

“Bugabug ang dagat” (Rough seas): Experiencing Foucault’s heterotopia in fish trading houses

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Abstract

Places in the contemporary world are subjected to the workings of differentiating logics, foremost of which is globalization and to the other end, the counter-logic of localization, which results in, amongst others, the instantiation of differing spaces. These spaces, oftentimes co-existing and overlapping, are a result of contrapuntal forces, enacting their own colonization of places by people of varying interests. This article explores the *other* uses of *kumisyunan* (fish trading houses) by *magrigrigaton* (fish vendors) from a small fishing community in Quezon province that “simultaneously represent, contest, and invert” the very purpose and nature of the places’ rationale: fish trading. Heterotopia will be deployed in this article to further the ends of how a particular place could be inhabited by a number of spaces or exhibit alternate spatial possibilities and display a plethora of spatial practices within one singular location at different times in a particular spatial and temporal context. The article hopes to contribute to the further understanding of how everyday life and place is lived and reproduced in the variegated geographies of globalization in a developing economy like the Philippines.

Keywords: *auction, fishing community, fish trading, heterotopias, place, space*

Introduction

The importance of the spatialization of contemporary life has never been more cogent in recent years in understanding the complexity of the variegated geographies of globalization (Gregory, 1994; Harvey, 2000, 2006; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 2009) and how they manifest in places (Hudson, 2001; Kennedy, 2010; Oncu & Weyland, 1997; Soja, 1996). This observation is tied up with how “the people we study in non-Western, less industrialized countries may have even more immediate and full relationships with place insofar as time-space relations are less fragmented and they retain more local control over their physical and social landscapes” (Rodman, 1992, p. 640). It is this turn to the dialectics of place and space and the enunciation of its importance in

grappling with the complexities of today's world that drove me to undertake a spatializing search at how rural economic spaces—fish trading houses in a coastal town in Quezon province—provide a window into life's (spatial) complexity (Candea, 2007). As Rodman (1992) notes:

Here the emphasis is on places in the world, on the agency of individuals and of forces beyond individual control. Places have multiple meanings that are constructed spatially. The physical, emotional, and experiential realities [...] at particular times need to be understood apart from their creation as the locales of ethnography (Rodman, 1992, p. 641).

It is in the recognition of the complex reality of places (Rodman, 1992, p. 652) that we grapple with the dynamics of everyday life and its connection to other worlds and geographies of being. Places, therefore, have never been this important in unraveling the collaborating and contradicting discourses that permeate contemporary life since “places are not simply settings for social action, nor are they mere reflections of society, they are socially contested, dynamic construction” (Rodman, 1992, p. 652). The complexity that I will highlight in this article will focus on the many uses of *kumisyunan* (fish trading houses) by *magririgaton* (fish vendors) in a fishing community in Mauban, a town in Quezon province (Figure 1).

To undertake the unraveling of “alternate ordering of space” (Hetherington, 1997) in a specific place, this paper deals with how *kumisyunan*—small depot-like structures where fish trading takes place—become more than an economic space at the hands of *magririgaton*. *Kumisyunan* transmogrify into *other* spaces as well: heterotopic spaces “that reveal or represent something about the society in which they reside through the way in which they incorporate and stage the very contradictions that this society produces but is unable to resolve” (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008, p. 25). It is this phantasmagoric nature of places (Giddens, 1990) and how we experience them as a “constantly shifting, complex succession of images” (Rodman, 1992, p. 646) which will be the focus of this article. This article, therefore, is specifically about the dynamics and politics of place and the plurality of spaces in places. Henceforth, I read *kumisyunan* as heterotopias, as “places that interrupt the apparent continuity and normality of ordinary everyday space” (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008, p. 4). The heterotopia that is invoked here is about:

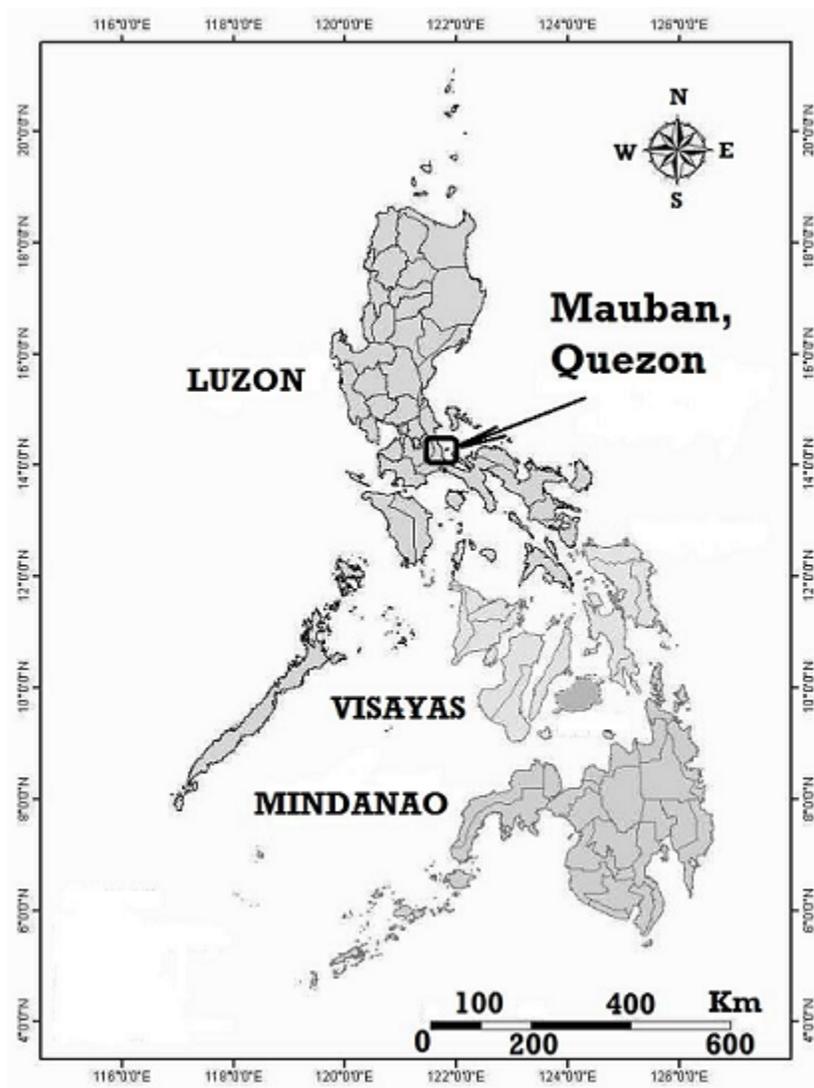


Figure 1: Location of Mauban, Quezon. Map prepared by E. Guieb III based on an original cartography by O. Devanadera.

real and effective spaces which are outlined in the very institution of society, but which constitute a sort of counter-arrangement, of effectively realized utopia, in which all the real arrangements, all the other real arrangements that can be found within society, are at one and the same time represented, challenged and overturned: a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable. (Foucault, 1997, p. 352)

It sounds odd that among all possible places, this article is locating heterotopia in kumisyunan. In wider literature concerning places and spaces, “urban space has been of primary interest” (Rodman, 1992, p. 647) and specifically, if we are looking for heterotopias, quite intriguingly, they are mostly about places avowedly different (like prisons, cemeteries and psychiatric wards, amongst others) from mainstream ones or public places whose uses defy the purported logic of their existence (like parks and beaches for sexual trysts). For example, the morphology of the beach makes it a heterotopia, and, as explained by Androit in his study of a beach in Crete, Greece, “the activities and behaviours of its users suggest it as a unique space in which gay nudists have the potential to explore their sexuality and to enjoy experiences and feelings that are often repressed in conventional public spaces” (2010, p. 1092). Other places where heteropic spaces could also be experienced point us to cathedrals or places of worship (Gutic, Caie & Clegg, 2010), malls (Orillard, 2008; Tolentino, 2001), theme parks (Kern, 2008), resorts (Lee, Bendle, Yoon & Kim, 2012), commercial districts (Lou, 2007), English rural areas (Neal & Walters, 2006), climate camps (Saunders & Price, 2011), the IT industry (Saloma-Akpedonu, 2006), and gated communities (Bartling, 2008; Low, 2008). Even entire cities like Dubai (Petti, 2008), Singapore (Guillot, 2008) and Los Angeles (Soja, 1995, 1996) have been characterized as featuring heterotopic logic. Very few Third World places, however, have been explored to locate heterotopias and if there are, they are most often than not found in urban places like the ones studied by Saloma-Akpedonu (2006)—the Philippine IT industry—and Tolentino (2001)—Philippine shopping malls. This elision of Third World heterotopias renders great disservice to the rich and complex tapestry that modernity (or postmodernity, depending on one’s ideological/theoretical perspective) has wrought on places of the world. Furthermore, it limits the deployment of heterotopia as a critical tool in understanding the complexity of places in geographies of uneven global development (Harvey, 2006). Forsaking places in non-Western societies to undertake heterotopian digging renders us complicit to the silencing of places and their adjunct narratives of emplacement and displacement which are the staple of subject formation in this epoch of hypermobility and constrained mobility.

Fishing communities and fishing practices are, on the other hand, mainstay features of many classic ethnographies (see, for example, Dumont, 1992; Firth, 1966; Horobin, 1957; Malinowski, 1922; Ushijima & Zayas, 1994; Volkman, 1994). Recent studies on fishing communities, on the other hand, are steeped in issues concerning marine management and conservation (Eder, 2005; Guieb, 2009; Sall, 2007; Sann, 1998; Smith & Pauly, 1983; Stobutzki, Silvestre, Abu Talib, Krongprom, Supongpan, Khemakorn, Armada & Garces, 2006), the

threats of globalization on fishing (Arbo & Hersoug, 1997; Taylor, Schechter & Wolfson, 2007), fishing rites and practices, gender politics, and property rights (Acheson, 1981; Al-Oufi et al., 2000; Mangahas, 1993, 2000, 2004; Skaptadottir, 2000, 2004; Thompson, 1985; Toufique, 1997) and alternative livelihoods to fishermen and their families affected by fluctuating fish catch in many parts of the world (Daniels, 2002). Not many of them, though, deal with fish trading houses and the activities that take place in their premises. However, when fish trading houses are talked about, most of the time the discussion dwells on economics (see, for example, Armstrong, 2001; Guillotreau & Jimenez-Toribio, 2011; Trondsen & Young, 2006) and not on the sociological aspect of practices that go with fish trading. Fish trading houses are of course different from one another in how they are managed and how they function. By all means, the fish trading houses being considered are different in many ways from the ones in Manila or in other parts of the world. Nonetheless, the understanding of fish trading houses in general is even rarer when it is scrutinized under the gaze of spatial analytics. This article attempts to fill this gap.

Proceeding after this, I explain the bigger context of the article and describe the place where I did my fieldwork. I also explain herewith the methodology of the study. Following this, I look into the dynamics of fish trading, sketch roughly the major players and describe the physical attributes of kumisyanan. Right after, I explore heterotopia as a critical concept. The discussion part deals with what makes fish trading houses heterotopias and explains how this is so. It analyses how heterotopia is conceived in these places and how it is important in the understanding of everyday life in a community that is not at the locus of world events and yet is very much appended to the geographical trail of uneven development that economic globalization instantiates.

The Context and Methodology of the Study

This article forms part of a bigger study of a small fishing community experiencing a localized fisheries crisis which has an impact on its inhabitants' gender, power and economic relations. The fieldwork was undertaken in 2008-2009 for a period of six months. Empirical data were collected through formal interviews, informal conversations with research participants, observation of, and at times participation in, their daily activities, and archival research in local and national libraries.



Figure 2. The facade of one of the four kumisyunan observed in this study. Five magririgaton wait for boats to land. Photo by the author.

I grew up in a place not far from this fishing community and the fish trading houses, and my father was a fisherman. Tagalog is universally spoken in the area and it is my first language. In a number of ways then, my study falls under the rubric of insider research (see, for example, Turgo 2012a, 2012b). The fishing community where many if not all magririgaton in kumisyunan came from is reached some six hours by bus from Manila; it is in one of Quezon province's numerous coastal towns dotting the long coastline of Lamon Bay. There were 708 inhabitants in the community at the time of fieldwork. Fishing had become economically unproductive for small-scale fishermen in the community beginning in 2000. Several reasons could be cited but the most obvious ones were the weak local regulatory regime on illegal fishing, overfishing, the high cost of fishing implements and petroleum, and the continued operation of big commercial fishing boats in areas designated as municipal waters (Campos, 2003; Turgo, 2010). When I say small-scale fishermen, I refer to fishermen using small craft and simple gear (though not necessarily simple techniques) of relatively low capital intensity. Their fishing operations are skill-intensive and they fish in relatively near-shore waters in single day or night operations (Turgo, 2010, p. 1).

The kumisyunan studied were situated at the main promenade of the town, near the town's port which services local passengers going to small islands populating the vast expanse of Lamon Bay. These kumisyunan were some 10

minutes away by foot from the community, and all magririgaton in the community (and other neighboring communities as well) obtained their fish from them. I should mention this early to clarify that fish sold in kumisyunan largely came from big commercial fishing boats originating from neighboring towns, although those landed by local fishermen are included as well. During lean months (when the weather was not good for fishing), they imported fish from a fish port in Lucena City. The localized fisheries crisis was only affecting the small-scale fishermen in the community and in the town as a whole.

There were 34 magririgaton spread in four kumisyunan during my fieldwork. There were actually more, but this article will only look into the spatial practices (Lefevbre, 1991) of magririgaton who were from the community. The focus of this article then are the kumisyunan and the magririgaton, and not the fishing community itself where the main research project took place. If the fishing community is mentioned in the article, this is to signal the place where most of the magririgaton came from, provide the context of their heterotopic emplacement, and to embed them in a particular time-space envelope (Hudson, 2001).

Magririgaton are divided into two groups: those who sold their fish in the public market and those who sold their catch on foot, visiting neighborhoods and the town's peripheral communities. Though all magririgaton included in the study were experiencing economic hardship, those in the latter group were in the most economically precarious condition, and most of them were family members of small-scale fishermen themselves. Their income was small compared with that of the former. Mobile magririgaton would only join fish auctions that involved small amounts of money, limited as they were by their resources and wary of incurring big losses. Usually, they would participate in auctions that did not exceed PHP 1,500, and, more than this amount, it was those who had stalls in the public market or were visiting buyers from other towns who would participate.

Most magririgaton were women, a testament to the gender stereotyping that attends this particular economic activity (Hapke, 2001; Hapke & Ayyankeril, 2004; Illo & Polo, 1990; Williams, Nandeeshha & Choo, 2004) although during my fieldwork, a number of men who were mostly former fishermen turned to fish vending because of the fisheries crisis. Other men found work in the city as construction and factory workers. Those who were too old to migrate or who lacked skills did odd jobs like carpentry or cultivated a plot of land to grow vegetables. The rest continued fishing, though irregularly, and only to satisfy their yearning for the sea, as one of the old fishermen told me. The unemployed men, on the other hand, took to managing the household while

their wives worked either as magririgaton or as house helpers of some of the town's affluent families.

Fish Trading in Kumisyunan

Fish auctions or *bulungan* in the local language (which loosely mean whisper in English) have been introduced in Mauban town in the 1980s and the buildings that housed them are called kumisyunan. They are called kumisyunan by virtue of the levy (*komisyon*) charged by the owner of the kumisyunan to the winning bidder of the fish auctioned off. To further clarify, I will provide an explanation of how bulungan takes place in kumisyunan and the major participants involved therein.

In kumisyunan, four major entities play important roles: the owner who provides the capital and manages the daily affairs of the kumisyunan; the *magpapabulong*, who helps the owner manage the kumisyunan and leads the conduct of bulungan; and the magririgaton who buys fish and then sells them to customers and fishermen (Figure 3). On a typical day, bulungan is usually participated in by an average of six magririgaton. In the kumisyunan studied, fish trading was conducted by whispering the bid into the ears of the magpapabulong, hence, bulungan (Figure 4). When the magpapabulong starts the auction, one by one, the magririgaton whisper their bid. Before the winning bid is announced, the amount is revealed to the owner by the magpapabulong who in turn consults with the fisherman if the winning bid is acceptable to him. Most of the time, the winning bid is accepted by the fisherman. It is very rare that another round of auction is called. In case the fisherman finds the amount significantly below his expectations, he tells the owner that he wants a better price. There would be another round of bulungan and most often than not, this would also be the last one. When a winning bid is announced, say PHP 4,000, for a wooden box of *lumaban* (a local variety of mackerel), 7% of the total amount is added to the winning bid. This percentage is the kumisyunan's levy or komisyon. There is a levy because it is the kumisyunan who pays the fisherman cash up front, while the winning magririgaton pays the full amount to the owner the following day (some would pay even later, such as seven days after a bid is won) when the fish is sold. Kumisyunan then provide the capital, a regular supply of fish, and the venue for the magririgaton who in turn pay more for their "use" of the premises and the money "lent" to them by the owner.



Figure 3: Boxes of fish are examined by magririgaton before the auction begins. Photo by the author.

Most of the kumisyunan studied had a capital of at least PHP 500,000. A daily turn-over is hard to calculate because of the variation in fish landing, although from May until August, the busiest months of the year, one fish trading house estimated that in a day they spent as much as PHP 70,000 to pay for fish brought in by fishermen. In lean months, from September until March, when bad weather prevented fishing boats from venturing out, PHP 10,000 would be the average transaction per day. In these lean months, fish trading houses would frequently “import” from a fish port in Lucena and sell the fish in fixed prices to magririgaton. In these lean months, owners of kumisyunan told me that they were only getting by, earning just enough to pay for their utility bills, rent (two of the kumisyunan were just leasing their space), workers (the magpapabulong receives a regular monthly salary of PHP 7,000 and a certain percentage of the total income after expenses per month), and local and national taxes. It should also be mentioned that the income of kumisyunan varied and some earned more than others.



**Figure 4: A magririgaton whispers his bid.
Photo by the author.**

Bulungan started when magririgaton in town could no longer handle large volumes of fish landings. This was in the 1980s when fish landings, both by small-scale fishermen and fishermen on big commercial fishing vessels, were huge. Large volumes of fish meant bigger capital and a much more systematic way of managing sales. Most, if not all, magririgaton did not have the wherewithal for this. This compelled fishermen to bring their excess catch to neighboring towns which had kumisyunan. Enterprising individuals from the town who saw an opportunity started putting up kumisyunan to fill this economic gap (Turgo, 2010). The establishment of fish kumisyunan also attracted other fishermen from other fishing communities and neighboring towns. During my fieldwork, there were four kumisyunan in town. Trading hours varied from one kumisyunan to another, although in general, during busy months (when fish landings averaged six per day), they usually opened at 7 a.m. and closed at around midnight to accommodate fishermen from far-flung communities and towns. The rest of the year, due to the prevailing monsoon season called *amihan*

(northeast wind), they were open from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m., but on other days, they were not open at all. There was no fixed time for bulungan although these usually took place between 9 a.m. and 11 am, and from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Compared with kumisyunan found in major fish ports like Navotas, Batangas, and Lucena, the kumisyunan studied were small and had spaces averaging 100 m² in size. They were usually annexed to a house where the family of the magpapabulong usually lived. Their basic design was that of a box-like structure where the biggest part was an open space where wooden boxes of fish were laid out for valuation; on one side of this space was a table or two with benches where magririgaton could spend time while waiting for fishing boats to arrive or for a transaction to begin. Tucked in another corner was the office of the owner where he or she balanced the books and managed the place's day-to-day affairs. In another part, there was a small kitchen where utensils were made available for use by magririgaton or where food for the consumption of magririgaton was sometimes prepared by the kumisyunan's paid helpers (usually old men or women who were tasked to keep the premises clean). Chairs and tables were made of either plastic or wood and were designed to be easily moved around. The furniture looked worn out and ready to fall apart due to constant and long-time use, but for the same reason, they felt comfortable and gave the place a homey touch. One of the magririgaton told me that the furniture at the kumisyunan looked like what they had in her house. "It's like being surrounded by familiar things," she said. Constructed to facilitate an economic activity, the layout of kumisyunan was focused on an unstructured, uncluttered, and free space. When wooden fish boxes arrived and the space allotted for them was inadequate, tables and chairs on the side were cleared to give way. Thus, when there were just too many wooden boxes for valuation—such as when there were ten or more—brought about by the simultaneous arrival of fishing boats, it was not ordinary for the foyer of kumisyunan to be littered with tables and chairs.

Heterotopias

Foucault's heterotopia has been variously criticized as "unfinished, the examples varied and speculative and the outcome inconclusive" (Hetherington, 2011, p. 466), "inadequate [...] for analyzing spatial difference" (Saldanha, 2008, p. 2081), and "frustratingly incomplete, inconsistent, incoherent" (Soja, 1996, p. 162). Regardless of this, though, the concept has been used in a dizzying array of subject matters from architecture to urban theory and spaces (Boyer, 2008; Leach, 1997; Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996) to explore the hybrid and complex transformation of places in today's world. The continued relevance of heterotopia and, in fact, applicability in understanding the complexities of the

constitution of places underline, firstly, the lack of other possible conceptual tools which could supplant Foucault's (1997) original rich, though contentious, formulation and secondly, the profound interpretative power of its being open to a myriad of possible readings (and thus, the robust agency of readers to interpret the concept in various ways though, of course, guided by the tenets set down by Foucault). This being open to a number of possible readings gives us, as Dehaene and De Cauter (2008) observe, the feeling of the concept's lack of definition and too encompassing nature. However, its being "incomplete" and "too broad," I think, gives the concept a particular theoretical cogency, power, and allure. Sharing the sentiment of Dehaene and De Cauter, I see "heterotopia as being at a crossroads of the conceptual flight lines that shape public space today" (2008, p. 4) and seeing kumisyanan as heterotopias might help us contribute to the concept's further elucidation and refinement, as it were, as a critical tool and provide it with a more empirical grounding.

Foucault introduced the term heterotopia in a lecture for architects in 1967, pointing to various institutions and places that interrupt the apparent continuity and normality of ordinary everyday space. Because they inject alterity into the sameness, the commonplace, the topicality of everyday society, Foucault called these places *hetero-topias*—literally *other places* (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008, p. 4). According to Foucault (1997), heterotopias surround us: the school, the ship, the honeymoon, old people's homes, psychiatric institutions, prisons, cemeteries, theaters and cinemas, libraries and museums, fairs and carnivals, holiday camps, hamams, saunas, motels, brothels, and Jesuit colonies.

In explaining the concept, Foucault (1997) laid out six principles. The first principle asserts that all around us, wherever we are, heterotopias—of crisis and deviation—are everywhere but their forms vary, conditioned by the context and society that produced them. In this article, the focus will be on the heterotopia of crisis rather than on the heterotopia of deviation. The second principle stipulates that societies can make existing heterotopias function in different ways; thus, although heterotopias have a precise and determined function in the synchrony of the culture where they exist, they could have one or more functions. The third principle says that in one place, different incompatible spaces and emplacements could exist side by side with one another. The fourth principle is about heterotopias most often linked to slices of time—which is to say that they open onto what might be called heterochronisms. The fifth principle is all about a system of opening and closing that both isolates heterotopias and leaves them penetrable. The sixth and last principle is all about heterotopias having a function, in relation to the rest of space, to create a space of illusion and a space of compensation. I will show how all these principles could be found in the fish trading houses studied.

Among those who extrapolated further the notion of heterotopia, Genocchio (1995) provided a more lucid and illustrative critique. For Genocchio, heterotopia should be seen rather as:

an *idea about space* [emphasis added] rather than any actual space. It is an idea that insists that the ordering of spatial systems is subjective and arbitrary in that we know nothing of the initial totality that it must presuppose. It is an idea which consequently produces/theorizes space as transient, contestory, plagued by lapses and ruptured sites. (1995, p. 43)

This visibly contrasts with Foucault's (1984, 1997) notion of heterotopia which is oriented toward geography—the existence of actual places, or places which are *inherently* heterotopic. Rather than seeing Genocchio's (1995) stand on heterotopia, however, as doing away with Foucault's notion of heterotopia as actual places, I will deploy them both. Thus, heterotopias are real places which have the tendencies to have heterotopic qualities than others. It is the relation of a particular place to others and how places are used that make them heterotopia in conjunction with other existing places. The point I am making is evinced by the very example used by Genocchio (1995) to establish his claim about heterotopia not being actual places but how we think of these places. In his example, Genocchio (1995) used an underground art installation to argue his point. The choice of an underground station by the artist and his turning it into an art venue transformed it into a heterotopic space. However, this is not as simple as it appears. A counter-critique by Hetherington (1997) made the following point:

This was an artist's installation that was to be found not just anywhere but in an underground station in Sydney, and had the intended effect of unsettling one's everyday experience of that space. But the underground system is not just, as Genocchio suggests, a 'non-space' but a space laden with all sorts of uncertainty and difference relating to different uses, dangers and fears that could allow it to be described as a heterotopia long before the artists came in. (pp. 46-47)

Heterotopias then, taking into consideration Foucault's (1984, 1997) and Genocchio's (1995) points, are about actual places which have the potential over others to be enacted with heterotopic spaces by virtue of people's reactions to events around them in a particular spatial and temporal context. They are places which are "polysemous and contestory, [...] must always be questioned, fought over, altered and most of all unraveled" (Genocchio, 1995, p. 43). This will be made clear in the succeeding parts of the article.

Kumisyunan as Economic Space

To understand the dominant logic of space characterizing kumisyunan, they should be viewed first in economic terms—they are places where fish is traded and, concomitantly, where profits and losses are realized. Kumisyunan are of course not different from any market of goods where people go to participate in an economic activity (Alexander, 1987; Benediktsson, 2002; Ligthelm, 2005). The only difference could be that kumisyunan are a specialized market where rules are specific to the trade and the place where they are situated.

Participating in bulungan, I was told, was exclusive to a few chosen people due to their perceived credit worthiness and biographical history. A system of payment between owners of kumisyunan and magririgaton had evolved through the years. As mentioned earlier, magririgaton who participate in fish auctions do not pay upfront for their fish. They pay a day after (or oftentimes several days after) they have won a particular auction. It is in this context that there is a special relationship between magririgaton and owners of kumisyunan. This situation—where there is a belief that money owed by magririgaton will be returned to kumisyunan owners—demonstrates what Gambetta (1988) observed about relationships operating on the notion of trust.

The relations that govern kumisyunan then are based, among many other possible relationships (including feudal, I should say, since the owner, as I witnessed a number of times, acted as patron while the rest were his “dependents”), on the tenets of market relations—profit-oriented, highly formal, and methodological—which bestow fish trading a capitalist tinge. Everyone involved in bulungan has his own role to play and is expected to perform this in accordance with a set of unwritten rules. Thus, owners of kumisyunan and magpapabulong are expected to be fair in their dealings with their customers—the magririgaton and fishermen. On the other hand, both fishermen and magririgaton are expected to do their share as well in making sure that kumisyunan are made economically viable. By regularly landing their fish, fishermen support the continued operation of kumisyunan. Magririgaton, on the other hand, play their part by paying on time. The aim therefore is to constantly turn in profit and keep the money flowing. Those who continuously fail to adhere to this—for example, magririgaton who time and time again are late in their payment—are dropped from the rolls. Others are recruited in their place.

The Heterotopias of Kumisyunan

According to Foucault (1984, 1997), there are two forms of heterotopias: heterotopias of crisis and heterotopias of deviation. In modern times, Foucault

(1984, 1997) averred, the heterotopias of crisis fade away while heterotopias of deviation take over. This can be seen in the proliferation of prisons, psychiatric hospitals, clinics for sex, drug addicts, and the likes. While it is true that heterotopias of deviation multiply nowadays, it is premature, I think, to sound the death knell for the heterotopias of crisis. They are here to stay, although in different forms. For instance, the kumisyunan studied are, I submit, heterotopias of crisis. For many magririgaton from the fishing community, kumisyunan provided them with the necessary opportunity to weather the fisheries crisis. Kumisyunan, being heterotopias, are “a privileged place reserved for the individual who finds himself in a state of crisis with respect to the society or the environment in which he lives” (Foucault, 1997, p. 353).

The fishing community where most of the magririgaton came from was in a state of crisis. While Foucault (1984, 1997) did mention the people whom he thought were in a “perpetual” state of crisis—such as adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, and the elderly—the people in the community and, specifically, the magririgaton and fishermen in the community were in state of crisis in their everyday life and in the society where they lived. Although generally, people living in fishing communities have been described as living on the fringes of society with their peculiar outlook in life (for example, some fishermen tenaciously continue to fish despite incurring losses because according to them it is their way of life and they cannot live without fishing) and perennial precarious economic life (Bene, 2003), the localized fisheries crisis made the lives of fishermen and their families in the community even worse. At the time of fieldwork, I met people who only ate once or twice a day. Daily intake of protein was down because the prices of meat and fish were prohibitive and most people were surviving on a diet of instant noodles. The closest that people in the community could get to eating fish was by taking discarded ones or the lowliest of the fish (like the bony fish *Don Pilas*). Many were also in mental and emotional crises as they grappled with the lack of material resources to meet everyday needs. Marital violence was prevalent and break-ups were not extraordinary.

Foucault (1984, 1997) said that people in crisis, like adolescents and menstruating women, have chances to get out of their heterotopias. The people in the community studied, however, were in a different bind altogether. Although they could leave kumisyunan and opt for a different mode of economic practice, their choices were very limited given their biographical constraints—they had limited education and skills—and the dire economic opportunities provided by the very society where they were in. Thus, kumisyunan would continue to be a heterotopia of crisis for many of the people in the community and when

others opt to leave in search of better income and a much more secure mode of economic sustenance, others would take their place in the heterotopia.

Changes in Heterotopias and Co-existence of Differing Emplacements

Each society creates its own unique spaces where experience of social life can be conceptualized based on values and social meanings (Androitis, 2010, p. 1086, citing Lefevbre, 1991). Implicit in this statement is the presence of forces, structural and otherwise, that give birth to changes in society which in turn affect how individuals make sense of their surroundings and practices. For example, in a study of Chinatown in Washington, DC, Lou (2007) explains how Chinese community and business leaders in the area conceived of ordering new business establishments to put up both English and Chinese signage in their stores to keep the Chinese identity of the community. This edict is a response to the steady closing of Chinese stores in the area due to high rent and the establishment of big commercial stores like Starbucks which for many signify the demise of the Chinese character of the community. Their response was to create a particular space for the articulation of Chineseness in the context of breakneck competition that economic globalization instantiates in every corner of the world.

In the early days of kumisyunan, spaces that allowed magrigrigaton to experience daily life in between bulungan and selling time took place in *sari-sari* stores and waiting sheds erected along the seashore. These stores and sheds provided a venue where magrigrigaton could create their own private space where people like them could talk about their lives, and temporarily put on hold the demands of family life, among others. Owners of kumisyunan then were not keen on letting magrigrigaton stay on the premises. There were only two kumisyunan at that time and competition between the two was not tough. Fish landings usually occurred in the mornings, which limited the time spent by magrigrigaton in kumisyunan. Things changed in the early 1990s when two more kumisyunan were established. Furthermore, more and more fishermen from other towns and communities landed their fish in kumisyunan, which necessitated a much longer period of operation every day. In addition, with the onset of the fisheries crisis, more people became interested to work as magrigrigaton. These factors contributed to the reshaping of the ways kumisyunan were managed. “Magrigrigaton” could now stay in kumisyunan while waiting for fish to land. Hours of operation were also extended since fishing boats coming from other towns would usually berth their boats late in the day. As a result, magrigrigaton spent more and more time—an average of five hours per day—in kumisyunan.

“The power of juxtaposing in a single real place different space and locations that are incompatible with each other” (Foucault, 1997, p. 354) characterizes heterotopias and this is most evident in kumisyunan. While avowedly economic in nature, the place also allows the enactment of other spaces that contravene the very logic of its existence. Momentarily stripping the economic import of kumisyunan, as explained by Rodman in a different context, “other social processes involved in the creation and manipulation of the use of values of [...] space come into sharper focus” (1992, p. 647). Thus, when bulungan enacted a space for magririgaton that called for cold, impersonal, and oftentimes contentious relations with their fellows, post- and pre-auction periods brought forth a different emplacement of space that was friendly, relaxed, and fun. In their study of Mt. Kungang Park in North Korea, Lee, Lawrence, Bendle & Kim (2012) spoke of different spaces together in one localizable place. According to them, the park showcased the power of juxtaposition in a single real place different spaces and locations that are incompatible with one another. Thus, in the park, there existed a romantic space, a sunshine space, a totalitarian space, a resort space, and a shadow space (see Lee, Lawrence, Bendle &, 2012, p. 76). It is along this line that a number of spaces could also be seen at play in kumisyunan. These practices could be a way in which “the heterotopia resurfaces [...] to reclaim places of otherness on the inside of an economized ‘public’ life” (Dehaene & De Caeter, 2008, p. 4).

In making different and differing uses of space, magririgaton stamp their presence in altering the ordering of space through their social, personal, and religious uses of kumisyunan. The social use of the spaces of kumisyunan reigns supreme over other uses. During my fieldwork, I noticed how magririgaton turned kumisyunan into a place for drinking, entertainment (karaoke singing), gambling, and exchanging news about individual lives and tips about cooking or reducing everyday expenses.

Other uses include religious practices. For instance, one Sunday, I attended a prayer meeting held in one kumisyunan. Clearly, due to the enormous amount of time that most magririgaton spend in kumisyunan, many of them did not have the time to visit the local church. When a religious lay leader brought up the idea of holding a prayer meeting in one of the kumisyunan, many of the magririgaton seized the opportunity to perform their religious obligations there.

For personal uses, kumisyunan also provide venues for magririgaton. For instance, when a magririgaton’s oldest child was hospitalized and money was needed to pay for his operation, a box was set up in one of the kumisyunan and all who won in bulungan were asked to give some money as a donation. Even fishermen were asked to donate. The drive lasted for a week and raised

a good sum of money. It is curious then that in the superimposition of other spaces in a place of dominating economic space, a reversal of place-logic set in. It is in this context that while homes in modern times are conceived to become work places (Nippert-Eng, 1996), in the heterotopic spaces of kumisyunan, the workplace becomes home. Kumisyunan became both a place for economic struggle and a social refuge at the same time.

Absolute Break from Traditional Time

The operation of kumisyunan was not all year round. In the months of September until April, their opening hours were limited. Few auctions took place as fishing was almost impossible. In the months of May until August, however, kumisyunan would come to life and open for magririgaton most of the day. Magririgaton would hang out again in kumisyunan and enact their own conceptualizations of space. Kumisyunan would become heterotopias during these busy months since heterotopia “enters fully into function when men find themselves in a sort of total breach of their traditional time” (Foucault, 1997, p. 354).

During these peak months, kumisyunan were at their busiest and magririgaton would spend most of their time there, leaving only to sell fish and be back again to join another round of bulungan. For many magririgaton, hours spent in kumisyunan were a break from their traditional time which was spent looking after the children, worrying about household expenses, and managing the household. When there was no time for idle talk because of successive bulungan, magririgaton would usually find time to congregate at kumisyunan after 7 p.m., when they were done selling fish. In these busy months, owners would allow magririgaton to linger on, even to hold drinking sessions since they too had to work on their balance sheets until midnight (Figure 5). Their time in kumisyunan provided magririgaton with the opportunity to elude for the moment some pressing family and personal concerns and talk about the latest news on local movie stars, customer behavior, and places where fish sell well. They could also talk about anything freely with one another without fear of censure from their family members. As one magririgaton said:

When I go home, I have no time to banter with my husband since I have to do household chores or help my children do their school assignments. It is only in kumisyunan that I get to talk about things that I know or are close to my heart.... Here, I have no husband to tell me off. (C. Lubaton, personal communication, September 23, 2008)



Figure 5: Magririgaton kill time between auctions by drinking local wine called *lambanog*. Photo by the author.

Exclusivity of Entrance and Exit

It should be noted that as Foucault (1984, 1997) explained, the exclusivity of heterotopic spaces also meant rites of purification. One can only enter by special permission and after one has completed a number of gestures (Foucault, 1997, p. 355). Those who wanted to join bulungan had first to be recommended by a bonafide magririgaton and be interviewed by the owners. A background check was also conducted to know the financial biography of the applicant. In my case, when I showed up and introduced myself to the owners, no permission was readily granted to conduct research in their premises. Although I had recommendations from four magririgaton (one each per kumisyunan), I had to visit the kumisyunan a number of times before I was finally allowed to observe their daily routines.

In addition, according to Foucault, “heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that isolates them and makes them penetrable at one and the same time” (1997, p. 355). In terms of kumisyunan’s structural features, they were as public as any public space could get. Their main entrances were as wide as the places themselves. In fact, any passerby would have an uncluttered view of the place itself, as well as of those who were inside and what was going on. Thus, anyone could enter the premises and strike up a conversation with the people there. On a typical bulungan day, it was not

uncommon for passersby to mingle with the crowd of magririgaton and fishermen. This mingling made it possible for some petty thefts to take place. During my fieldwork, a mobile phone and a coin purse were lost to thieves.

However, kumisyunan were also somewhat off-limits to the public. While there seemed to be no physical barrier to the entry of anyone, a sense of unease, and therefore, exclusion, was always felt by outsiders. My own experience illustrates this point. On one occasion, as the magririgaton were having a lively chat about recent developments in the local political scene, I made a cursory observation that was followed by an awful silence. I thought I said something disgusting but I did not. I soon realized that as a newcomer and as someone whose interest was not really in conjunction with theirs (I was with them to do research and they were there to make a living), I was never an integral part of kumisyunan. After that intimidating experience, I would just listen to their conversation and utter a word only when asked. Although I thought that it could also be about my length of stay among them, and that I was at that time still unsuccessful in establishing rapport with them, my interview with one of the magririgaton was revealing. When asked about her sentiments toward people who would frequent kumisyunan and yet were not magririgaton nor were doing any business with them, she said:

They are free to come in. Like you, you are here for research. But I also feel uncomfortable when after auctions they linger on and listen to our conversation. It's our time and their (visitors) time is up. The fish auction is ended. They should leave. (P. Sangcap, personal communication, September 25, 2008)

In this statement, a division of time and space is clear. When fish was being auctioned, kumisyunan became a public space and time was for everyone to share. But when a bulungan was finished, the kumisyunan became a private space of magririgaton where they could be their real selves and do away with their economic side. Thus, as explained by Foucault (1997), if heterotopias were about exclusivity and inclusivity, kumisyunan had their own way to be both penetrable to outsider glance and intrusion and at the same time be close to others. By delineating what is open and close to the public, magririgaton enacted their re-ordering of space at their own time and in their own way.

Functions of Heterotopia

Heterotopias have a function that make them different from other spaces. They have the function of forming another space, another real space that is as perfect, meticulous, and well-arranged as ours is disordered, ill-conceived, and

in a sketchy state. The role of heterotopias is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned as still more illusory (Foucault, 1997, p. 356). This is quite evident in kumisyunan. As they are there to serve the ends of commerce, kumisyunan are not meant as third places (Oldenburg, 1999)—as places of refuge and worship, to unwind, and for opinions to be said and heard. They are meant to facilitate the sale of fish, to reap profit for the owners, the fishermen, and magririgaton. As shown above, however, aside from the ritualistic, competitive, and at times tense air that permeates kumisyunan during bulungan, magririgaton were able to construct a new spatial order in their midst, post- and pre-bulungan periods. It was an alternate space where they could do other things aside from what they were supposed to do: participate in an economic activity. However, this sense of being themselves and enjoying their free time “far” from the stresses of everyday life is both real and illusory. It was real because they were experiencing it in a real place and it was illusory since when the doors of kumisyunan would close behind them, they would go back to their houses to confront what they had elected to forget for a while: unpaid bills, jealous husbands, spendthrift wives, scheming mothers-in-law, leaking roofs, and many more.

Kumisyunan provided the magririgaton the necessary space to enact a different self, a set of other activities that contravene the very nature of their presence in kumisyunan: they were there not to feel at home and unwind but to compete against each other to make a living. But the production of other spaces and, concomitantly, the enactment of a different self were also illusory since they were doing it on borrowed time; they were enacting alternate spaces, the heterotopias of their lives, on a limited basis at the behest of the dominant practice of the place: fish trading. When fish arrived and were put on auction, the magririgaton would re-order their space toward the official spatial discourse of the place and end their out-of-place and out-of-time (Foucault 1997) spatial practices. It is also the case that when they step out of the premises of kumisyunan, to either go home or sell fish on the street or at the public market, they confront the stark reality of living—of living in a time and place where everything is precarious.

Why Kumisyunan and not Other Places

A further spatio-temporal contextualization of the community where most magririgaton came from needs to be further explained to understand why and how kumisyunan are a heterotopia. As the community was experiencing dire economic constraints, family relations were in so many ways also strained (Turgo, 2010). The lack of economic resources to meet everyday needs had an

immediate effect on the relationship among husbands and wives, their children, and other family relations. During my fieldwork, marital break-ups were not uncommon as much as marital violence seemed to be an everyday fixture of life. When economics and social demands could not be met, home became a place of tension and stress.

As explained by many magririgaton who spent an average of 4 to 6 hours in kumisyunan, being away from home was a way to relax. The demands of their families, they said, were just too great. They had to go somewhere to escape from all these. According to one magririgation:

I feel good in kumisyunan. I forget my troubles. There is real camaraderie here. I can laugh in abandon. At home, I have to deal with my children's needs. Not here... (F. Dolor, personal communication, October 3, 2008).

Places where people could stay and kill time without thinking of their immediate family or everyday concerns—what Oldenburg would call third places, or “the core settings of informal public life” (1999, p. 16)—seemed to be lacking in the community. Unlike in most Western countries, some communities in the Philippines do not have cafes, bars, or agoras where people can converge and pass time. And even if there were cafes and other commercial establishments to visit, the expenses that come with going there would make these places unattractive to many. The closest thing to public meeting places that Philippine communities can have are sari-sari stores, plazas, and assembly halls. However, these places, though public, are not conducive for any free interaction akin to what had been described by Oldenburg (1999) and what I found in kumisyunan. Sari-sari stores are too public, plazas too open, and assembly halls are open only during special occasions. In the fishing community, its assembly hall was closed most of the time and would only open once a month for public consultations by district officials, or due to some scheduled events. To say the least, there were no structures or places in the community which could be described as “third places” following Oldenburg (1999).

The absence of places where people could go and relax and have “...peace of mind where (we) could talk about (ourselves) freely without fear that (we) would be censured by others or maybe by (our) wives because (we) feel that a ‘kumadre’ looked good and cooked better...” (L. Saperola, personal communication, September 30, 2008) paved the way for kumisyunan to be heterotopias for magririgaton. Since there was no available space where magririgaton could seek refuge in these times of uncertainties, kumisyunan had to produce them.

The compulsion to survive also served the end of creating multiple spaces in one site. As they had to earn money, magrigrigaton had to stay in kumisyunan most of the time to partake of fish up for auction. The drive to earn and therefore be part of a larger network of profit-making individuals states the case for the enactment of spaces that would sustain magrigrigaton in their quest for economic survival. In this case, as Genocchio (1995) has tenaciously asserted, heterotopias are also ideas about places and spaces. Although kumisyunan had the potential to be heterotopias as much as other places of comparable context, people who inhabit them had to exercise their agency. As observed by Certeau (1988), it is through practices that people provide sites with meaning and make places into spaces (McAllister, 2012, p. 117). It is through the people's active spatial practices, their struggle over other factors that determine the different uses of space, that heterotopias in kumisyunan were realized.

Reiterating the Dominant Discourse of Kumisyunan

As much as space is a product of human activities and interaction at a particular juncture in time, the production of space is also about power struggle and opposing views of how spaces are conceived and used (Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 2009; Pile & Keith, 1997). Thus, space for Foucault (1998) is also about the production of power. Different people have different views of space and different ways of using them to address their ends. Kumisyunan then, as a heterotopic space, are also about other spaces claimed by other people for other reasons.

In their study of a protest climate camp in the United Kingdom, Saunders and Price (2009) spoke about the resistance that this heterotopic space elicited from a diverse group of people—from riot police to local residents. Reasons for other people's disapproval and resistance to the camp were brought about by the:

disruption of local road networks, notably by police roadblocks and checkpoints...and fear of violence. With the policing budget reaching 5.9 million GBP, a number of local taxpayers also complained that they would have to foot the bill for what they deemed an unnecessary protest. (Saunders & Price 2009, p. 119)

In this case then, every place is contested by different interests and in the case of kumisyunan, the use of their premises for relaxation, reading, and chatting was not totally supported and encouraged by their owners. An example needs to be told, which I narrate below.

It was 2 p.m. and the next unloading of fish would not happen until around 3:30 p.m. and some magririgaton were toying with the idea of drinking some wine while waiting. Soon, a hat was passed around and money was contributed. At 3:00 pm, everyone was in their element, singing at the top of their voices. Two women were dancing while another man was tapping his fingers loudly on an empty pan. There was much merriment. Meanwhile, I watched the owner in one corner, shuffling papers and entering numbers in her ledger. She would from time to time give the maririgaton a frowning look. No one seemed to notice her. At one time, she stood up from what she was doing and pretended to go to the waterfront. She was visibly irked.

The following day, alone in her office, after a succession of bulungan, I asked the owner if she was uncomfortable with magririgaton making so much noise while they were drinking the previous day. At first, she told me that it was fine with her but later on, she came up to me and told me:

This place is built for bulungan and not for drinking or gossiping or debating or whatever. Sometimes, they would even come up to me to tell me their problems at home. I think they are mistaken. I have put up this place, this business, to make money. (K. Ambal, personal communication, October 4, 2008)

There is a paradox here, however. While she confided to me her reservations about the activities of magririgaton, she did not make it known to them. In fact, after speaking to me, she asked me to keep our conversation to myself. She did not want to hurt the feelings of magririgaton, she said.

While some owners of kumisyunan did not approve of the heterotopic spaces that magririgaton created, they did not totally disapprove it nor vigorously discourage the magririgaton from enacting their spatial practices (Lefebvre, 1991). Owners knew that to thwart the execution of the alternate re-ordering of spaces by magririgaton would mean alienating them and driving them away from their premises. The demise of the oldest fish trading house, I was later informed when I revisited the fishing community in October 2011, was, aside from bad financial management, also because of the unwelcoming attitude of the owner and her strict rules on the use of the premises. Thus, while not totally finding the continued presence of magririgaton in the premises of kumisyunan to their taste even after each bulungan, the owners were also not too keen on voicing out their disapproval. As one of the owners explained: "I let them do whatever they want to do here. Their presence here, for whatever reason, is good for my business." (C. Balane, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

This giving in and, in fact, bestowing of “approval” to the production of heterotopic spaces in kumisyunan, makes market transactions work efficiently. By investing the formal space of economy with a malleability to enact an alternate ordering of space to suit the needs of magririgaton, market relations thrive. Heterotopic spaces therefore, in the case of kumisyunan, are an important component for the success of fish trading. They are there to rejuvenate the tired bodies of magririgaton and allow them a breather before they tire themselves again in another round of bulungan. Economic spaces have to be reinvented constantly and in today’s world, they could take the form of heterotopias. Taking the form of heterotopias of economic space also highlights the social nature of kumisyunan. They are, as Lefebvre put it:

a space of society, of social life. Man does not live by words alone; all ‘subjects’ are situated in a space in which they must either recognize themselves or lose themselves, a space which they may both enjoy and modify. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 35)

Conclusion

In this article, I highlighted the ways in which kumisyunan were also heterotopias. They were mainstream places and central, in fact, to the functioning of the community and yet were also other spaces whose existence “set up unsettling juxtapositions of incommensurate ‘objects’ which challenge the way we think, especially the way our thinking is ordered” (Hetherington, 1997, p. 42). They were similar, to a large extent, with other places of commerce and yet were also very much different. They highlight a sense of place wherein “[...] a single physical landscape can be multilocal [...] that it shapes and expresses polysemic meanings of place for different users [...] conveys the idea that a single place may be experienced quite differently” (Rodman, 1992, p. 647).

I also made a case for the many uses of kumisyunan aside from their economic purpose which points to the understanding that “space and place are socially produced and implicated in the construction of social relations of power and knowledge” (Lee, Lawrence, Bendle & Kim, 2012, p. 650). Among other uses, the most prevalent use by magririgaton of fish trading houses was for social purposes like chatting about private lives of individuals and discussing the latest news in the community. The other uses were for personal intent like raising money for a sick member of the family and for religious rites, like the holding of prayer meetings.

Furthermore, I made concrete my earlier pronouncement about heterotopias being both an actual space and an idea about space, thus putting in

place Foucault's (1984, 1997) idea and at the same time deploying Genocchio's (1995) contribution to the furtherance of the concept. Through the magririgaton's active manipulation of space, they were able to juxtapose in a single real place several spaces, manifold sites that are themselves incompatible (Foucault, 1997). Here, we see the active and at the same time constrained agency of individuals, manipulating the use of space in a particular spatio-temporal contiguity. The very nature of their employment and deployment of space also highlights the rationalizing power of economic logic in everyday life. As magririgaton whisper their bid, they struggle to carve out a niche for themselves to sustain their work which at the same time also supports the functioning and maintenance of their own economic entanglement. Concomitantly, the magririgaton were able to mark and contest boundaries between the cold logic of place-specific economic practices and the warm and enervating force of communal belongingness.

The creation of alternate ordering of space (Hetherington, 1999) in kumisyunan could be read as the continued re-ordering of logic of space in the global periphery as it is subjected to the cultural logic of late capitalism (Jameson, 1991). While the places studied (the fishing community and the kumisyunan) were visibly isolated by virtue of their geography and relative immobility or limited mobility of their inhabitants and major actors (the magririgaton most especially), their global connections though, as evinced by the economic practices in kumisyunan and the fisheries crisis engulfing the community, instantiate their opening up to the rigors and demands of spatial dynamics, both by the inhabitants and by the forces external to them.

As functional spaces, the kumisyunan are "important reflections of the complexity of social relations at particular times" (Bartling, 2011, p. 382). The heterotopias of kumisyunan are the magririgaton's way of imprinting their manipulation of space as much as the local economy's performative optics in a place that is both globally connected and yet peripherally positioned, both socially and economically. Thus, kumisyunan are actual places of more heterotopic potential than others and, in the context of the community's temporal and spatial context, are made to serve the ends of both magririgaton and the continued functioning of the local economy and the community's everyday life.

The kumisyunan, in the future, could well cease to be a heterotopia of crisis. Developments, both externally and internally, in economic and social fronts, could precipitate the creation of new venues where people in the community could have their "haven and island of tranquility, their reading room and gambling hall, their sounding board and grumbling hall...safe from nagging wives (and violent husbands) and unruly children, monotonous radios and barking dogs" (Oldenburg, 1999, p. 21).

Kumisyunan might not provide the same sense of belongingness that they provide now to magririgaton and it could be that the primacy of home as the locus of warmth and sociality might be restored, due to some developments. State agencies, armed with new legislation and laws in the pretext of creating socially and economically viable communities, could also step in and put in place structures where people could come together and enjoy the company of their fellows. However, in the present context, as people in the community live in the time of *bugabug ang dagat* (or rough seas, the magririgaton's favorite expression when referring to hard times), there seems to be no alternative but the continuation of the heterotopia of crisis in kumisyunan. And as the whirlwind of whispers drives the breeze that passes through the walls of kumisyunan, the magririgaton, people of unforgettable means, will continue to stamp their own presence and enact their uses of space, in their own time and in their own place.

Funding

The fieldwork from which the data used in this article came was funded by the Seafarers International Research Centre-Nippon Foundation Fellowship Program.

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank the two reviewers for their very helpful comments. Professors Helen Sampson and Rosario Cruz-Lucero have always been an inspiration.

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