Recognizing Frames and Constructing Realities:

The Implications of the Integration of Actual, Virtual and Augmenting Realities of the Optical Mediascape of Quiapo

By

Brian S. Bantugan

Introduction

Quiapo, in the Philippines, has long been associated with folk culture and much of it revolves around the Catholic Quiapo Church. Wikipedia describes it first and foremost as "a well known district of old Manila, Philippines, and a place which offers cheap prices on items ranging from electronics to native handicrafts," a home of the Black Nazarene, and the seat of the politically historical Plaza Miranda (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quiapo) where an "army of fortune tellers and stores offering herbal products" ply their services and products, respectively. It's glory as a center of "trade, fashion, art, higher learning and the elites of Manila" slowly faded away after the construction of the Light Rail Transit that darkened the main street, Rizal Boulevard, and the surrounding commercial districts of Avenida, Binondo, Sta. Cruz, Escolta.

But Quiapo Church is no longer the sole cultural center of Quiapo. The Golden Mosque of the Muslims on the other side of Quezon Boulevard, just across Quiapo Church, has also become a center of a distinct culture that is more linked to media and digital economy. The emergence of this "other" side of Quiapo brought about by the proliferation of the optical media economy now renders it a case that goes beyond

traditionalism. Its optical media-driven economy has already transformed a local landscape and economy. Aside from "bandits", Wikipedia identified "piracy" as "the biggest problem underlying the district" as its public streets have become open markets of "pirated movies, software and pornographic videos" (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quiapo). However, this "new" criminalized Quiapo is no longer bound to a physical space. Its boundaries now stretch far to the unlimited virtual spaces of the World Wide Web. Its reality has evolved.

With the "digitalizing" Quiapo, new territories for investigation should emerge. But what are those territories? This study hopes to start the navigation of this fast expanding domain. While studies in new media have started exploring the new ways by which identities are constructed by human beings, this study explores the expanse of the Quiapo's new identity which includes virtual representations that mediate its reality to others in new ways. By so doing, it is expected to redefine one's understanding of the place, and as a consequence, change one's paradigm of culture that has long been attached to geographically bound communities.

This research hopes to help redirect attention away from such prejudicial modes of thinking, at the very least, if not help change perceptual lenses. Recognizing that with the Internet new ways of knowing have become available, and digital technology has created a new economy that is bound to affect culture, new areas of investigation have now become apparent in studying a place such as the optical media landscape of Quiapo. This research was intended to expand the territories of investigations related to the place.

The research was also conducted to document the ongoing evolution of what has generally been perceived as that part of Manila that refuses to change. A lot of online

articles related to Quiapo, so far, have mostly been in the area of traditional practices and folk Catholicism (especially those attached to the Nazareno or Black Nazarene) which have helped propagate the image of Quiapo as the last bastion of religious traditionalism in Manila. Meanwhile, Venida's (2002) research which presented Quiapo's old infrastructure and architecture called for a preservation and restoration of such heritage structures to help revitalize its commercial and tourist potentials. A search of "Quiapo realities" in Google revealed that a journalist like Shiela Coronel (in her Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism blog *o*n 25 December 2005), on the other hand, has helped represent Quiapo as a gate to "the depths of human misery and hopelessness" (www.pcij.org/blog/?p=554) that brings out the need for "a social contract that is premised on the right of every citizen to the fundamentals of a decent life and on a more equitable sharing of the wealth our country produces" (www.pcij.org/blog/?p=859). These and more help create the presence of Quiapo in cyberspace which pushes its boundaries as a reality.

This study therefore attempts to account for what is still ignored and unconstructed about Quiapo. It hopes to shed light on an ongoing phenomenon that has often been dismissed as significant only in relation to "piracy." Recognizing that the issue of piracy has only further tarnished the image of Quiapo and aggravated the stigma of Muslims, the study was deemed necessary to provide an alternative approach to capturing the same criminalized side of Quiapo. But more than a simple description of a less-prejudicial image, it recognizes the impact of digital technology not only in shaping an actual place but also new spaces of interaction that are linked to the former. In the tackling of both physical space and new spaces (specifically cyberspace) where the

former can also thrive, Quiapo is taken to a new level of existence made possible only by a recognition of a new way of knowing, that is, through the Internet. To accomplish these goals, the study should describe the broader reality of Quiapo's optical media market by describing its natural state, surfacing and cataloguing the variety of information that construct its virtual reality and uncovering how major search engines in the World Wide Web are framing and augmenting the former and the latter for others.

The research aims to describe Quiapo at two levels and the processes that make those descriptions possible – the physical dimensions and its its cyberspace extensions that make it accessible to more people here and abroad. However, due to the illicit, although, open transactions of the optical media trade in Quiapo, the modes of inquiry that require person-to-person exchange between a participant in (what government considers) illegal trade and a "stranger" researcher would not only be difficult but also questionable. On the one hand, the researcher will always be suspected by the dealer in any direct and probing investigation. On the other hand, any information divulged by the latter will be questionable in its transparency if there is no complete trust in the former. Thus, the mode of investigation deemed appropriate for the situation was the covert observation approach. A recorded covert interview was deemed by the researcher as unethical and was therefore not utilized. As a result of not having any consenting dealer as interviewee due to various considerations, no quotes or narratives from any dealer may be found in the study. Only observations made and recorded discreetly within ethical standards were included.

Meanwhile, sources that construct Quiapo in cyberspace covered only the first pages resulting from web searches in the two major search engines in the Philippines –

Google and Yahoo! The limitation to the first pages was deemed necessary since the time constraint of the research did not make a random sampling of the web results and a specific quota of samples from web search results possible. The restriction to the two search engines was considered adequate since they are the main access of Filipinos to Quiapo online. Their wide coverage and popularity could sufficiently account for constructions of Quiapo that reach farthest and, consequently, have more impact. However, it should not be expected that they could sufficiently represent Quiapo in all of cyberspace.

The study is deemed significant to Quiapo because this will give an updated and less discriminatory representation of its often criminalized area. It would also be able to represent the more modern Quiapo that has found itself working synergistically with its long-standing economic structures. Thus, the study would be a way by which Quiapo could be perceived with a more humanistic and realistic than legalistic or romantic perspective. It is also significant to communication research because it provides alternatives in data gathering that can be applied in a problematic site such as Quiapo. Knowing that the culture of the optical media area of Quiapo is tinged with a combination of aggressive and cautious marketing, trust and suspicion between Muslim and non-Muslim interactants, and commercial and religious persuasions, it has been able to explore ethical modes of data gathering that is less intrusive but also respectful of existing cultures. It may also be valuable to individual communication researchers because the new paradigm used in the study may serve as a new starting point in other areas appropriate for communication research. With new ways of knowing through the Internet, it is but necessary to find new areas of investigation in what others would

consider “tired” subjects such as Quiapo. Hopefully, the research would be able to encourage other researchers to look upon old research subjects with new, if not better, perceptual lenses.

The understanding of how search engines frame and construct reality also has great significance in beginning to understand how new media is able to change the way human beings perceive natural phenomenon through a more democratized environment for communication. Not only will it reveal new venues for discourse, it will also uncover discourses that have to be dealt with if authentic development through enlightenment is to be achieved.

Review of Related Literature

The Nature of Reality. There are three positions arguing on the nature of reality. The first considers reality as hidden or illusory (Albert Einstein in www.chemistrycoach.com/nature_of_reality.htm). The evasiveness of reality can be spotted in the view that it is not what is experienced but what is impressed upon a person as a result of the experience. Here, reality has become more variable and has become a subjective rather than an objective existence. Rather than a human-independent phenomenon, reality is taken as humanly-determined. However, the limitless variations make reality a universal experience that has no singular quality.

The second position claims that reality is attainable. Finding reality is inevitable because the world freely reveals itself (Kafka) and is an omnipresent (Robert Linssen) experience (Siren Kirkegaard) common to all (Heraclitus) but is independent of anyone’s belief in it (Phillip C. Dick) (www.chemistrycoach.com/nature_of_reality.htm). Therefore, it is accessible and not elusive.

The third position is that reality cannot be agreed on. Reality is only one of the many worlds of consciousness (William James) or appearances (Aesop) that are not always what they seem (Phaedrus), if not infinite (William Blake), and can never be handled in its totality by a single person (C.S. Lewis). Thus, how can many find a unified version of reality (Douglas, McDaniel and Alexander) from a collection of mere inferences or hypotheses (Eddington)? (www.chemistrycoach.com/nature_of_reality.htm).

The study's concern for the nature of reality stems from a need to define reality that integrates the new media platform that brings forth new typologies of reality. It is upon a paradigm of reality that is able to incorporate cyberspace that the research hopes to establish the new realities of Quiapo knowing that it will have a clear impact on how issues will be perceived, understood and responded to with the help of new media technologies.

Constructions of Reality. One can infer Matthew's (1994 in Rusbult, C., n.d.) statement that there exist two realities – **theoretical reality** and **actual reality** which exist in the frame of human consciousness. The Correspondence Definition of reality implies that every theoretical reality corresponds to an actual reality and that the former is a human attempt to explain or describe actual reality as a conceptual construction. It is when a theory corresponds with actuality that **truth claims** are constituted. By virtue of an understanding of the phenomenon of binary opposites, one is easily led to say that a **non-truth claim** can also be constituted and account for the **fictional reality** recognized by human consciousness. The reality of truth and non-truth claims, however, exists

within the domain of **humanly constructed reality**, which is dependent on the human experience of **human-independent reality**. The latter can exist without the former.

Realities in a Man-Machine Society. In the age of digital information and communication technologies, the interaction between the human beings and their machine have gained considerable interest from various fields. Tomic-Kulodrovic, Petric and Mitrovic (2002) in **Mixed Reality or One Reality: A Socio-Semiotic Approach to Hybrid Multi-agent Environments** highlighted the "hybrid society" which implies "the existence of a society developing as a result of a social reality defined by machines and the social reality of human environment growing together into one."

This merging of the reality of the machine and the human being has been called "mixed reality" in more technical contexts. Canon Technology (2001 in Tomic-Kulodrovic, Petric and Mitrovic, 2002) defined it as a state where technology merges "the virtual world such as computer graphics, images generated in a computer and the real world as seamlessly as possible in real time." This mixed reality exists in an "augmented space" or the space where the real and the virtual are integrated perceptually.

However, the idea of a mixed reality connotes a confused and unintegrated reality. Augmented reality, meanwhile, presents actual reality to be lacking or insufficient – hence, the need for augmentation. Thus, the term "hybrid multi-agent environments" was proposed by Tomic-Kulodrovic, Petric and Mitrovic (2002) to "describe the context in which interactions between human agents and artificial autonomous agents take place" (jasss.soc.surrey.ac.uk.5/1/6.html). As a consequence of such considerations, the notion of the hybrid multi-agent reality is made to consist of the human agent and the non-human agent that are brought together as a single unified reality by an "augmenting"

reality rather than augmented reality. Although "human agents and artificial agents operate from two different (technically and perceptually defined) environments… the 'social reality' emerging from their interaction is 'one'," according to Tomic-Kulodrovic, Petric and Mitrovic (2002).

The Reality Continuum. Milgram, Takemura, Utsumi and Kishino (1994) in **Augmented Reality: A Class of Displays on Reality-Virtuality Continuum** pursued the notion of augmented reality, which is more appropriately called here as the hybrid multi-agent reality, as a continuum. The reality-virtuality continuum, which is better understood here as the **actuality-virtuality continuum** (since virtuality also lies within the social reality), consists of **totally unmodelled world** at one end and the **completely modeled world** at the other end, respectively. Everything between the two are **partially modeled worlds**. In what they labeled as the Extent of World Knowledge (EWK) actuality is defined as a case in which concrete objects are directly viewed and acted upon while virtuality is a case perceived and engaged in only as a result of total simulation of things based on actuality or otherwise.

Augmenting reality is a synthetic reality – a reality that synthesizes variables from the actual and virtual world into a unified whole. This synthetic reality is a domain where actual reality is augmented with virtual reality and/or virtual reality is augmented with actual reality. However, the lack of any clear idea where augmented reality (actuality) or augmented virtuality exactly begins or ends makes the gradations or transition less identifiable that is theoretically claimed by Milgram, Drascic, Grodski, Restogi, Zhai and Zhou (1995). I**t is now evident that the new reality of Quiapo, which this study hopes to describe, can only approximate actual reality and the augmenting realities.**

Whether there exists a completely virtual Quiapo, however, is still something that remains to be explored or verified.

The Hyper-reality Model. Romero and Correia (2003) in **HyperReal: A Hypermedia Model for Mixed Reality** presented a generic hypermedia model which is useful in creating context-aware and mixed reality applications. Prior to the model, they recognized that most of the present interactive systems is driven by hypermedia processes and the search for a new model comes from a realization that –

> "… the introduction of new devices and media types and the integration of the physical space in the application design, taking location and user preferences into account, leads to the need of new ways to structure information. New approaches should take advantage of the tools that were developed previously while integrating the new paradigms. Hypermedia provides powerful mechanisms for structuring and navigating large quantities of information. As this information is presented in different physical and virtual locations, using multiple media, hypermedia models should take this into account. " (p. 2)

This brings to light the current evolution in representation in the context of evolving technologies and diversifying information. As people rely more and more on the Internet and other interactive technologies to access information necessary for decision-making, the more the world is constructed in the actual world through the virtual constructions present in the augmenting realities of the hybrid multi-agent reality of everyday life. More and more, the navigation into the domain of the augmenting reality is becoming part of actual reality. Romero and Correia (2003), seeing the value of the continuously expanding augmenting reality, proposed the incorporation of the **Dexter Reference Model** in the navigation and construction of the hypermedia. As a structuring mechanism, the Dexter's Model identifies "a flexible access mechanism to combine entities present in physical/virtual spaces with related information in a hypermedia graph.

Briganti (n.d.) in **Advanced Technologies: Towards a Future Paradigm of Thinking and Representing Reality in ODL Literature Studies,** while discussing the synaesthetic culture of the post-Galilean age, claimed that the new technological paradigm, (focused on the New Technologies of Information) "gives new physicalness to virtual reality, that becomes possible, symbolic and linguistic, immaterial" and, "following Kuhn and the principles of the cognitive society," (Burman, 2002 in Briganti, 2006) facilitates "the emergence of a new identity and a new view of the Universe… characterized by a perpetual and cyclic renovation (that is)… fluid in the online use" (De Kerckhove and Bermejo, A., 2005 in Briganti, 2006). Hence, in the post-Galilean age of an epochal paradigm shift, interactivity and multimedia hypertext are able to change "deeply all the cognitive faculties of the user" (De Kerckhove, 2005 in Briganti, 2006) which are crucial in socially changing humanly-constructed reality. With the same conviction, Cheser (1994) stated, "Virtual reality affects the outside world and not the inside world. Virtual reality creates a new objective level of reality."

Community as Hyper-Social Reality. Van Fenema and Go (2003:3) in **Dispersed Communities: Weaving Collective and Individual Life, Fact and Fiction, Mediated and Direct Spatial Experiences** asserted that "the relatively new phenomenon called virtual community aggregates members, content, and member profiles through electronic media… Just like collocated communities, virtual communities have the capacity to integrate and act as catalyst of dynamism in society." They added that this is possible when people from different sites integrate digital resources (MP3 files, video files, logs of community meetings, articles, letters and chat logs) in their collective artifacts (like hardware, mobile communications and computing, networks, softwares and

digital files) as part of their activities. However, an opposite but complementary process happens when cyberspace "absorbs cultural meanings to inform its own development" (Cheser, 1994). This two-way mediated experience, according to Van Fenema & Go (2003:6) can be either "goal-oriented (e.g. online gift shopping, professional knowledge sharing community) or experiential in nature (e.g. exploring the web in search of interesting site experiences)" for every person who "bridge their local lifeworld with a shared digital space" (Ancona,1992 in Van Fenema & Go, 2003:6).

Stanoevska-Slabeva (2002 in Van Fenema & Go, 2003) pointed out that virtual communities appear as either 'discussion communities' or those that exist around communication software and 'task and goal-oriented communities' or those that can propagate without community building processes. These 'complex meeting spaces' (Van Fenema & Go, 2003), both a hybrid multi-agent social space and a hybrid network or community space that "constitute unique and dynamic lifeworlds" (Dougherty, 1990 and Habermas, 1984 in Van Fenema & Go, 2003:10) where "**people interact and make sense of their perceptions**" (Weick, 1993 in Van Fenema & Go, 2003:11).

Study Framework

Ontological. This research tries to account for what is or anything that has to do with reality. It attempts to know the classes of entities that constitute a complete description and explanation of all goings-on (Smith and Welty, 2001), maybe not in the universe, but in the newly emerging Quiapo. Compared to the colonial Quiapo most of the people now are aware of, its new face has just surfaced from an unnoticed, if not ignored, abyss of the digital wave. Smith and Welty, declared, "… in recent years, ontology has become intertwined with the development of artificial intelligence and

information systems science" (p.2). The efforts of knowledge engineers, conceptual modelers or domain modelers at declarative representations that are as general as possible and able to represent the objects and processes that it should correspond to is not so different from what this study aims to arrive at – a better approximation of what Quiapo has become.

However, this study does not attempt to "catalogue" (Sowa, 1984 in Smith and Welty, 2001:3), "list everything that exists" (McCarthy, 1980 in Smith and Welty, 2001:3) in Quiapo. More precisely, it is more complex in that it hopes to produce a preliminary collection of frames – a point between collection of taxonomies and a set of general logical constraints that is bound to happen with more automated reasoning.

Epistemological. According to DeRose (2005), the central question of epistemology is - "Under what conditions does a subject know something to be the case?" But this is not exactly the target of the research. What the study wishes to attain is sociology of knowledge because it is specifically more concerned with the "relationship between human thought and the social context in which it arises" (ssr1.uchicago.edu/PRELIMS/Culture/cumisc1.html).

The knowledge in everyday life, upon which temporal social realities are built are independent of one's apprehension of it. It is complex in that coexistent temporalities are correlated at different levels. Hence, social realities are also patterned, especially if they are routinary, and are typified – the sum of which result to the social structure. Knowledge, whose meanings are carried by language, is made accessible by **(1) everyone's participation in society, (2) the structure of relevance they manifest as a result and (3) how the socially available stock of knowledge is distributed.**

The theory recognizes that society has an objective reality that results from institutionalization through activities of participants that are habitualized in the context of social roles, the dialectic relationship between individuals and the social world (that manifest society as a human product, society as an objective reality and man as a social product), and the legitimization of the former when the logic (a socially available stock of knowledge) is taken as an "objective truth then internalized as a subjective reality" (ssr1.uchicago.edu/PRELIMS/Culture/cumisc1.html).

At the operational level, one could construct the 'digitalizing' Quiapo from realities that have been perceived by many who have virtual lives, stored in virtual reality, and re-presented in the virtual-actual interface. The construction, by this research, however, must be seen also as a function of perception, but that which is triangulated by an accounting of realities that exist beyond the plane of geography. Figure 1 depicts the role of the researcher in trying to encompass the greater reality of the "digitalizing" Quiapo but bound within certain human constraints.

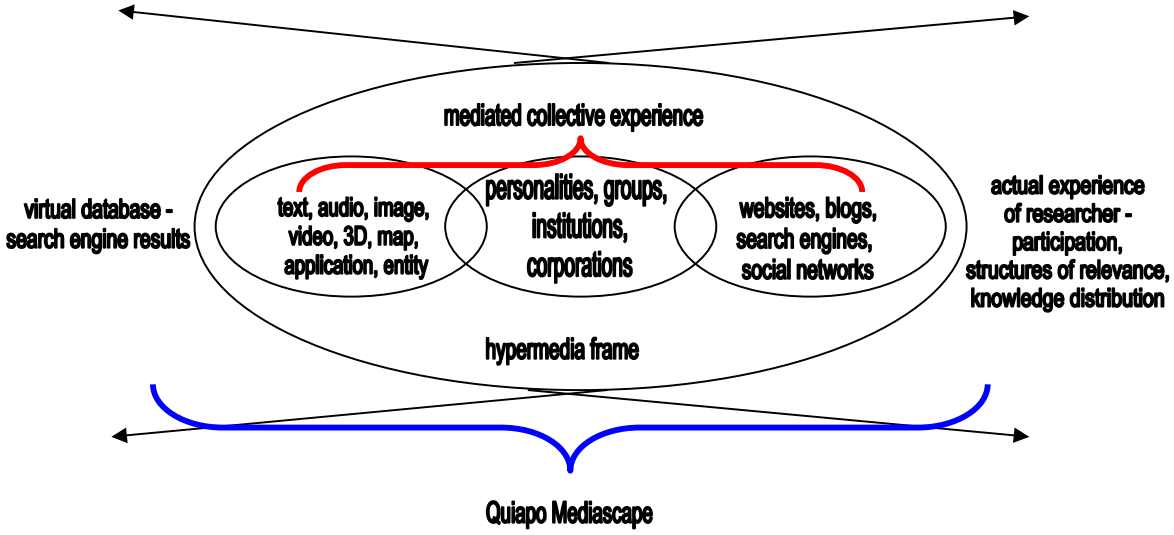

Figure 1. Operational Framework in the Construction of Digitalizing Quiapo

To arrive at the mediascape description of the "digitalizing Quiapo, one must consider the researcher's personal experience in the place, virtual spaces where Quiapo is present and interfaces where virtual spaces are made relevant to actual realities or places.

Methodology

Using a descriptive method to describe the augmenting and actual reality that expand the boundaries of the Quiapo mediascape, the study used a qualitative research design. The first design included actual visits and explorations in the selected area with accompanying covert methods of documentation to arrive a multi-layered (multi-sensory) description of the physical domains. The second design involved an exploration of dominant cyberspace domains that make Quiapo's mediascape manifest to more people who are not able to visit it yet. This meant downloading the most easily accessible resources online to be able to arrive at a databank necessary for analytical processing at any time during the research period. It was deemed more appropriate, though, to undertake the actual visit before the online search to prevent the researcher's perception or judgment from being unduly influenced by the cyberspace materials that are already framed by other people's personal visits to the location. Thus, the design required a sequential ordering of two separate or independent qualitative approaches.

Actual Visit. Using a purposive sampling technique, the researcher identified via an initial ocular visit the areas in Quiapo where optical media trade occurs and is more concentrated on a regular basis. They are also areas where photographic digital recording could be undertaken discreetly. The areas that have been selected were the streets of Hidalgo, its two other parallel streets that are closer to Quiapo bridge or the Golden Mosque, and two streets crossing it and parallel to and a block or two away Quezon

Boulevard. Hidalgo street is marked by major three fastfood chains, namely, Greenwich, Chowking and Jollibee while the two perpendicular streets are made noticeable by stores like HBC and Ministop.

The rounds of streets and buildings in the selected area were done repeatedly during three different days: one Saturday, one Sunday and one Thursday. The researcher played the role of a passive explorer rather than an active participant in the optical media trade to maintain a more reflective disposition while going through the different areas. After visiting each building where optical media trade was ongoing, the researcher retreated to a table in Chowking or Jollibee along Hidalgo street to write down observations during the walk around. During the rounds, the researcher covertly documented activities using an MP3 player/recorder located in his pants' front side pocket. Before and after each round, the researcher shot digital photos of activities perceptible from his retreat location

Digital Photoshoot. Three days in February and March were chosen as the day of visit. Each visit started at 9 a.m. and ended at 9 p.m. The 2nd floor of Chowking along Hidalgo street and near the entrance to the Quiapo underpass was used as stop-over area by the researcher. In the said location, the researcher took photos from two angles – one point looking down on Hidalgo street, and the other point looking down on the perpendicular street. Shots were taken between 10 a.m. (mid-morning) and 4 p.m. (mid-afternoon) on February 4, 2007 (Saturday) and February 11, 2007 (Sunday). The first shooting was focused on streets, buildings and communicative materials found in the area. The second shoot, meanwhile, of the same detail from another vantage point - on

the 2nd floor of Jollibee at a point facing Chowking. The last day of shoot on March 1, 2007 took photos of evening activities.

Digital Audio-Recording. Since no formal interview or note-taking simultaneous to the exploratory rounds by the researcher would be appropriate, audio-recording via an unnoticeable MP3 player/recorder was implemented. And yet, the recording was not meant to document simulated or research-motivated transactions between the researcher and a dealer or another customer. Its use was intended to capture a reality that was not disturbed by the researcher's presence or passing by. It was a recording by a researcher of a situation where he became a non-entity. Note-taking was done after a round of each building was accomplished. It was done by replaying the recording and noticing sounds that helped mark certain characteristics that describe or render unique the area visited.

Word Wide Web Search. The study used "quiapo optical media" and "quiapo dvd" as search phrases in the Google and Yahoo! search engines. The said phrases were used to limit search results to the data about Quiapo directly linked with optical media trade. Google and Yahoo! are currently the most widely used search engines all over the world, including the Philippines, and as such were judged by the researcher as the most influential in constructing Quiapo to people all over the world and the most instrumental in making such constructions highly accessible at any time. An additional search in Wikimapia was sought, using "Quiapo Manila" as search keywords, for a look of maps that capture the selected area. In all these searches, only the entries in the first search results page were taken as samples. No searches were conducted in other search engines due the limitation in time of data processing and the complexity of other data like videos

that may arise from more specific searches in Youtube. Hence, the phrase "preliminary construction" in the study's title.

Web Searches. To locate the mediascape of Quiapo in cyberspace, the researcher went online on February 26, 2007 (between 12 noon and 1 p.m.) via Google and Yahoo! search engines for websites and images directly related to Quiapo's mediascape, and Wikimapia for maps that are linked to Quiapo, in general. Only the entries found in the first page of each search engine results (using 'Quiapo optical media' and 'Quiapo dvd') were saved for later printing. Meanwhile, for the Wikimapia search, printscreen images of the map, each displaying unique descriptive notes as the cursor is pointed to selected sections of Quiapo, were similarly saved and printed. The non-inclusion of video which was identified by the Dexter Hypermedia model was deliberately done in recognition of the complexity of audio-visual materials which cannot be processed given the allotted time.

Data Construction and Analysis. The data gathered from the different instruments were sorted to answer the specific objective set by the research. Designed as a triangulation in data construction, the photos and audio recording acquired from the site visits and the websites that emerged from the searches in Google, Yahoo! and Wikimapia were processed such that the actual, virtual and augmenting reality of the optical mediascape of Quiapo would be constructed separately and later correlated from a qualitative approach. The research designed the following approaches to data analysis to arrive at the three realities sought.

Epistemological Synthetic Construction. For the site visits and rounds, the different digitally recorded audio and photographic information, were used to help

describe the actual reality of the optical mediascape of Quiapo via the P.L.A.C.E. concept posited by posited by Cardenal (2003). It was implemented "to understand… the spirit of a place that makes it different other sites or areas… (through) a systematic assessment of the biophysical as well as the psychosocial surroundings." The concept is an acronym for people, landscape, artifacts, context and events. Starting with photographic data, the research described the place using the five elements that constitute P.L.A.C.E. The same approach was done using audio data at jumping board. Then, the description were further processed by threshing out everyone's participation in the place, the structure of relevance that are manifested by the interactions and how the socially available stock of knowledge is distributed among the participants, consistent with the principles of the Social Construction of Reality. As such, it acquired an epistemological perspective.

Ontological Textual Analysis. To construct the virtual reality of the optical mediascape of Quiapo, the websites in the first page that surfaced after each search in Google, Yahoo!, and Wikimapia were broken down into the basic components (text, image, audio, video, 3D, map, application and entity, if any). Then, the components in each website were brought together with those of other websites to constitute a sample of a section of the virtual reality sought. The different sections, constructed as a collective under each component typology, were synthesized and constructed as a part of the breadth of the virtual reality of the mediascape of Quiapo.

Hermeneutic Frame Analysis. To arrive at the augmenting reality, the websites that came up in each first page of a websearch were classified according to particular "common interests" and as such were representative of unique agendas in cyberspace. Such agenda frames the use of the different components found within the realm of the

virtual reality Quiapo's optical mediascape. Thus, the aim was to arrive at the "frame" or the context in the use of such components. After this basic frame analysis, the identified frames were grouped to constitute the sub-frames of each search engine frame (secondary frame). The synthesis of all the search engine frames (tertiary frame) makes up the augmenting reality of Quiapo's optical mediascape. The approach is considered hermeneutic since it was aimed at reading text using a particular context (or frame).

Phenomenological Construction of Total Reality. The research utilized phenomenology as the appropriate approach to synthesize the three distinct realities of the Quiapo optical mediascape in aid of constructing the total reality. As "a theoretical orientation… it (phenomenology) does not generate deductions from propositions that can be empirically tested (but) operates more on a metasociological level, demonstrating its premises through descriptive analyses of the procedures of self-, situational, and social constitution. Through its demonstrations, audiences apprehend the means by which phenomena, originating in human consciousness, come to be experienced as features of the world" (Orleans, n.d.).

Results

The research revealed that the actual reality of Quiapo's optical mediascape is most concentrated in five dominantly zoned trade areas which reaches it peak operations after 4 p.m in the weekends. It is a configuration of social interactions and active and passive business transactions that manifest acceptance and support of the optical media trade which the government considers illegal, both on the side of the dealers and the buyers. It is a place that is transformed into a total media experience for adults and children but is still an elusive subject to capture using digital technology. The results also

showed that the virtual reality of Quiapo's optical mediascape is a conglomeration of a variety of textual information that are often attached to commercial, legal and personal identities. Finally, the two major search engines sort or frame information in virtual reality using typologies that (1) reflect niching for their respective sites, (2) their closer affiliation with certain institutions that construct the subject using subjective experiences of people and (3) anchor definitions of keywords that link to the optical mediascape of Quiapo differently.

Conclusion

The study exposed that the optical mediascape of Quiapo is largely independent of the old Quiapo Church driven economy and morals. The mediascape is more than just a space at the physical plane, but even more, a conflict domain that is constructed by subjective notions, interests and satisfactions of people with personal and institutional convictions. Google and Yahoo! are more than just search engines – they are framing machineries driven by marketing, politics and culture-bound definitions of keywords crucial in searching, finding and constructing entities like the optical mediascape of Quiapo.

Implications to Development

The study emphasizes the need to understand formerly geographically bound phenomenon or concepts using parameters that include virtual and augmenting realities. The new media environment and optical media commerce that has now changed the economy and landscape of Quiapo, currently challenge its old associations with folk

religiosity and livelihood. It forces a paradigm that looks upon it as a discursive arena than a mere physical space where culture can occur.

With a new perspective on a social condition, new ways of looking at its problems and issues emerge. New solutions are also bound to arise from these new considerations. Piracy alone is bound to be questioned as concepts like citizenship or identity have already been challenged. If the optical mediascape of Quiapo is bound to culture, then "piracy" is a testament to Filipino culture. To abide by current definitions of piracy is to condemn the culture that allows it to flourish in a place that is identified with religious morality. Or should it be understood as a social behavior that negates old business models that no longer apply in a new media environment? Will blogs give an insight into such a behavior? It seems likely based on the number of blogs that advocate more appreciation and support for the optical mediascape of Quiapo.

As digital media products become more common household items with the help of optical mediascape of Quiapo, lifestyles change. Movie houses die but the demand and appreciation for storytelling remain as strong as ever. The claim that cinematic art is dying is no longer a valid claim. Though the movie industry is no longer earning from the theaters – it's indirectly benefiting from film viewing in the homes. Hence, the movie industry is hardly struggling to survive. It is well and alive among the people though it is a lost cause among profit-oriented producers of the big screen. When films are relocated to the domestic arena, the audiences are no longer as glued to a movie for other domestic concerns get a portion of the viewer attention pie during a viewing period. When the spectacle diminishes, the spectator is released from captivity. The remote control allows the domestic film viewer to call the shots. The viewer is no longer

bound to a theater seat for two hours. The subversion accomplished by Quiapo optical mediascape is the subversion of the old and greedy film capitalist. Should we still look at Quiapo, then, with the same "piracy" lens still?

As students realize the framing power of the search engines they use in scholarly work, the more they are encouraged to critic accessible materials online and balance any information accessed in one source with that found in another. To learn to critique and weigh the value of information given by cyberspace is to learn to do the same with any other media. Any education graduate will recognize this as a success in the development of a higher cognitive skill that is critical in management and leadership positions. Learning to question the media decenters power in the media environment from the networks and conglomerates to the readers and audiences. Media is forced to be more competitive by becoming more responsible and reliable in the quality of information they provide.

Clearly, there is much to benefit from in the development arena by encouraging the consideration of all realities as one is faced to resolve issues and provide solutions that will impact the most people. There is no doubt that a better ontological sense and epistemological anchor leads to a better understanding of the world and the human condition. It is therefore, highly recommended that educational institutions mandate that students be taught how to sieve through the limitless information and institutional agenda found in cyberspace and critic old notions and constructs about an experience or phenomenon using new augmenting platforms. A knowledge of the multiple and sometimes conflicting discourses found in the new media is bound to develop

information managers that are more responsible and less at the mercy of any single medium or source, especially, in the context of decision making that can impact many.

Bibliography

Briganti, A. (2006). Advanced Technologies. Towards a Future Paradigm of Thinking and Representing Reality in ODL Literature Studies. Retrieved from http://www.openlit.gr/proceedings/Briganti.pdf on March 11, 2007

Cardenal, J. (2003). The P.L.A.C.E. concept towards a phenomenological approach to environmental assessment: A case study of the Manila CBD in Quiapo and Sta. Cruz. QC: U.P. Diliman.

Cheser, C. (n.d.). Colonizing Virtual Reality: Construction of the Discourse of Virtual Reality, 1984-1992. Cultronix. Volume 1 (1), 1994. Retrieved from http://eng.hss.cmu.edu/cultronix/cheser/ on March 13, 2007.

Milgram, P., Twkemura, H., Utsumi, A. and F. Kishino (1994). "Augmented Reality; A Class of Displays on the Reality-Virtuality Continuum. *SPIE, Telemanipulator and Telepresence Technologies* Vol. 2351 (pp. 282-292). Retrieved from http://gypsy.rose.toronto.ca/publication/1994/Milgram_Takemura_SPIE1994.pdf on March 11, 2007.

Milgram, P. Drascic, D., Grodski, J. Restogi, A. Zhai, S. and C. Zhou (1995). Merging Real and Virtual Worlds. Retrieved from gypsy.rose.utoronto.ca/people/david_dir/IMAGINA95/Imagina95.full.html on March 11, 2007.

Orleans, M. (n.d.) Phenomenology. Retrieved from http://hss.fullerton.edu./sociology/orleans/phenomenology.htm on March 25, 2007.

Orleans, M. (n.d.) Phenomenology. Retrieved from http://hss.fullerton.edu./sociology/orleans/phenomenology.htm on March 25, 2007.

Romero, L. and N. Correia (2003). HperReal: A Hypermedia Model of Mized Reality. HT '03, August 26-30, 2003 (pp. 2-9).

Rusbult, C. (n.d.) "Reality 101: Basic Concepts of Reality, Truth and Theory. Retrieved from http://www.asa3.org/ASA/education/views/reality.htm on February 26, 2007.

Smith, B. and C. Welty. (2001). Ontology: Towards a New Synthesis. FOIS '01, October

17-19, 2001, Ogumquit, Maine, USA. Retrieved from http://www.cs,vassar.edu/faculty/welty/papers/fois-intro.pdf on March 13, 2007.

Tomic-Kulodrovic, I., Petricm, M. and I. Mitrovic. (2002). "Mixed Reality or One Reality: A Socio-semiotic Approach to Hybrid Multiagent Environments. Retrieved from http://jasss.soc.surrey.ac.uk.5/1/6.html on February 26, 2007.

Vallino, J. (2002). Introduction to Augmented Reality. Retrieved from http://www.se.rit.edu/~jrv/research/ar/introduction.html on March 17, 2007.

Van Fenema, P. C. and F. Go (2003). Dispersed Communities: Weaving Collective and Individual Life, Fact and Fiction, Mediated and Direct Spatial Experiences. Retrieved from http://home.hetnet.nl/~pcvf/Publications/Paul%20C%20van%20Fenema%20Frank%20Go%20%20Virtual%20Communities.pdf on March 13, 2007.

Venida, V. S. (2002). "Conflicts Over Heritage: The Case of Quiapo. In Torres-Reyes, Ma. Luisa F. (ed.). (2002) *Kritika Kultura: An Electronic Journal of Literary/Cultural and Language Studies*. No. 2, December 2002. Retrieved from http://www.ateneo.edu/kritikakultura/kk02.pdf on March 11, 2007.

"Quiapo." Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quiapo on March 11, 2007

"Quiapo Realities." Retrieved from http://www.pcij.org/blog/?p=554 on March 11, 2007

http://www.pcij.org/blog/?p=859

http://www.chemistrycoach.com/nature_of_reality.htm

http://www.ssr1.uchicago.edu/PRELIMS/Culture/cumisc1.html

Brian Bantugan is currently the Institutional Research Officer of St. Paul University Manila. He is a Director of the Association of Pacific Rim Universities Doctoral Students' Network Executive Committee and a member of the European Network for Cinema and Media Studies, Asia Media Information and Communication Centre, Philippine Association of Communication Educators, Art Association of the Philippines and Green Peace Southeast Asia.