



## **Contested Space: Manila Sunset Bay and the Conflict Over Land Reclamation for an Urban Transformation Project**

**Seth Asare Okyere<sup>1</sup>, Gifty Adom-Asamoah<sup>2</sup>, Karenina Guevara Aramburu<sup>3</sup>, Don  
Johnson Lontoc<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Division of Global Architecture, Osaka University, Suita Osaka, 562-0871, Japan

<sup>2</sup>Department of Planning, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, KNUST, Kumasi,  
Ghana

<sup>3</sup>Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano, Piazza Leonardo da Vinci, 20133,  
Milan, Italy

<sup>4</sup>GHD Architects, Philippines, 2258 Chino Roces Avenue cor EDSA, 1229 Makati City Philippines

Corresponding author: Seth Asare Okyere, Division of Global Architecture, Osaka University, Osaka,  
Japan ([sethrumsfel@gmail.com](mailto:sethrumsfel@gmail.com))

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**Abstract:** Urban spaces are becoming contested spaces, where different groups and institutions, political or apolitical, legitimize their right to use, maintain and appropriate space for various purposes, eventually leading to conflicts and contestations. The Manila Bay area has been at the center of reclamation efforts and opposition against such efforts over a long period. Through observation, interviews and documentary sources, this paper provides a narrative on a developing conflict between local citizen groups, city authority and real estate organizations. The first section of the paper provides a background on the Manila Bay cultural value and the proposed solar city reclamation project. Secondly, the paper highlights an evolution of the conflict through a network analysis. The final section of the paper outlines decisional strategies for conflict transformation by focusing on patterns of interaction and the network among the different actors.

**Keywords:** *Manila bay, urban transformation, land reclamation, local conflict, protest, networks analysis*

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## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, the need to make cities the catalyst of local economic development and place them in the trajectory of global economic competitiveness processes has become prime, especially in the developing world. The scramble for natural resources that characterized much of the late 19th and early 20th century has turned into the scramble for strategic urban spaces in the current dispensation of urban growth and urbanization in the developing world. The neo-liberal agenda that originated in the United States (Wacquant, 2009 cited in Dijk and Sridharan, 2009) has been taken up by urban political elites and bureaucrats in several cities in the developing world (Fernandez and Heller, 2006) particularly South Asia and Africa. Significant attention and priority has therefore been given to urban transformation projects and they are indeed appearing everywhere possible in developing cities (See Watson, 2014, Chatterjee, 2004). Based on the contentions that characterized much of the natural resource scramble several decades ago (and persisting in a relative sense today), it seems apparent that a new scramble for strategic urban spaces will generate similar contentions and conflictual situations with different manifestations.

Local governance practices of deregulation and privatization have provided immense opportunities for developers, property investors and those seeking to cash in on strategic places in the city. Speculative urbanism, that is land speculation and dispossession of materials (animate or inanimate) for private development (Goldman, 2011 in Watson, 2014) is the new order of the day. However, as Mazza (2009) asserts, planning decisions are inherently conflictual. They generate costs and benefits in different measurements across different actors and citizens in the city. The challenge therefore is not the 'revitalizing' projects per se, rather the outcomes of such projects on people, livelihoods, spaces and places in urban areas. Such outcomes can also be 'conflictual' depending on how different actors estimate potential benefits and costs.

Drawing on Harvey's (2006) 'accumulation by dispossession', the ideals of urban competitiveness projects if not contextually evaluated, can lead to accumulation of urban spaces to meet the competitiveness rhetoric that disposes people and/or materials and long held association to spaces, or places. The tensions, which emerge, and the conflicts which arise offers a rare opportunity for understanding the relationship between new urban visions, goals, interests, interpretations and implications of actions on actors and the possibilities for conflict transformations. More specifically, in developing countries where identity is strongly connected with local resources, any attempt at manipulation of resources implies a change in the long held heritage and social reorganization of its citizens.

In Manila, there is a renewed local government interest in revitalizing vital urban spaces and opening up to massive urban transformation projects that places the city higher on a competitive global city scale. This remains a high priority for city government. Though important urban transformation projects have been provided in the past, the case of the Manila Solar City Project remains unique in terms of how transformation projects can underpin local contestations and conflicts and the mechanisms people adopt in such situations. Within the aforementioned, critical issues emerge on how the quest to drive cities towards global competitiveness compete with the non-negotiable aspects of space and social life; how does this evolve and what tools do actors utilize to influence the process, and how do the different actors organize to make their voices heard?

This paper therefore attempts to understand these conflictual situations through the lens of the Manila bay solar city project. It provides a narrative on how the contentions have developed as a result of the opposing interests between transformation and the

retention of local heritage, actor relationships and possible strategies for conflict transformation.

## **2. Manila City: Contextual Issues**

The city of Manila is the most urbanized in the capital region of metropolitan Manila in the Philippines. The city recorded a total population of approximately 1.7million residents in the 2010 Population and Housing Census (Philippines Statistical Authority, 2013). That implies a growth rate of 0.44 percent from the 2000 population of about 1.6 million. The demographic changes have also been accompanied by private sector-led redevelopment projects that seek to tap into the opportunities of an urbanized region. Over the past few years, there has been a steady increase in urban transformation projects within the city, and the high concentration of land developments in the metropolis heightens the competition over its ever-limited land. Land is a very scarce resource in Manila, undoubtedly, evidenced in its high population density of 66,140 persons per square kilometer in 2010, among the highest in the world (National Statistics Office, 2012). But the fact that the city lies within a floodable area further compounds the issue of land scarcity and usability. Hence, developments do not only need to contend with limited space and but also the usability of space for specific projects. Nonetheless within a situation of sprawled and haywire phenomenon, Metro Manila has rapidly changed its urban landscape in the last 60 years.

Manila's limited space has been the major challenge in the booming real estate development projects and grandeur governmental efforts for tourism and economic growth. More than a few of the large projects in Metro Manila has been built on the first ever reclaimed land on Manila Bay, such as the Mall of Asia complex and the highly publicized on-going construction of the 'Entertainment City-Manila'.

Within the constraints of space availability and usability, land reclamation seems to provide a suitable mechanism through which the goals of development agents and their political allies could be met. The land reclamation plan introduced and approved has provided the means for meeting the land resource requirement for massive urban transformations. It has therefore provided the basis for a rapid flow of transformation projects thereby pushing developments into the Manila bay area. The Mall of Asia and Entertainment-City Manila are huge transformations developed on reclaimed land on the city's urban space. It is also important to mention that though the two previous projects have been developed on reclaimed land, none of them have generated such contentions and conflict as the proposed solar city project—certainly due to the specific location of the solar city project. As we shall highlight later in this paper, this contention is not only due to the location of the project but the very rare characteristic of the proposed site and its connection with the urban life of local people.

### **3. Manila Bay: A mere sunset bay?**

In order to construct the whole process of the conflict and understand the way different actors are projecting their interests, it is relevant to highlight the site of the proposed transformation and its significance to the daily life of the people. This is highly significant because of the intrinsic relationship between the social organization within the space and the expected interruptions to be impacted by the project—a situation very fundamental to the case under study. Manila Bay is strategically located, a semi-enclosed estuary facing the South China Sea. Historically, Manila Bay facilitated commerce and trade between the Philippines and its neighboring countries, principally to south China, becoming the gateway for socio-economic development even prior to the Spanish occupation<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See PEMSA.org on the socio-economic importance of this location (accessed 04.06.13).

The surface area of the bay is 1,800 km. Manila Bay consists of a gently sloping basin with the depth increasing at a rate of 1 meter per kilometer from the interior to the entrance and has an average depth of 17 meters. The two main contributory rivers are the Pasig and the Pampanga river basins. The Pasig River connects Manila Bay with Laguna de Bay, the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia. Manila Harbor, at the easternmost part of the bay, is divided into two sections: North Harbor for interisland ships and South Harbor for international shipping. Sangley Point is a U.S.–Filipino naval reservation near Cavite, on the southeastern shore, and Balanga, on the western shore, is the base of a small fishing fleet. In terms of the local economy, the major natural resources include fisheries, shellfisheries and aquaculture. Manila Bay became the ocean portal to its epicenter for government, economy and industry. Manila Bay still remains important for commerce and industry, including fishing, although rapid urban growth and industrialization are contributing to a decline in water quality and deteriorating marine habitats.

In spite of this economic and environmental significance of the bay, its strongest local identity and local connection lies in the *sunset view* and the leisure use of the bay. The ‘sense’ citizens make of the space (not only local people but the national citizenry) is inherently perceived as part of their heritage and cultural identity. For the local people the bay and its *sunset view* is not a mere natural presence, it is a national heritage, a place where social relations are made manifest, an organizing space and a capital. It is a national resource and pride for its rarity in the region. In a phenomenological sense, the bay sunset view and solar space, is not just a physical location, but also a place where social, cultural and psychological meaning is made in a public space of the city. The *sunset view* is a cultural symbol of local people. It is in a cultural and social perspective, a situation where a ‘common’ urban *space* becomes a cherished ‘urban *place*’. Thus to

take away the sunset view, is therefore perceived as removing these very dimensions of city life which for them is a destruction of their daily urban experience and attachment to the city.

**Figure 1: Map of the Manila Bay in National Context**



#### **4. The Proposed Solar City Project: A Paradoxical Project?**

For a better comprehension of the contentions, we reckon that the issue does not only concern the nature of the site but also the nature of the project and the changes that come along with it. The name of the project—Solar City—as derived from the uniqueness of Manila Sunset Bay, suggests that it capitalizes on the sunset view and seemingly presents an opportunity to showcase this heritage to the world through a huge transformation project that the people can proudly associate with.

Specifically, the Solar City project is a mixed-use commercial development that covers the southern part of the shore of Manila City. It is a proposed reclamation project that will be undertaken by the Manila City Government and the Manila Gold Coast Development Corporation, a private real estate development agency. The project is part of the government's National Reclamation Plan, which includes 38 other proposed reclamation sites stretching from Cavite to Bataan. The proposal is to reclaim 148 hectares of land located at the back of the Philippine Navy and Manila Yacht Club. Its boundary will stretch to the Hospital of Manila, a full kilometer from the US Embassy, with a frontage of 600 meters towards the bay. The two kilometers stretch from the Manila Yacht Club to the US Embassy along Roxas Boulevard. The Solar City project will consist of three reclaimed islands: East Island 1, East Island 2 and West Island constituting 29, 37 and 82 hectares respectively, with the buildings average height of twenty floors.

Through the reclamation plan, much of the original seaside has already been transformed by previous projects. In effect, less than two kilometers of the entire waterfront stretch is now available of the Roxas Boulevard in Manila. The remaining stretch, which hosts the *sunset view*, perhaps the richest part of the bay available, will be obstructed and lost forever. The contentions therefore emerge here as it looks as if the best part of the bay that has been reserved will be lost. Thus, a solar city project building on a sunset identity becomes the very intervention that's destroys a sunset heritage-a strong paradoxical situation of a project name and its impact.

## **5. Evolution of events**

At this point, it is apparent the uniqueness of the Manila bay, nature of the solar city project and their seeming incompatibility creates the contentions. However, it is worthy



to note that the current issue is the result of a series of historical events of decisions, laws, actions and practices that need to be deconstructed to understand how these have evolved. In light of this, we highlight here the historical evolutions of events surrounding the conflict, the changes over time and its relationship with the actor networks.

Moreover since the different events span over a period of time marked by significant changes and pauses we have divided the timeline into two phases. We do not anyway suggest that in the actual situation, these have evolved through a phasing process. It is an analytical way we try to understand the different process and deconstruct the past events.

### **5.1 Phase 1: Heritage Conservation and Conflictual Laws**

In 1954, under presidential proclamation, ratified by the House of Representatives, the Manila bay was declared a National Conservation Park. Through this declaration, Manila Bay became a protected area devoid from any changes imposed by development projects. Its heritage status was highly maintained and strongly presented as a tourist site for citizens and visitors. The *sunset view* was one of the prime objects at the bay and rationale for conservation.

In contradiction, national reclamation plan was developed and approved in 1986 with the goal of converting all underutilized land for redevelopment including the Manila Bay. The reclamation plan also charged the Public Reclamation Authority (PRA) as the main public institution in charge of the process. This created a conflictual situation because a previous Act had established the bay a reserved area but the new law also allowed possible redevelopment of the area. About 600hectares of land had been reclaimed as about this time including the Manila bay. Taking advantage of the

situation, the Gold Coast Development Corporation (MGCC, a private real estate developer) lobbied and got the approval from the PRA to redevelop the Manila Bay in 1991.

On the other hand in 1992, a Republic Act repealed the previous permit granted to the MGDC and re-included the bay in the national Integrated Protected Areas. After series of citizen opposition to the reclamation of the bay, in 1993, a city ordinance (by Manila city government) was also passed to ban any form of reclamation along the Manila bay. The PRA in a seeming demonstration of political and legal power reaffirmed its approval for MGDC to reclaim and redevelop the Bay in 2006. At this point, NGOs and citizen groups emerged into the scene declaring their opposition to the reclamation of the bay. Consequently in 2009, in a probable response, the state enacted the National Cultural Heritage Act (10066) and Republic Act (10086), declaring Manila Bay a cultural heritage site. The city government, however, repealed its own promulgated 1993 ordinance that banned reclamation of the Bay area. Hence, even though the same city government made the 1993 ordinance, it had changed its earlier position to support reclamation and development at the Bay. This was a matter of changes in political administration and interests.

This demonstrates a sort of political ambiguity as decisions are made and remade without a binding resolution on what to do with the Bay. One may appropriately refer to it as the phase of ambiguity and conflictual laws. Again, it is not only the state that was inconsistent but also the Manila city government that has also changed its position on conservation to reclamation. However, what is interesting is the role of the PRA, which has sought to maintain its position of reclamation and redevelopment against the odds of the state and city government inconsistencies.

### 5.1.1 Actor Network Analysis

The actor network analysis identifies the various actors, their interests or goals, the resources they wield and their relationship with other actors in the decision making process. In the context of this paper, actor network analysis is used to understand the type of actors, their interests and roles in the evolution of the conflict and contestations surrounding the reclamation of the Manila sunset Bay. This in our view enables a better understanding of the situation and aids in its possible conflict transformation.

Table 1: Overview of Actor Interest and established goals (Phase 1)

| <b>Actor</b>                             | <b>Type</b>                | <b>Resources</b> | <b>Goals<sup>2</sup></b>        | <b>Role</b> |
|--|----------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| President of the Philippines             | Politicians<br>Bureaucrats | Political/Legal  | Content related                 | Director    |
| House of representatives                 | Politicians<br>Bureaucrats | Political/Legal  | Content related/process related | Gatekeeper  |
| PEA                                      | Politicians<br>Bureaucrats | Political/Legal  | Content related/process related | Ally        |
| National Commission for culture and Arts | Politicians<br>Bureaucrats | Political/Legal  | Content related/process related | Gatekeeper  |
| City of Manila                           | Politicians<br>Bureaucrats | Cognitive        | Content related/process related | Gatekeeper  |
| Manila Goldcoast corporation             | Special Interest           | Economic         | Content related                 | Promoter    |
| Local Citizens (9 unorganized groups)    | General Interest           | Cognitive        | Content related                 | Opposer     |
| SOS Manila                               | General Interest           | Cognitive        | Content related                 | Opposer     |

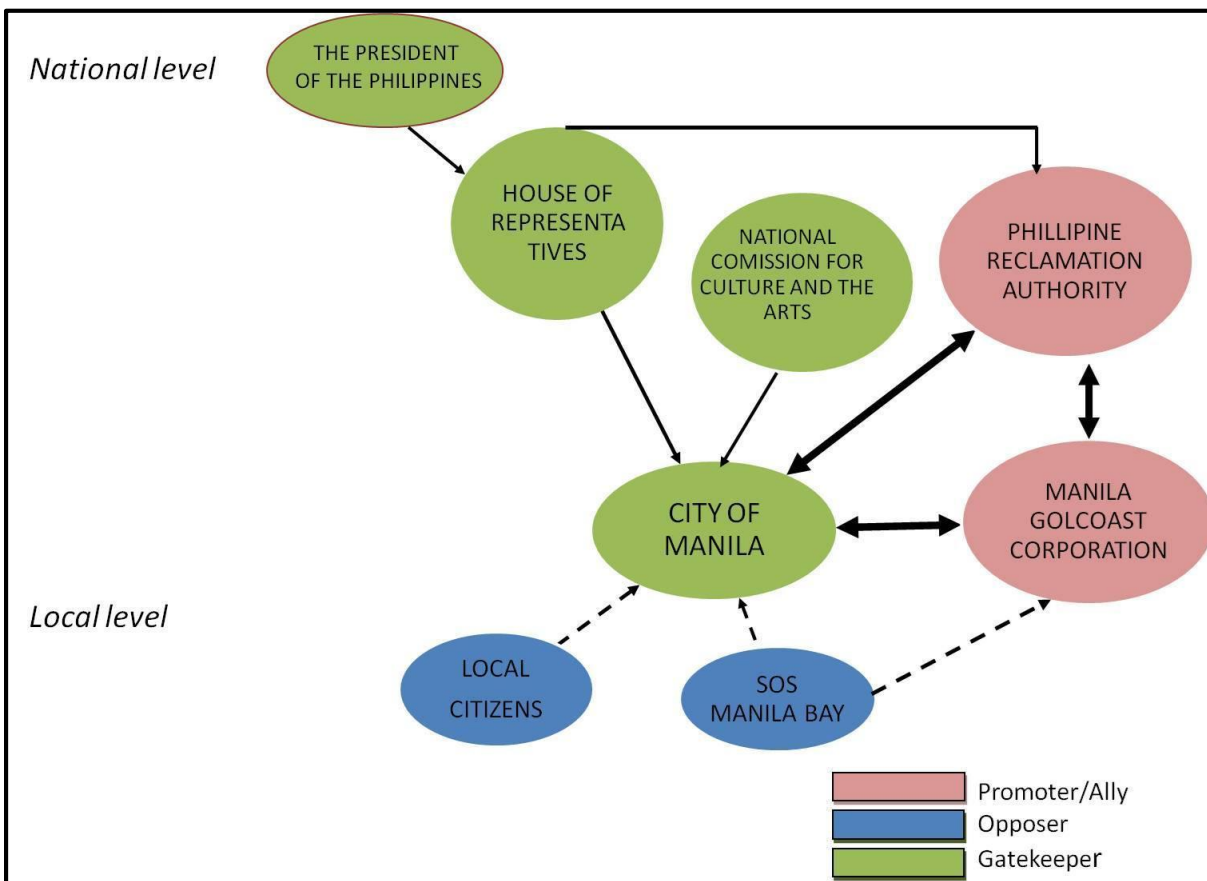
Source: Authors' elaboration, 2013

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<sup>2</sup> Content related goals refer to the preferences and goals of actors with regards to the problem itself or the kind of solution to adopt. Process related goals on the other hand imply preferences that do not consider the actual problem per se but the relations with other actors. It most often includes the consequences of actions on other actors' positions in decision-making (See Dente, 2014, Making public decisions)

Figure 1 illustrates the different categories of actors and the level of interaction among them in the decision making process. A first glance of this network shows a compartmentalization among the different groups of actors—especially political, bureaucrats and citizen groups. For instance, there is a higher level on interaction between PRA and the MGDC, primarily because they are the main promoters of the reclamation project. A similar pattern is also recorded among the political actors including the House of Representatives and the City of Manila. What is observable in this network is the weak connection to the local citizens and organized groups. There is no functional interaction (e.g. consultation) with local groups apart from their opposition target at promoters.

Figure 1: Network of Actors (Phase 1)



Source: Authors' elaboration, 2013

## 5.2 Phase 2: Actions, Promotions and Oppositions

This final phase witnessed explicit manifestations and actions by the actors involved in the process. At this point, the original contention over the sunset Bay had expanded to include the impact of the reclamation and redevelopment on flooding, habitat and the river. As Tarrow (2011) points out, modern contentions sometimes become modular and connected to other issues through time than the local incident where the conflict emerged.

A consortium agreement, involving the MGDC, PRA and the Manila city council was signed without any public consultation in 2012. In principle, this agreement represents a concerted action to reclaim and redevelop the Manila Bay in support of the Solar City urban reclamation and transformation project. The conservation of the sunset view and all other heritage and cultural issues were missing, apparently. Without public consultation and regard for public opinion, the seeds for local conflict had been sown. Consequently, this led to public discontent and local opposition to the efforts of the consortium. Several opposition groups emerged and increased significantly, although presenting varying arguments encompassing the heritage of the Manila sunset view to flooding. However, all opposition groups—largely NGOs and citizen associations—had a general shared opinion in opposing reclamation through protest.

In the same year of 2012, concerned citizens formed a human chain along the bay to protest. Again, the People's NICHE (People's Network for the Integrity of Coastal Habitats and Ecosystems) called on the city government to repeal the ordinance allowing reclamation of the Manila bay. In an apparent response, the MGDC reviewed its master plan in 2012, largely due to increased opposition, integrating 'green technology'. The 'modification' to include green technology was aimed at making the project more sustainable and environmentally friendly. In spite of this, opposition group's position did not change and SOS Manila (coalition of environmental activist

groups and organizations) in 2013 joined arms with students, artists, environmental advocates and tourists to protest the reclamation.

### 5.2.1 Actor Network Analysis

The second phase in the timeline of events indicates plurality of actors that appear in the conflict and contestation over conservation of the Manila bay and the reclamation and subsequent redevelopment of the area. Table 2 shows the typology of the actors and their relationship and level of interaction is illustrated in figure 2.

Table 2: Overview of Actor Interest and established goals (Phase 2)

| <b>Actor</b>   | <b>Type</b>                | <b>Resources</b> | <b>Goals</b>                    | <b>Role</b> |
|--|----------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| President of the Philippines   | Politicians<br>Bureaucrats | Political/Legal  | Content related                 | Director    |
| House of representatives   | Politicians<br>Bureaucrats | Political/Legal  | Content related/process related | Gatekeeper  |
| PEA  | Politicians<br>Bureaucrats | Political/Legal  | Content related/process related | Director    |
| Department of Environment and Natural Affairs                            | Politicians<br>Bureaucrats | Political        | Process related                 | Gatekeeper  |
| City of Manila   | Politicians<br>Bureaucrats | Cognitive        | Content related/process related | Ally        |
| Manila Goldcoast corporation   | Special Interest           | Economic         | Content related                 | Promoter    |
| SOS Manila   | General Interest           | Cognitive        | Content related                 | Opposer     |
| Peoples Network for Integrity of Coastal Habitats and Ecosystems (NICHE) | General Interest           | Cognitive        | Content related/process related | Opposer     |
| Save Freedom Island Movement   | General Interest           | Cognitive        | Process related                 | Opposer     |
| Sagip Manila Bay movement  | General Interest           | Cognitive        | Process related                 | Opposer     |
| PAMALAKAYA   | General Interest           | Cognitive        | Process related                 | Opposer     |

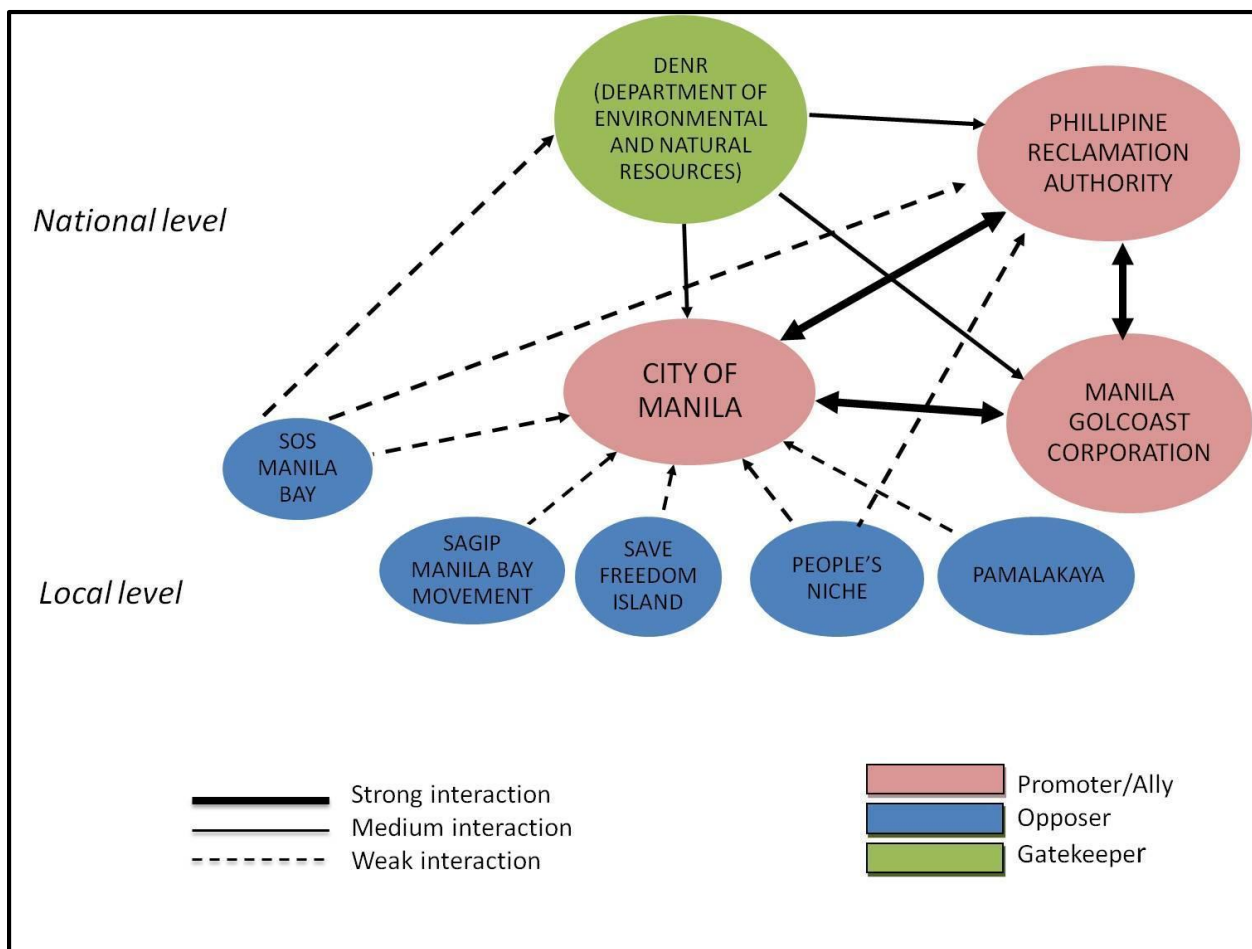
Source: authors' elaboration, 2013

During the final phase of contestations surrounding reclamation, two significant changes are observed. First, the opposition to the reclamation increases in terms of the number of groups arguing against it. This is observed in the addition of four citizen groups or NGOS protesting reclamation. Second, some of the actors in phase 1 shifted positions in the conflictual process. For instance, the city of Manila moved from a gatekeeper in phase 1 to an ally in this second phase. This was however due to a change in the political administration of the Manila city government. The new city leader was highly in favor of reclamation and redevelopment of the bay and therefore supported the activities of the PRA and the MGDC by utilizing the political and bureaucratic resources available to the city council. That is, the city had promulgated an Act (an example of a legal resource) that repealed an earlier law to prevent reclamation and development. This became possible after the City of Manila and the MGDC entered into an agreement that provides compensation for the city of Manila through a condition of equitable share of land in the proposed reclamation area.

Moreover, in a technical sense, two points are also noteworthy: (i) the complexity and the (ii) density of the network of actors. The former refers to the number of actors (plurality) involved in this conflictual process while the latter refers to the level of interaction among the actors. In terms of complexity, (shown in figure 2) the opposition groups against reclamation have expanded. Interestingly, the target of their opposition is not unified. For instance, SOS Manila directs its opposition activities towards the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR) at the central level while most of the other actors direct their efforts to the City of Manila, putting enormous pressure in favor conservation for the bay. That is locally based. There is therefore a multi-level process at play through which opposition groups target institutions at different levels of governance.

With respect to density, nothing unique is observed comparatively to phase 1. The level of interaction among the actors is still concentrated (and stronger) among the main promoters and proponents of reclamation and redevelopment. It is rather the addition of the City of Manila into the densest part of the network that is strangely observed. Nonetheless, the enlargement of many local opposition groups does not lead to a corresponding level of greater involvement. As observed in phase 1, they are still peripheral to the process without any engagement or consultation. Based on this, local opposition groups tap into their most available resource: consensus and ties, to protest. This pattern is discussed in the next section.

**Figure 2: Network of Actors (Phase 2)**



Source: Authors' elaboration, 2013



## **6. Local opposition movements and patterns of protest**

It has been reiterated that though local opposition to the reclamation and redevelopment of the Manila Bay has increased, it has neither affected opportunities to engage them nor plans of revising the transformation project. In view of this and similar to the strategies of several public and local opposition strategies, organizing into movements and embarking on protests becomes the most visible and viable option. In like manner, the citizens and organized groups have embarked on different patterns of protest, utilizing different tools to demonstrate their opposition and displeasure to the Solar City project. Building on the theoretical framework of della Porta (2004) on how different responses to conflict generate different types of protest, we highlight the various strategies of the local opposition groups at the Manila Bay within the theoretical framework of movement organizations.

### **6.1 Participatory movement organizations**

Here, participants who share a certain ideology may participate in a set of organized activities that move towards a stable organization through time. A shared ideology usually provides the impetus for participation and involvement and its gradual progression into an organization. Della Porta and Diani (2006) observe that globally such organizations have been revitalized in the context of the growth of the global justice agenda.

This situation of participatory movement organizations, in the context of the Manila Bay conflict, is seen in the activities of local opposition groups. Groups such as Save Freedom Island Movement, Heritage Conservation Society Youth, Sagip Manila Bay Movement and Pamalakaya, have a shared perspective on environmental protection of Manila and 'their' landscape. They have strong participatory orientation with certain

low levels of formalization of the organizational structure. Mostly voluntary citizen's willingness to participate in activities related to the protection of the 'Baywalk' is directly connected to their *local identity*, defending the local heritage (the sunset) and its environmental significance. The main forms of protest are 'mass marches' and occupation of space at the Bay (occupy protest). Local groups organize street march of multitudes along the bay, sharing emotions as they walk until they arrive at the sunset bay, where they protest by intentionally occupying space over a period of time.

## **6.2 Technological innovation social organizations**

Technology especially with regards to social communication platforms have become a tool for fostering collective behavior and mobilizing efforts against decisions, policies and actions considered detrimental to a group or section of society. Clearly, means of communication has permitted social organizations to capture a major attention in public discourses (Della Porta and Diani, 2006). Similarly, Rosenkrands (2004) indicate that 'websites operate with information, mobilization, or community-oriented functions' than can drive social mobilization efforts, in situations such as Manila Bay.

In the case of Manila, websites of local groups like People's Network for the Integrity of Coastal Habitats and Ecosystems (NICHE), and SOS Manila Bay provided an easy way for information dissemination through links between websites and online platforms such as Facebook. Based on these social communication platforms, local participants could understand, share opinion, voice out and mobilize efforts to demonstrate and protest. In some cases, certain groups use press, radio or television media to voice anger at the authorities especially in the case of SOS Manila Bay or NICHE group. The media therefore becomes a good and independent organizational resource. Most of these oppositional groups have significantly increased in the last two years by using the

technological innovation tools (Facebook, and other social platforms) to create multiple links for mobilization and protest strategies.

### **6.3 Un-conventional and cultural movement organizations**

Contrary to the organized movement organizations that based their activities and strategies on conventional methods through street marches, social media platforms or debate their opinion based on knowledge and experience, unconventional methods do exist and are commonly used. Artistic tools like painting, graffiti cultural displays among others as Della Porta and Diani, (2006) and Elster (2005) assert, can be positive, empowering participants by spreading the feelings of belonging to a large community like Manila City, trying to win the sympathies of those who have less commitment.

In Manila City we find such organizations, trying to adapt creatively with the development of artistic forms of protest against the real estate developer (Gold Coast Development Corporation). Examples include painting displays, advertising panels or artistic cultural events take place in the Manila 'Baywalk'. Nonviolent protest dominates as an option of value and also as a strategic choice. Several artist and other creative professionals, some of them famous in Manila, use their competencies in manifesting their displeasure. Indeed, the power to influence public opinion and participation is strongly embedded in the activities of local opposition groups who can be considered as *cultural* opposition movements.

## **7. Possible Strategies for Conflict Transformation**

The presence and manifestation of conflicts can be destructive, devastating and socially disorganizing. Nonetheless it is the very presence of conflicts that provide an understanding of people's interest and goals, their values and how they want to be treated and recognized. Thus, conflicts, mostly nonviolent ones do provide

opportunities for mitigation and transformation. In this final part and based on the previous discussions, we adopt the tools offered by Dente (2011) in dealing with policy and conflict situations among groups and people. Before identifying the possible strategies for transforming the conflict situation in Manila, there is the need to highlight the identified weakness in the narrative we provided on the situation concerning Manila Bay and the contestation on conservation and reclamation. Firstly, the pattern of interaction is highly concentrated among promoters without any consultation with local citizens or groups. Secondly, the position of some of the main actors have been inconsistent, especially the city of Manila. Finally, the local opposition groups, though in principle do oppose reclamation of the Manila bay, have no unified voice, very fragmented and drive their opposition tactics at different institutions at various levels of governance, thereby complicating and limiting opportunities for involvement and consultation.

## **7.2 Manipulation of patterns interaction**

This relates to such strategies that build on the level of interaction and relationship among the different actors.

### *Coordination and Consensus*

- Restructuring and re-composition of the opposer's goals. The need for local opposition groups to formulate a shared idea based on the complementarity between their goals and interests. This will enhance coordination and cooperation among the various opposition groups.
- Even though the different opposition groups present different issues, there should be a unified platform on which their voices are raised. There is therefore the need for an umbrella platform that unifies all of them and also a chosen voice

that aggregates their representation and increases chances of interaction with public authorities.

- Since politicians are into political consensus, the voting power of the local citizenry could be employed as a tool of negotiation to compel the city authority to open up for citizens engagement in the decision making process.

### *Participation*

- Using public debate as participatory strategy, involving local citizens, groups and activists, to increase consensus and mitigate local opposition and conflict. Project proponents and promoters should pay significant attention to participation and involvement of local actors where there is a possibility to influence the process through active and functional discourses.

### **7.3 Manipulation of the network of actors**

This refers to decisional strategies that consider the number, characteristics of the various actors, and their connections and interrelationships. It usually includes increasing or decreasing the number of actors and/or their goals, improving actor interaction among others.

#### *Introduction of new actors*

- To improve the efficiency in the relationship among the actors, there is the need for the addition of independent and technical actors such as universities and consultative institutions. The addition of new actors will provide new resources (e.g. technology and innovation, technical expertise) that can improve efficiency and effectiveness in interactions.

*New relation between actors*

- Improve the possibility to achieve complementary goals by encouraging negotiation and interaction between PEA, Municipality of Manila, MGDC and opposition groups.

**7.4 Re-institutionalization**

This strategy includes efforts to introduce institutions or sub-units, (re) define rules or procedures, create ad hoc agencies or develop institutional frameworks for improving decision-making and reducing conflicts. This however, is a dependent strategy and its success relies on an existing level of coordination, consensus, participation and cooperation among existing actors.

*Redefinition of actor's role*

- Redefine the role of the actors in the entire process. A mechanism where the role of actors are mutually agreed and supported and also there is consistency in the way actors act.

*Articulation of planning framework*

- Currently, there is no clear framework for the organizational process of decision making thus complicating a coherent definition of actor roles and relationships and procedures for implementation. A clear articulation establishment of an inclusive framework and institutional mechanism for the process will be important in this conflict situation.

**8. Conclusion**

Manila bay has become the platform where the different interests of urban actors are contested. As we have revealed in this paper, the current conflicts and contentions is

evolutionary and the dynamics seem to be very fluid. Broadly, the reclamation of the Bay is the prime concern of all the actors with varying interests concerning redevelopment. It is however important to stress that the conflict concern two broad frames which include (i) maintaining the heritage value or (ii) redevelopment toward global economic competitiveness of the city. Although our emphasis is not to orient ourselves toward an either-or and yes or no perspective, it is our aim to simply offer a descriptive analysis of the ongoing situation. Nonetheless, we identified two main critical elements in this phenomenon. First, the consortium of promoters and allies has not made cautious attempts at enlarging their decision making frame to include primary stakeholders as citizens and opposing groups. Contrariwise, opposition groups are segmented, without a unified voice and fragmented interests. Hence, we propose an enlargement of the network toward inclusive and participatory mechanism and also argue for a much more coherent, unified movement with one voice to increase the propensity for 'promoter-opposer' interaction and coordination. However, we opine that the conflict is far from over. With the election of a new mayor at the time of this study in 2013, the next step in the on going process remains unpredictable and the actions of the new city council will be crucial in the shaping the future of the decision making process and eventual situation of the conflict.

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