

Rethinking Intramuros: Threats, Values, and Possibilities in Modern Philippines

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ABSTRACT



Intramuros, a walled historic Spanish urban landscape in the Philippines, is located at the heart of Metro Manila. Like most of the developing countries in Asia, Intramuros has faced serious conflicts between urban development and cultural preservation. This paper illustrates the full range of threats to Intramuros, including both natural and human factors, and reexamines the value of Intramuros in the Filipino context. According to these discussions, several recommendations will be given. Furthermore, the basic restoration policy of Intramuros will be questioned. The author calls for applying a wider interpretation to the cultural heritage management of the site.

Keywords: *Intramuros, Heritage, Urban design, Value, Sustainability*

INTRODUCTION

Intramuros, located along the Manila Bay and the Pasig River, is the oldest district of Manila, the capital of the Philippines. Although the importance of Intramuros is evident, its present cultural heritage management is not satisfactory because of poor visual conditions. Under international criticism, Intramuros Administration has conducted several new activities. At this turning point, it is valuable to clarify the threats and rethink the basic management of Intramuros. As Demas (2002) indicates, an ideal cultural heritage plan should reflect the significance of a site. Moreover, Waterton (2005) points out that identities of sites might change over time. Therefore, in this paper, both known and previously unrecognized threats will be identified. Secondly, through applying the criteria for cultural heritage management based on a model adopted by the Getty Conservation Institute (Torre 2002, Avrami et al. 2000), a

reexamination of the significance of Intramuros will be provided by showing its rich values. Finally, several recommendations will be offered based on the previous information.

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF INTRAMUROS

The Spaniards established the first colony in the Philippines in 1565. When Manila became the capital of the archipelago in 1571, Intramuros, which at the time was the same as "Manila", became the political, military, commercial, educational and religious center of the Spanish Empire in Asia. In order to defend it from Chinese and Japanese pirates and the Dutch, the construction of walls and other defense structures continued under many governors until the 19th century. The urban design within the walls was certainly unique in Asia (Figure 1).



Figure 1:
Map of Intramuros in 1717 (Quirino, 2010)

Shatkin (2006) notes that the political symbolism of urban space in Manila has shifted several times under different powers. Although by 1898 the United States colonial government was settled in Intramuros. During the early stages of its rule, they were eager to redesign Intramuros according to their aesthetics. The American urban design focused on several public spaces outside the walls and Intramuros was changed dramatically to coordinate with the new blueprint: the moat was filled up for hygienic reasons and became a golf course; sections of the walls were removed to construct other buildings outside Intramuros and two gates were removed to make way for roads. During the 1930's, most of the government offices moved out. In World War II, Fort Santiago became a concentration camp of thousands of Filipino, including Elpidio Quirino and Ferdinand E. Marcos, who became presidents of the country after the war (Laya and Gatbonton, 1983). In 1945, the whole Walled City was severely damaged in the Battle of Manila (Figure 2). As the new independent country

started to recover from World War II, squatters from the provinces started to move into the ruin of Intramuros. Although there are several schools, churches and offices that still function and people still pass by the area during the daytime, Intramuros has degenerated into a slum abandoned by Manila's modernistic city plan.

The first reconstruction work was started by the National Planning Commission in 1951 when Intramuros was declared a National Historical Monument. However, the work of reconstruction was limited mainly because of a lack of adequate recourses. In 1979, the Intramuros Administration (IA) was established by martial law under Presidential Decree No. 1616. Due to the effort of the IA, Intramuros has gradually revived. Currently Intramuros is a tourist destination in the capital city. Ninety-five percent of the walls were restored and the main attractions in Intramuros include Fort Santiago (where the national shrine is located), the San Agustin Church (the oldest



Figure 2:
Intramuros, March 1945 (Lava and Gatbonton, 1983)

stone church in the Philippines, listed in UNESCO World Heritage), Manila Cathedral, the Plaza de Palace, Bahay Tsinoy (Museum of Chinese Filipino) and Casa Manila

CHALLENGES OF INTRAMUROS

In spite of the contribution of the IA, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee rejected Intramuros in 1989 mainly because of inefficient management. In 2010, the Global Heritage Fund listed Intramuros as one of the "Endangered Cultural Heritage Sites in the Developing World" because of the threats from modernization,

pressure from developers and developments, and neglect. However, the criteria for the international institutes do not cover a wide range of natural imminent risks that cannot be ignored, including earthquakes, flooding and weeds. In this section various threats that Intramuros faces will be discussed.

In terms of human causes, the challenges of Intramuros include insufficient management, developmental pressure and unsuccessful conversation between the stakeholders. The IA has been established for more than 30 years yet insufficient management is one of the most influential human factors. However, regardless of the popularity

of several spots, the interior of Intramuros has often looked neglected. To most visitors, it looks like there is no maintenance in Intramuros. People rarely realize that most of the buildings have been reconstructed. The main reasons for inadequate management include the lack of sufficient financial support and the ambiguity of responsibility for management between the IA and the Manila city government.

Second, unlike Vigan, another Spanish town in Northern Luzon with an effective cultural heritage management plan in place, Intramuros faces serious developmental pressures. It is located in the heart of Metro Manila, which is the 18th most populated metropolis around the world. The Global Heritage Fund (2010b) was seriously concerned about several international franchising chains in Intramuros (Figure 3). Moreover, there is rampant speculation that the city of Manila wishes to gain the power to control Intramuros and replace this heritage site with high rises and malls. However, the most serious problem for Intramuros is from the developmental pressures caused by squatter settlements. Because of the structure of Intramuros most of the squatter settlements are located in the central area of the Walled City and cannot be visually ignored. (Figure 4).

Moreover, conversations between the stakeholders are not successful. Besides the IA, the stakeholders of Intramuros include several governmental administrations and a wide range of private groups (Table 1). Santiago (2003) notes that during 1979-1992 the IA had invited landowners and even squatters to join the discussion of management, but it seems that only people in the government are really at the level of decision making. Furthermore, there have been considerable conflicts between the IA and other government agencies (ibid, 2003). These situations create confusion for the local community, which is discouraged from cooperating. Instead of helping to promote Intramuros, some landowners prefer letting their land stay as a ruin or just convert it into a parking lot for quick revenue (Figure 5).

The natural factors include earthquakes, flooding and weeds. The whole Philippine archipelago is located at the Circum-Pacific seismic zone. In 1863, there was a serious earthquake that destroyed the Manila Cathedral, the City Hall, the Palace and much of the city. This may happen unexpectedly in the future. Flooding, which might cause erosion, is a serious problem in all Manila during the rainy season because of failures in current urban design



Figure 3:
International chain stores in Intramuros
(photo by Ellen Hsieh)



Figure 4:
A squatter settlement located one block away from Casa Manila
(photo by Ellen Hsieh)



Figure 5:
The parking lot next to the Manila Cathedral
(photo by Ellen Hsieh)

Table 1 The stakeholders of Intramuros			
Stakeholder Category	Stakeholder Groups	Interests	Related Heritage Values
Official (main)	Intramuros Administration, Department of Tourism	Preservation, reconstruction, maintenance	Historic Research Economic Aesthetic Spiritual
Official (Related to cultural policy)	National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), National Museum (NM), the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP)	Research, recommendation	Historic Research Aesthetic Spiritual
Official (Not related to cultural policy)	Departments in Metropolitan government	Coordinate with the IA when the responsibility overlap	Historic Economic Spiritual
Private	Institutions in Intramuros (churches, schools)	Preservation, maintenance	Historic Spiritual
Private	Businesspersons, developers, people in tourism industry (ex. tricycle, tour guides, chain stores, antiques stores...etc.)	Increase economic benefit	Economic
Private	Local community, landowner, squatters	Hope to share economic interest	Economic Spiritual
Private	Visitors (domestic or international)	Appreciate the beauty of the antiquity, recreation	Historic Spiritual Aesthetic

Made by Ellen Hsieh

(Figure 6). Archaeological studies have found some evidence of Spanish drainage engineering systems in Intramuros (Paz, 2009). However, the urban environment of Manila has changed dramatically, thus it would not be feasible to apply the old system to solve the environmental problems today. Finally, there are weeds growing on ruins in Intramuros that are very hard to remove in such a tropical climate. They might destroy the site physically and/or biologically. But in some places they might actually be supporting extant construction (Figure 7).

THE VALUE OF INTRAMUROS: AN ASSESSMENT

Since 2012, we have seen several new initiatives from the IA as a response to international criticism. An art festival was held in the end of 2012. In addition, according to the media, there are plans to relocate most of the squatters and make Intramuros into a nightlife destination (Aning, 2012; Tubeza 2012; Agoncillo 2013). However, could these plans address all of the threats to Intramuros? Lacking a

full range of considerations, these activities seem to only focus on short-term economic relief but neglect the social issue of the site. For long-term management, the IA needs to consider additional issues, such as the impact of natural threats and the complicated relationship among the stakeholders within and beyond the Walled City.

How could these goals be achieve? As noted, it is evident that attitudes towards a site might change over time and the management process must align with them. An assessment of the significance of Intramuros is necessary at this turning point. According to Global Heritage Fund (2010 a, b), the importance of Intramuros is that it is a "Historic City of the Philippines." However, the significance of Intramuros is far more than its historical value alone. Hernandez (2011) has applied several international heritage charters to discuss the importance of identifying the significance of archaeological sites in the Philippines for further management. In order to reevaluate the importance of Intramuros, the significance assessment of the Getty Conservation Institute (Torre 2002, Avrami et al. 2000) will be applied.

Historical / educational value

Intramuros is considered one of the most complete sites with key features of urban design characteristic of the Spanish colonies. The Spanish urban plan laid out a grid of streets that marked a new page of history in the archipelago (Macaroon and Villain, 2002). The very architecture of Intramuros



Figure 6:
Flooding in Intramuros (photo by Ellen Hsieh)



Figure 7:
The weeds in Intramuros (photo by Ellen Hsieh)

has notable tangible resources for educating the local community and national / international visitors about the history of the Spanish period in the Philippines. Moreover, the historical value of the Walled City must be considered beyond the Spanish period. In addition to the rise and fall of the Spanish period, Intramuros has also witnessed the U.S.A. colonial period, the ravages of World War II, and the development of the post-war era.

Aesthetic value

Compared to other over industrialized areas in the rest of the city, Intramuros is the only area that preserves the beauty of the antiquity of Manila. Particularly, the buildings in Intramuros represent the fusion of European design and construction with contextual materials and decorations (Figure 8). Moreover, Intramuros is certainly a source of inspiration for artists and writers. There are considerable artworks related to Intramuros, such as the epic poem "The Archipelago" by Cirilo F. Bautista (1975).

Spiritual / social value

As Pompeii de Mesa stated, "Intramuros is witness to events and influences that have found their way into what constitutes the Filipino soul." (de Mesa, 1975). In terms of nationality, Intramuros is the most important national symbol of the Philippines. Also, in terms of religion, the San Agustin Church and the Manila Cathedral both have high prestige since Catholicism is still the religion of the majority.

Economic value

There is a wide range of tourist industries that benefit the IA (ex. tickets and souvenir selling), private investors (ex. hotels and restaurants) and local inhabitants (ex. tricycle and carriage riders and street vendors). Moreover, the San Agustin Church, which is the most popular wedding venue, gains considerable profit from offering an authentic Catholic ceremony in the most genuine church in the country (Figure 9). Furthermore, Intramuros as an ideal place for film making could also derive financial benefits.

Research value

The physical remnants of Intramuros, both above and below ground, have tremendous research potential for providing significant knowledge about Filipino history in the modern global historic context. Coordinating with reconstruction project, several archaeological projects have been conducted within Intramuros (Bautista & de la Torre, 1994; Dizon, 1994; ACECI, 2005; Paz, 2009; Bautista, 2009). The archaeological finds, including artifacts from the 17th century to the 20th century and construction features, yield the richness of a material culture that is not fully illustrated in historical documents

and offers data for a wide range of topics related to Filipino historical archaeology. In other words, more unrecognized values might emerge from this research (Demas, 2002).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the threats that Intramuros faces today and the values discussed above, four recommendations for future cultural heritage management are provided in this section. First, evaluate the degree of harm from the natural factors. It is unclear how critical the natural parameters could be for the surfaces and structures of Intramuros. Most of the dangers posed by the natural factors of weeds, flooding and earthquakes are usually not immediate or visible in the course of day-to-day life, but they are measurable through careful study. Moreover, global climate change and air pollution may also intensify the damage from these factors. Thus, a holistic evaluation of the impact of natural factors would be necessary before further conservation plans for mitigating or controlling potential damage.

Second, do not isolate Intramuros from the rest of Manila. During the later period of the Spanish rule, when the Walled City expanded to “Extramuros” (the surrounding areas of Intramuros), the city planners had included the areas within and beyond the walls in their urban design (Figure 10). In 1859, seven towns surrounding the Walled City were decreed suburbs and parts of the capital city (Medina 1994). Although the relationships between inside and outside the walls today are different from the past, both practically and theoretically, it is impossible to isolate Intramuros from the rest of Manila (Figure 11). The establishment of the IA did give Intramuros priority, but it is clear that the problems of Intramuros, such as flooding or squatter settlements, cannot be solved by itself. In the case of the Jewish district of Jerusalem, Lynn Swartz Dodd indicated that the issues of the area could only be understood when people look both at sides of the wall. In both of these cases, the old cities are part of the new cities. Moreover, archaeologically speaking, it is historically meaningful to contextualize cultural heritages in a larger landscape. For example, the locations of the Parians (Chinese settlements) and their relations to the walls of Intramuros illustrate the



Figure 8:
The Chinese stone lions in front of the San Agustin Church
(photo by Ellen Hsieh)



Figure 9:
A wedding in San Agustin Church (photo by Ellen Hsieh)

Third, promote stakeholders' collaboration. It is clear that the 64 hectare Intramuros is too big for the IA to manage alone. It is widely accepted that multiple stakeholder participation is positive for sustainability (Demas, 2002; Landorf, 2009). Creating a more successful conversation between the stakeholders in Intramuros is of primary importance. Besides improving the bureaucracy between different departments, the coordination between the officials and the private stakeholders should be promoted. Aas et al. (2005) remind us that community involvement as an idea from developed countries needs to be carefully applied to the developing countries. The management of Intramuros has to pave a way that suits the cultural and political contexts in the Philippines. Since the mode of interaction between the government and the community about Intramuros is "top-down", a more open and friendly dialogue would

Fourth, promote public awareness. Locally speaking, Intramuros is the only district of Manila where Spanish-era influences have survived. Nationally speaking, Intramuros is a mirror of the development of the Philippines, a trust of national identity. Internationally speaking, the rise of Intramuros was part of the global history and the degeneracy of Intramuros is evidence of the most



Figure 10:
Plan of Manila in 1814 (Angara et al., 2009)

horrible war in human history. However, how many Filipinos notice these significances? Although every Filipino could agree that Intramuros is a symbol of the country, most of the people do not feel a connection with the Walled City. Promoting public awareness of the values of Intramuros should be one of the most important tasks of the IA, especially in the case in which government funds are not sufficient for cultural policies. Intramuros has multiple values that have not been highlighted previously and these values do not benefit only the people living within the Walled City. A clear understanding of why Intramuros is important is needed to motivate the stakeholders' participation (Sayej, 2010). If people can recognize these values, local communities could be motivated to help develop Intramuros in other ways besides reducing vandalism. People beyond the walls would be willing to visit and take an interest in it. A balance between modern development and

value preservation can only be achieved under these circumstances. It is meaningful to notice that academia could make significant contributions in promoting public awareness, participation, and tourism (Medrana, 2011). As Hodder (1993:18) notes, "Today, both practice and theory need each other in order for the past to be alive, to play an active role in the present." Besides doing individual research or impact assessment, scholars could be more actively engaged in public education.

BEYOND NOSTALGIA

Although the goal of the IA is restoration, is it necessary to reconstruct the entire Walled City? Practically speaking, according to the efficiency of the previous reconstruction, it might take the IA numerous years to reach this goal. Even if the IA

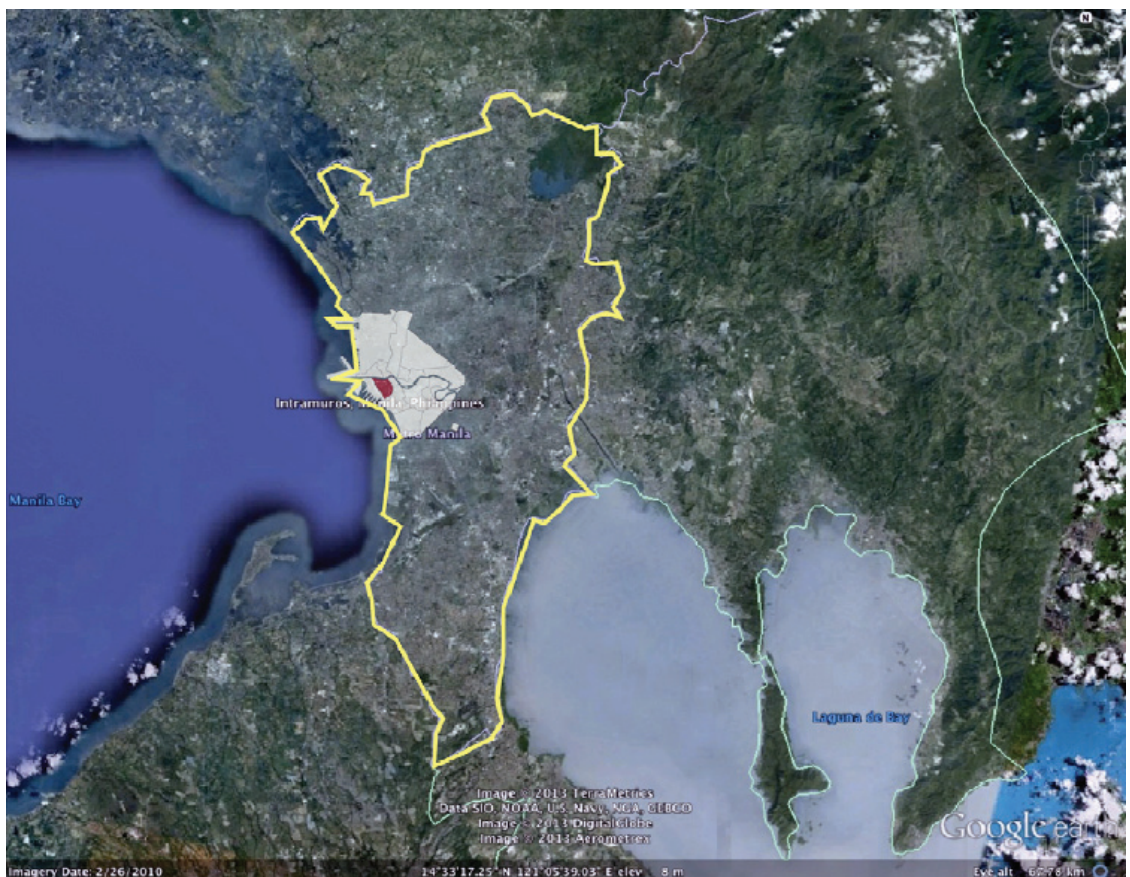


Figure 11:
Intramuros in the context of Metro Manila (made by Ellen Hsieh with Google Earth, red area: Intramuros, yellow area: City of Manila, yellow line area: Metro Manila)

does reconstruct everything, what is the meaning of a city in which 80% of its buildings are not authentic? Would it become a theme park that only has a recreational function? Following this idea, Mata (2009) calls for us to rethink the conservation policy of Intramuros. Tracing the current activities of Intramuros, as mentioned, it seems like the IA is also trying to find a new direction. However, the current movements might alleviate the superficial problems but does not touch the core issue: the meaning of Intramuros for modern society.

Martokusumo (2012) highlights possibilities and creativities in post-cataclysm heritage management. As noted, the historical value of Intramuros is not only the Spanish period but also the contemporary past. The trajectory of the modern ruins could represent the social and economic history of the postwar country (Cheng and Hsieh, 2013). In any case, as a mostly reconstructed site, the significance of Intramuros is not its authenticity but interpretation. If we accept this viewpoint, the ruins left from World War II, the American chain stores and the squatter settlements, which reflect the historical progress of the country, could all become part of the interpretations of Intramuros. This viewpoint might tie the Walled City with modern Filipino society, in which Spanish influence is no longer a cultural priority.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper addresses cultural heritage management of Intramuros under the promise of understanding its past and present, its challenges and values. The challenges of Intramuros, including natural and human factors, and the practical economic and social situation of the country should be faced. Moreover not only the economic aspects of Intramuros should be invested, but the multi levels of the significance of Intramuros, including historical/educational, aesthetic, spiritual/social, economic and research values, should be equally highlighted. In addition to providing several recommendations, the basic policy of the management should be reconsidered. Intramuros is a walled city built in the Spanish period. However, in order to feel the heartbeat of the old city again and to keep its uniqueness, its interpretation should chronologically go beyond the Spanish period and geographically go beyond the walls. It is part of a developing Asian city in the global society. It is only through the promotion of public awareness and stakeholders' collaboration and contributions can a real living heritage be developed.

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