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Remaking Against Removal: Protest Artmaking in Sitio San Roque Against the Neoliberal State's Aesthetic Regime

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ABSTRACT

A public-private partnership (PPP) operationalized through the National Housing Authority (NHA), the construction of the Quezon City Central Business District has been forcefully evicting the urban poor community of Sitio San Roque in Quezon City. While the community has been struggling for on-site development for decades, it was only in 2019 under President Rodrigo Duterte's neoliberal regime that creative cultural engagements became crucial in their campaign, with the participation of the broad alliance Save San Roque (SSR). I argue that this cultural engagement with the state exposes and counter-attacks the aesthetic governmentality that machinates PPPs. The state turns its citizens against informal settlements by painting slums as a hindrance to development, signified by publicly visible infrastructure. The private sector's economic gain also takes shape through this compelling vision of urbanity. SSR's communal artmaking and crafting of a community development plan protest this vision. Foregrounding the residents' agency in deciding their future, creative engagements visualize the resident's claim on their land, fostering what Jacques Rancière calls a "community of sense" and testifying to the urban poor's right to space in the city.

Keywords: private-public partnership, community of sense, Duterte, protest art, Save San Roque

Corporate interest finds prominent articulation as public-private partnerships (PPPs), which favor private gain through the externalization of costs and risks. A PPP supported by the World Bank and authorized by former president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo,[1] the Quezon City Central Business District (QC-CBD) exemplifies the threat that neoliberal governance and development poses against the urban poor. The QC-CBD is an approximately 250-hectare mixed-use infrastructure project envisioned to be a "globally competitive . . . center of gravity of all commercial activities" in northern Metro Manila (SSR, *The Right* 2). The National Housing Authority (NHA) is pursuing this 65-billion-peso joint venture with corporate entities such as Ayala Corporation and Bloomberry Resorts Corp. to transform a "non-performing asset" into a model of urban renewal, enacting a mandate to "harness and promote private participation in housing ventures" that can be rooted in Marcos-era governance (SSR, *Sitio San Roque* 8).

The realization of neoliberal governance in the 1970s and the consequent upsurge of PPPs did the groundwork for the challenges faced by the residents of Sitio San Roque, a parcel of public land in North Triangle, Brgy. Bagong Pag-asa, Quezon City, in front of Philippine Science High School along Agham Road. The construction of 45 skyscrapers, high-end residences, malls, business offices, entertainment parks, and a 40-storey resort and casino as part of the QC-CBD entails the demolition of houses and the displacement of approximately 24,000 families comprising the said urban poor community (SSR, *The Right* 2). Following a lull due to the construction of the Vertis North complex on the cleared areas, former President Rodrigo Roa Duterte's NHA oversaw the successive demolitions that have terrorized San Roque residents since 2017. Throughout the decades, members of the community have organized public demonstrations to protest housing injustice, usually with the support of human rights organizations and activists in Quezon City. The call of the picket lines and barricades against forced demolitions asserts on-site housing development, a clear provision of Republic Act 7279 or the Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992 (UDHA).

It was on May 11, 2019 that residents and advocates coalesced into a formalized political identity that augmented the usual avenues of protest with creative cultural practices. The Save San Roque Alliance (SSR) was formed to unite members of the San Roque community, planners, architects, artists, students, volunteers, urban poor associations, and peoples' organizations—most notably the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap or KADAMAY ("Federation of Mutual Aid for the Poor") which had already been organizing in the area beforehand—for the crafting of a community development plan (CDP) that can stand as an alternative to the QC-CBD and thus to the state's vision of development.

I argue that their (re)creative productions consolidate the politics of residents and advocates alike through aesthetic experiences, rendering the *community* of the Sitio *visible* both to its inhabitants and to external agents. This essay makes its case in two parts: firstly, it contextualizes Sitio San Roque's narrative of resistance against neoliberal governance and its aesthetics of development. I explain how the Philippine government visualizes and organizes the "ungovernable" slums. Secondly, it documents and exhibits SSR's artistic endeavors that offer an alternative to the precarious PPP, which hinges on hegemonic aesthetic codes to gain tacit public approval. As in the case of Sitio San Roque, marginalized communities can and have used aesthetic practices that challenge threats to their right to live in the city.

The murals featured in this article have been documented with the help of members of SSR and Sining Kadamay (SIKAD), an organization that supports the artistic projects in the community. We surveyed the area together to take photographs in October 2019. In the same month, I also conducted an informal unstructured interview with (1) the leader of KADAMAY-San Roque, Estrelieta "Nanay Inday" Bagasbas, who gave me a historical sense of Sitio San Roque's struggle for urban space; and (2) Arvin Dimalanta, a community architect and co-convener of SSR. While I dwell on community artworks, the processes behind them, and spectatorship, my positionality as an occasional participant in SSR's activities gives way for praxical reasoning. Besides joining several of their benefit gigs, educational discussions, and protest actions, I have also assisted in launching their Eskwela Maralita project, which sought to provide educational services to local children. This practice-informed position allows for reflection that aligns with the community's perspectives, interests, and political campaigns (Tungpalan and Bawagan 85).

The Aesthetics of Neoliberal Governance

In making a case for Sitio San Roque and SSR, this essay borrows from Jacques Rancière's formulation of aesthetics anchored on communal experience and Alice Guillermo's criterion of protest art as an instrument in asserting what David Harvey calls "the right to the city." To link these concepts, I work on the premise that neoliberal states conscript and disseminate aesthetic codes that shape urban built environments. The process of neoliberalization embodies the essential fact of capitalism: it is a "perennial gale of creative destruction" (Schumpeter 83–84). Harvey opines that this framework inaugurates new zones of untrammeled market freedoms that rouse the mobility of corporate interest (*A Brief History* 26). Neoliberal freedom certainly does not embrace much of the world. The universality of capitalist economic imperatives encroaches the farthest reaches of the globe by the same coercive force that determined productive relations between masters and subjects in erstwhile colonized territories (Wood 125).

From its inception, urbanity emerges out of the creative destruction inherent in neoliberal capitalism. A material condition for commodity (and thus capital) production, land is a means of labor production inasmuch as it serves as a condition for living and social reproduction (Harvey, “Labor, Capital” 267). As the system of private property excludes labor from land as such, housing mechanisms arise out of the geographical and social concentrations of surplus product (Harvey, *Social Justice* 315). In other words, it is the owners of capital, and not laborers working and living on land, who control the urban built environment. The instigators of built environments, the same individuals and institutions that mobilize surplus, provide the labor force a limited set of living options enough only to sustain production (“Labor, Capital” 270; *A Brief History* 316). Ironically, the primary mediator of class conflicts over land-as-property is none other than the state. While the tenets of neoliberalism seem to efface the presence of the state in running the market-driven society, national governments—usually comprised of capitalists and landowners themselves—play a crucial role in sustaining the dominance of corporate interest over people’s welfare (Wood 178-9). By spearheading the deregulation of industries, the privatization of commodities, and the liberalization of financial power, the neoliberal state poses a threat to the urban poor’s access to urban resources, which Harvey calls the *right to the city*. A basic yet neglected human right, the right to the city is the capacity to change one’s socio-economic standing by changing the city (*Social Justice* 315).

State withdrawal from social welfare provision completes the supremacy of capital over the labor force rendered redundant by their slender or even non-existent access to areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution (*A Brief History* 168). Moreover, the state *must* set up armed defense forces and law enforcement units to secure private property rights and guarantee by force the unhampered functioning of markets (2). This includes the seizure of urban/ized lands from the labor force such as those living in residential communities to secure the infrastructural means of capital production. Only the most strategic of physical environments can concentrate commercial activities, such as retail, hospitality and recreational establishments, and tourist attractions to rapidly generate profit. In the case of the Philippines, clientelism and the elite capture of economic policymaking render the state a mere accomplice to capital and investment returns through PPPs (Africa et al., 49; Arcilla, “Producing Empty” 79). The country’s Armed Forces, National Police, legal institutions, and executive agencies protect and facilitate the corporate plunder of lands for mining operations, plantations, tourism, and infrastructure development, among others (Flores 17; Padilla 19).

For the neoliberal state to secure built urban environments for capital, it relies not only on legal, military, and socio-economic strategies but also on the aesthetic, which is the primary concern of this paper. Rancière believes that aesthetics plays an active role in undoing and remaking our world ("Contemporary Art" 41–50; Tanke 129–33). In arguing about the aesthetic dimension of neoliberal governance, I reiterate Rancière's contention that politics and aesthetics—characterized primarily by sensual experience—are inseparable. Aesthetics is a regime of sensing and identifying; it sketches the boundaries of what is intelligible, the *possible* (Rancière, *The Politics* 21–25; Tanke 5). Rancière asserts that the distribution and arrangement of sensible objects (aesthetics itself) shape subjectification, thus rendering sensible different molds of political agency—that is, anything between the will to dominate and to resist. A significant parallel operation between the two fields is the modification and transformation of the "landscape of the possible" as they both involve the rearrangement of meanings and the occupation of spaces ("Art of the Possible"). Thus, both political and aesthetic domination or resistance can lend space to alienation or subjectification, respectively. A "community" of subjects, in this sense, arises from a common politico-aesthetic code that renders visible possible courses of action, not from universal and uncompromising ideologies that limit what could be said or done.

The state itself extends control over public practices of viewing and feeling to rationalize its mechanisms. This visual modality operates by setting expectations for how space looks and how it must look (Ghertner 7), eliciting support for state projects that are dangerous to certain populations. Neoliberalism counts on the aesthetic dimension of governance, an inclination urban geographer D. Asher Ghertner calls "aesthetic governmentality," to help materialize visual indices that can validate the framework's profit orientation (16–79). As Patrick Flores comments on the aesthetic governmentality of Ferdinand Marcos Sr., the dictator's framework of development plays "between the codes of the aesthetic and the statist," with visually sensible architecture and infrastructure signaling "the epic of the passage from a deep past into a future of plenty" (14). Towering and attention-seeking infrastructures are not the only expressions of hegemonic power; governments and corporations also conscript artists to amplify the grand narratives of progress and development. Tessa Guazon, curator and public art scholar, points to the commissions under Marcos's "New Society" and the more recent public art exhibitions in corporate enclaves like Bonifacio Global City and Makati's Ayala Triangle as examples of this tendency (865). It will be no surprise if Ayala aestheticizes the envisaged business district in Sitio San Roque in the same way as their other commercial spaces.

Nevertheless, the state's aesthetic regime, as will be shown in this case study, does not go uncontested. While the dialogues between art and the city can cast art as a

symbol of progress and development, it can also be a channel of protest (Guazon 864). Surveying politically committed art and artists from the 19th century until the end of the Marcos regime, art historian Alice Guillermo fastens her conception of protest art to the Maoist dual criterion of art. Protest artmaking involves (1) popularization, or the use of popular forms to effectively propagate resistant and even revolutionary ideas; and (2) raising of standards, which involves the careful study of the forms and styles that can best popularize ideas in a given socio-historical moment (38). Artworks emerging from this committed position function in three ways: they (1) express the reality of society, (2) question the structure of society, and (3) call on its audiences to influence society as agents of change (Guillermo 68). I suggest that a sense of community—a community of common sensual experience—can emerge from such an art practice to contest the rival aesthetic codes of a different "community," that of the profit oriented and corporate-controlled neoliberal state. In the following sections, I aim to show through the example of Sitio San Roque how aesthetic practices reshape the conception of the city towards the community's reclamation of the right to live in it.

The Neoliberal State and Its Aesthetic Regime

The case of Sitio San Roque is embedded in a history of neoliberal state development programs that institutionalize the systematic spatial, political, and economic displacement of the poor. This section seeks to survey cursorily the socio-economic and aesthetic dimensions of the urban poor sector and neoliberal urban organization in the Philippines. Urbanization has always been a class phenomenon, creating in its organic development the urban poor sector, a mass of disenfranchised citizens made to rely on the social provisioning of housing for rent (Harloe qtd. in Palomera 225). Housing plays a pivotal role in human development in that it can provide access to amenities such as water, sanitation, energy, and socio-economic infrastructure. Under neoliberal capitalism, it has evolved into a commodity, produced in strategic locations, and sold swiftly to attain profit targets (Arcilla, "Producing Empty" 96). Even the urban poor are potential consumers as social housing schemes still require the payment of rental fees and utility bills.

Emerging from the spatial, political, and economic partitioning of city space, enclaves of urban poor communities are commonly composed of internal migrants attracted by new economic opportunities but far from being able to pay the market price for housing (Berner 122). Without access to affordable housing, the poor are forced to create homes in unsafe spaces and in slums (Arcilla, "Ensuring the Affordability" 1). Indicative of capitalism's insolvency, this perverse urban bloom contradicted orthodox economic models that failed to predict the widespread rural exodus that led to an oversupply of low-skilled labor and, therefore, low wages,

which were advantageous to globally arbitrated labor chains (Davis 14). Thus, the emergence of the urban poor sector is not an anomaly of metropolitan development. Rather, metropolitan development itself relies on the concentration of urban poor populations in slum areas, which gives way for the expansion of commercial spaces that accumulate capital (Berner 122). In the context of globalization, the demands of the global society itself propel and depend on the rapid expansion of the informal sector and the shadow economy (121).

The Philippines may as well be an archipelago of slums. The lack of affordable and sustainable housing has plagued majority of the population especially during the revitalization of liberalization of fiscal policies, privatization of public social services, and deregulation of market prices in the 1970s. Marcos's Four-Year Development Plans for the decade diverged from Magsaysay-era protectionism and incited liberal measures across the board such as wage flexibility and openness to foreign investments, especially that of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Africa et al. 53). The change in development strategies in the following governments—particularly that of Corazon Aquino who purported to counter Marcos's crony capitalism—intensified and made explicit the market orientation of the Philippine economy to dovetail the "neoliberal 'free market' policies" of 20th century globalization (54). Housing may be accessed but only as an expensive commodity. Enacted in 1992 under Fidel Ramos's administration, the UDHA only ensured capital intervention in housing, as will be explained later.

Historically accelerated infrastructure projects seeking to "develop" metropolitan areas have neglected and marginalized the needs, desires, experiences, and the right to the city of the poor. Through PPPs, businesses offer traditionally state-provided functions directly to the public on a profiteering basis, reifying a neoliberal policy framework many have criticized for its dangerous inefficiency in providing services (see Kwame Sundaram et al.). In this scheme of urban development, PPPs facilitate and institutionalize the systemic spatial, political, and economic displacement of indigent populations to make way for built infrastructures (Arcilla, "Producing Empty" 79). The accompanying well-worn narrative fetishizes a stunning panorama of shopping malls, driveways, commercial centers, and casinos as the sign of development, relegating slums—the living spaces of the urban poor—to being the former's converse. The significance of infrastructure—here understood as physical, tangible, and *visible* facilities that mediate societal functions—in neoliberal governance lies in the state's strong drive to attain globally indexed targets of development, such as hosting prestigious international events and offering cosmopolitan lifestyles, markers that heavily rely on visuality (Ghertner 8).

“We will make the next few years the ‘Golden Age of Infrastructure’ in the Philippines,” Duterte ambitiously touted in his State of the Nation Address in 2017. Duterte’s “accelerated” infrastructure program, dominated by 100 (from 75) flagship projects, operates no differently from the pro-market strategies devised by previous Philippine governments seeking economic liberalization and aggressive capital accumulation (Arcilla, “Producing Empty” 79). While it was Benigno Aquino III’s administration that oversaw the aggressive corporatization of public transport, water, telecommunications, and other social services, “Dutertenomics”—a shorthand for Duterte’s socioeconomic policy—only picked up the previous regime’s mania for PPPs, now with infrastructure as the central program (Africa et al. 54; IBON 1, 3). The Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) estimates a housing backlog of 2,017,909 units as of December 2016, including cases of unacceptable housing (799,780 units), doubled-up households (493,427), and for future/recurrent needs (724,702). Over the 2017 to 2022 period, total housing needs were projected at 6,796,910 units (Africa et. al. 15). Despite this overwhelming paucity, Duterte continued to prioritize capital generation over housing, with infrastructure development as means. It was very clear in his first State of the Nation Address in 2016 that he would be taking a neoliberal route in addressing poverty: “We shall continue to attract investments that will generate thousands of jobs . . . that are suitable for the poor.” Infrastructure flagship projects worth 343 billion pesos, to be executed in partnership with corporate entities, are concentrated in the National Capital Region, warranting the “creative destruction” of makeshift urban poor villages (IBON 9). Finished and ongoing projects include the Metro Manila Skyway, Sorsogon City Coastal Bypass Road, extensions for the Mactan Cabu International Airport, and the infamous New Clark City, a planned community in the Clark Special Economic Zone that inspired public protest because of the dangers it poses against local communities and the natural environment.

Duterte’s vision of urban economic progress was not so different from that of Marcos’ landscape of development. Under the latter’s regime, landmark edifices were aggressively established with high-profile cultural institutions subsided by tax breaks and income from quasi-government corporations (Quizon 296). Basing on government reports, conservation architect Gerard Lico explains that the Marcos government invested around 450 million dollars in infrastructure, a good deal of which went to the projects of First Lady Imelda Marcos (52). Imelda Marcos played a decisive role in embedding “the feeling for the national in the formation of the state,” rendering the “nation-state” as much a political as aesthetic category through deliberately palpable ways (Flores 15). Acclaimed artists during that time such as cubist painter Vicente Manansala and muralist Carlos “Botong” Francisco caught the eye of the Marcoses. Inaugurated by Imelda Marcos as a Valentine’s Day present

to the president, the Philippine Heart Center for Asia was another infrastructure project established under the dictatorship. Inside hung a mural by Manansala centrally featuring the First Lady as "an allegory of a Woman . . . embodying maternal compassion, healing and solace" (Quizon 292–93). On the other hand, Francisco, who was taken under their patronage, completed shortly before he died in 1969 *The Life of Ferdinand Marcos,* a mural touted to chronicle "the rise of the legendary leader, tracing his descent from Ilocano revolutionaries Diego and Gabriela Silang, and following his life as it unfurls toward his ultimate destiny" (Paulino 122). These artworks that found themselves in the edifices established by the regime extended the narrative that the dictator was the "national shaman" and "Great Man" whose authoritarianism would have guided the Filipino society to progress (Paulino 110; Quizon 292).

To bolster the authority of capital over public space, the viewing public is prompted to identify with the state's vision of development, laying down the basis of how slums are assessed (Ghertner 7). The neoliberal state has shaped visual rhetoric through "official" discourses, such as the UDHA. Outlining the objectives of socialized housing, it purports to "uplift the conditions of the underprivileged and homeless citizens in urban areas and resettlement areas by making available to them decent housing at affordable cost, basic services, and employment."[2] Benevolent in writing, the UDHA downplays the initiatives of the urban poor to plan, design, and construct houses based on their immediate needs and desires. The law explicitly details the roles of housing agencies towards the production of physical shelter for the urban poor, cementing the agency of the state in organizing space and rendering slums as lucky beneficiaries which must return the government's kindness ("*utang na loob*") through disciplined conformity. State housing programs must also be undertaken in cooperation with the private sector as stated in Article 1, Section 2 of the UDHA. While the UDHA poses as a safeguard to the urban poor's right to the city, the law surrenders it to the neoliberal state, securing capital for real estate activity at almost no cost (Harvey, *Social Justice* 326). The law secures the state's ability to see into and intervene in otherwise ungovernable space, (Ghertner 5) the self-built urban village in this case.

Everyday depictions of slums as dirty, uncivil, and out of place in a city undergoing development legitimize the hegemonic aesthetic sensibilities for partitioning and ordering urban spaces. The law itself institutionalizes the pejorative "squatter" (or "iskwater"), an insult associated with the defecation process (Berner 129). Article 1, Section 3 of the UDHA disqualifies "professional squatters," defined as individuals or groups which occupy lands without the express consent of the landowner, from socialized housing. Those who were previously awarded housing units by the government but choose to settle informally somewhere else are also constituted

as squatters. The legal distinction of squatters from the rest of the urban poor obstructs the fulfillment of the UDHA's objectives as most of the sector comprises informal settlers and relocatees. Relocation in the Philippines fails due to the prioritization of capital accumulation in spatial planning. Private production of off-city resettlement constitutes the dominant approach to socialized housing, hardly addressing issues of affordability, livelihood displacement, and service inaccessibility (Arcilla, "Ensuring the Affordability" 1). Slum dwellers from high-priced slum land would be evicted and relocated to marginal spaces where surplus (rent) normally will not prosper, allowing the state to the "adequate relocation" provision of the UDHA while facilitating elite-capture of the rent gap (Arcilla, "Producing Empty" 98). The inadequacy of relocation spaces gives birth to a portion of the urban sector vilified by the state for rejecting socialized housing, with the rhetoric of "squatter" invalidating their reasons for choosing to self-build homes in sought after city space.

The UDHA imposes an aesthetic regime of practices, forms of visibility, and patterns of intelligibility which presumes the ungovernability or unruliness of slumdwellers. State experts would suggest so, citing the difficulty of cartographically and statistically simplifying urban poor territories (Ghertner 1). In the Philippines as in elsewhere, slums equate to the city's *abject*, or anything that the subject, here the neoliberal state, seeks to expunge in order to maintain the symbolic division between what is acceptable and what is not (Kristeva 71). That "squatters" are considered a nuisance operates as abjection in the association of annoyance and sensory disgust with urban poor villages. Discursive formations initiate material abjection (Ghertner 80). Profit-driven cities involve a politics of abjection that extend to spatial process of expulsion (79), including the erection of iron gates, land conversion and the subsequent transformation of land to commercial residential subdivisions, and, as in the case of Sitio San Roque, the eviction of slumdwellers and the destruction of their homes.

In discussing his 2016 plans to uplift the lives of the urban poor, Duterte epitomized the neoliberal state's view of the urban poor:

> May iba[ng squatters na] kasi hinahayaan nila [ang mga bahay] for ten, twenty years they do nothing. And when the time comes na . . . ipagbili lang nila, eh tayo [ang gobyerno] ngayon ang distorbohin . . . Fight na naman iyan between government and the . . . tawag nila squatters. Squatters naman talaga iyan. Masasaktan lang, mamatay for no reason at all. Eh kung mayaman ka, bigyan mo naman ng konting ano, provide a relocation and I will be glad to talk to the people and say, "go, it is not yours." ("First State of the Nation Address")

> (There are squatters who occupy houses for ten, twenty years and they do nothing. And when the time comes, they would sell the land, and the government will be disturbed . . . It's another fight between the government and what they call squatters. They are indeed squatters. They get hurt, die for no reason at all. If you are rich, provide them relocation and I will be glad to talk to the people and say, "go, it is not yours.")

Two figurations of the urban poor are reproduced in this comment. Firstly, that the urban poor can only be at the mercy of the private sector's real estate operations facilitated by public social provisioning; and secondly, that slumdwellers are "squatters" whose lifeways are a nuisance to the government. Duterte, not giving KADAMAY slack, persistently demonized any of their attempts to occupy empty or unused public housing units. "If things get messy and somebody dies, before the nation I will say, 'That is my order,'" he exclaimed in one such instance (Morallo). Duterte's statement exemplifies and further cements how slums must be seen by a nation paving its way to (corporate-led) development: overcrowded, dirty spaces inhabited by a squalid and criminal population (Berner 129; Jocano 166; see Davis).

While the current administration boasts that PPPs serve the un(der)employed population, infrastructural transformations through capital intervention have only confiscated political power from marginalized populations (Harvey, *Social Justice* 324). With political and economic power wrested from slumdwellers, their territories are rendered subject to state-facilitated demolitions and evictions. As Harvey writes, invoking Joseph Schumpeter, "violence is required to build the new urban world on the wreckage of the old" (324–25). While Article 5, Section 28 of the UDHA discourages eviction and demolition, they "may be allowed . . . when government infrastructure projects with available funding are about to be implemented." When an infrastructure-related PPP is set to be executed, the urban poor—divested from the UDHA's protection—must face their expulsion from the city, which are regular sights in Metro Manila. Bolstered by the hegemonic way of seeing the poor as helpless, profitable, and uncivilized, the legal, political, and material process of "creative" destruction continues to plague slums and squatter settlements. Nevertheless, urban poor communities have time and again frustrated attempts at eviction and demolition and continue to do so (Berner 125), as in the case of Sitio San Roque.

Removing Sitio San Roque From the City

Around the Philippines, urban poor residents organize themselves (loosely or tightly) and enjoin the assistance of human rights groups and advocates to assert their right to remain in the city against threats of inadequate relocation. KADAMAY,

among several other organizations, materialized out of the continued efforts of slumdwellers, informal workers, and the homeless to parlay their share of social welfare provisioning. Historically, Sitio San Roque has been an active site of political contestation from the emergence of its urban poor community in the 1960s until today under the Duterte regime, where members and advocates—many of whom are associated with KADAMAY and its ally organizations—engage more rigorously in aesthetic resistance. According to Nanay Inday, Sitio San Roque began as a remote area thronged with lush talahib in the 1960s. She explained that pioneering families in the area are rural migrants who cleared the thick foliage to cultivate vegetables and crops. It was even the NHA itself which allegedly offered so-called social housing to workers in nearby establishments which eventually built the first houses at the Sitio.

Over the years, the local government continued to dangle the promise of eventual land tenure to residents, but the community's growth was accompanied by the surge of property values in the 1990s. Public and private interests began to see the potential of developing the area. As early as 1997, around 2,000 families were paid to relocate to Montalban, Rizal, clearing land for what is now the North Avenue Metro Rail Transit (MRT) station and Ayala's Trinoma Mall. It was only in 2006 when the Quezon City LGU commissioned the drafting of the planning framework for a central business district in the city. Three years later, the NHA, by way of operationalizing a PPP, awarded a contract to *lone bidder* Ayala Land, determining the land values well below prevailing market selling rates. A second wave of eviction came in 2010. Residents then received an official demolition notice from NHA with measly cash, a few packs of noodles, sardines, rice, sugar, and coffee to ameliorate their forced relocation to Montalban. Around a thousand residents protested but an equal number of people voluntarily demolished their homes. The NHA explained that on-site relocation, wherein the locals who have stayed there for years could participate in developing the area, would be "unfeasible" as it meant a huge loss in potential earnings for the project (SSR, *Sitio San Roque* 4–5).

After the violent encounter between residents and state forces, the clearing strategy of the NHA in cooperation with the LGU shifted from large-scale demolition to "pocket-sized" forced eviction of certain sections of the territory (termed alphabetically by both residents and the LGU). Leaders and neighborhood associations were peddled with financial incentives to break down the community's solidarity. KADAMAY led the filing of a complaint to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing against the NHA, Quezon City, DILG, Ayala Land, and other institutions (Gamilong). Bent on railroading their projects, Ayala unveiled the Vertis North project in 2012. Two years after, a team of almost a thousand police and members of the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) demolished more than

80 houses to give way to a road widening project along Agham Road. As the years went by, more attacks facilitated by the state's police forces managed to destroy the self-built urban village of Sitio San Roque. In 2019, the Sitio community comprised approximately 800 small to medium-sized households of mostly young families, with some having up to 15 members (SSR, *Sitio San Roque* 2). Many of them are also active members of KADAMAY San Roque and the San Roque Vendors' Association.

Under the Duterte regime, subsequent years witnessed an NHA with a strengthened resolve to remove the urban poor of Sitio San Roque from the face of the Quezon City map.[3] In 2017, the NHA dialogued with residents, offering them three options: To receive 100,000 in cash and leave, to relocate to Bulacan and pay a monthly amortization, or to move to sections of the community not yet slated for demolition. While some residents conceded out of fear, KADAMAY staunchly campaigned for on-site development. In September 2018, the NHA issued an order for residents to self-demolish. By December, police and security forces began to forbid residents from repairing their demolished houses. Hindered from self-building, some 3,500 residents gave in to the NHA, but were disqualified from the option to relocate after being deemed incapable of paying the monthly amortization for the housing units. The urban poor community continued to shrink due to forced demolitions and suspicious fires that engulfed sections of San Roque. Even with an expired Certificate of Compliance for Demolition, the NHA pushed through with clearing Area J and I mid-2019 (SSR, *The Right* 3–4). The NHA, despite the changing regimes, continues to burden its targeted beneficiaries.

Remaking Community, Reclaiming Space

The torrent of attacks against the residents of San Roque, despite the "safeguards" of the UDHA and the "options" peddled by the NHA, gained enough attention to attract several volunteers to form Save San Roque (SSR) and help reiterate KADAMAY's campaign for on-site development through a community development plan (CDP). Founded in Kasamaralita, a benefit expo, gig, and art fair organized by SIKAD and Better Living Through Xerography (Gantala Press, Magpies, Studio Soup Zine Library, and the Youth & Beauty Brigade), SSR was formed in May 2019 to unite members of the Sitio San Roque community with these volunteers. The group believes that the envisioned CDP can stand as an alternative to the state's vision of development by representing that of the residents.

The alliance primarily campaigns for the suspension of eviction and demolition and the implementation of on-site development. Rather than jettisoning the urban poor residents to off-city relocation areas, on-site development or *slum-upgrading* asserts their right to stay in the city by improving the basic services of a slum such

as sanitation, sewage disposal, water and electricity supply, and other amenities to a satisfactory standard where residents could be empowered to participate more actively in the city (Arcila 30).[4] This also parries the state's coding of slums as uninhabitable and thus in need of (corporate-led) development. By analyzing the artworks and processes engaged by the SSR, this section shows how protest artmaking and alternative development planning recognize, interrogate, and challenge dominant aesthetic codes that scaffold the neoliberalization of space.

SSR draws in distinct artistic forms—from mural painting to cinema, from music to sculpture—as means of generating funds for the community's activities, gathering donations, disseminating their campaign for on-site housing, and, as this study argues, interrogating and countering state-envisioned development, that which depends on the deterritorialization of urban poor territories. SSR has committed to the usual forms of state engagement, such as holding dialogues with the LGU, erecting barricades to halt demolition activities, staging protests in the area, and conducting educational discussions. Given that many of its members are artists, architects, cartographers, and students in related fields, cultural forms of protest became easy to convene. These include artmaking workshops with both residents and volunteers as participants. Art exhibits are held every now and then in the Sitio, featuring outputs from these workshops. These were done alongside social profiling for the crafting of the CDP. Consolidation activities through artmaking, such as the Salampak: Art Talk and Open Jam[5], blend different art forms to serve as platforms for exchanging and finding solidarity among the struggles of community members. It was also in Salampak where Sining San Roque: Reclamation of Demolished Space through Art was born, a program by the alliance driven to explore other cultural venues besides visual artmaking, such as storytelling and writing workshops for the youth, film showing that featured works by independent and/or politically committed filmmakers, music and spoken word performances, and the *Oplan Pinta, Oplan Dikit* (Operation Paint and Stick).

Nasa Puso ang Sitio San Roque (Sitio San Roque is in the Heart), a creative initiative that started on July 27, 2019, was facilitated by SIKAD, Pong Para-Atman Spongtanyo, and Buen Abrigo, who was a recipient of the Thirteen Artists Awards by the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) in 2015. It involved a series of galleries, on-site visual arts exhibition, murals, art talks and workshops, educational discussions, and do-it-yourself activities in the community. The Nasa Puso campaign called for volunteer artists and donations of production materials such as brushes, water-based paint, among other materials. In June to July, these were used to inaugurate Oplan Pinta, Oplan Dikit where artists and volunteers tagged walls of standing and demolished houses with murals that represent the struggle of locals and their collective desire to frustrate Duterte's NHA-led demolition. Artists, musicians, media workers, and

Fig. 1. Locals, including children, and volunteers join to paint handprints on the walls, leaving their mark on a house soon to be demolished. Artmaking activities such as this usually follow a related talk or workshop. Source*:* Gamilong (2019), permission granted to author.

volunteers who participated in these engagements include the following: Brenda Lyn Abong, Buen Abrigo, Luis Alberto, Mio Asaremo, Audrey Añonuevo, Jamilla Briñas, Carmela Biso, Noelle Cacayan, Patrick Nathan Castro, Gerone Centeno, Daryl Ceribo, JL Comia, Chingbee Cruz, Ched De Gala, Sinag De Jesus, Hannah Dela Rea, Pepe Delfin, Arvin Dimalanta, Lilac P. Fameronag, Coco Garcia, Macky Gomez, Resty Flores, Ish Flores, Reb Fulgencio, Eli Hiller, Gail Javier, Decca Lumanglas, Emman Magararu, Marion Manabat, Mark Manzano, Michael Marcenares, Katrina Maria Milanco, Krystien Veloso, Paolo Muncada, J-ra Morallo, Jose Olarte, Josel Ray Nicolas, Jean Palma, Jadie Pasaylo, Patricia Ramos, Carl Real, Audrey Rendora, Amiel Rivera, Rodner, MC Sacay, Joshua Sales, Jhemuel Salvador, Rojeno A. Soringa, Pong Para-atman Spongtanyo, Kyle Rubis, Joaquin Salvador, DJ Tan, Claire M. Umali, Karize Uy, Daniel Victor, Saya Villacorta, Nicole Villaruel, Akie Yano, Angelu Zafe, and Cath Garcia.

Every Saturday that followed, art workshops and production were conducted as SSR's social profiling continued. Mornings were spent conducting art workshops among the artists, volunteers, and community members, especially youths. According to Dimalanta, co-convener of SSR, the artists shared to workshop attendees their

personal styles and techniques in artmaking, but all art talks followed a "common theme" of anti-demolition. Besides discussing their assigned their art forms, participating artists also became students in these workshops as they listened to the locals' problems and experiences. After lunch, artists and community members engaged in production, which generated paintings on paper, songs, photographs, and murals about Sitio San Roque's struggle for urban space. For Arvin, the artmaking processes were collaborative in that both artists and community members learned from each other. Even though the artists and volunteers came from outside the Sitio's "community of sense," to borrow from Rancière, they were tasked as participants in *Nasa Puso* to integrate in their forms the residents' aesthetic codes.

The most visible expression of communal aesthetic cohesion is the *Oplan Pinta, Oplan Dikit,* a mural painting project in the *Nasa Puso* series. In the same way that urbanscapes are negotiated by surplus capital and power, public art in Metro Manila "is realized by impetus from the state (national and local governments), private developers, and artists' initiatives"—a consequence of "heightened global competition between prime cities" (Guazon 870). Artist commissions relied on government programs that mobilize aesthetic codes to embed a cultural—even "nationalistic"—thrust in urban development projects. The protest murals produced in collaboration between the cultural and urban poor sectors negotiate space with the state and its corporate partners. However, these negotiations eschew the hegemonic landscape of progress and instead espouse protest, privileging a vision of development where the people are at the center. Tagging murals on walls bound for destruction does not only stake a claim on what should have been their property under the UDHA. These murals also visualize the residents' (1) current campaigns, (2) historical development, and (3) vision of the future, signified by their dream homes, dioramas of protest, affective icons, and images of their leaders and members. Campaigns include what urban poor organizations call "*tumbalik*," a portmanteau of "*tumba*" ("demolish") and "*balik*" ("rebuild"). Arvin recounted that the term was first used to name a benefit gig and solidarity night in August 2019 for Sitio San Roque. The event sought to celebrate the resilience of the residents. That tumbalik finds itself in a mural nods at how residents continuously restore their housing units after attempts at demolition (fig. 2). This mural was painted on the walls of a demolished second floor of a house, high enough for bystanders to see. The whole slogan reads: "*Tumbalik!!! Malikhaing pagtutol ng mamamayan laban sa demolisyon!*" ("*Tumbalik*!!! Creative resistance of the people against demolition!"). Also in figure 2, a young resident is seen leaving blue and yellow handprints across the walls.

Fig. 2. The mural reads "Tumbalik!!!" Also on the right is the image of a protest placard saying "*Sagot sa demolisyon, barikadang bayan!*" ("The solution to demolition? The people's barricade!"). Source: Gamilong

Other murals draw elements from other spheres of experience, revealing intersections among the urban poor and other sectors. With the influence of KADAMAY, some of the residents adopted the comprehensive call "*lupa, sahod, trabaho, at karapatan*" ("land, wages, jobs, and rights") of the workers' movement, imbuing the campaign with their own calls such as housing, water, and electricity (figs. 3 and 4). While figure 3 directly presents the campaign, figure 4 takes a satirical approach: the democratic rights forwarded by the locals (now including water, electricity, and affordable housing) are on the dinnertable of several defaced figures while a slogan hangs above saying "*Serbisyo sa tao, huwag gawing negosyo*" ("Services for people shouldn't be made into business").

Fig. 3. A comprehensive campaign for democratic rights tagged on a resident's house. Photograph by the author.

Fig. 4. A mural calling for the decommercialization of social services. Photograph by the author.

Several artworks function as recollections, positive attempts at collecting testimonies of a common history. Nanay Inday was featured in one of the first murals painted by volunteers (fig. 5). In our conversation with her, she explained that she has been organizing in the community for years. It was the artists' choice to paint her portrait to memorialize her crucial role in forming the SSR. Other murals highlight the "*barikadang bayan*" they have staged multiple times before. Roughly translated as "the masses' barricade," the campaign invokes "*bayan*" or "nation," an assertion of their belongingness to the rest of the city (fig. 6). The barikadang bayan community members staged throughout the decades sought to hinder the entry of demolition teams into the Sitio. This mural makes visual play: it features community members pushing back against the left side of the house that has already been demolished, showing their resistance against the destruction eating away the Sitio. A cutout of Duterte's face finds itself as the central motif of another mural memorializing the barikadang bayan. This emphasizes and reminds residents that it is Duterte's neoliberal governance that propelled the NHA's attempts to expel them from their land (fig. 7).

Fig. 5. A portrait of Nanay Inday, the local KADAMAY chapter leader, is one of the first murals to be seen should the viewer enter the area from Agham Road. Photograph by the author.

Fig. 6. The figures in the mural support a barricade against a demolition team. Photograph by the author.

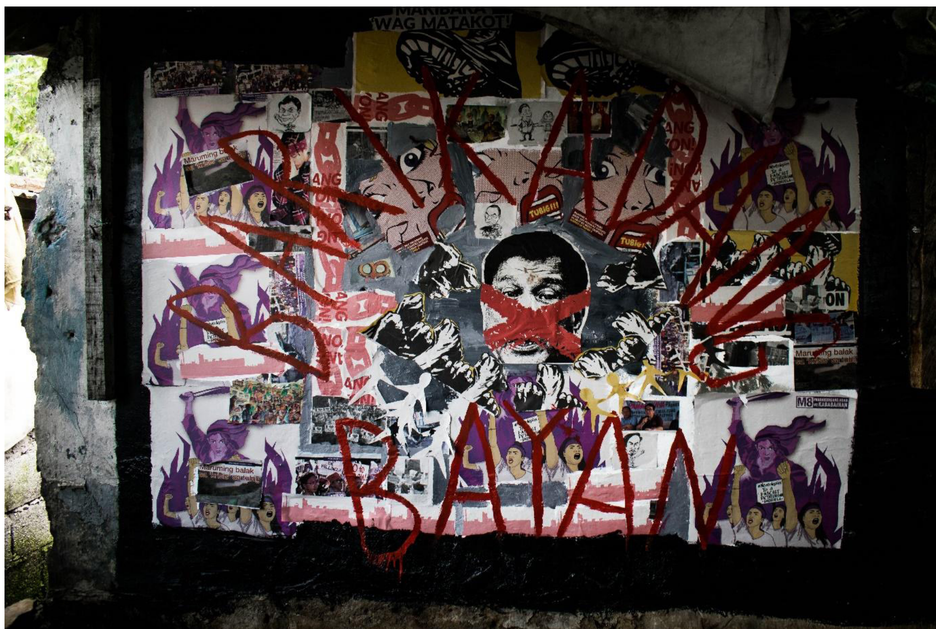

Fig. 7. A collage featuring a crossed-out cutout of Duterte's face. Source*:* Gamilong.

Painting murals that depict the residents' vision of the future motivated the residents' participation in the crafting of the CDP. After briefing and sharing sessions, residents—many of which are children—were asked to draw their dream houses on the walls of their broken houses (fig. 8). Many of the children's annotations on their mappings of an imagined Sitio use the enclitic "*sana*" (roughly, "hopefully") to show their desire to remake their homes.

Fig. 8. Children drew their dream houses on a wall. Photograph by the author.

The children-made mural reflects their participation in the crafting of the community development plan of Sitio San Roque. As urban poor communities and their advocates have asserted, affordable in-city housing remains the best option for the urban poor as it reduces economic displacement and preserves the residents' access to social services (Ballesteros and Llanto 10–11). The process of crafting the CDP consolidates the struggles and desires of residents to visualize them in an aesthetic code that resonates to both residents and to outsiders who do not subscribe to the state's perception of the slums.

To reflect best the interests and needs of residents, the CDP of Sitio San Roque underwent months of planning and consultations between the Sitio San Roque residents and the alliance. A series of workshops were facilitated by the volunteer planners, architects, and students, among others to ensure that the residents' voices and dreams were surfaced by the CDP. Once the residents were better informed about the land-grabbing issue confronted by their community, it became easy for them to identify their needs and wants in remaking urban space (SSR 3). Table 1 shows the milestone events in the CDP's production process.

Table 1. Consultations and Workshops in the CDP Production Process

Inclusive dates	Event	Description
June 16, 2019	Introduction to CDP Workshop	The workshop gave community leaders a deeper understanding of the CDP and the community's role in leading the CDP process for inclusive development.
Fourth week of June up to the first week of July, 2019	Dream House Workshop Series	The workshop series gave residents a platform to collectively design and plan their dream houses that respond to their needs and wants.
July 28, 2019	Counter-mapping Workshop	Through a mapping workshop, the residents identified the community's common spaces and their various experiences in the area to show that the community is a vital driving force of the city.
September 21, 2019	CDP Visioning Workshop	Here, residents collectively created their vision of Sitio San Roque. A visual representation of the CDP was crafted to show what on-site development is and how it reflects the community members' hope for the urbanscape.
November 16 to 17, 2019	CDP Validation Workshop	Residents clustered into different sectors were guided in designing the model units, choosing a medium rise building scheme, and designing common spaces for their proposed on-site housing.

Source: Save San Roque Alliance (SSR). *Sitio San Roque Community Development Plan*. Document, 2019, 4–6.

According to Nanay Inday, it became easy for them to identify their needs and wants for the community, which gained concordance between sense (perception) and sense (meaning) through cultural engagements. To the alliance, the CDP "aims to assert the urban poor's right to the city and will fight for the empowerment of the urban poor as a valuable contributor to society being the builders and workers of the city" (SSR, *Sitio San Roque* 3–7) (fig. 9).

Fig. 9. The community development plan for on-site development in Sitio San Roque. Source*:* Save San Roque Alliance (2019).

The primary target clients of the CDP are those at risk of the impending demolition and who thus wish to assert their right to on-site development. Social profiling reveals that many of the residents want to stay in Quezon City for work, even when 80 percent of the heads of households earn lower than the living wage monthly. Majority of the interviewed have been living in San Roque for five to nine years as well, building families and relationships with the rest of the city. The site of around 23,729 sqm. prioritizes common spaces and facilities to serve the residents' needs, empowering them to participate in other activities in the city such as the workforce.

These include a wet market, a church and a mosque, tricycle terminals, a daycare center, a health center, playgrounds, and open green spaces. These facilities seek to secure residents' equality and freedom lived through aesthetic experience—the visualized dream of the upgraded slums, which the CDP aspires to materialize as the community's very form of existence. The CDP was submitted to QC Mayor Joy Belmonte on December 9, 2019. In 2021, Belmonte signified her support for the CDP and the community members' campaign for on-site development.

Crafting a "Resistant" Aesthetic Regime

It is not only the neoliberal state that can mobilize the senses to cement power. In Rancière's formulation of aesthetics, artworks and art practice balk at the everyday system of meanings sensually transmitted by dominant institutions of the government (Rancière, "Contemporary Art" 133). Under an aesthetic regime, which is characterized by the relationship between art and other modalities of making, aesthetics ruptures the concordance between sense-as-perception and sense-as-meaning (Routledge 22–23). Attending to the liminal space in between, imagination facilitates speech, descriptions, and the capacity to distinguish and make sense (Tanke 162), which are in themselves political operations against hegemonic codes of understanding. Art can reproduce and transform the sensible, at best, to place it in conflict with a rival conception of the world. This *dissensus* in aesthetics can interrogate and, as this paper argues, frustrate neoliberal governance and its codes that tell people "to do as they ought" (Ghertner 5).

While the Philippine government operates and cements its own codes that visualize the urban poor as disruptors of urban space, the artistic endeavors that took place in the Sitio San Roque community engraves the landscape with an aesthetic regime resistant to the hegemonic. These (re)creative practices place residents, volunteers, and external observers (agents of the state included) under the same frame of visibility and intelligibility, shaping a stronger sense (and sensorial experience) of community—a community of sense, so to speak—articulating their right to stay put and reside in the city. Workshops mobilize knowledges in art production to serve the interests of the community. Galleries and on-site visual arts exhibitions visualize the community's struggle not only to outsiders but to members of the community themselves, while street protests become sites of exhibiting artworks, placards, and other paraphernalia crafted by the residents.

I suggest that the crafting of an oppositional aesthetic regime in the urban poor community has been accomplished through two parallel practices. First, the SSR campaign involved the creation of sensible objects themselves. Sining San Roque workshops, murals, jams, readings, and viewings pushed residents, along with volunteers, to reclaim their space by surfacing the stories, memories, and dreams

in the Sitio through different artforms. This case study paid particular attention to murals, which serve as recollections. These are positive attempts at collecting testimonies of a common history (Rancière, "Contemporary Art" 46). As a strategy in some murals, fictionalization also helps residents invent new trajectories "between what can be seen, what can be said, and what can be done" (Rancière 50), disrupting the illusory inevitability of the community's destruction and encouraging further resistance. These murals frame an ideal community fostering the "fanciful dreams" of residents posited beyond political conflict, a sphere of autonomy from the hegemony pursued in democratic and revolutionary politics (Rancière 32). There is little doubt that these objects belong in Guillermo's category of protest art, not only by virtue of their interrogation of the state's vision of development but also because of the collaborative processes behind them (82). Arvin explained that after the series of Nasa Puso art talks and workshops, the residents took on the task of painting murals and even protest graffiti in demolished homes. The youths who produced these murals enjoined their friends in their wall tagging as well. As Arvin concluded, artmaking for Sitio San Roque became a venue for community organizing as well.

The second practice is spectatorship itself. Unlike in a museum or gallery, viewing these sensible objects, including the CDP, is done by continued living in the Sitio. Efforts in the protest art category, done in the midst of struggle, are usually transitory "because of the necessity for quick campaigns along with the risks involved. Graffiti and instant street murals are always fresh, renewable, and inexhaustible" (Guillermo 38). Guillermo recounts that during the height of the Marcos dictatorship, artists' organization such as Kaisahan, a collective of social realist artists formed in 1976, used cheesecloth as a canvas for portable murals that could be rolled up after rallies (82). While at first glance, the murals and graffiti in Sitio San Roque appear static, they become transitory in that the walls and houses tagged by community artists are bound for demolition. In producing protest art that is *rendered ephemeral* by state-backed eviction and destruction, the artistic engagements of SSR interrogate aesthetic governance that depend on removal, championing instead the creative possibility of (a positively inclusive) remaking.

Sining San Roque murals and workshops, along with the occasional exhibitions, pervade the corners of the Sitio and bind the experiences of those who walk its alleys, directing them to view themselves as members of one politico-aesthetic community and fortifying for this collective the political issue to be addressed. The sensible objects were produced collectively, which demystifies the artist persona behind a work. Consequently, their viewership is also collective in that residents are free to view and find themselves and their hopes a space in the city in a given

artwork. Guazon's comment on public art resonates with this experience: "art's relevance endures in moments and spaces where introspection and scrutiny are possible, and when reflection finds fruition in action" (869). By provoking a break in perception, San Roque's community of sense discloses links among the residents' desires in/for the city that are absent in the state's planning. Interestingly, a portrait of a mother carrying a child and a heart—formerly a part of a bigger mural—survived demolition (fig. 10). I surmise that demolishers who saw this despondent portrait felt discomfort in their actions. In this way, I read the mural's survival as a breakage away from the visual codes of "development."

Fig. 10. Demolishers have already ravaged this area of Sitio San Roque. However, an image of a mother and child symbolizing the campaign "*Nasa Puso ang San Roque*" survived the wrecking ball. Photograph by the author.

Withheld from the opportunity to accumulate capital by wage labor, the urban poor sector is hindered from mobilizing surplus and thus changing their marginalized positions in the city. This right is inevitably moored to the commons instead of the individual as it depends on the exercise of collective power to shape the

urbanization process weaponized by the state to benefit capital. As promised by the politics of aesthetics, the visual codes that bolster the hegemony by imposing configurations of space may be disrupted by aesthetic dissensus, the highest expression of which in Sitio San Roque is the community development plan. The plan embodies what scholars call the urban poor's "pride of place," an identification with their now sensory/senseful settlement in the city (Pinches 178; Tanke 185). Through collaborative practice and processes, the mutual constitution of art and the city as active agents in the field of change becomes more palpable (Guazon 865).

The possibility of such pride over a place coded as ungovernable requires the replacement of the state's spectacle with a "new" one (Rancière, "Art of the Possible"). The CDP challenges the state's vision of development by breaking through the dominant aesthetic code by the recreative potential of participatory slum-upgrading, which foregrounds the agency of residents to dispel pervasive notions of viewing urban poor enclaves. This alternative emphasizes that San Roque is already part of the city's diverse and heterogenous population which is necessary for urbanism and urbanity (Berner 135), by negotiating with the aesthetic codes of the neoliberal state. Here, on-site development sounds like a compromise to PPPs. However, by the very insertion of the urban poor community in the neoliberal state's vision of Quezon City, the CDP and the cultural engagements of the SSR rupture the seemingly impenetrable creative destruction operated by capital.

In claiming their right to the city, the main procedure at work is an aesthetic-political dissensus, rather than a consensus, with neoliberalism (Rancière, "Contemporary Art" 41). These engagements are grasped in a specific form of visibility that puts viewers in a common frame, or as Rancière puts it, a specific sense of community (1), one that fights for and proves themselves capable of staying in the city. To put it simply, the creative endeavors of SSR and the Sitio San Roque residents—from murals to the CDP—reshape the landscape of the possible.

Continued Resistance in the Community

Earlier, it was pointed out that the neoliberal state engages in aesthetic governmentality, or the use of visual and sensory codes to secure political power over public spaces. Slums have been coded as an unorganizable nuisance in the Philippines and elsewhere. However, as demonstrated by the community members of Sitio San Roque and the creative projects facilitated by the Save San Roque Alliance, the emergence of a community of "sense" frustrates—or at least attempts to frustrate—eviction and displacement by counterposing the aesthetic codes of the neoliberal state. By "remaking" Sitio San Roque, which the CDP visualizes, the urban poor community combats state-backed removal to assert the locals' right to the city.

In the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, decisions around the fate of Sitio San Roque are yet to be finalized. Unfortunately, this crisis only proved the inability of the neoliberal state to address the needs of the urban poor residents of Sitio San Roque. Social amelioration remains scarce in the Sitio, and protest from their collective has been met by the disciplinal violence we have been all too familiar with under Duterte's regime. However, KADAMAY, the residents, and the SSR Alliance continue to convene as their struggle for the city continues. Despite rules on social distancing, a donation drive, online art and music performances, and a soup kitchen have been conducted as acts of protest and a response to inept government welfare services. According to Cecille Fernandez, a community leader and community kitchen volunteer, this unity and collective action is strengthened as work is distributed and done collectively. This is not too dissimilar to the involvement of the community in the remaking-against-removal projects conducted in the Sitio.

While continuing on-ground creative engagements became a challenge given lockdown measures in the Philippines, protests and government dialogue continued even amidst the pandemic. In commemoration of the 11th anniversary of the barikadang bayan in Sitio San Roque, more than two hundred residents flocked the NHA headquarters in September 23, 2021 to protest the eviction, demolition, and the harassment of residents by armed agents. After the demonstration, the group headed to the Quezon City Hall for a solidarity program. Mayor Belmonte registered the LGU's support for Sitio San Roque and the Save San Roque's alliance campaign for on-site development. While their battle for the right to the city is far from over, that the LGU recognizes how the residents see and sense their space is a small victory against the neoliberal regime's vision of development.

NOTES

1. This is through the issuance of Executive Order No. 620-A, s. 2007, which expands the composition of the Urban Triangle Development Commission and clarifies its structure and functions, thereby amending Executive Order No. 620, s. 2007. The said Commission facilitates the PPPs that seek to commercialize the East and North Triangles; the Veterans Memorial Medical Center Area; and the Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife in Quezon City.
2. Republic Act No. 7279, enacted March 24, 1992, and Republic Act No. 7160 (as amended by Republic Act No. 8553), enacted October 10, 1991.
3. In a literal cartographic sense: when checked through Google Maps, the area where Sitio San Roque stands is now geotagged with Ayala projects yet to be constructed.
4. The Community Architect Network (CAN) documented a number of successful slum-upgrading cases around Asia, including Koh Mook Community, where post-tsunami rehabilitation solved the land security problem at the same time (Ampur Kantang, Trang Province, Thailand in 2004); Ale Yaw Ward, a community located in unsecured land pressured by development and land speculation (Hlaing Tar Yar Township, Yangon City, Myanmar in 2010); and Mandartola, Gopalganj (Bangladesh in 2011).
5. "*Salampak*" means to sit down on the floor or ground. It refers to the way audiences are seated on the floor during the art talk and open jam event.

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