

Converging social classes through humanized urban edges

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Abstract. Urban open spaces are created to be used by people. It is a place of convergence and social activity. However, these places have transformed into places of divergence. When spaces become dehumanized, it separates social classes. As a result, underused spaces contribute to urban decay. Particularly an urban edge, the JP Rizal Makati Waterfront Area is the center of this paper. The JP Rizal Makati Waterfront Area is a waterfront development situated along the banks of one of Metro Manila's major water thoroughfare --- Pasig River. The park and its physical form, urban design and landscape tend to deteriorate over time --- creating a further division of social convergence. Social hostility, crime, negligent maintenance and poor urban design are contributing factors to this sprawling decay in what used to be spaces of bringing people together. Amidst attempts to beautify and renew this portion of Makati City's edge, the urban area still remains misspent. This paper attempts to re-humanize the waterfront development. It uses the responsive environment design principles to be able to achieve this goal.

1. Introduction

1.1 Makati City and the Study Area - JP Rizal Waterfront Area

Makati City is known as one of the highly urbanized cities in Metro Manila. With a population of 529,039, it ranks 32nd in the most populated cities in the world. Aside from this number, Makati, being a CBD, attracts transient visitors that increase daytime population. The Makati Transportation Study in 2012, projected the maximum daytime population of Makati at 4,241,105. With the continued growth of urbanization, population growth is also imminent.

The vast movement of people going in and out of the city implicates the movement of social classes. The amount of jobs available in the city, from white to blue collar categories, attracted different workers depending on offered industries. Professionals, utility workers and other job workers enter the city and bring about a mix of high, mid and low classes in the socio-economic scale.

The Profile of Makati included in its development plan an Urban Greening program. It listed down 12 urban parks in Makati including the Guadalupe Nuevo Linear Park which is included in this paper's stud area.

The study area is called the JP Rizal Waterfront Area. It is composed of several linear parks and has the potential to become an urban park system. It is terminated at the east by the Makati Park and Garden and the at west by the Casa Hacienda Park. It is good to note that the Makati City Local Government spent efforts in beautifying this stretch by renovating existing infrastructures and providing landscaping. However, the area remains underused for various reasons that this paper will tackle.



The JP Rizal Waterfront Area is comprised of three major areas spread in three different barangays --- Poblacion, Guadalupe Viejo and Guadalupe Nuevo. The three barangays outline the northern border of Makati City and is bounded by the Pasig River. It is considered as an edge of Makati City. The site is 43,151 square meters in land area with a waterfront length of 2,236 meters (Figure 1).

The site consists of boardwalks and several establishments. Residential, industrial and institutional uses populate the central area of the area coverage.



Figure 1. Scope of the JP Rizal Waterfront Area (Source: Google Earth, 2016)

1.2. Urban Edges

Edges are linear elements which are not used as paths. Although not dominant as paths, these edge elements have important organizing features, particularly holding together generalized areas, as in the outline of a city [5].

The urban edge is one of the five mental mapping ideas as introduced by Lynch. Together with the other four (nodes, paths, districts and landmarks), these elements of the city help in understanding how and why people perceive a place in the way that they do.

For the purposes of this study, the edge is defined and considered as an urban space. Due to the fact that edges are attached to certain paths, districts or nodes, as well as, it can hold special landmarks, the edge is considerably a place in the city where activity happens. And where activity happens, it becomes a space for convergence. Provided with the correct design considerations and strategies, the urban edge should bring people together in social activities. However, with the current situation and case of the JP Rizal Waterfront Area, this is not the case

1.3. Social Classes

The JP Rizal Waterfront Area is home to different social classes. Ranging from the upper class A-B (residents of nearby high end residential enclave) to lower class C-D (vagrants and informal settlers) that frequent the area, the different social classes change the scene of the area. In the morning, joggers (Class A and B) frequent the place, while in the afternoon and late night, the space turns into a camp ground for Class C and D individuals (or groups).

The disparity of social classes depend on two forces: the pull of the place and the push of each class. The place, as an area of activity, would naturally pull users. However, if there is no strong pull, the place becomes weak. The push of social classes is seen when one class is turned off or intimidated by the other. A combination (or lack) of the push and pull factors greatly enhances or disrupts the usability of an area.

2. Problem Setting

Kelman [4] discussed two features of humanness, namely: identity and belongingness in a community. Reversal of these roles result to loss of identity and exclusion from a community. It then results to dehumanization. Dehumanization occurs when people fail to appreciate fully the needs, desires, feelings and hopes of others [11].

In the urban space, dehumanization is manifested in several aspects. The physical or visual factor is one aspect. Spaces tend to be fragmented because of the overwhelming scale of transport routes [3]. Furthermore, Enjuto [3] discussed that environmental conditions such as sounds, air quality, humidity, sunlight, shading, moisture etc., fall under another aspect that affects the city. The third factor is the socio-cultural aspect. Spaces and places are imbued with powerful meanings by different groups of people [7]. The meanings can vary between social groups and individuals, and be fragmented and contradictory [7]. With these three aspects (physical, environmental and socio-cultural), the manifestation of dehumanization results to misused and underused spaces.

Dehumanization of spaces can be traced back to earlier statements regarding the push and pull factors. Placelessness is a factor that weakens the pulling force. The "melting pot" experience [8] forces people to integrate in a society void of individuality. The requirement to conform strengthens the pushing force that segregates social classes.

2.1. The Problem

In 2015, the UN-Habitat launched in its annual World Habitat Day the advocacy on "Public Spaces for All, Designed to Live Together". It promotes certain points about public spaces, which includes open spaces. The advocacy states that public spaces: 1.) are crucial for the urban poor, 2.) contribute to building social cohesion, 3.) promote gender equality, 4.) enhance safety, 5.) support economic development, 6.) improve public health; and 7.) improve the environment [10]. For these points to be satisfied, the convergence or bringing together of people is key.

However, the urban areas intended to bring people together, more often than not, create social and cultural segregation. Dehumanized urban elements contribute to this phenomena. As a result, segregation creates constructs that lead to these urban spaces as either misused or underused. The urban space improperly used and left unmanaged will then lead to urban blight.

2.2. Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this paper is based heavily on the assumption that the re-humanization of these dehumanized spaces will reverse its current effects. Humanizing these urban spaces will solve socio-cultural segregation --- allowing people to come together in social activities. And without segregation, social classes will converge. And with the creation of convivial spaces, sustainability of the spaces are achieved. For redeveloped areas, this can be a catalyst for urban renewal.

2.3. Goals and Objectives

The goal of this paper is to establish a framework in humanizing urban spaces. To arrive at this goal, the following objectives are drawn:

- to recommend design strategies to address dehumanization of the JP Rizal Waterfront area
- to study correlation of social classes with urban landscape design

2.4. Significance of the Study

This paper can aid local government units and communities in re-evaluating their programs on urban renewal programs. The in-depth socio-cultural research entailed in developing open spaces is important so as not to result in dehumanized spaces. The paper can also assist students and the academic professionals in furthering the study of humanely designed spaces. This provides basic information and theories on the subject. This study can be further developed into a more in-depth research that can support stakeholders, especially, law makers in creating decisions or ratifying existing laws and guidelines.

3. Methods, Findings and Recommendations

The theoretical framework of the study relies on the application of humanizing strategies in urban spaces. This is achieved by responding to the physical, environmental and socio-cultural needs of such spaces.

In studying the needs of human beings, we must look at the basics. Maslow introduced the concept of hierarchy of needs, which are intrinsic to each individual. In relation to these needs, the response to the physical, environmental and socio-cultural aspects are satisfied. (Figure 2) A similar study [9] posits that depending on the space, physical needs are fulfilled by cultural advancement.

This framework is used to correlate the connection between the manifestation of humanization in a physical space. With each aspect, responsive design principles should be engaged to come up with humane spaces.

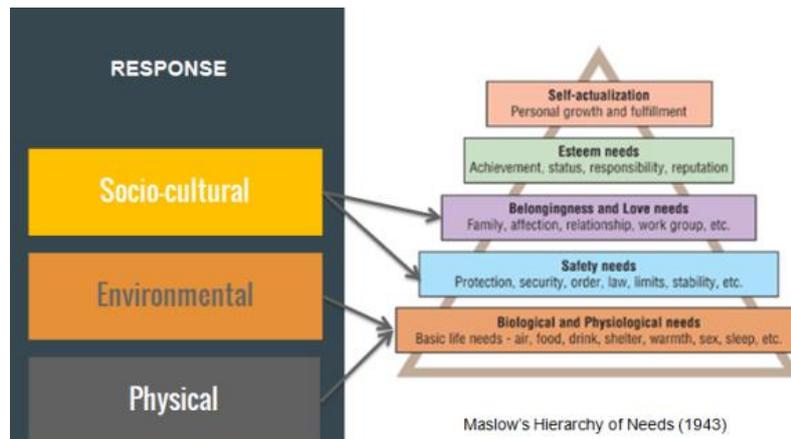


Figure 2. Response to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

3.1. Site Inventory and Analysis

During site inventory and analysis, it is noted that due to the pre-existing condition that the entire stretch of the site is spread across three towns of Makati, the visual character differs. Site elements such as planting, hardscape patterns and materials, street lights, sheds and street furniture are not uniform from one portion to another, particularly the western side from the eastern side. In terms of continuity, the length of the site can be divided into three portions: west, center and east areas. It is divided, not physically, but rather implicitly by the presence of two overhead roads (Pantaleon Bridge and EDSA) which traverses perpendicularly above the linear park.

It is important to cite that the linear park sits along the bank of the Pasig River --- making it a waterfront development --- and along JP Rizal Avenue, a major thoroughfare at the edge of northern Makati. The road traffic is busier than that of the water traffic, although presence of informal and formal ferry boat terminals integrates with the site. As such, the site has numerous public utility vehicle stops, but no distinct drop-off areas are designated.

It should also be noted that there are existing vegetation across the stretch of the study area. Some of these are potted plants while majority are in-ground street plants. Existing inventory includes: Palawan cherry (*Cassia nodosa*), rain tree (*Albizia saman*), MacArthur palms (*Ptychosperma macarthurii*), golden shower (*Cassia fistula*) and yellow oleander (*Thevetia peruviana*). These major urban trees provide shade in interspersed areas. Only certain spaces are shaded due to the distance between one tree to the next.

These urban trees also have push and pull factors. At late morning and high noon, the shade offered by these trees pull users to conglomerate underneath the canopies. However, at night time, the trees push away people as these are possible spaces where safety and security are questionable.

In the course of the evaluation, certain major trees are important to be maintained in the redevelopment proposal. Some needs to be transplanted in order to achieve a more humanized area.

3.2. Cultural Analysis

Cultural mapping results show that the concentration of convergence happens at the terminals of the site (western most and eastern most areas). This is due to the presence of activity generating areas such as a terminal located at the western end and a park at the eastern end. People can be seen interacting in

the park spaces (i.e. children playing, people cooling off from the heat). Towards the center of the site, the activities change into commercial transactions that involve buying and selling of food items, pop-up eateries and the like.

A cultural analysis on the various activities at the site was done. Results are based on actual count done in a 3-day observation. Its frequency is derived on the average of a 2 hour count per timeframe, spread in 3 days (Figure 3).

Activity Inventory	Morning	Noon	Evening	
Transitory Use i.e. waiting area for public transportation, river ferry terminals	High	Medium	High	Frequency: High > 25 Medium 15 – 25 Low < 15
Commercial Activities i.e. street vending, eating area	Low	High	High	
Leisure Use i.e. biking, jogging, walking	Medium	Low	Medium	
Unwanted Activities i.e. vagrants, theft	Medium	Low	High	

Figure 3. Activity inventory results based on a 3-day observation of the site

It should be noted that the different activities have been grouped. In Figure 4, the cultural mapping of the grouped activities is shown.

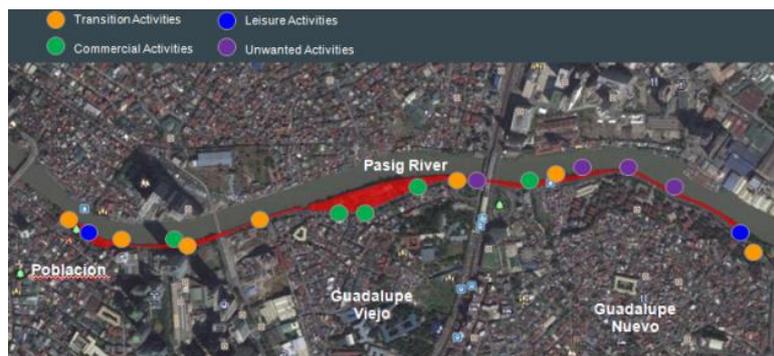


Figure 4. Activity mapping (Source for Base Map: Google Earth, 2016)

Activity patterns on site also vary on the site elements provided as well as the location. For example, a mini-playground was provided, located away from the western terminus, which resulted in the underuse of the space. In addition to that, the playground has little shade and protection from the elements. Safety is also a concern.

The pop-up stores are usually situated near office developments and on-going construction sites found along the stretch of the site. These transient activities rise during late afternoon to evenings.

Commuter activities are high in the morning and the evening, due to the fact that the JP Rizal Avenue is a major road where plenty of transients pass by. Traffic congestion happens especially at choke points where make shift drop off areas occur.

Based on the perception of the place, inferred qualities of the space dictate issues on 1) sense of place; 2) visual character; 3) need for multifunctional spaces; 4) maintenance; 5) walkability, and; 6) safety.

Correlating these findings into open space planning, there is a need to respond to the user needs. Thompson [8] theorized that open spaces in cities are places that celebrate cultural diversity. She described that although public parks are places for meeting strangers, these are also places where people can be intimate, anonymous and therefore, private [8]. The findings on the users of the JP Rizal Waterfront Area clearly displays the lack of theoretical basis of its design. These dehumanized factors

are manifested in the space as in poor design, the misuse or underuse of spaces, maintenance, barriers and discontinuity to name a few.

In analyzing the theories of Thompson and Tiwari, the connection between open space and users are clearly established. It is therefore a pliable next step to respond to the needs of the users through the environment in which they belong. Borrowing heavily from the responsive design principles of Bentley et al [1], this paper correlates responsive environments as a solution in re-humanizing urban open spaces.

Responsive Design Principles	Physical	Environmental	Socio-Cultural
Permeability	✓		✓
Variety	✓		✓
Legibility	✓		✓
Robustness	✓	✓	
Visual Appropriateness	✓		✓
Richness	✓	✓	
Personalization	✓		✓
Maslow's Pyramid Level	1	1	2 and 3

Figure 5. Responsive design principles correlated to the three aspects of human needs derived from Maslow's pyramid

3.3. Recommendation

Based on the responsive design principles and the site conditions, the following design strategies are formulated:

3.3.1. Permeability. 1) Improve walkability through covered walkways; 2) remove makeshift ferry terminals; 3) enhance pedestrian access through crosswalks and better vehicular drop-offs; 4) propose reblocking / transferring of some dwellings very near to the river, and; 5) connect east and west side through masking of psychological barriers (i.e. provision of lights, continuity of character, induce movement through curvilinear paths).

3.3.2. Variety. 1) Create 'loose fit' spaces for multi-purpose functions; 2) provide spaces for existing major uses (waiting sheds, vending areas, jog paths), and; 3) provide spaces with blurred distinctions as private or public realm (i.e. benches with interspersed armrests).

3.3.3. Legibility. 1) Create strong terminus at both ends to facilitate movement (i.e. plazas, activity areas); 2) provide way finding elements (i.e. signage); 3) establish monuments (i.e. sculptures, etc.) 4) establish clearly demarcation of hardscape and softscape areas, and; 4) preserve major tree locations as these have strong pulling effects to users.

3.3.4. Robustness. 1) Enhance the river experience (i.e. capitalize on vistas, river rehabilitation); 2) reuse existing warehouses and convert to spaces with multiple uses; 3) introduce indoor-outdoor activities near the waterfront, and; 4) introduce water related activities (i.e. dragonboat activity, clean-up drive)

3.3.5. Visual Appropriateness. 1) Establish unifying character (i.e. plants, floor patterns, urban design elements, furniture, materials); 2) maintain one color scheme across the stretch of the site regardless of barangay jurisdiction, and; 3) strengthen sense of place by creating unique spaces across the area, but have unifying elements (i.e. old trees with seating space, view decks with seating space)

3.3.6. *Richness*. 1) Improve softscape elements by adding more vegetation (i.e. shrubs, take off from existing urban trees on site: *Albizia saman*, *Cassia nodosa*, *Cassia fistula*, *Pterocarpus indicus*), and; 2) integrate sensory elements (i.e. fragrant trees such as *Azadirachta indica*, play around colors, provide various textures)

3.3.7. *Personalization*. 1) Create spaces that interface private and public use (i.e. view decks, seating spaces); 2) introduce a light park under the EDSA bridge to connect east and west sides; 3) provide ample lighting to deter unwanted activities; 4) preserve areas of high socio-cultural values (i.e. identified spots where people converge, shade trees, resting places, etc.); 5) address safety concerns through defensive site elements (i.e. choice of lighting fixtures, provision of bollards along drop offs and railings along riverfront areas); 6) correct the distances of tree planting locations in order to address issues on defensible space but also integrating proper shading effects, and; 7) increase security through avoidance of dark areas, provision of paths with unblocked visual corridors, etc.

4. Conclusion

In creating humanized spaces, there is no set template. Designing urban edges that brings people into convergence will always entail an in-depth study of the project area. It is important that during the design process, the users are already considered in a participative manner. One site will always be unique from another site due to the physical, environmental and socio-cultural aspects of that place.

There are however, base guidelines or considerations that can be used as a checklist in studying and designing urban spaces. Responsive design principles are some of the tools that a designer can use in order to achieve an effective and convivial output. These can be applied to any urban design study as a constant, while the site and users are the variables.

On the subject of the site as waterfront development along Pasig River, there is a need to revisit the easement requirements for urban areas (3 m) in order to appropriate the correct distances of built structures from water bodies in the urban setting. A stricter enforcement of the Easement of Servitude provisions found in the Civil Code of the Philippines should also be considered. Furthermore, the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) has masterplanned the banks of the river including transference of Informal Settler Families (ISF's), recovery of easements and establishment of Environmental Protection Areas (EPA's). These should all be considered in similar waterfront revitalization projects like the JP Rizal Waterfront Area development.

Converging social classes is achievable given that the response to human needs are met. Design should not focus solely on form but rather a big portion should be spent on function. More importantly, design should address the needs of its target users.

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