPO Employee

“A lot of people became rich in Bagumbayan from renting their homes. Also, food business. All of them eat here. The food there is expensive, so they go here to eat. It’s accessible and good home cooked meals.”
-Barangay Official

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Eastwood City

Whitening the “grey”

“If [the vehicles] can’t enter, they congest the highway. Even inside, traffic can be heavy as well ... They planned for it to be big but they didn’t plan for the traffic.”

-BPO Employee

“There’s no open green space ... It’s full of buildings and the open space is paved. It lacks greenery, just trees in pots.”

-Nearby Resident

“A lot of people work here, but not everyone really gets a fair wage. And this place, actually, its main customer, it caters to expensive stuff.”

-BPO Employee/Resident

“I think there is no mechanism to voice out anything.”

-Eastwood Resident

“I dislike the constant fear of an earthquake ... it’s right along the fault line ... The construction of the building itself is pretty lousy ... I don’t feel safe at all.”

-Eastwood Resident

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From the margins

“If we don’t do anything [about our situation], then nothing will happen.”

-Store Cashier
From the margins

“Our rapport with the development is good. Of course, it’s not 100%... But I know the person who is in charge, so I just call, and we discuss the problem. If you tell them the problem, they’ll address it.”

-Barangay Official
Conclusions

Existing recommendations

• A sound policy base
• A range of allowable discretions
• Submitting a plan for review
• Collaboration with experts

Should be addressed

• Extent to which community’s needs are advocated
• Variety in processes and stakeholders
• Developments are constantly changing

PUDs as a public planning tool?

“[T]he aim of public planning is to treat people as citizens with political roles, rights, and agendas – not only as entrepreneurs and recipients of service.”

Sager
Conclusions

- Eastwood City is a space of exception primarily geared towards private interests
- Facilitated through a deregulated system of (in)formal negotiations between the local government and the developer
- Legitimised through narratives of “a good life”, however exclusion is evident and normalised
- The dispossessed negotiates and reshapes the space from the margins
- Sharing the power to negotiate to all stakeholders throughout the development’s lifespan can lead to more inclusive and sustainable futures