NIGHT MARKET AS CONCEIVED-PLANNED SPACE

The Case of Davao City, Philippines

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Abstract

This paper explores and tackles the meaning and issues of Roxas Night Market in Davao City as conceived space. Guided by Henri Lefebvre's notion of space as conceived, which refers to the perspective of planners, designers, or engineers, the night market in Davao City is described as space created by the Local Government Unit (LGU) and regulated by rules that it has set. Recognizing that this notion of space impinges upon the life of the street vendors, the LGU's account of the issues that beset the area as rules are applied and decisions are imposed is also identified and looked into. Consequently, such issues interface with the other two notions of space of Lefebvre as lived and practiced. More to the point, space as lived stands for the meanings that vendors attach to their experiences as they reflect on their past and imagine their future, and space as practiced pertains to the vendors' day-to-day experiences as they subsist in their vending sites. Using case study as research design, the night market through Lefebvre's space as conceived can be interpreted as the LGU's economic rationalization of space use in the context of the changing needs of the city and the uses of its public space. Corollary to this, it is also in response to the increasing number of street vendors in the city center, a way of framing vendors as symbols of resilience against terrorism after the bombing incident in 2016, and as an expression of the uncertainty and limits of its plans as the LGU grapples with its responsibility to decide on the future of street vendors and the night market in the city.

Keywords

informal street vending, production of space, resilience, local narratives, inclusivity

About the Author

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INTRODUCTION

There is a growing presence of night markets in the country. Usually located in urban city centers, these markets extend daytime economic activities (Hadfield 1) and encourage informal vending and small-scale entrepreneurial engagements (Hsieh and Chang 138). Also becoming tourist spots, night markets have become a social spectacle where people gather and come together for fun, relaxation, or an experience of what it means to be local. Despite its increasing presence, night market studies in the country, however, remain marginal. B. Lynne Milgram's (153) article on the Harrison Road Night Market in Baguio City is a good attempt to understand the legal issues surrounding the area. The write-up, however, signals other aspects of the night market which can be explored especially from the perspective of social space—or, as a site that is spatially-socially produced and re-produced. By privileging the role of space as conceived in this paper, the LGU is reckoned as a designer or planner of social space. As a conceived space, the design of the night market can, therefore, be looked into to make sense of the LGU's biases with regard to street vendors, its perceived issues in relation to street vendors, and its plan for the street vendors in the city.

Guided by Henri Lefebvre's ("The Production" 290–292) notion of space as social construct and as embodied location that is produced and reproduced, this study highlights his idea of space as conceived to make sense of the viewpoint of the Davao City LGU and the challenges that street vendors face as a result of decisions taken by the LGU with regard to use and management of the night market. In this paper, the three notions of space of Lefebvre stand for the following: (1) space as conceived, pertaining to the planners' or government's point of view; (2) space as lived, referring to the vendors' transformative vision and meaning of the night market in relation to their experience as they make sense of the rules and changes in the area; and (3) space as practiced, relating to the routines of vendors as they interpret the rules and day-to-day situations while they proceed with operations in their vending sites.

Guided by such perspectives, this study describes and discusses the LGU's power and agency as it regulates and structures the life of the night market in the following instances: (a) its decision to create the night market in 2013 as a vending site to address the increasing number of street vendors in the city, (b) its decision to close the night market for 13 days in August 2016, and (c) the way it handled the bomb blast incident in September 2016 which resulted in the death of 15 persons and the injury of 70 more. In such decisions, the LGU also expresses its ambivalence or uncertainty with regard to its vision or plan for street vendors as the LGU recognizes its difficult task in maintaining a space that intersects with poverty, security, and migration issues.

In the Philippines, the study of night markets occasions important questions on the intersecting contexts and concerns of progress or development. As studies on night markets in Asia privilege the gaze of tourists (Urry 10-12) such as Hsieh and Chang's (138) study of night markets in Taiwan, and Bishop and Robinson's (32) paper on the association between night markets and sex tourism in Thailand, the situation of street vendors within the informal sector is largely unexamined. The presence of the Roxas Night Market in Davao City, therefore, raises attention for equally relevant concerns: (1) the increasing number of street vendors vis-à-vis the difference in distribution of development project-programs between rural and urban locations, and (2) questions on access to public spaces where the differentials and contestations between the formal and informal sectors figure as affirmed by Ofreneo (420) in his account of the neoliberalist influence in the growth of the informal sector. These concerns, hence, make this study on night markets in the country important and timely as LGUs plan and decide on the future of its locality, which hopefully includes the interest of the informal sector such as street vendors.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, space as social construct is explained via the perspective of Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (290–292). In this work, Lefebvre identifies and distinguishes three kinds of social space: (1) spatial practice, (2) representations of space, and (3) representational space.

For spatial practice, Lefebvre holds that “[T]he spatial practice of a society secretes that society’s space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it. From the analytic standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space” (“The Production” 290). He adds that the way space is created and remade is telling of the kind of social relations that subsist in an urban society. By emphasizing the gradual process of spatial accretion and appropriation, Lefebvre underscores the cohesive nature of spaces that unfold which also explains its capacity to regulate the arrangement of communities. Although it does not necessarily follow that cohesive relations are always coherent in terms of form, it is important to take note of Lefebvre’s notion of dialectics. Dialectical relation, says Lefebvre, underscores the “bringing together the conflictual and contradictory, and the linking to theory and practice” (*Writing on Cities* 10). This means that unlike Hegel’s dialectic as thesis-antithesis-synthesis and Marx’s affirmation-negation-negation, Lefebvre values the open-ended movement of the dialectics which can be fragmented, on-going, and in transit (*Writing on Cities* 9–10). Consequently, spaces can be both fluid and permanent—fluid, in the sense, that its nature demands

that it moves and longs to be recreated, and permanent, since it seeks to create a tangible or recognizable form.

Representations of space, meanwhile, are characterized by Lefebvre as a “conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocrat subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent—all of whom identify what is lived and what is practiced with what is conceived.” This makes representations of spaces as abstractions of space. This means that through the lens or perspectives of the planners, certain abstractions are elevated and assume the role of markers. This also explains why Lefebvre holds that space as conceived tend to be verbally articulated signs which have been primordially intellectually thought of or worked out (290–292). As conceived space, representations of space privilege those in position, since their vantage points influence the way spaces are determined. A group of architects, for example, has the capacity to influence the kind of buildings which shall be built around the city. The selection of design and the justifications made to ensure that the designs are approved will eventually contribute to the ethos of the city. If architects underscore the balance between the old and new buildings, the character of the city will eventually create a nostalgic, contextual, and historic feel to its residents, and to society as a whole. This point also resonates with Pottie-Sherman and Hierbert’s (538) take on why night markets thrive, since they have the capacity to offer a multi-sensorial experience and a fluid character which entice individuals to immerse in or perhaps recreate.

For representational space, Lefebvre reckons that this social space leans towards “coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs.” He specifies that representational space is “space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols hence this pertains to the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users,’ but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do no more than describe” (Lefebvre 290–292). Coming from a symbolic and historical stance, this kind of space highlights the lived meanings of a society, which commands a set of lasting values. This is why representational space occasions the will of individuals or a community to transform spaces into locations of strong or powerful meanings. Guided by vision, events are reconfigured as locations of newly found claims and identities. A case in point is McCann’s (163) use of Lefebvre’s space construct in discussing race and racial identities in US urban settings. In relation to night market study, this point is also couched in Hadfield’s (1) discussion of the third wave of evening and nighttime economics such as night markets as extensions of “situated assemblages of power.”

In this paper, the terms spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space are referred to as space as practiced, conceived, and lived, respectively (Watkins 209). With these notions of space, the privileged construct

in this study is space as representations, given that the primary informants in this topic formally work in the LGU. While narratives from the other two spaces are bracketed, the accounts on space as practiced will, however, reveal that the other two spaces—practiced and lived—assert their presence via the issues which the LGU has itemized towards the street vendors. On this note, space as practiced and space as lived will also figure in the discussion as the background against which space as conceived space or representations of space will derive its social context, and meanings. In this sense, the other social spaces using the frame of Sletto (389) may be construed as “alternative representations of space.”

METHODOLOGY

The case study approach is the qualitative research design (Creswell 183) used in this investigation. As part of a larger project which I did in 2016, the parameters of this study are theoretically set by Lefebvre’s (“The Production” 285) interrelated space construct. Coupled by the time-bound and space-bound nature of the Roxas Night Market, the area establishes itself as a case since it has intersecting themes, issues, and concerns. The specific qualitative tools used in this paper include on-site observations, mapping of the physical spaces in the night market, and key informant interviews.

To familiarize myself with the site, maps of the physical spaces in the night market were produced. For key informant interviews, the head of the night market was interviewed in his office in Magsaysay Park, Davao City, together with a staff member who has been working in the night market office for three years. On-site interviews were done with the checker of the night market office and the person in charge of the food section, the person in-charge of the massage section, a staff of the City Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO), and two security officers of the LGU stationed at specific checkpoints in the night market who provided on-the-ground accounts of the bombing incident. In describing the night market from the lens of the LGU, the key informants were also asked to share issues they dealt with in managing the place. These issues also served as entry points in characterizing the way the LGU frames and deals with the street vendors.

Access to information also posed some challenges. The busy schedule of the night market office head and staff meant frequent visits to the office in hopes that they have free time for interviews. Having scheduled interviews was not reliable, since there were many emerging concerns. At one point, I was hoping I would have the chance to do the interview, only to find out that there were around 15 vendors waiting their turn to have a conversation with the head as well. With

repeated visits, however, the interviews were eventually conducted and the staff in the night market office were of big help in filling in lacking information. The on-site interviews were also only possible on evenings when the night market was not that busy. Since the night market opened at 5:00 p.m., interviewing the staff in the area at around 8:00 to 9:00 p.m. was a viable period as activities in the place became steady. Finally, the bombing incident added a layer of difficulty in gathering supplementary information from the informants. Their initial hesitations due to security concerns were mitigated, however, by the sense of trust that was built prior to the incident.

With the qualitative descriptions from the informants, the ensuing task was to critically analyze the meaning of unfolding themes from the perspective of Lefebvre's notions of space as conceived. In this paper, the data tilt towards the LGU's approach in designing the site, its behavior in relation to the events in the life of the night market, and its take on the issues that exist in the night market. While the descriptions highlight the LGU's role in determining the structure of the night market and its power over space, the roles of vendors in designing the area were also occasioned. This means that the vendors also made their presence felt in influencing the design of the night market. This critical break from the overarching narrative of the LGU is where the vendors communicate their presence given the dominant role of LGU in planning the night market as social space.

Hence, two important methodological and qualitative considerations are invoked in this paper: (1) descriptive meanings of the night market, and (2) critical meanings of unfolding themes gleaned from Lefebvre's space as conceived, lived, and practiced. Using the dialectical frame of Lefebvre's notions of space production, the competing agencies and tensions that subsist between vendors, and between the LGU and vendors, are reflected upon. These insights are then gathered to allow this paper to conclude that the Roxas Night Market is an intersection of space as it stands as a narrative of the LGU's command and power in creating spaces, the influence on space-making which street vendors can communicate, and the unfolding story of the night market as a social phenomenon.

THE STORY OF THE ROXAS NIGHT MARKET

Roxas Avenue as Location. Roxas Avenue is the physical space where the Night Market in Davao City is located. As an area, the avenue can be spatially described as an expanse between Claro M. Recto Avenue and Quezon Boulevard Junction. In between its stretch, there are four streets that intersect, namely: Aurora Quezon, Pag-asa, Padre Faura, and Padre Zamora where four open canals are also observable.

Fig. 1. Google Map of Roxas Avenue. (Source: Google Maps)

In relation to establishments and institutions, the avenue also serves as one of the entry points to Ateneo de Davao University (ADDU) and Aldevinco Shopping Center, which are academic and tourist hubs in Davao City, respectively. It is these institutions which also create a busy atmosphere in the place. When the head of the night market was asked as to why the night market was stationed at Roxas, he opined that the place, being at the city center, can easily attract possible customers, and the site has the capacity to almost be at par with the crowded atmosphere fronting the Sangguniang Panlungsod (SP) where the street vendors used to be stationed.

From a political consideration, Roxas Avenue belongs to the 1st District and is specifically within the bounds of Poblacion sub-district, which covers 40 barangays. Interestingly, three barangay units politically share Roxas Avenue, namely: Barangay 34, 33, and 32. Moreover, Barangay 34 covers Padre Gomez Street and the streets of Padre Faura, Pag-asa, and Aurora Quezon. The area after Padre Gomez Street is part of Barangay 32 and 33. This shared feature of Roxas Avenue also explains why the police officers who oversee the security in the area either belong to the Sta.

Ana Police Force or the Police Force of San Pedro. This was a point clarified after I interviewed a police officer stationed along Padre Gomez Street.

The freedom park in Roxas Avenue is its other familiar feature, which is symbolically signified by the bust of Sam Ratulangi, who was the first Governor of Sulawesi Province in Indonesia. Building on its function as freedom park, the place is usually used as meeting point for peaceful demonstrations, as well as protestors. This is where institutions gather to express their dissatisfaction over social issues that affect their sector; or where women and men begin their march in support of the celebration of Women's Month. Gatherings of such nature usually do not go beyond Padre Zamora Street, however. In terms of number of lanes, each side of Roxas Avenue has four. The breadth of these lanes somehow makes driving in the area less difficult, since traffic or jeepney congestion is seldom observed and experienced prior to the start of night market. In the current setup of the night market, four lanes of an entire side of the avenue up until Padre Zamora Street is used for the evening vending activity.

Night Market: Its Creation and Spatial Arrangements. According to the head of the City Transportation and Traffic Management Office (CTTMO), many of these vendors come from the streets of San Pedro, Uyanguren, and the street adjacent to the SP of Davao City. Additionally, the massage therapists who render their services in front of the SP and in Osmeña Park (located beside the SP) were asked to leave their sites. The citywide effort to decongest the sidewalks, park, and streets near the SP and City Hall predisposed and conditioned the creation of the night market in Roxas Avenue. Initially the evictees disapproved of Roxas Avenue as the proposed new location, according a night market staff, given that only a handful of people stroll along the avenue at night. The vendors knew that people almost always frequent San Pedro Street given the presence of the SP. Despite such uncertainty, Roxas Avenue was selected and up to this day, the area has proven its economic viability for street vendors as people have gathered for food, leisure, and relaxation in the area for the past three years.

Just weeks before the oath-taking of outgoing Mayor Rodrigo Duterte as the country's newly elected president, the number of street vendors in the area swelled to almost 800. According to the head of the night market, the extent of the spaces occupied by the night market vendors covered two lanes in each of the two sides of the entire stretch of Roxas Avenue where vendors sell their goods such as *ukay-ukay*, accessories, food, and massage services. In this expanse, the area between the streets of Aurora Quezon and Padre Faura is designated for *ukay-ukay* vendors. The space between Padre Faura Street and Padre Gomez Street is the site for the

food vendors; and the area between the streets of Padre Gomez and Padre Zamora is the spot for the accessories or the free-for-all type of merchandise or services, except for food and *ukay-ukay*. In the accessories section, a few spaces are also assigned to massage therapists.

Given that the night market occupies two of the four lanes in each side of the Avenue, the jeepney drivers would need to be extra patient as the buildup of traffic in the area accumulates when more and more people flock towards the night market. This is also the context of a few drivers' complaints with the number of people deliberately crossing the streets just to proceed to the site. These are remarks I often hear from drivers as I frequent the area on a daily basis, since this is where I usually take the next ride to my residence. But to a researcher's perspective, the slow-moving vehicles already gave me a good view of the night market and how vendors arrange their sites, or how people wait for the night market to formally begin. These are scenes that I also notice, given that the people who are with me in the vehicle will also closely observe how the night market unfolds.

Changes in Spatial Arrangement. In July 2016, the use of space of the night market drastically changed. With the new city mayor, the LGU decided to rearrange the night market as response to complaints from vendors themselves and the night market staff. In my interview with the night market head, he added that the rearrangement eventually led to the Mayor's decision to close the night market on August 3, 2016. He reiterated the reasons for the night market's closure which were also itemized in a report in a local newspaper: (a) vendors refusing to follow the one-family-one-stall rule, (b) vendors insisting on their preferred locations, (c) the presence stalls that are run by financiers, but are managed by dummies, (d) vendors subleasing their stalls to others, and (e) vendors who are not in the list insisting that they have secured rights or permits over their preferred stalls (Capistrano).

But after a series of consultations and negotiations between the LGU and the street vendors, the night market was reopened on August 15, 2016. The reopening also meant the enforcement of new rules and schemes for space use in Roxas Avenue. According to the head of the night market office, the number of vendors who were allowed to sell in the area decreased. From close to 800 stalls, the number dwindled to around 350. This means that the vending space became smaller, and street space for the public transport system broadened. The reduced number of vendors also meant vending in the area for only three months. This new scheme, although it was met with objections especially from the vendors, was done to accommodate all the other vendors in the city who might be interested to sell in the area. To determine the first batch of vendors, a lottery system was put in place. I

was only able to witness the second drawing of lots for the second batch of vendors, which was held in Almendras Gym in September 2016. The activity was filled with mixed reactions. Those whose names were called were elated that they could work again in the area, but those whose names were not called went home dismayed that they couldn't sell within the next three months. The vendors whom I interviewed said that they were really hoping that they will be luckily drawn especially that the second batch will work during the Christmas season. In the meantime, they would need to wait to for the next drawing of lots.

Interestingly, the decrease in the number of street vendors in the night market only affected the vendors of *ukay-ukay*, food, and accessories. The massage therapists managed to gain more from the negotiation process as they were given a specific space where they could provide their services. In the previous setup, the massage therapists were placed in the accessories section. In the new scheme, the space arrangement considered and created a fourth section: an exclusive space for massage therapists. During the lottery for the second batch of vendors, however, the massage therapists were still required to witness the activity. I asked them for the reason they were asked to be there. A few mentioned that they were not sure if they would be asked to leave their site, or if they would still be allowed to continue with their massage services. The head of a massage therapist organization specified that it was best for them to be there in Almendras Gym just to get the information first-hand. I also asked the head of the night market office if it was still necessary for the massage therapists to be there. He said that their attendance was a must since the rules and regulations of the night market would be explained again, and they would be given a chance to raise questions. Hence, their attendance means agreeing to abide with the rules of the LGU: "*Di sila pahawaon pero kinahanglan nila mamati sa mga balaod sa night market*" ("They won't be told to leave, but they will need to listen to the rules of the night market"; my trans.).

The Bombing Incident: Prelude to an Emerging Space. September 2, 2016 marked a shift in the way the night market was governed as public space. The night market was bombed, killing 15 persons and injuring 70 more. The bomb, believed to be planted by a member of an extremist group, exploded in the massage area. The incident caused a significant change in the free and relaxed environment of the night market in Roxas Avenue and Davao City in general. I was also shocked by the incident and my friends were relieved that I did not do my field work that evening. But with the incident, speculations arose if the night market will be permanently closed. With the city still in a state of shock, Mayor Sarah Duterte-Carpio was quick to correct such estimations and asserted that the night market will resume its operations as soon as the street vendors are willing to go back to the site (Perez). In

a news conference, the mayor explained that this was the LGU's way of encouraging and challenging the people of Davao to face terrorism with courage, and not to succumb to fear and diffidence. Since the attack, Holy Eucharistic celebrations were held at the scene of the crime, and a fence was put up to provide an area where the people of Davao City can visit and offer prayers to the victims. In the days that followed, prayer vigils were organized and flowers and candles filled the site (Perez). I also helped revive the lost sense of security in the area by having my feet massaged when the therapists resumed in their operations. While having my massage, I could still recall my left foot shaking as I tried to stay calm.

From the space-use perspective, the LGU shared its plan of building a memorial marker to help facilitate the gradual healing of the night market as a space of work, fun, and peace in Roxas Avenue. The marker was also expected to allow visitors and patrons of the night market to converse and exchange stories, perspectives and questions as to why and how the incident happened. More importantly, the massage therapists who were directly affected by the incident slowly went back and regained their livelihood space. Seeing these individuals who braved through the fear of uncertainty, some concerned citizens brought with them flowers which they handed over to the massage therapists. For the other vendors, they also started resuming their work. On October 11, 2016, the memorial marker was officially opened. This was the new space that emerged in Roxas Avenue. The memorial marker has the names of the 15 victims carved on it, surrounded by plants and flowers as the LGU's way of consoling the victims and their families. The plants and flowers are considered as symbols of prayers for peace and security in Davao City. In the words of Mayor Duterte-Carpio: "We wanted a marker na labored so that we will never forget what happened. *So pag living plants ang nilagay diyan* (if we place living plants there; my trans.), everyday, we take care of it, we will always remember what happened, so that we will always be vigilant and help each other prevent another senseless attack" (Perez).

Issues in the Night Market. The unfolding of the story of Roxas Night Market is not replete with issues. From the perspective of the LGU, there are certain challenges in the running and governance of the site. These are some of the issues:

(1) A recurring concern, according to the head of the night market office, revolves around vendors leasing their space to other vendors, the monopoly of spaces by wealthy entrepreneurs, and the non-observance of the one-family-one-space policy. In the interview, the head of office explained that it has been difficult to trace a family's background to ensure the one-family-one-space rule. He noted that the family trees of some of these vendors have become so complicated that he

Fig. 2. Memorial Marker at Roxas Avenue. (Source: author)

realized that it may be futile to categorically ascertain if a family having the same family name actually belongs to two different families. He noted that when these families assert the authenticity of their claim, they can also present valid documents. Since it has become too complex, he shared that it may be more productive if the night market will just focus on the implementation of the other rules. This difficulty in tracing the family members of vendors was seen in Almendras Gym when the second batch of vendors were drawn. On a few occasions, when a name was called, two to three persons went towards a station to receive their numbers. This caused slight confusion among the vendors and it was settled when the vendors were able to present valid IDs. I was also curious as to how the LGU will determine the vendor who deserves the slot if both can present legitimate documents.

Given the one-family-one-stall policy, the night market office also did disciplinary acts. For instance, the night market head shared that his office already blacklisted 30 vendors who served as employers of vendors, or who owned a stall while hiring a vendor. He needed to remove the 30 vendors as a reminder to other vendors that the same fate can happen to them once they violate the rules. Jocelyn, a night market staff listening to our conversation, affirmed the reasons shared by the office head. She added that prior to the removal of the erring vendors, they also provided

opportunities for these vendors to come clean, acknowledge their mistake, and eventually give up their space. Sadly, the 30 vendors opted to wait for the night market office to exercise its authority.

(2) Security is another top concern of the LGU for Roxas Night Market, according to the head of the night market office. After the bombing incident, the treacherous act conditioned the full attention of the LGU in securing the night market and ensuring its continued presence. This detailed attention to security measures was seen in the railings, the assigned supervisors per area, the presence of police and military officers, and the people's groups who volunteered to help regain the people's trust in the security measures of Davao City, and to encourage them to revisit the Roxas Night Market. With the foregoing security measures in place, the recurring issues that the head of office mentioned are the absence of light and lack of security forces attending to the extended space of the night market towards Padre Faura Street. Since this section of the night market did not have lighting, he requested electric connections. While sharing such inadequacy in the area the head of office somehow shivered at the thought that something bad might also happen in that part of the night market. For the rest of the vendors, however, he was happy to note that the vendors were cooperative in their security efforts. They also communicated well with the vendors that if an untoward incident happens in the night market, then everybody would certainly get affected.

(3) After the lottery system was enforced, a subsequent issue emerged: the increase in the number of referrals or requests to avail of slots in the night market. This increase in referrals also explained the sudden jump in the number of vendors in the three sections, and the therapists in the massage section. This effort to accommodate more vendors also meant smaller vending areas for everyone. Consequently, the head of office discussed the possibility of having less income for vendors if the vendors themselves keep on encouraging other vendors to apply for vending space in the night market. To this concern, he added that the vendors, after the scenario was explained to them, understood the risks of having more vendors but remarked that they just wanted their fellow vendors to also have decent or proper spaces where they can vend. The same analogy holds for the massage therapists. If an organization accepts more and more therapists, then it may mean less income for everybody. On this issue, the night market office was at a crossroads on what value should be prioritized. Is the night market for all vendors interested in having a site for livelihood? Or, should it be limited to only those who are indigent—vendors who really do not have any recourse for employment? These are some of the questions that the night market office also grappled with. These questions were also affirmed when I visited the night market office one morning and saw the head of office convening around ten vendors who reported to the office that there are three unoccupied spaces in the *ukay-ukay* section. Since there were ten of them,

he raffled off their names to select the three vendors who would occupy the vacant spaces. While going about the procedure, he reiterated the point that this process needed to be done so that no one among the potential vendors will say any negative things about the way the night market office handled the selection process. This is where the LGU manifested its frustration with the behavior of vendors, and the immense responsibility it needs to prudently fulfill (Cheng-Ter et al. 435).

(4) With the creation of Roxas Night Market, some formal establishments complained to the LGU on the presence of the vendors right across their stores. The presence of these vendors somehow caused a disturbance in their operations, since their walkways became inaccessible. With this situation, the office head admitted that it was a lapse on their part, and acknowledged that the comments of the owners of formal establishments were right—“*Kung pwede diay maninda dira sa atubangan namo, kami na lang diay ang maninda?*” (“If it is acceptable to vend right across our stores, then shouldn’t we be the ones vending on this space?”; my trans.) With this remark, the head, however, expressed that the issue had already been addressed. The night market office just needed to enforce more discipline on the vendors and explain to them why it is not right to vend in some areas adjacent to Aldevinco. The same complaint was also raised by the church beside Aldevinco. The church officers noted that the entrance to their church had become inaccessible and there were some market-goers who peed on their gates. Such issues meant more work on the side of the LGU in reminding the vendors and patrons of the night market to respect the church entrance where the night market is also stationed.

(5) The other concern of the night market office head is the extended work of his staff in cleaning up Roxas Avenue after every night market. He shared that his staff needed to stay there until 2:00 to 3:00 a.m. to ensure that the place was ready to assume its role as public space for transportation the following morning. This was something that he was especially mindful of since cleanliness is one of the attractions of the city from the tourists’ point of view. “*Ulaw man pud sa atuang mga turista. Kita baya ang ginatan-aw*” (“It is also a concern for the city’s image as tourists flock to Davao City”; my trans.). He even added that some LGUs in other parts of the country visited his office inquiring on how the Roxas Night Market was managed. He mentioned Bukidnon, Cagayan de Oro, and Makilala as the LGUs who made such visits. But on top of such concerns, he underscored the importance of ensuring that the nearby formal establishments would not be negatively affected by the presence of the night market. This also meant having more workforce for his office. There were two shifts in the office: 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., 2:00 to 9:00 p.m., and another group for the night market working from 6:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. These were concerns which he also explained to the vendors so they would be more mindful of the rules in the area. This meant that with emerging rules and space,

there was also an increase in work, which conditioned the emergence of spaces where these officers and staff gathered their forces and capacities so that the night market was well-governed.

(6) The head of office also hoped that the vendors would aim to become legal vendors in the near future. Sharing a vendor's complaint that he had been vending in a site in the city for 25 years until he was evicted by the office, he asked the vendor if he ever tried to save and dream of becoming a legal or formal vendor someday. Listening to the poverty issues of the vendors, the office head found himself guessing if some vendors had become professionals in informal or illegal vending. Also noting that many of these vendors were trapped in a cycle of poverty, he reminded his staff to make a conscious effort to let the vendors understand the rules of the night market, the decision-making processes, and the decisions arrived at. When asked about the LGU's response to the growing number of vendors in the city, he explained that the LGU had given privileged spaces for street vendors via its 1/3–2/3 policy. The policy allowed vendors to put up stalls along walkways near establishments as long as 2/3 of the space was allotted for consumers, buyers and/or people in general who needed to traverse the space for errands. This rule, according to the night market office head, enticed vendors to stay in the city and encouraged vendors from other cities and towns to migrate. He added that the creation of the Roxas Night Market is another landmark which has motivated many vendors to settle in the city. Stressing that Roxas Avenue is a transportation space, the office head recognized that the creation of the night market may have been interpreted as a signal that the LGU favored the vendors in its territory. But with the steady increase of vendors, he was quick to mention that the vendors can be considered as one of the key challenges, if not problems of the city. He noted that time will come that these vendors would need to be removed from their slots, especially if development projects require spaces where vendors are stationed. He even added: "*Kung asa bawal kay daghan tawo, dira man pud gud ang mga vendors.*" ("Vendors stay in places where people gather, and usually these kinds of spaces are not for private use, such as vending"; my trans.). Thus, the concern for the future of vendors is something which urban informality in general needs to confront and address (Yeoh et al. 369).

THE CRITICAL SIDE TO THE STORY OF THE NIGHT MARKET

The beginnings of the night market showcased the primary role of the LGU in determining the place and its arrangement. On this note, the LGU's capacity to decide on the spatial constitution of the night market speaks of its autonomy in arranging and re-arranging the site. From Lefebvre's perspective of space as conceived, this

sense of autonomy functioned as the basis of the city administration's space-making ability. With the ordinance of the LGU, a night market space at the city center emerged. This consequently means that Roxas Avenue at night is recreated as a shared space between the night market vendors and the other stakeholders who use the space, such as the jeepney drivers who traverse such lanes, and the surrounding business establishments. This change in the use of Roxas Avenue is where the interface between space and politics figures. As Wallis (3–4) underscores, space in Lefebvre's discourse is construed as having an apolitical nature.

In making use of a space for another purpose, here is where Lefebvre's idea of space as conceived asserts its theoretical force: When the LGU created the night market as public space, it also recreated itself in the night market. This is where the LGU expressed its identity or way of packaging itself in relation to the night market as a social phenomenon. Hence, when this question is asked—"How does the night market embody the stance, values and priorities of the LGU of Davao City?"—the making of the night market at the city center occasions the LGU's position as provider of space for marginalized sectors like vendors. Using Harvey's (218–219) reflection on Lefebvre's space construct, the night market reveals the manner and values which the LGU as a political institution upholds in creating the city's social spaces.

Extending the discussion using Lefebvre's conceived space construct, the same re-creating ability of one's identity is demonstrated when the LGU decided to close the night market for thirteen days. In coming up with the decision, the LGU re-affirmed its disciplinary force, or its powerful and regulative position in managing the issues in the area. Analogical to Foucault's (195) notion of the panopticon, the LGU reaffirms its hierarchical position and its decision-making ability even if it affects all street vendors. Given that the LGU is known for its strict leadership style, the issuance of the immediate closure reinforces the image of an iron will, especially when hard decisions need to be made. Hence, the 13-day closure of the night market is a good case in point.

The bomb blast and the LGU's firm stance to open the area two days after the incident also showcased the position of the LGU when confronted with terrorist attacks. While the city is known for its safe and secure landscape, the city officials demonstrated their approach in the face of terrorism. The LGU specifically recreated its position to confront the ill effects of terrorism head-on. *What will the LGU do in such uncertain instances? How will the LGU respond to the growing sense of insecurity in the city?* These are questions which the LGU addressed when it announced with conviction its plans for the night market. Instead of putting a permanent closure to the place, the LGU invited the vendors to resume their economic activities in the night market and ordered the creation of a memorial

marker where the bomb exploded. With such instructions, the LGU made its principles tangible, underscoring its strong stance against terrorism in the night market itself. Now, the site does not only embody the LGU's plan for the street vendors, but it also showcases its conviction when confronting ill effects of terrorist attacks and highlights the LGU's tenuous hold on the safeguarding and management of the night market as conceived space in relation to extralocal forces like terrorists.

As the LGU showcased its capacity to plan for the night market, its role as planner or designer somehow met its limits when it needed the help of the vendors, as they were requested to go back to their stalls to ensure that the night market would not close because of the bombing incident. Interestingly, it is at this point that the street vendors were able to locate their parallel capacity to figure out and exercise the capacity to design or plan for the night market. In this case, the vendors showcased their brave disposition in dealing with their own fears to help assure the continued existence of the night market.

The realities that vendors dealt with as they struggled to make decent sources of living also contributed to their ability to influence the changing design of the night market. A case in point was the presence of an employer–employee divide between street vendors. Here, one can recognize the dialectical relation in space-making (Wallis 2–4) among street vendors and the LGU. As some vendors manifested their intent to hire other street vendors as their “front” to a vending site, the situation brings to mind the contrast between vendors who had the financial capital to support two to three vending stalls, and street vendors who did not have such resources. Since the LGU admits the night market is for indigent street vendors, tension unfolded between well-financed vendors and the LGU's aim of facilitating economic spaces for vendors who were in dire need of state support. This became a constitutive tension (Harvey 220–221) which was difficult for the LGU to sort out. In my conversations with a few vendors in Almendras Gym during the second drawing of lots, I also met vendors who were “accompanying” their employees in the area, hoping that their staffs' names will be called. This was a scenario that initially shocked me, but one I'd gotten accustomed to. This is another instance of dialectics which Harvey (219) considers as the in-between of what is imagined and experienced. In the language of Lefebvre (290–292), this dialectical tension is where space-making ability of the vendors as practiced is occasioned. This means that as the LGU formulates and implements its rules, the people who are subjected to the policies find ways to reinterpret the rules that are usually favorable to their goals or intentions.

Since the night market proved to be economically viable for street vending, the vendors were also quick to adjust in taking advantage of the livelihood space

despite initial hesitations with the LGU's decision to transfer their vending sites to Roxas Avenue. This adjustment to the new area was most evident in the radical increase in the number of night market vendors, reaching around 800 stalls in 2016. This rise in number using Lefebvre's (285) frame of space production also points to the vendor's willingness to reiterate and assert their identities in the Roxas night market. Lefebvre's (290–292) discussion on the dialectical relation between a “command and demand” figures in this scenario. This means that at one point, the LGU seemed to be in control of the night market as it decided the number of vendors who can claim a stall in it. But as the number of vendors swelled, the LGU now had difficulty managing the phenomenon as vendors, through their numbers, made their presence felt. This is why the decision to close the night market for 13 days introduced a sense of confusion as to where power rests in determining the spaces in the night market.

The vendors' ability to quickly adjust and master their spaces did not instantly happen. It was a skill which evolved through time. This is where Lefebvre's (290–292) other notion of space as lived locates its theoretical importance. Through the years, vendors transferred from one vending site to another. While this was a situation that they did not want to frequently happen given their desire to stay in the legitimate spaces of the night market, their life story proves that migrating or transferring to another site is almost always part of their narrative. It is this desire to continue the story of the night market which also motivated vendors to help the LGU reclaim the night market space from fear and insecurity after the bombing incident. This different texture in the relation between the LGU and the vendors somehow changed as it was the LGU's turn to negotiate and convince the vendors to return to the site. This reversal in role shows that the LGU's approach to conceived space needs to acknowledge the limitations of designs or plans when solely determined by one institution.

Since the vendors were not at the other end of the spectrum in terms of power relations, the LGU and the street vendors revealed how spatial issues in the night market get addressed when both sectors work together. In recreating and reclaiming the night market, both the LGU and street vendors needed to sacrifice for the good of the city. Thus, the incident allowed the LGU to recognize the other possible meaning of conceived space: as an opportunity to determine the collaborative meaning of space-making as the LGU sought from and worked on with the vendors in their bid to free the night market from the clutches of fear and worry. As the memorial marker stands to help sustain the city's healing process, and as the street vendors went back to their stalls, the night market, therefore, was no longer simply the result of the plan or design of the LGU. It became collaborative, as the night market's design and plan was influenced and shaped by the lived experiences of the vendors. This collaborative stance, for instance, was shown when the LGU and

the vendors chose to work together to deal with the repercussions of the bombing incident, and when the LGU constructed the memorial marker which changed the meaning of street vending from being confined to an economic activity to becoming part of the healing process of the city from the threats of terrorism.

CONCLUSION

The night market in Roxas Avenue exists as a result of the space-making ability of the LGU. Claiming a primary role in shaping the life or story of the night market, the area can be construed as a produced and reproduced space. As a produced space, the Roxas Night Market emerged as a result of the decision of the LGU to allot an area for street vendors. The LGU, being the planner of the site, conceived of a vending space that is both legal and subject to the rules of the city. As a reproduced space, the night market was also reconceived in many instances such as the rearrangements in the space assignments, the reduction of the number of vendors, the creation of the memorial marker, and the LGU's decision to work with the vendors in reclaiming the night market from terror after the bombing attack in September 2016.

Primarily conceived or planned as an economic site, the night market, however, has taken a significant shift from being an abstract planned space (Sletto 389). As the story of the night market unfolds, the LGU encounters the limits of its space-making ability as issues and instances emerge in the area. In turn, the LGU needs to acknowledge that conceiving or planning the night market is not its sole responsibility. Expanding Lefebvre's notion of conceived space, it has to take into consideration the contributions of other sectors, such as the street vendors, in the designing and redesigning of the space. In this way, conceived space is not unilaterally constructed and is challenged to be inclusive or participatory. Hopefully the place is no longer entirely conceived in terms of rules, regulations, and penalties, or deprived of history and practices. The LGU should take note that the night market, based on its story, has interfaced with other notions of space—using Lefebvre's frame, as practiced and lived.

A crucial concern, for instance, that binds almost all vendors is their quest for better livelihood opportunities in the city. It is on this point where the abstract view of the LGU encounters the realities from the ground. A case in point is the LGU's hope that vendors will eventually graduate from informal street vending to formal vending stations. Some vendors, however, do not see themselves apart from informal street vending. Should the LGU provide other opportunities so vendors can see its point? Or should the LGU take more time to listen and understand the

histories and situations of the vendors? These are contrasting ways of conceiving the night market which locates the tension that subsists in the place. Proof of this tension is the issue on the increasing number of applications for vending stalls in the area. As the LGU applies its planned rules and programs to condition or force better spaces for street vending, more and more people go into informal street vending. Why is this the case? The LGU, being a planner, needs to reckon with such a reality. Moreover, as the LGU aspires to help indigent street vendors, those who have the financial capital also join the bandwagon in the guise of employed street vendors. How will the LGU make such distinctions?

The seeming contradictions and dynamic arrangements in the night market intertwine with the growing list of issues that beset the LGU as it manages the site. Will the LGU eventually close the area if issues are not abated in due time? For this question, the memorial marker interestingly reminds the institution how the vendors helped or assisted the city in the healing of its scars from the bomb blast. Does this make the memorial marker a concrete argument to remind the LGU to keep and perpetually extend the night market? Thus, this paper concludes that as the LGU exercises its power and agency in creating and recreating the site, the issues and events in the story of the night market also reveal the limits or boundaries of its plans. The uncertainties which the LGU faced point to its responsibility to not only decide on the future of the street vendors and the Roxas Night Market in the city, but to listen as well to the contributions of the street vendors. In so doing, the LGU is invited to acknowledge its role in co-writing the tale of the city (Lefebvre, *Writing on Cities* 86–87) with the vendors as both sectors are affected by the ever-changing and evolving arrangements in the urban landscape.

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