

# THE ARCHITECTURE OF PUBLIC MARKETS: A STUDY ON QUINTA MARKET

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## **Objectives of the Paper:**

1. To define the term "market" in the global and local sense, and determine the significant meanings and values it holds for the various sectors concerned.
2. To describe Quinta market, explain its role in the national and local public market framework, and analyze the reasons for its decline.
3. To discuss the spatial framework that supports the desired qualities of the typical shopping place, in the urban design and architectural contexts.
4. To apply the above framework on the case of Quinta Market.

## **Definition of Terms:**

The word "market" holds varying levels of meaning. The Webster's dictionary defines it as the "meeting of people for buying and selling merchandise"<sup>1</sup> as well as "a space or building in which the market activity can be held."<sup>2</sup> The meaning immediately puts importance into three vital elements: a) the convergence of people, b) the trading of

merchandise, and c) the space or building where these can occur.

The first suggests a profile of the "people" who converge in the market and a hierarchy will emerge as follows:

- The customers who shop for goods
- The vendors who provide the goods to buy
- The administrators who manage and maintain the operations, security and physical upkeep of the market
- The deliverers of the goods that are distributed to the vendors

The second refers to the actual buying and selling of a range of goods that satisfy man's basic needs, while the third involves the physical enclosure that allows the successful conduct of all of the above.

Nowadays, the term "market" has evolved in meaning from the traditional fresh produce marketplace that every city and town in the whole world have, to specialized settings like:

- the SUPERMARKET, where 'fresh' produce are most often 'frozen' and the goods are obtained not

from persons but from racks, and one payment is made at the end of a usually long line at one of many cash and credit counters;

- the SHOPPING MALLS, where the biggest range of goods and services (as they say about the Mall of America, "everything you need from birth to death") can all be found in one department store, or singly in many different shops housed in one building;
- and of course, the original of them all, the FLEA MARKET, equivalent to our *tiangge*, which normally are temporary, sometimes celebratory events, organized by a mix of business- and non-business people, where the goods featured for sale are oftentimes recycled, or used items like furniture, clothes, toys, and an assortment of memorabilia.
- The term has also generated a generic meaning such that such references to a 'car market' or even the 'currency market' are made comprehensible.

In view of these, a distinction is necessary to establish the definition of 'public markets' in its local genre. Foremost of all is that it is popularly referred to as the *palengke*, a shopping place of public or civic ownership and function; and the place where the art of *haggling over prices* is not only a standard procedure of trading, but more significantly, a tradition within the Filipino culture. This notable shrewdness at haggling for the lowest price, a practice known as *tawaran*, depicts the strong cultural fiber that the *palengke* is woven of. Where the vendor, in his or

her desire to please the buyer, will acquiesce to the prices haggled, and the buyer who finds a vendor agreeably acquiescent, finds pleasure in the savings made from the bargaining, a *suki* relationship begins to form, establishing an almost permanent, familial bond that ensures exclusive patronage for the vendor and low-cost good quality products for the buyer. The cultural trait is so well-known that our neighbors in Hongkong, Singapore and Bangkok often acknowledge and encourage it when Filipinos visit their own shops, for the same reasons of loyal patronage.

This is the Filipino *palengke*, and this shall be the context under which we will derive the design meaning of the Public Market.

#### **THE QUINTA MARKET: A STUDY OF A HISTORIC, TRADITIONAL PUBLIC MARKET AND ITS DECLINE**

The Quinta Market is a public market that was built at the early part of the century by the Americans, its location being a necessary response to the "town plaza concept" that revolved around the Quiapo Church. What was most exciting about it was that it was given such prominence along the Pasig River, thereby creating a strong visual connection between the plaza and Pasig. Operationally, Quinta was a popular wholesale market, the market for all markets in Manila. It enjoyed the patronage of both the *masa* and the elite, a patronage almost equal to their devotion to the Jesus of Nazarene of Quiapo Church. Historically, as it still is today, Fridays are special Quiapo days, where people converge at the site for the Holy Mass, and later, food and

shopping. (At this point, you will take note this distinctly Filipino combination of the Catholic mass and food and shopping have given rise to the Filipinization of the western influenced shopping malls.)

Through the years, when the *platerias* and *alajerias* of Quiapo, and the old-Manila ambience of the Escolta shopping district became overshadowed by the new business and shopping centers in Makati and Cubao, more and more people were drawn to the novelty of the department store. Most of the traditional *suki's* succumbed to the convenience offered by uniformed salesgirls, well-lit and airconditioned shops, and sparkingly clean floors, and willingly gave up their power of negotiation for the ease of reading price tags and paying on credit. Worse, the Quiapo area itself became congested with tall buildings and overhead vehicular roads. The narrow streets were choked with a mixture of trucks, jeepneys, and *kalesas*, as well as people rushing to work or to church. Hawkers naturally emerged in the streets outside the market. In time, Quinta market lost its flavor, and with only a small thread of patronage at hand, it has become a regular retail market, bogged down by dependence on supply which passes through layers of middlemen, and hardly comes directly from farms anymore.

### **THE SPATIAL FRAMEWORK OF THE DESIRED SHOPPING PLACE**

In analyzing the quick switch of patronage from the *palengke* to the supermarket and shopping malls, the relation between shopping and pleasure

should be noted, and that pleasure is equated with convenience and entertainment. The spatial framework that supports these desired qualities can be summed up as follows:

#### **Urban Design Context:**

1. **The compatibility of the shopping place to the land use and human activities of the adjacent areas.** In the case of Quinta, the combination of church devotion, food and shopping provided the impetus for success. However, the shopping malls took the cue and added the Holy Mass as a main event in the malls on Sundays, worsening the situation for Quinta.
2. **The clear and direct linkage of public commuter access to the shopping place.** The most ideal situation is achieved when the market goes embark and disembark right at the "doorstep" of the market.
3. **The systematic ingress and egress into the shopping center.** The ease of circulation for all types of vehicles contribute to the necessary visual, physical orderliness so that vehicular and pedestrian traffic congestion can be eliminated, if not, minimized.
4. **The defensibility of the space.** A shopping district can be planned to capitalize on its defensibility by enhancing visual controls, eliminating dark corners, and providing security services and surveillance systems appreciable not only by protectors, but also by those aimed to be protected.

5. **The availability and workability of basic community services.** These include adequate provisions of facilities for water, power, telecommunications supply, drainage, security and surveillance, and such services as garbage collection and disposal. Special services can enhance the well-being of the space, and these include street cleaning, street decoration, and special events provisions.
6. Most of all, **the legibility and memorability of the space.** Architecture is one powerful means of ensuring such qualities; this includes the architecture of the streetscapes that provide the planting, site furniture, signages, most especially, the textures and colors of the physical and natural surroundings; as well as the architecture of the building that encloses, enframes and secures the activities inside, beckoning the community to come and visit and patronize it.

#### **The Building Architecture Context:**

1. **A strong and clear statement of arrival.** The building should **inform, direct, and guide** the visitors towards the appropriate entrances, and then towards the particular destinations inside.
2. **Adequate provision of spacious and secure parking spaces.** This is compulsory not only to service private car owners but also deliveries and pick-up services.
3. **The legibility of the interior space.** This includes the clarity in the arrangement of goods and services, clarity in the flow from one point to another, and clarity in the services available for the shopper as well as the vendors and administrators.
4. **The flexibility of use of the interior space.** Shopping centers always benefit from the variety of goods, services and events that are featured on an occasional basis. The interior space must be able to respond to the needs of such occasions.
5. **The defensibility of the interior space.** The users and goods, the structure and the services within the building must be secured from burglary, arson, and other crimes, and from vandalism, vagrancy, and other disturbances.
6. **The adequacy and efficiency of building and operation systems.** The provision of adequate and efficient building systems contributes to the ease and efficiency of maintenance and operations of a shopping place. Such provisions include people-moving systems; products-moving systems; vending systems; monitoring systems; security and surveillance systems; and others. These may be electronic (computerized), mechanical, manual, or personal services. Provisions for customer services are also important features of a modernized shopping center.

The above form the minimum **physical design criteria** for achieving pleasurable, enjoyable, and convenient shopping. Other criteria include the quality and range of goods offered, and

the competence of the administrators or managers.

### THE APPLICATION OF THE REQUIRED SPATIAL FRAMEWORK ON THE CASE OF QUINTA MARKET

In application of the above on Quinta Market, only its history stands as its last remaining advantage. The urban context is largely decayed, and the building does not figure anymore in the skyline of Quiapo, from the points of view of both Plaza Miranda and the Pasig River. Hence, Quinta Market requires a major renewal as follows:

#### 1. The Quiapo Shopping District

There is an urgent need to revitalize this quaint, mystical, historical district called Quiapo. A classic study of contrasts, Quiapo is an exemplification of RELIGION and SUPERSTITION, of FAITH and THIEVERY, of FESTIVITY and TRAGEDY.<sup>3</sup> It is safe to say that Quiapo is a mother of Filipino shopping malls because specialty shops abound and are zoned accordingly; among them fresh flowers and cameras along Hidalgo St., silversmith and jewelry in Platerias (note the literal meaning of the name), electronic appliances and car accessories including surplus items in Raon and Evangelista Sts., shoes, clothing and personal items in Carriedo, 'excelente' ham and *hopia* in Echague, not to mention the basketry, and special *halo-halo*, *itlog na maalat*, *balot*, and *palengke* goods in Quinta market. Quiapo Church itself contributes to the mystique of the place, being the center of religious icons and *estampitas*, of prayer books and rosaries, of herbal

medicines and abortifacients, of amulets and love potions.

In the larger neighborhood of Quiapo can be seen a lot of urban spaces and components that possess potentials for the scenic, romantic qualities sought in old cities in Europe and the Americas. Quiapo, to this date, showcases the colors and textures of the traditional cultural marketplace, the very same theme that the new shopping malls try hard to copy.

However, Quiapo has been plagued by years of mismanagement, resulting in the physical deterioration of its streets, its drainage system, and add to that the general proliferation of incompatible architecture. Even Quiapo Church became subject to a renovation work that resulted in the loss of a significant amount of architectural quality. Peace and order situation is almost nil, where thieves and snatchers are as prominent as the regular law-abiding citizens. Roads have become too narrow for normal access, thus vehicular traffic is chaotic and pedestrian movement is stressful.

A wholistic approach is necessary in the urban renewal of Quiapo, and the following URBAN DESIGN STRATEGIES are most urgent and appropriate:

- The immediate traffic rerouting of Quiapo to declog the streets of the noisy and rowdy stream of vehicles, and the introduction of alternative means and methods of transporting people and goods into the area. Scheduled deliveries can be effected, and regulated lanes for pedestrians, bicycles, *kalesa*, cars, deliveries and service or emergency vehicles can be imposed. Parking should be provided at strategic

points, whether on-grade or in buildings. Electronic billboards should communicate conditions in the area, including availability of parking slots, to facilitate and control traffic.

- An enlivened pedestrian route through most of Quiapo's narrow streets will promote walking tours within this famous historic district site, and consequently support the church-food-shop triumvirate.
- A skyline that respects the Quiapo Church must be observed. Building heights should be ideally kept below the base of the church pediment. The spatial quality of the Plaza Miranda must be enhanced through the reduction of building volumes in the space. The landscape should preserve the integrity of the urban space that is dominated by Quiapo Church, taking into careful consideration the vast open space requirements that will accommodate on a durable and permanent basis the rough and forceful movements that accompany the annual celebration of the Feast of the Nazarene.
- Architectural and landscape architectural face-lifts should be imposed on all buildings and streets within the district to incorporate a set of ornamentation and decoration designed to strictly uphold the sense of place.
- Views to and from the Pasig River must be opened, thereby commanding the buildings along it to develop their waterfronts for visual and pedestrian pleasure.

- Customer services must be made available for the ease of movement of the pedestrians in general, and the shopper, in particular, and the manner by which they move around their goods. Natural and mechanical systems for ventilation and the sanitation of the space should be optimized for general comfort and convenience. Lighting should be pleasant, festive, romantic, as needed. Security should be appreciable at all times of the day and night.

## 2. The Quinta Market:

The design of the Quinta Market takes off from a few given conditions:

- a. That the market will retain its function as fresh produce market, and provider of specialty items like baskets and other native handicraft products, special *halo-halo*, *itlog na maalat* and *balot*.
- b. That the market cooperative will revive its original role as a wholesale market, catering to the needs of the individual market vendors as well as other markets in the city or metropolis.
- c. That the market will begin to innovate by adding the ingredients of entertainment, education, and tourism into its operations.
- d. And lastly, that the cooperative will focus its efforts and resources not on PROFIT, but on CUSTOMER SATISFACTION, putting to work all necessary services and amenities to support this objective.

To begin with, the following existing components of the Quinta Market have to be corrected/modified:

- The **utility services**, to assure sufficient water and power supply; working telecommunications facilities, and good drainage capability. Use of rain water can be introduced for landscape irrigation and washing, to reduce consumption of precious potable water. An effective septic vault system should ensure the discharge of only grey water into the street mains or Pasig River. A mechanical fresh air recycling system can be incorporated into the market to enhance air circulation and minimize or eliminate odors.
- The **internal circulation system**; to redefine it in order to decongest the aisles, smoothen the flow, and improve the quality of space. Also, to facilitate the cleaning of the corridors and promote the security of the premises.
- The **design of the stalls**: to provide the visual attractiveness to the layout, the containment, the arrangement of goods, the signages, the lighting style, and other such visual and physical features needed to draw the customers' attention, and hence, patronage. Such attractiveness should apply to the permanent and occasional components, and should be easily maintainable by the stall owners, as well as the administrators.
- The **bagsakan services**, to improve the delivery vehicle access and maneuverability to and from the market; to open a barge port delivery service from Pasig River; modernize and upgrade the unloading (*bagsakan*) system using

overhead cranes, conveyor belts, manual or electronic forklifts; improve receiving and recording systems through the introduction of electronic weighing scales, computerized billboard display counters; centralized data entry; and provision of mechanical or manual means of storing and distributing to the vendor stalls. To a certain degree, a controlled condition storage facility should be provided for non-perishable items like rice.

- The **illegally-occupied areas**, to restore the usability of the space, and to strengthen the visual and pedestrian linkage to the Pasig River along the side of Quezon Bridge, and to generally improve the peace and order situation and sanitary conditions in the vicinity.

These modifications should be reinforced with the following proposed new, innovative, modernized features that are aimed at promoting the equation of shopping = pleasure = convenience and entertainment:

- Provision of **comprehensive customer services** like public address (paging) systems, piped-in music, electronic information and advertising billboard, bag safety deposit counter, shopping trolleys or carts, child care center, ATM services, credit card payment, even phone-in orders and express delivery services.
- Provision for **entertainment events** like musical performances of live bands, videoke competition, Valentine's Day dance, coronation of Santacruzán beauty queens, re-

enactment of the celebration of selected regional summer fiestas like Pahiyas of Lucban, Sinulog of Cebu, and Kadayawan of Davao, not to mention the religious observance of the Feast of Jesus of Nazarene, the Semana Santa, the Dias de los Todos Santos, Christmas and New Year. The architecture and the landscape should be capable of dressing up for such events.

- Provisions for a **Pasig River waterfront activity area**, integrating into it the entertainment and tourism functions of the market, and introducing a major pedestrian node for people entering Quiapo via the Ferry Service, and directing them towards Quiapo Church through the market, or towards the places of work or schools fronting the riverside. The same development should provide the elegant Quezon Bridge with a new, beautiful perspective.
- Provisions for **electronic, mechanical and manual devices** for security, surveillance, and emergency systems, including automatic voice or bell alarms, megaphones, emergency lighting, emergency power generator, and the like.
- Provisions for **artificial intelligence systems**, including lighting controls that regulate lighting levels on the basis of the amount of natural daylighting penetration into the interior; downpour detectors that activate electronic wall enclosures around clerestories of high roofs; solar detectors that activate vertical louvers that shield western portions

of the building from the harsh rays of the sun; flood detectors that warn of rising water levels in the immediate vicinity, and others.

- Provisions for **big, bagsakan sale events**, a *tiangge* within the *tiangge* at the core of the building space, to serve as magnets for crowd shoppers, featuring products that could be associated with the season or a particular event celebration, i.e. Christmas hams, Easter red eggs, etc.
- Provisions for **vehicular approaches and parking** inside or outside building, to boost the user friendliness of the space without sacrificing the needs of the regular pedestrian shopper. Such vehicle approaches should take into consideration not only private vehicles but also jeepneys and tricycles.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The urban design and architectural design solutions presented above are real, modern-day situations that we, architects, deal with nowadays. The urban picture shows the need for drastic changes and bold moves from both the public and private developers concerned, and a lot of political will from the local government to shuffle cars and buildings around, and truly comprehend the meaning of urban design. It must be remembered that it is the urban space framework that puts cities like Paris, Barcelona, Boston and others in the tourism map of the world. Quiapo can be one of them.



The architectural design, on the other hand, requires just enough foresight on the life cycles of building components and building systems, but a lot of CUSTOMER-CENTERED business sense to really put the market to full, vibrant, energetic use, and transform Quinta Market into the shopping place of Manila, the way it used to be.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, G. and C. Merriam, 1977.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Aris Manuel, taken from his oral presentation on Planning Concepts of the Quinta Market Architectural Design. UP College of Architecture, Diliman, 1999.