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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Pavo, R. R. (2018). Night market from H. Lefebvre's space as practiced: the case of Davao city, Philippines. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 6(2), 213-230. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-63275-8>

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# Night Market from H. Lefebvre's 'Space as Practiced': The Case of Davao City, Philippines

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## **Abstract**

*Guided by Lefebvre's (1991) notion of space as practiced, the night market is a result of actual and evolving activities of street vendors as they subsist in the area for their livelihood, as they interpret and apply the governing rules set by the Local Government Unit (LGU), and as they respond to emerging events in the areas such as the bomb blast which happened in 2016. With such experiences and responses, the narratives of the vendors reveal that as they occupy their spaces within the night market, they maximize the limited lot which the LGU has accorded to them, invent some rules which do not violate the policies set by the LGU so vendors can extend their stay in the place after the three-month rule, and capitalize on the potential of their experiences after the bombing incident by redefining themselves as survivors and as symbols of resilience in the city. It is through these actuations and positions that the vendors' manifest their strength and capacity to rise above structures and situations that regulate and confront the Roxas Night Market. Thus, the experiences of the street vendors when gleaned from the perspective of Lefebvre's space as practiced stand for an intent to convert or transform the night market into an arena of practice where their agency, identities, and quest for survival interface. When further appraised using Foucault's (1977) lens on power, such experiences also mean that the vendors articulate their participation in inventing and re-inventing the stories and meaning of the Roxas Night Market as a locus of transcendence and discipline.*

Key words: *Roxas night market, space as practiced, Lefebvre, Foucault, power*

## **Introduction**

As part of a growing list of activities in the Evening and Night Time Economy (ENTE), night markets are created to extend the day-time economic activities (Hadfield, 2014). This can be recognized in cities across the country which attempt to make urban evening life more interesting for the locales and its tourists by creating night spots such as night markets. As a growing urban

phenomenon, few researches, however, have been done to describe and understand the socio-cultural meanings of night markets – why it exists, and thrives, and the accounts of vendors as they subsist in the area.

In the country, Milgram's (2014) study of the Harrison Road Night Market in Baguio City to date stands as an example of a night market study which uses the social science perspective in

analyzing and interpreting its social meaning. While Milgram's work has its strengths, the work primarily looked into the interface between legality and illegalities in the night market, which occasion other areas and interest that are wanting of attention. For instance, there is a need to study the night market from the point of view of social space, and from the perspective of the vendors themselves. With the opportunity to contribute to night market studies, this paper aims to gather the stories of select street vendors, and the interpretation of such stories shall be taking-off from Lefebvre's concept of space as practiced (1991). This means that this study is interested to know the way street vendors manage and maximize their stall-sites, the manner by which they use their spaces as their interpretation of the rules set by the Local Government Unit (LGU), and their assertions over their spaces as response to incidents that have transpired within the night market with the bomb blast as the specific point of concern.

As a short background to Roxas Night Market, this site has been existing since 2014, and its creation was conditioned by a city ordinance which was approved by the city legislators of Davao City in December 2013. As livelihood space, it is composed of four units: (1) food section, (2) *ukay-ukay* (second hand items), (3) massage section, and (4) accessories section. For the food section, each vendor is provided with 1.8 x 3 meters, and 1.5 x 2.1 meters is allotted for the accessories and *ukay-ukay* sections. In the massage section, eight

organizations of massage therapists are accommodated. This means that each organization is allowed to put up tents not exceeding 5 x 4 meters. Given the spatial limitation, space use and maximization are primary interest for the 350 vendors. Moreover, the limitation in space is coupled with a limitation in time. As a livelihood space, vending can only take place between 5PM to 1AM on weekdays and 4PM to 1PM on weekends. Considering the three-month rule of the LGU, vendors can only avail and access such spaces in the night market for three months. As a consequence, four batches of vendors can access the area in a year resulting in an estimate of 1,400 vendors in the area.

The constraints with regard to space and time have conditioned the way vendors manage their spaces. From the interviews conducted, this research focuses on four narratives representing each of the four sections – massage, *ukay-ukay*, food and accessories. The key informants were selected based on these qualifications: (1) vendors in the night market for at least one year, (2) have experienced the three-month vending rule of the LGU, and (3) was in the area when the bomb blast happened. With these parameters, the informants can narrate their experiences and reflections with the nodes in the life of the night market hoping that their accounts will serve as microcosm on how vendors in the Roxas Night Market make the most of their time-bound and space-bound areas as new rules of the LGU and unexpected

incidents emerge in the story of the night market.

### Methodology

This study upholds the qualitative research frame in the social sciences. The specific methods used include key informant interviews, observations, on-site mapping, and participant observations, which help provide thick descriptions from which themes or patterns unfold (Peralta, 1996). For the interviews, the conversations revolve around the following concerns: (1) the processes involved in bringing their goods to Roxas Avenue, (2) the steps followed to assemble their vending stations, (3) the actual/concrete ways of managing their small vending spaces, (4) how vendors sell their goods to costumers, or invite potential clients for a massage for the massage therapists, and (5) eventually how vendors pack their goods, stalls and stations as they fold-up and close their livelihood space for the evening. Since space as practiced means staying in the field from start to finish, this approach required at least experiencing the entire duration or cycle from 4PM to 1AM. This method is needed to document the practices of the vendors as they go the rounds of operating and managing their stalls. With regard to participant observation, this was done in the stall of Ricky – an *ukay-ukay* (second hand clothes) vendor. This means filling the role of the vendor, entertaining the questions of potential buyers, and arranging the shoes in his shoe stall. This experience facilitated observations on how vendors

maximize their lots, address the questions of on-lookers, and the intersecting concerns of vendors, since at times, they receive calls or messages from family members. For the mapping of space stalls, maps were drawn on-site which was followed by comments from the vendors themselves.

After the descriptive section of the study, the analysis part ensues. The spatial aspect of the vendors' accounts will be magnified and interpreted using the lens of Lefebvre (1991), and this will be critically appraised through Foucault's notion of power (1977). In so doing, the productive relation between the narratives of the vendors on their practices within the night market as social space, and the meaning of the Roxas Night Market as space as practiced will be occasioned and critically looked into.

### Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Lefebvre's notion of space as practiced which refers to daily routines within the context of urban realities. More to the point Lefebvre holds that "The spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it. From the analytic standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space" (Lefebvre, 1991). This means that through the practices of individuals, social spaces or areas are created, re-created or transformed into locations of meanings. While these meanings may form

contradictions, this notion of space as practiced admits that there is this built-in tension in space-making which ensures or guarantees that there is room for exchange of influence, change, accommodation, opposition that condition and regulate the dynamism in social spaces. In the case of the Roxas Night market, its meaning as a social space is cultivated and formed by the practices of vendors, by their intentions as they make the most of their limited time and space, and by their responses to emerging changes such as the imposition of new rules, and the unfortunate bomb blast. With these combined conditions, the presence, experiences and agency of vendors in the area shape or form the meaning of the night market as a practiced space. This conversely means that in the absence of street vendors, the night market will lose its meaning as space as practiced.

Such critical component of the study is also enriched when coupled with Foucault's take on power, noting that power is comparable to a capacity to govern, or "to structure the possible field of action of others" (1977). Since power takes place and makes manifest its bearing in a social relation, Foucault adds that power only makes sense within the context of the possibility of resistance. He adds that because of such nature, "the relation between power as the capacity to inform-influence, and to resist – to simultaneously challenge, question, modify the influence, points to the peculiar nature of power" (1977). Hence, with Foucault's stance on power, the practices of vendors within their limited

spaces in the night market can be construed as questions, or as their way of asking the LGU if the night market itself will suffice to give them opportunities to improve their conditions, or the condition of the informal sector such as street vending in the city.

## Results and Discussions

### *Narratives*

The following narratives were selected to help describe the Roxas Night Market as space as practiced:

(1) *Dhoy as Massage Therapist.* Dhoy is from Lake Cebu, South Cotabato. He started working as massage therapist in the night market in 2013 after he inquired with Ate Fely – massage therapist in the area, on how one can become part of the group. This inquiry, however, has been conditioned by his prior observations on how massage therapists go about their work and engage their customers, since he was first part of the night market as assistant to the stall of his elder brother in the accessories section. Given his curiosity, Dhoy wondered how he could possibly become a massage therapist. When asked for his motivation to work, he shared that he has a child in South Cotabato. Despite having no clear knowledge on how to do proper massage, he enrolled himself in a training, since he saw the potential of having better income with massage in a busy place like Roxas Night Market. Up to this day, he shares that "*makalingaw ang massage ug makahatag pud ug income*" (Giving massage is fun and interesting, and it can provide income).

With regard to income, Dhoy recalls that in 2013, he used to earn Php 700 per night when there were fewer massage therapists. Since he is already a member of a massage therapist organization, Dhoy also needs to allocate 5% for every massage service to the organization and Php 10.00 for the rental fee for the chair he is using. For instance, if he gives whole body massage which costs Php 200.00, he needs to give Php 20.00 to the organization as part of his contribution to the monthly space fee which the organization needs to settle. When asked if such rates burden him, Dhoy mentioned that the rates and fees are reasonable and necessary so the organization of massage therapists can address its obligations to the LGU.

How do you compare your present income to your income in 2013? Dhoy laments that today, he can only bring home around Php 300 to 400 a day. He explains that the decrease in income is attributed to the increased number of massage therapists, and that fewer people avail of the massage service especially as a result of the bombing incident. In order to survive and deal with the pressing constraint, Dhoy has become keen in keeping track of the cellphone number of his clients for home massage services, and he has upped his tools of the trade by investing on a good selection of oils, and scents, and even buying a comfortable pillow for clients who may have back pain. Since I also experience some difficulties with my lower back, I tried his personalized service and even observed the reaction of other massage therapists in

the vicinity. When Dhoy, opened his kit, and inquired if I prefer lotion, oil or powder, I felt privileged that such options are offered especially that massage therapists will only just usually use coconut oil. Having an element of surprise to his options, I also realized how Dhoy values hygiene as he underscored the fact that he always uses clean towels for every client.

Equipped with options, his fellow massage therapists expressed that the tool kit has been Dhoy's trademark in the area. Since he brings clean towels every night, Dhoy also shared that after his work, he needs to soak all the used towels which he needs to wash in the following day. This is part of the cycle that he has to observe and at times endure especially if he feels unwell. Dhoy knows that he needs to maintain such edge so he can keep the interest of clients and perhaps attract more in landscape of increasing and competing number of therapists. When there is no client, Dhoy also stands near the entrance of the massage area or at the exit point of the food section to greet possible customers or entice them for a massage for the evening. This is the part of his work which reminds him of the uncertainty of his work, especially if it's rainy season, and now, when the night market is slowly overcoming the scars caused by the bombing incident.

Given that Dhoy has a child to support in South Cotabato, and now, he needs to take care of his ailing mother, he just hopes that he will not have health problems so he can fulfill his

responsibilities to his family. When sick, do you also avail of the massage service from your colleagues? Dhoy said that he has a group of friends whom he can request if there is a need for him to receive a massage therapy. He notes, however, that such service is not for free. Knowing the kind of strength exerted in giving a massage, Dhoy still pays his friend. But this time, instead of paying Php 200.00 for a whole-body massage, he just gives Php 100.00. What about a signature massage? Is a massage therapist keen to developing his own massage style? Dhoy remarked that having your own massage style is a key element. This is something which a massage therapist needs to discover or develop. Dhoy also realized that having a group of massage therapists with various signature massage approach will also be good for the organization as a whole.

(2) *Ricky as ukay-ukay vendor.* Being an *ukay-ukay* shoe vendor, has allowed me to do participant observation in his work space. I asked him if I can be his assistant for the evening as we install, and sell the items in his rack. After installing the make-shift post, and hanging the shoes, Ricky explained that unlike other shoe vendors, he does not lump all shoes so as to maximize the small space that each stall has. Ricky has a different concept of maximizing space. He explains that after his years of experience displaying shoes, he realized that customers prefer to stay longer in a stall if each shoe displayed has sufficient space for it to stand out. "*Dili kinahanglan itapok gyud tanan*" (It is not necessary to lump everything). Noting that in a shoe sack – which he bought for

Php 3,000.00, he selects and sorts the good quality shoe pairs from the rest. Explaining that a good quality shoe can be sold for Php 1,500.00, he thinks that it will be faster for him to recover his capital if he pays special attention to such type of shoes. This is the reason why Ricky will only hang the quality shoes in his rack and leave the rest at the back of his stall. Since I was there to participate for the entire evening, I started to believe in what Ricky was explaining, since we were flocked by a group of four to five potential buyers who stayed longer than usual. For Ricky, giving his costumers reasons to stay longer to assess his goods increases the chance that they will end up buying a pair of shoes. As his assistant, I also realized that such approach also makes the life of Ricky easier, since he can almost memorize the features of his select shoe pairs. Having such information and mastery is crucial especially for customers who have an eye for good items in the *ukay-ukay* section. Ricky is aware of the presence of some buyers who will try to find a few good buys which they will re-sell over the internet. These were the kinds of concerns that Ricky had as he patiently shared to me some of his realizations on the kinds of customers that visit the *ukay-ukay* section in the night market. In between the folding beds, Ricky also allocates a space so his buyers can have an area to move around. This space also helps Ricky, since it allows him to move freely at the rear part of his stall where some of his items are kept in sacks.

With Ricky's understanding of his work space and the kind of goods that he

has been selling for years now, Ricky does not worry with the other shoes that he will no longer display in his stall. He specified that he will simply bring the other shoes in a fiesta in a far-flung area and sell the shoes at a very cheap price. Ricky notes that such approach has always worked for him, since people will no longer think twice buying a pair of shoes for Php 100.00 or even for Php 50.00. What about the three-month rule of the LGU? How does one prepare for the end of one's contract in the night market and the possibility of re-gaining the space after 3 or 6 months?

To such question, Ricky shared that he plans of sharing a space with another vendor in the *ukay-ukay* section. At this point, Ricky expressed that he has been in talks with his brother-in-law over such possibility, and shared that his in-law is amenable to such arrangement. "*Lahi ra man gud kung naa ka diri sa Roxas.*" (It is just different when you are here in Roxas selling). This was Ricky's driving point in stressing how the night market has made his life easier and better in terms of having more reliable and steady income compared to the other posts in the city which he has previously explored. "*Kami na man guy adtuan diri*" (It is the people who come to us in this area). He is also not worried over the legality of the proposed arrangement, since there is no policy that states that sharing of space is not allowed. Moreover, the person who will be selected during the draw lots will also be in the stall physically – in this case, Ricky's brother-in-law would need to be in the night market every time the

presence or attendance of vendors is checked. After the draw lots, however, Ricky was no longer part of the night market after I surveyed the place two nights after the drawing of lots was concluded. His absence may mean two things: (a) his brother-in-law was not drawn, or (2) his proposed arrangement with his brother-in-law did not push through. His absence also implies that I would need to wait for another three months or so to see if Ricky will be in action in one of the spaces in the *ukay-ukay* section of the Roxas Night Market in the near future.

In closing the evening, Ricky started picking up the empty sacks which were hidden beneath the folding beds. In doing this routine, Ricky was quick to identify which shoes should be grouped together in a sack. When this sorting was done, he then removed the wood frame of his stalls, tie them together, and kept them in a corner. He also made sure that his area is clean, and that it is litter free. Once the entire stall is dis-assembled and folded, and the space is cleared of any garbage, Ricky texted somebody who soon arrived with a tricycle. This is where Ricky lodged his tools of the trade, and informed me that his items are kept in a nearby house which has then served as repository for the items and good owned and sold by the *ukay-ukay* vendors. The following day, I walked around the vicinity of Roxas Avenue and I discovered three houses which were converted into *ukay-ukay* housing stations.



(3) *Nur's Eatery*. Unlike the massage area and the *ukay-ukay* section, a different type of space and time use maximization unfolds in the food section in the night market. Nur occupies a stall in the food section of the night market. During the first round of selection of vendors after the closure of the night market as ordered by the city mayor, she was one of the few who were lucky enough to continue in their enterprise. Nur also recalls how the other vendors who were not selected cried and expressed their dismay over the new system of the LGU in the selection process. But contrary to what people expect, Nur was actually not happy that her name was called. It can be recalled that she is the only vendor whom I discovered who was hesitant with her new space, since she preferred to vend near her home where she can take care of her only daughter. Nur complains that with the schedule of the night market, she always finds her daughter playing video games near their residence. She worries over her daughter's safety including the kind of food that her daughter eats. With her selection, she is now obliged to be in the night market on a daily basis. Sharing the stall with her sisters, she now has a laminated ID which shall serve as the inspector's basis in checking if the person in their list is actually on site.

In managing her stall, the space where Nur is stationed is divided according to the following: grilling station, display section of chicken liver, chicken barbeque which she sells for Php 65.00. She also offers *pastil* for Php 20.00 which is

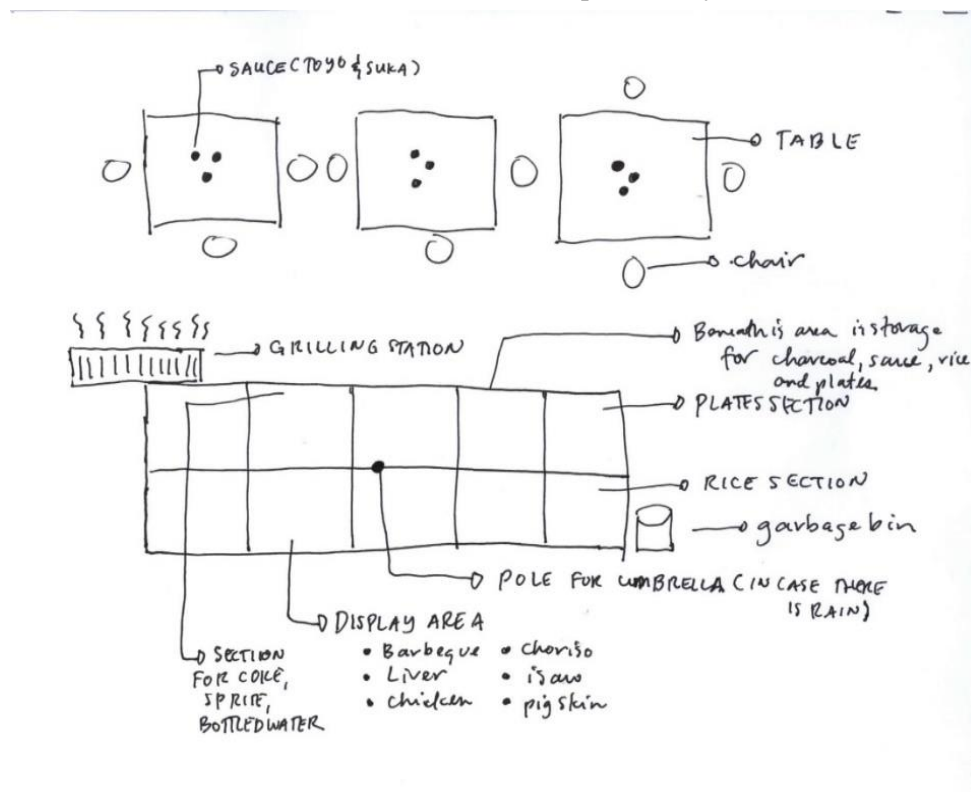
a local Muslim food and plain rice for Php 10.00. In the stall, bottled water is also available for Php 15.00. Given the different items sold in her vending space, Nur is stationed at the *pastil* and bottled area. This is also the place where I frequently eat so I can observe how Nur proceeds with her tasks, and manages the entire stall. Given the multitude of people who wait for their barbeque and *pastil*, Nur shared her team can only start eating around 11pm when the number of people eventually decreases. This also means that they would need to first bear-with hunger, since they need to attend to their customers.

Interestingly, the rear section of the bike in Nur's stall has been converted into a grilling station. This is one of the creative and practical maximization of space in the area, which many of the vendors in the food section also have. The bike-grilling station after the night market operation will then resume with its role as mode of transportation as the vendors pile up their tables, things, and bring back their makeshift vending stall to their homes. This is also the reason why Nur works with his male nephew so he can take charge of the delivery of goods and items to the vending site and bring back such items to their residence. Since Nur chose to sell barbeque, she also shared her difficulty in preparing the chicken liver, barbeque and *pastil*. This is the day-time job that many of the night market vendors need to do in preparation for the night market operations. When asked as to how she manages the income of her stall, she quipped that she simply takes note of her

expenses and daily income. With her busy schedule, she also cited some instances when she no longer can properly record her expenses. On this point, I thought of the need for vendors to have basic financial literacy which may be of help in assessing the purchasing, preparations, and vending process and identify which section is in need of intervention.

Since her tables were marked by a local soy sauce brand, I inquired if such tables were provided by the said company. Nur noted that some companies actually offer such items as long as the

vendors will patronize their products. For Nur, such arrangement is acceptable, since it is a win-win situation for vendors and the company. She added that most of the sauces in the night market are also tied-up to a brand, or company which offered them tents, tables and discounts in purchasing the select products. When compared to the other sections in the night market, it is the food section which also appears to have better condition in terms of tents, and tables, since private companies already made their presence felt via their concept of corporate social responsibility.



Map of Nur's Vending Station with its Different Functions

In this map, the small vending space is maximized by incorporating various elements which facilitate the transactions with the vendors. Also, the persons in Nur's stall are assigned to fulfill different roles: (a) for grilling, (b)

selling, (c) in-charge of rice, and (d) another is tasked to clean and arrange the tables. These are the roles that figure in a vending stall to conform with the pre-conceived functions with a stall. In this stall, Nur is responsible for the

preparation and distribution of rice and pastil.

(4) *Sohaya in the Accessories Section.*

Sohaya is in the accessories section of the night market, since her friend offered to her half of the space or stall-site. Since there are two of them in this stall, Sohaya contributes half of the monthly dues and fees for the electricity use. In her work space, one can observe that Sohaya only has one long table, since the other half will be occupied by the items owned by her good friend. In this respect, Sohaya would need to contend with the small space available to her, and she adds that their location also makes it more challenging for them to sell, since the stall is near the section of the canal where customers seldom visit. If given the choice, Sohaya prefers to sell in the adjacent lane near the free pass area, since it is where the visitors of the night market walk through. Despite the limitations of her location, Sohaya just hopes that something can be done to improve the access of customers to their space. Since Sohaya and friend were not drawn in the next round of vendors, Sohaya may take notice of the fact that today, the LGU has broadened the space between the two lanes so more vendors will pass through the stalls near the canal section of the Roxas Avenue. This concern has been addressed since the space between stalls were expanded to encourage more patrons of the night market to visit the stalls near the canal area.

In the course of our conversation, I also asked if she plans of selling other

goods in the night market area. She opined that she prefers selling accessories, since it requires lesser capital when compared with the food, and *ukay-ukay* sections. Sohaya adds that she also does not worry with the storage of her goods and she need not concern herself with expiry dates. When asked if Sohaya has a source for her accessories, she said that many of her items are from Uyanguren Street which is also the China Town of the city. This is an instance which supports my hypothesis that the Roxas Night Market can also be considered as an extension of China Town, and is China Town's evening economic sibling. Especially with the accessories section, most of the goods on display can actually be seen and bought in China Town, which, however, closes at around 5pm. It is on this note that the Roxas Night Market can be considered as an extension of the economic fervor in China Town at day-time, and is also contributory to the vigor of the China Town in Davao City. Is Sohaya aware of such point? She said that the Chinese Business People in Uyanguren are lucky, since their goods are still sold even at night time through the presence of the Roxas Night Market.

On the day of the interview, rain unfortunately poured which meant having lesser income for the evening. This also means having to immediately put-up a huge plastic cover so their goods will not be drenched. Since the rain continued, Sohaya called it a night as she decided to put back all her items – such as socks, handkerchief, and other accessories, back to her huge rainbow-colored plastic bag.

This action also meant that it was time to also wrap-up our conversation, since Sohaya was already looking at the tricycle which will ferry her goods back to their house.

#### *Unfolding Themes from the Narratives*

From the narratives of the informants, the following themes emerged: (1) working for the family, (2) practical innovations, (3) contingency plans, and (4) family concerns.

(1) *Working for the Family.* The limited space and time that a vendor in the night market deals with have conditioned their efforts to make the most of what such delimitations can offer. This is a common approach that intersects in the four different yet interrelate accounts of space and time use. Also, this is where the structuring role of space and time figures in the experience of the vendors (Giddens, 1979). An important approach that can be observed is how the individual's efforts intersect with the need to work with a group of people, family, or with other vendors. If this point is made pronounced, each stall in the night can be reckoned as an effort of a community of individuals (Nirathron, 2006). This means that the motivation for work, the efforts to maximize space and time, and the importance of upholding the rules set by LGU suggest the varied concerns that each stall in the night market considers, deals with or tries to acknowledge or respect. This is the reason why Dhoy, for instance, reminds himself of the need to work better as a massage therapist for his child, and now, for his ailing mother. His desire to be

better brings him back to the reasons why he wants to make his chances of finding clients improve. The motivation to help the family is also true for Ricky, Sohaya and Nur. Despite the varied circumstances, they all agree with Dhoy that their efforts will hopefully bear meaning in the lives of the family members who in one way or another depend on them for their economic sustenance.

In order to make a difference in the lives of loved ones, the narratives suggest that in practicing one's creativity and resilience in the accorded space also means working well with others, or finding a sense of refuge from the opportunities which others may want to share (Nirathron, 2006). This is the clear case of Sohaya who was able to find in her friend the generosity to partition half of her space so they can both continue in their economic endeavors in the Roxas Night Market. Without her friend, I, too, would not be able to meet Sohaya who can be considered as an example of a young vendor who may as well change the kind of vendors in the future – educated and willing to find a balance between formal and informal work.

(2) *Practical Innovations.* Converting the rear part of a bicycle into a grilling area is a viable manifestation of an innovative output of vendors in the food section in the night market. A closer look at their ways and means as they operate their makeshift stalls condition the need to make the most of what a limited space and time has to offer (Low, 2017; Dovey,

1999). This creative tactic was also demonstrated by Dhoy who did not want to settle with the usual practices of fellow massage therapists. By preparing and investing his own version of his tools of the trade, he can always claim in the massage area that his approach to his work is reflective and sincere. The idea emerged because of his keenness in observing practices surrounding his area. Through observation, he was able to initiate himself into the world of massage therapists, and through other rounds of observation he imagined what his customers need to make their stay as clients of massage services unique and physically rewarding.

Another strategy that Ricky projected and which Sohaya used is to navigate themselves in the rules stipulated by the LGU. By having a shared vending space, both Ricky and Sohaya give themselves more chances of extending their stay in the night market. This is a practice that is also done by other vendors in the area, and for them, it is acceptable as long it will not cause trouble to other vendors. Nur also demonstrated that she actually needs to share her space so she can sell more, and perhaps add more to her savings. Will the government allow such approach if everyone will adapt such method? From a critical lens, such disposition is also conditioned by the necessity to fight the constraints and difficulties brought about by poverty (Nirathron, 2006). Moreover, the critical perspective is reminiscent of Bourdieu's *habitus* (1990), the night market as space as

practiced also points to the vendors' mastery of their spaces.

While the confined space gives the impression that it should require less mastery, it is the other way around, since the small space is saturated with various elements that need to work together. This mastery or cognitive map has also become intuitive for the vendors. The accounts of Ricky and Dhoy, for example affirm such points, since they have already started innovating and distinguishing themselves from the other practices of vendors. For Ricky, he has learned that it is better to prioritize quality shoes in the display section, and the small spaces where the potential buyers can navigate with; while Dhoy knows that giving customers options and showcasing a tool box sets him apart from the other massage therapists. Such insight has been conditioned by his years of experience and work, and some observations with his fellow therapists. This is why up to this day, Dhoy still manages to survive and support the needs of her child in Cotabato City. This is where vendors also showcase their mastery of the logic or principle behind vending as a social and entrepreneurial activity.

(3) *Contingency Plans*. Nur is a good example for this theme. While admitting that she prefers to work near her abode, she also underscores her capacity to work and vend elsewhere if it so happens that she will no longer be selected, or her sisters in the next round of the drawing of lots. The kind of preparedness that she has speaks of the

ready plan, or plan B if in case, the night market will no longer be accessible for another three months or so. The same spirit of readiness can also be seen in the narratives of Ricky, Sohaya and Dhoy who have been into vending services and goods for years. The experience has provided them options in case some of their goods will not be sold in the night market, as in the case of Ricky, or the accessories of Sohaya can still be sold in other parts of the city which Sohaya has done even when she still in her elementary years, or Dhoy's effort to beef-up his relation with clients who can just text or call him for home service type of massage. Given these options that they have created as they practice their skills and craft in their spaces in the night market, the vendors in the Roxas Night Market can be said to have the laid down contingency plans so they can still survive, or outlive the challenges that may ensue in the process of finding a sense of permanence in the time-bound and space-bound structures of the night market.

(4) *Family of Vendors.* Vending is a family enterprise. As family, this also expands to relatives and even close friends. This is the reason why Nur was still in the night market despite hoping that her name will not be drawn during the first batch of vendors. When I visited her stall, and ate at her vending site, she was surrounded by her relatives who also sold food and were assigned to fulfill specific functions in their stall-site. The scene made me understand why Nur decided to vend still, since it means giving economic opportunities to her relatives.

Like Sohaya, she was also fortunate to have a close friend generous enough to share a space with her. This also explains why Sohaya shared that if her name will be drawn, her friend can also vend with her. This seemingly working partnership means that vending is not an individual activity. It involves the family, relatives and friends. Ricky, in the management of his vending stall, applies the same logic.

The socio-cultural nature of vending in the night market means that it embodies certain community values and expectations. These values and expectations assume even greater depth when gleaned within the context of the family (Nirathron, 2006). Since many of the vendors are migrants, their shared stories and experiences mean that it will be difficult, if not anti-thetical for them to not consider the benefits of working together. This also explains why the context and concept of a family is a crucial element in understanding the space-use practices of vendors.

#### *Analysis: Space as Practiced as Locus of Meaning*

When gleaned from the perspective of Lefebvre's space as practiced (1991), the vendors have articulated their capacities to convert or transform the night market into an arena of practice where their agency, identities, and quest for survival interface. This ability is conditioned by their mastery of street vending as an enterprise, a way of life, and coupled with the necessity to live and take advantage of the night market as livelihood opportunity. Such is the case

since the vendors have decided to face the difficulties that they regularly encounter as they continue to street vend. It is because of such commitment or assertion that the night market can be taken to mean as an expression of their effort and struggles to survive and decently live. The changes and changing arrangements in the night market which is generally a characteristic in urban landscapes (Low, 2017) have somehow helped shape the way street vendors deal with their vending spaces. As changes in urbanity increase, the street vendors also find themselves in changing situations that force them to respond as part of the process of survival.

A concrete example of such unexpected change is the three-month rule imposed by the LGU. When the rule was implemented, the street vendors were initially distraught by the news. They were initially unconvinced by the seemingly anti-poor stance of the LGU. Noting how the city mayor was serious in addressing the violations of some street vendors, the other vendors who were not remiss with their obligations complained of the blanket punishment. It is this seemingly inherent contradiction in space as practiced that lets Lefebvre argue that space making or space production subsists or grows from such types of tension. In the absence of this dialectical spirit, space will only be produced by a privileged vantage point such as the LGU's and it will purposely impose its position to other entities who can also be agents of space production.

Noting the patterns in the logic of practiced space, Lefebvre adds that what accounts as the obvious day to day practices are fulfillments of the plan or design created the planners. In the case of the night market, the LGU expects its plan to be visible which is its measure of success. But from the lens of the street vendors, such design also stands as an invitation for innovation. Take the case of Sohaya who invoked her choice to share her space with a friend to increase her chance of staying in the night market for at least another three months. This plan manifests the inherent dialectics in space making. In space as practiced, what seems to be good and acceptable to the planners or designers may be reinvented along the way.

Also noting how practicing agents come from different perspectives and backgrounds, the evident practices in the night market can also be compared to the tip of the iceberg. This means that underneath the visible practices, less visible actuations, dispositions and negotiations emerge and come-in and re-define the logic of practice in the area. More so if the street vendors think of the changes in the governance of the place as a test of their capacities to survive or make the most of emerging situations. Given that such is the disposition of the street vendors, it can be inferred that the street vendors will always have a say in how the night market as a practiced space will take shape. This is actually the undertone of the two themes that emerged from the narratives of the vendors: practical innovations and contingency plans.

The practices and dispositions of the vendors when the bomb blast happened in the area also revealed the way the street vendors managed the night market as practiced space. Dealing with the least expected and terrifying situation, the vendors took the challenge to assist the LGU in reclaiming the area from fear and insecurities. How did this ensue? Showing their strength in confronting their fears with the terror brought about by the incident, and recalling their experience with bombing incidents from where they were originally from, the vendors helped the City, and not just the LGU in retrieving the sense of security and safety in the area which the bomb blast dislodged. Making sense of Lefebvre's notion of space as practiced which is also fueled by the aspiration for 'a firmly grounded everyday life', such account points to the vendors' intent to decipher the incident not as a moment of retreat or surrender but as a case where they can communicate their stance that they will hold-on to the livelihood spaces. This show of commitment further shows strength in their identity as vendors, the urgency to resume in their livelihood engagement to earn again, and the meaning of the night market in their lives as a space which have productively and uniquely interfaced with their day to day practice. Although a critical stance may point out that such commitment to the night market is a result of an absence of better options in the city, the decision to reclaim the night market also underscores the point that for the vendors, the night market is a space that belongs to them. Despite knowing that they will be losing

their spaces after three-months to other street vendors, they still put premium to the possibility of returning to Roxas Night Market in the near future, and their contribution to some street vendors whom they also know and have become friends with.

In relation to Foucault's notion of power, the vendors' position to decipher and reinterpret the events in the life of the night market can also be taken to mean as the vendors' re-appropriation of the night market as a space where they demonstrate two interrelated sides of power which Foucault (1977) refers to as transcendence and discipline. For instance, the vendors' power as transcendence is revealed in the way they treat their working space armed with a sense of flexibility and possibility. As the LGU imposed the three-month rule, the vendors pushed the boundaries of their imagination as their limited spaces where further confined by the rule. As time asserted its hold on space, the vendors realized that such change should be met with strategies. This is where the transcendental capacities of the street vendors are showcased. Knowing that the LGU exercises a governing power, the vendors elected to make use of their imagination through their practical innovations. As they also take lessons from their efforts and experiences in street vending in the past, one clear position that they have argued is that one should not succumb or yield to unfolding structures that aim to delimit options.

But despite such efforts to remain defiant, this question should still be



considered: Will vendors eventually accede to the limitations in space and time as their access to the night market is consistently challenged? This is a question which the LGU should also consider as a point of reflection given that the LGU has always asserted its power over informal work such as street vending. Also, will the contract between two vendors agreeing to share their spaces be eventually prohibited given that such innovation is not yet considered violative of any rule set by the LGU?

Recognizing the importance of immediately confronting the terror which the bomb blast has sown, the LGU – in an indirect fashion, sought the help of the vendors in reclaiming the night market from fear by encouraging them to go back to their post. This is where the LGU recognized that the street vendors are also in possession of a transcendental power. Knowing that the LGU cannot reclaim that night market on its own, its request to the street vendors to immediately resume vending means that the LGU also displayed its vulnerability. This is confirmed by the vendors' remark that they were shocked to note that it was the first time that they were being requested to vend again. In previous engagements with the LGU, the vendors have always been in a defensive mode fearing that they will be evicted or blacklisted.

Recalling that the vendors were once disciplined as an entire group when the LGU decided to have the night market closed for 13-days due to violations of a few vendors, they remembered how they

were dispersed and found themselves unsure of their immediate future. Despite such experience, the street vendors still recognized and appreciated how the LGU officials approached and invited them to continue vending in the area after the bombing episode. Noting Foucault's concept of discipline, this is where the vendors helped discipline two things: (1) the terror that emerge from the occurrence, and (2) the LGU as street vendors demonstrated how they can assist the LGU and the city deal with the effects of the terrorist attack and regain the city's over-all sense of courage.

Will the night market be closed once more in the future? Given how the vendors helped the city deal with the effects of terrorism, the vendors hope that the night market will remain, that night market as a vending space will be made more accessible by increasing the number of vendors each quarter, and that the LGU will not forget the vendors' contribution in helping the city move-on from the terrorist incident. More to the point, the construction of the memorial marker will hopefully serve as the reminder that the street vendors have helped in the healing process of the city as a whole. Since the marker has assumed a symbolic value, will the LGU continue to acknowledge the assistance that it has received from the street vendors in reclaiming Davao City's secure and peaceful aura or mantle? Or, will the memorial marker be a remembrance of how the people of Davao together with the LGU joint forces to squarely deal with the effects of the terrorist attack? There are other queries

which the vendors hope will not slip into oblivion to help discipline or influence the LGU's decision with regard to the fate of the night market in the city's future urban landscape.

### Conclusion

The Roxas Night Market as practiced space gleaned from Lefebvre's position of the production of space speaks of a rhythm which the street vendors have created as response to the governing rules implemented and imposed by the LGU. This rhythm, when closely looked at, is made possible by the vendors unique take of the vending spaces, and their assertion of their right to claim the livelihood spaces legitimized by the LGU, and the vendors' commitment to express their stamp on the role and meaning of the night market in relation to the city's story of rebuilding itself from the terror caused by the bombing incident. Although difficulties arose due to the rules imposed by the LGU, the street vendors decided to maximize the limited vending time and space. It is this commitment to ensure that the night market stays where the street vendors locate and propose their interpretation of the night market as space as practiced.

The logic of practice that permeates the night market is further nuanced by the transcending and disciplining sides of the vendors seen through the lens of Foucault (1977). This means that the experiences and situations of the vendors when seen from such lens inform and enforce daily habits which make-up the fabric of the Roxas Night

Market as space as practiced (Lefebvre, 1991).

Hence, the practices of vendors in the night market, their interpretation of their spaces along the rules set by the LGU, the vendors' relations with their family and fellow members, and their reflections with the bombing incident have contributed to the conditioning of actions and decisions that uniquely subsists in Roxas Night Market. In construing the night market as practiced space, the street vendors have shown that the place is a site of learning new skills, testing old abilities, and carving identities within the shifting and changing urban landscapes of the city.

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