IAN MORLEY

Remodelling to Prepare for Independence

THE PHILIPPINE COMMONWEALTH, DECOLONISATION, CITIES AND PUBLIC WORKS, C. 1935–46

ROUTLEDGE RESEARCH IN PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN

ROUTLEDGE

Remodelling to Prepare for Independence

Remodelling to Prepare for Independence: The Philippine Commonwealth, Decolonisation, Cities and Public Works, c. 1935–46 illuminates the implications of the USA's final phase of colonial rule in the Philippine Islands. It explores the Filipino side of decolonisation and the management of the built environment in the years immediately prior to self-rule.

This book shakes off the collaboration vs. resistance paradigm that empire histories generally follow and consequently yields an original vantage point to comprehend transition within an Asian society in the years immediately prior to, during, and after World War Two. This will not only deepen insight of the American Empire, but also grants the opportunity to tie Philippine political-cultural change to the global history of urban planning's advancement. Accordingly, it opens a new window to rethink Filipino ethno-history and societal evolution, alongside the opportunity to compare the Philippines with other nations that undertook planning projects as part of their decolonisation process and early-postcolonial advancement. The book utilises theoretical frames in order to help creatively excavate the era 1935–46 for the purpose of not just revealing what public works occurred, but to also uncover what those projects meant to the Commonwealth Government, the BPW's staff, and the public who benefitted from public works projects.

The book will be relevant to students and researchers of Urban History, Asian and American (Empire) History, and Imperial and Colonial Studies. Architects, planners, and members of the public who are interested in the form and meaning of urban environments designed/constructed in the past will also find the publication to be of great interest.

Ian Morley is an Associate Professor based in the Department of History at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. A graduate of the Centre for Urban History, Leicester University, UK, and the School of Architectural Studies, University of Sheffield, UK, he has published widely on the American colonial urban environment in the Philippines. The former book review editor for *Urban Morphology: Journal of the International Seminar on Urban Form*, he is currently the Vice President of the International Planning History Society. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, Royal Asiatic Society, and Royal Society of Arts.

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Designed cover image: Quezon Memorial in Quezon City.
Photographed by Ian Morley.

First published 2024
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-032-48334-4 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-48537-9 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-003-38954-5 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003389545

Typeset in Times New Roman
by KnowledgeWorks Global Ltd.

Contents

Illustrations

Tables

Acknowledgements

Many persons and organisations have played crucial roles in enabling this book to be composed. Firstly, I am extremely grateful to the support given by the Research Grants Council (RGC) of Hong Kong. I am indebted to the RGC for their generous funding of my work via a General Research Fund Grant (number 2110367) in 2020. The issuing of funding by the RGC, notwithstanding travel limitations during the Covid-19 pandemic, granted the opportunity to visit numerous archives in the Philippines during 2022 and 2023, and to employ a full-time research assistant. In this regard, an enormous debt of thanks must be issued to Mar Ticao for her investment in my study, and for her capacity to open windows so that primary sources hitherto inaccessible to me in Hong Kong could be utilised within the frame of the research inquiry. Equally, a debt of gratitude must be given to Claudia Montero who, through personal contacts in the Philippines, permitted me access to archival holdings despite regulations limiting admission to public institutions during the aforesaid pandemic. Thank you, Mar and Claudia!

It would be wholly imprudent of me to not show my sincere appreciation to the staff at Routledge who, from 2022 onwards, have given much positive encouragement as to the character/production of this book. In particular, thanks must be given to Meghna Rodborne and Caroline Church for their hands-on assistance. Moreover, appreciation must be given to staff at different universities and public agencies in the Philippines and Hong Kong. For example, without the assistance of those employed at the Rizal Library, the Microform and Digital Resources Center, and the American Historical Collection at Ateneo de Manila University, plus the Special Collections Section and Filipiniana staff at the University of the Philippines-Diliman Library, my capacity to gather historical data would have been greatly limited. Furthermore, I am very thankful to the input of staff at the Vargas Museum and Filipiniana Research Center, and the School of Urban and Regional Planning Library at the University of the Philippines-Diliman, the National Library of the Philippines, the National Heritage Commission of the Philippines, and the Department of Public Works and Highways. Besides, as much research was undertaken in Hong Kong gratitude must be extended to those working at the University Library and Architecture Library, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

In terms of project support, I am extremely thankful to the Management Board of the International Planning History Society for their encouragement during the

past years, I am grateful to Simon Wu for his Japanese translation work, Henry Johnson for proofreading drafts of this monograph and, as with my other books, I must acknowledge the role of the late Prof. Anthony Sutcliffe under whom I was fortunate to the introduced to the field of Planning History at Leicester University. What is more, with reference to my present place of employment, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, I would like to acknowledge the Department of History under the Chairmanship of Prof. Cheung Sui-wai. The support of the Department in limiting my teaching load during 2022–3 has been critical to the composing of this book, and the possibility to travel to the Philippines so as to utilise archival holdings.

As a final remark, I must convey deep appreciation to persons such as Joel Rico, Ambeth Ocampo, Raymundo Rovillos, Danny Gerona, Mic Manalo, Liliane Manahan, Michael Pante, etc., for helping expand my knowledge of the Philippine urban and cultural past, and I owe thanks to the many people who at International Planning History Society and the Society of American City and Regional Planning History conferences in 2022 offered feedback on my then incomplete research project. Likewise, without the support of friends in different countries, the road to completing this book would have been much challenging: thank you to you all for your friendship! And, to conclude, I wish to dedicate this book to my family – Alexandra, Anaé, and Emeline.

Ian Morley, June 2023

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1 Introduction

In broad terms, the colonial history of the Philippines is split into two distinct pieces. The first part relates to the Spanish era (1565–1898). Following the Spanish-American War of 1898 the second segment, the American period, commenced. It officially ended with the granting of Philippine independence in July 1946.[1] However, during the age when the United States (US) colonised Philippine society Japan's annexation occurred (1941–5), and a number of important cultural, legal, and political phases transpired. One such advancement took place in mid-November 1935. At that time the Commonwealth, a Filipino-run administration described as "for and by the people,"[2] was established. It was conceived to prepare the country for future self-rule.[3]

The founding of the Commonwealth Government was hugely symbolic. Owing to the US Congress passing the Tydings-McDuffie Act[4] on 24 March 1934, and with the decree being accepted by the Philippine Legislature on May 1 of that year, the Commonwealth's existence was to only be for about ten years.[5] At the Legislature's final session, held on 14 November 1935, the US Governor-General, Frank Murphy, commented that a new chapter in American-Filipino relations was about to begin: "The United States Government is now entrusting direct management of domestic affairs to the newly elected representatives of the Philippines people."[6] Notably as well, at the Commonwealth administration's inauguration ceremony in Manila on 15 November 1935, George H. Dern, the US Secretary of War, acknowledged: "This event is another landmark in your steady progress toward the fulfilment of your aspirations to be a completely independent sovereign nation – ultimately to be realized through the practical, cooperative efforts of two peoples imbued with the same ideals of liberty and self-government."[7]

As the final chapter of the US colonial narrative in the Philippines, and, in conjunction, a new highpoint in the decolonisation[8] process kick-started during the first decade of the twentieth century by the Filipinisation of the colonial bureaucracy,[9] the Commonwealth's establishment was a political means to an end. It was, said its first President, Manuel Quezon (1878–1944), an administrative instrument "placed in our hands to prepare ourselves fully for the responsibilities of complete independence."[10] Yet, of additional significance, the Commonwealth Government readily encouraged social progress and enlightenment: the welfare, happiness, and civil liberties of the public were keenly promoted by the State. Hence, stirred by the

DOI: 10.4324/9781003389545-1

composing of a new constitution in early-1935, Filipinos were given unprecedented support in their physical, mental, and social advancement.[11] More so, the era saw urban planning activity within the nation's 915 municipalities. As Elpidio Quirino (1890–1956), the Secretary of the Interior, outlined in the 1937 text, *Planning for the Commonwealth and the Towns*, "I advocated the policy of town planning not only to encourage the growth of civic pride in each locality but to also to stimulate them to pursue the policy of self-sufficiency."[12]

To supplement the generic understanding of the Filipino-American political alliance constructed by 1935, Leia Castañeda Anastacio (2019) observes that if the instituting of US colonial rule in 1898 sought to teach Filipinos lessons in democratic politics then the composing of the new Constitution, ratified in May 1935, showed that they had assimilated a great deal. For the charter "embodied applications of early twentieth-century American ideas and institutions to a Philippine setting shaped by 300 years of Spanish colonial rule."[13] However, to wholly appreciate what has been described as the Filipinos' renaissance after 1935,[14] it is vital to not only recognise the impact of the newly-written bill of rights. With respect to matters of urban designing, it is necessary to acknowledge the influence of architectural and spatial concepts and practices in places such as Europe, Latin America, as well as the US. That being said, and once more referencing President Quezon, as to why notice must be placed directly onto him when venturing to comprehend the evolving nature of Philippine politics and urban development from 1935, four fundamentals necessitate consideration.

Firstly, the structure of the Commonwealth Government[15] meant that it operated with a robust executive office.[16] Reason for this organisational make-up was summarised by George Malcolm (1939) and Victor Torres (2016). Torres, in examining the 1934–5 Constitution Convention, noted that the majority of the 202 delegates believed in the need for a strong executive office as the country headed towards independence.[17] Likewise Filipinos, Malcolm stated, were accustomed to the centralised rule: "The local chieftains in ancient times, the Spanish Viceroys in past centuries, and Commanding Generals during the Philippine Revolutions, and the American Governors-General in recent days, each represented the focus of power, the one man to be obeyed and to look to for redress of grievances. By reason of such experience, the psychology of the masses reacts more favourably to a government dominated by one person than to a more democratic direction."[18] In consequence, added Alfred McCoy (2017), Quezon took on the role of a commanding leader.[19] He bequeathed little authority to the Commonwealth's Vice-President, Sergio Osmeña (1878–1961).[20]

Secondly, it must not be overlooked that the Commonwealth Government had a clear grasp of what "good citizenship" entailed.[21] A raft of laws was passed so that the nature of Philippine civilisation could be reshaped. Many of the 650-plus Acts passed between 15 November 1935 and 8 December 1941, when the Japanese invasion of the Philippine Islands began, not only related to aspects of public order, education development, or national economic progress,[22] but the expansion of public works programmes too. These often included matters of urban planning and slum removal[23] (see Table 1.1). As a result of new laws being passed, e.g., Commonwealth Act No. 648 (passed 16 June 1941) – a code for slum clearing

Table 1.1 Number of city planning, housing, and public works-related laws passed between 15 November 1935 and 8 December 1941 by the Commonwealth Government

Year	*Number of Laws*
1935 (15 November to 31 December)	1
1936	6
1937	1
1938	4
1939	10
1940	4
1941 (1 January to 8 December)	3

and public housing development, Filemon Poblador (1952) noticed that "unprecedented progress in public improvements was attained."[24]

Thirdly, as previously indicated, Quezon's general approach to activating Filipinos' advancement underscored his and his peers' belief in the social and economic value of public works programmes. As a political leader whose regime "was wholly dedicated to constructive progress"[25], one of the mainstays of Quezon's quest to bring about societal betterment was by means of improving peoples' living conditions and by building new urban infrastructure. In this regard, and citing the speech given by the prominent politician Manuel Roxas[26] at the third-anniversary celebration of the founding of the Commonwealth (on 15 November 1938), from 1935 to 1938 "we have made advances in many fields. Hundreds of school buildings have been erected…Sanitation, hospital and other public services have been afforded to scores of new communities. Several thousand kilometres of roads have been built, several hundred, paved or cemented, and many bridges have been constructed to provide employment for labor and more adequate transport facilities."[27] Plus, stressed Roxas, the Commonwealth Government had "endeavoured in every manner to improve the lot and raise the living standards of the labourer…Social advancement will be gauged by the improvement of his condition; his strength is the nation's power, his weakness is the weakness of the state. The nation cannot be free is he is oppressed or repressed. The only sure basis of the public welfare is his well-being and happiness."[28] Such an attitude, it must be noted, was partly shaped by early-1930s reports. They, noted Nathaniel Von Einsiedel (2019), exposed the harsh conditions of urban life that many Filipinos endured each day. For example, the 1933 text on slum clearing in Manila's Tondo district drew attention to the fact that only 40% of persons whose properties were to be razed would afterwards be able to afford to rent or buy new low-cost, basic housing.[29] Consequently, with Executive Orders and Acts such as No. 648[30] (passed on 16 June 1941), the State sought to establish minimum daily wages for labourers.[31] It also sought to foster the betterment of the inhabitants of towns and cities "by eliminating therefrom slums and dwelling places which are unhygienic or unsanitary and by providing homes at low cost to replace those which may be so eliminated."[32]

Fourthly, the single-minded Quezon[33] was instrumental in Commonwealth Act No. 457 being passed on 8 June 1939. Section 1 of the decree sanctioned the construction "of National Government and other public buildings on the site set aside as government center in the Burnham Plan for the improvement of the City of Manila, or a site to be selected by the President of the Philippines within a radius of thirty kilometers from the Rizal Monument in the said city, including the acquisition of privately-owned lands and buildings."[34] Bolstered on 12 October 1939 by Commonwealth Act No. 502, "An Act to Create Quezon City," Sections 12 and 16 of that statute granted authority to lay out streets, plazas, parks, and erect public buildings and monuments in a new settlement sited immediately east of Manila's bounds. Still, given the Commonwealth Government's objective to establish Quezon City as the future postcolonial capital, what kind of urban place – socially, physically, symbolically – was it to be? In short, President Quezon sought for the new city to articulate the "Filipino soul" and to be "the showplace of the nation – a place that thousands of people will come to visit as the epitome of culture and the spirit of the country; socially, a dignified concentration of human life, aspirations, endeavours, and achievements; and economically, a productive, self-contained community."[35] As such, both in literal and figurative terms, Quezon City was to be much more than just an "ordinary Philippine urban community." It was to be *the place* in the Philippine Islands where, amongst other things, democracy was to be depicted, culture augmented, and heroes venerated. In the words of President Quezon, the new city was to be "a real Filipino metropolis."[36] As a result of this attitude its plan and architecture were not to be inspired by the nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century exemplars of Washington, DC and Paris, France.[37] Rather Quezon City was to be "like no other city in the world."[38] *It would be exclusively Filipino in both design and meaning.* For this reason, if taking up Henri Lefebvre's rationality, the new settlement was to be a utopian-esque spatial manifesto, albeit in this instance, of the Philippine postcolonial future.[39]

Pertaining to grasping the environmental design of Quezon City and other Philippine settlements during the years 1935–1946, as Figure 1.1 reveals, it must not be forgotten that the 1930s witnessed the appropriation of new concepts and solutions to the challenges facing the nation, *and* what Dominador Castañeda (1964) labelled the "Transition Period" in local architecture. He reveals that during the 1930s the prevailing architectural trend for Classicism died out.[40] In its place, he points out, were two new aesthetic fashions: Eclecticism; and, Modernism.

Concerning the advent of Modern Architecture in the Philippines, two basic points need to be known. To begin with, the ideas, practices, and philosophy of internationally-renowned designers such as Louis Sullivan (1856–1924), Henry Van de Velde (1863–1957), Mies Van der Rohe (1886–1969), Walter Gropius (1883–1969), Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959), and Le Corbusier (1887–1965) took root by the 1930s "and, as a seedling, developed."[41] In alliance with the influence of Modern Architecture, it is defined by William Curtis (1987) as new forms of design which seem "to overthrow previous styles and set a new, common basis for individual invention,"[42] was made possible by "courageous architects who travelled, marvelled, and assimilated the new trends from places like England,

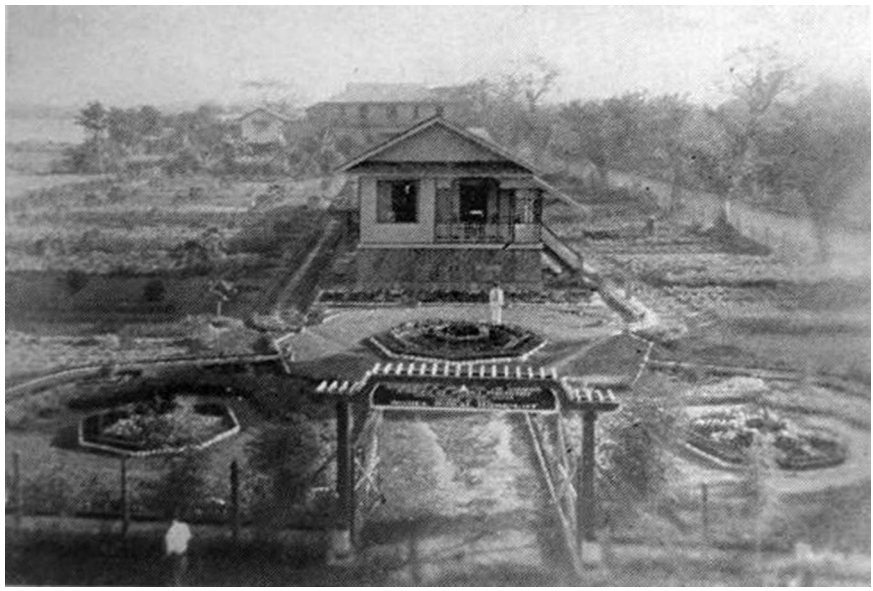

Figure 1.1 "Provincial model home lot and building." The house for persons of the labouring classes, in Rizal Province, was said to be the "first of its kind established in the Philippines."

France, Germany, Italy and America."[43] In particular, "courageous" Filipinos who promoted the development of architectural theory and practice in their homeland were Andres Luna (1887–1952), Pablo Antonio (1901–75) – an individual with the gift of architectural imagination[44] – Fernando Ocampo (1897–1984), and Juan Nakpil (1899–1986). The latter architect, it was said, was "always conscious of his responsibility to the Filipino community,"[45] whilst the prior-referenced Pablo Antonio sought through his vocational endeavours to manoeuvre local architecture away from past colonial influences.[46]

Together this cohort, to summarise, as an upshot of studying and observing design progress overseas, "brought back with them the capability and conviction to introduce the latest innovations in architecture."[47] Not only did these Filipinos compose buildings of outstanding quality – Nakpil's Quezon Institute (erected in 1938 in Caloocan, it later being incorporated into Quezon City) is described by urbanist Paulo Alcazaren as "a masterpiece of Filipino architecture, interior design, site planning and landscape architecture"[48] – they were central too in expanding the notion that a modern Philippine style of architecture existed *before* national independence ever happened. In this milieu, one additional but often bypassed fact needs highlighting. Whereas cities in Southeast (SE) Asia dramatically changed their appearance and morphology post-World War II in the postcolonial setting, with regard to Philippine society it is often neglected that the process of encompassing Modern Architecture was initiated within the frame of American-authorised decolonisation. Whilst it is widely believed that the emergence of

Modern Architecture in Asia was a second half of the twentieth-century phenomenon, in divergence the seeds of urban environmental advancement in the Philippines were planted during the Commonwealth Era. Proto-Philippine Modernism, a reflection of advancement in architectural form, spatial design, and community meaning, must be understood as being a pre *not* post-independence occurrence just as it was in some other Asian nations, e.g., India.[49] Moreover, akin to other Asian nations, e.g., Thailand, new forms of architectural and urban environmental layouts were utilised to manipulate new experiences of citizenship[50] which, in the case of the Philippines' Commonwealth Era, was based on State-sponsored models.[51]

Reshaping the Nation and Public Works: A Précis

Subsequent to 1935, a large volume of urban planning and public works schemes were undertaken by the Bureau of Public Works (BPW).[52] Quite simply, as this book shall in due course reveal, the reshaping of the Philippine-built fabric[53] was a central feature of the Commonwealth Government's basic existence. In 1936 alone, as an example, the BPW erected 274 buildings at a cost of ₱2,816,020.62. A further ₱15,366,027.19 was spent on road construction and maintenance.[54] Moreover, as an outcome of Department of the Interior Order No. 6 (issued in 1936), local planning commissions were established and "many requests from municipalities and provinces were received for town plans, development and expansion plans for plazas, streets, and parks."[55] Consequently, in the 1937 article 'Public Works, the Artery of Progress', Director of the BPW Vicente Fragante (1889–1972) commented that a huge public works system was underway "to make this country a better place to live in. The average citizen will certainly be gratified to learn that this program has helped considerably the unemployment situation in the country and has made for progress and economic advancement."[56] Such sentiment was echoed by Mariano Cuenco (1888–1964), a high-ranking employee of the Bureau. He remarked that "the story of the world's progress is in the main the story of the progress of public works," and that "China, Egypt, Greece and Rome attained greatness that was due in a large measure to their splendid public works…The nations that come after them have a similar story to tell…Better and more public works are mandatory to fast communication, and all other requirement and phases of life that have placed man so far above the apes."[57]

Urban planning schemes were promoted from 1935 as part of progressive national and municipal governance.[58] As Elpidio Quirino (1937) put it: "We must revitalize and bring up to date the progress of our local communities. We should resolve to build towns and cities, for building them is building provinces, and building provinces is building the nation."[59] To aid this process, as previously pointed out, local planning commissions (with District Engineers as members) were set up. But, just what role these agencies played in societal development in the years leading into national independence has, up to now, not been explained. More so, what was "social progress" understood to be during the Commonwealth Era? How did it engage, directly and indirectly, with the management and practice of urban environmental affairs? What role, therefore, did native civil engineers

and architect-planners have in the instigating of public good? Even though, identifies Dumandan (1954), major accomplishments were attained in social justice and national solidarity after 1935,[60] how did Filipinos through their vocational activities in the BPW affect the course of societal evolution so that, when national independence was granted in July 1946, the country was perceived by Filipinos to be truly "modern" and "free"? *Plus*, what planning and public works schemes actually occurred? And at what financial cost? At the moment detailed information on such topics is not known. Such a situation, arguably, is an upshot of Philippine historiography's portrayal of the years 1935–46: to recap, the Commonwealth Era is commonly written about as just being an interlude. Fundamentally, the epoch is presented as merely being a temporal link to unite, pre-1935, American colonialism with, post-1946, Philippine self-rule. Then again, as this book shall make known, to underplay the years 1935–46 is to in effect to make light of Philippine society's development. Such an attitude downplays too the feats and challenges that the era experienced. These included the growing desire of Japan to play an important role in Philippine life and the shaping of Filipino nationalism,[61] uneven economic growth and the challenge of balancing the national budget, and military insecurity.[62] In the opinion of some authors, particularly Manuel Gallego (1939) and Recah Trinidad (1998), the nature of Quezon's leadership[63] also left an adverse imprint upon the path of Philippine social betterment in the years before 1946.[64]

Social Evolution, Foreign Influences, and Modernity in Philippine Cities, 1935–46

As a substantial study of urban design in the years leading up to the granting of Philippine independence, this book seeks to assess the reach and implications of the concluding period of the US' imperial exercise in SE Asia. The association between decolonisation, Filipino political ideals, national development, and the endeavours of the BPW will, as a result, be shown. At the same time, within this intellectual scaffold, the significance of Manuel Quezon will be explored alongside the importance/role of other high-ranking Commonwealth Government officials, e.g., Elpidio Quirino and Jorge Vargas (1890–1980).[65] The work of scholars such as J.S. Furnivall and Robert A. Dahl will undoubtedly be of pertinence. Furnivall (1948) observed that social and economic stratifications in colonial society meant different populations lived side-by-side but did not mix.[66] Dahl, in *Who Governs?* (1961), discussed how the nature of decision-making, especially in the context of democratic governance, was not actually based on the free will of the people but, instead, the influence of competitive interest groups.[67] So, did Dahl's notion of 'pluralistic democracy' exist during the Commonwealth Era? If it did, what actions did the Filipino political elites undertake and how did they cloak their behaviours with democratic rituals in order to gain legitimacy from the public? More so, given Dahl's viewpoint that the existence of rituals and the need for legitimacy affects both the behaviour of government officials and constituents,[68] how did the implementation of public works schemes assist this process? At the same time, in this study, new recognition will be given to the social role/value of Quezon City's establishment

and development. As a place formed to represent the ideals and ambitions of the "free Philippine nation," its built environment exposed the Commonwealth administration's reading of social advancement and democratic principles.[69] Hence, thinking along the lines of architectural phenomenology, the city's layout and buildings convey the inferred Filipino sense of self, place,[70] and governance at a point in time when self-rule, for the first time, was soon to occur (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2 An aerial view of Quezon City and the Quezon City Memorial Circle in 2019.

Quezon City – see Figure 1.2, Michael Pante (2019) has shown, is a place relatively little written about in Philippine History. When so, Pante observes, such publications "are not really scholarly, but of a commemorative kind, celebratory rather than critical."[71] In fact, owing to the slant of this inquiry it is vital to not understate the impact of President Quezon and his flagship city upon the shaping of the free-nation-in-the-making because, as Alfred McCoy (1989) makes clear, Quezon was the first Filipino "with the power to integrate all levels of politics into a single system."[72] Also, Gopinath (1987) underscores, Quezon "did more than merely govern. He exerted his remarkable personality to dominate both the executive legislative branches of the government."[73] Additionally, states Renato Constantino (1975), Quezon was a policy maker who understood the relevance of US President Franklin Roosevelt's multi-billion dollar 1933–42 New Deal to the process of social transformation,[74] i.e. the comprehensive public works initiative that facilitated the construction of infrastructure that included new public spaces in countless US cities.[75] But, what effect did the New Deal have upon the Commonwealth Government's operation? Did Roosevelt's bold strategy to expand the role of the State,[76] and the sheer power of public works projects to reshape cityscapes in many parts of the US,[77] influence the Philippine administration headed by Quezon?

In spite of the New Deal's imprint being acknowledged upon the psyche of President Quezon to date little coverage of the matter has been presented within Philippine written history, particularly with respect to the activities of a major government office such as the BPW. Accordingly, this investigation will seek to tread new ground where, at present, a historiographical void exists in order to disclose *how important* public works/city planning were to Philippine decolonisation and social advancement. Besides, it should not be neglected too that of the Japanese Occupation little has been written about what public works occurred. It is commonly overlooked, first, that city planning, building construction, and infrastructure development were central elements of Japanese imperialism, e.g., in Manchukuo during the 1930s.[78] Second, of the six administrative departments established under the Japanese-influenced Philippine Executive Commission (set up in January 1942) one was for Public Works and Communication. Indeed, what public works schemes did the Japanese undertake in the Philippines? What laws did they pass to support this? Thus, what is known as Administrative Order No. 9 (November 1943), is a ruling to transform public plazas, sidewalks, and grounds into sites to grow food.[79] Likewise, what is known of Provincial Circular No. 52 (October 1942), a diktat to establish Development Plans for war-damaged towns and cities so as cater "for their growth and beautification" in future years?[80] Of equal importance, did these infrastructure-building exercises leave any mark upon the early-postcolonial setting, e.g., as occurred in Indonesia?[81]

In further discussing the matter of how the Philippines' colonial history has been written, whilst numerous grand cultural-political narratives have been composed by authors including Luis Francia (2014), Samuel Tan (1987), Renato Constantino (1975), Jose Arcilla (2012), Gregorio Zaide (1957), Conrado Benitez (1940), Vicente Pacis (1963), and Patricio Abinales and Donna Amoroso (2005).[82] With respect to historical Philippine urbanism, similar ambitious narratives have been

written by individuals like Winand Klassen (1986), Gerard Lico (2008 and 2021), and Roque Arrieta Magno (2017).[83] Yet, in such studies, attention to urban development and planning outside of Quezon City during the Commonwealth Era is, at best, slight. From an urban planning perspective, the era is to all intents and purposes exclusively defined by the founding and initial growth of Quezon City. Saying that, whilst little is known of public works activities occurring in Manila, it then being the Philippines' most populous urban place and the capital city until 1948, as Pante (2019) has emphasised little is actually known too of Quezon City's origins and early-development even though now, by the 2020s, it is the largest municipality in the country.[84] To boot, even less is known about public works occurring in the provinces during the Commonwealth Era. In spite of this, as will be clarified in Chapter 3, after 1935, there was great nationwide urban environmental activity.

To reiterate the aforementioned issue of the sheer volume of public works occurring nationwide, Domingo Guanio's *Bureau of Public Works Manual* (1935) outlined reasons why Development Plans were so important to social and economic growth. Stating that about 25 town and city plans had been composed by the BPW before the commencement of the Commonwealth, future planning projects "should be viewed not only from the aesthetic standpoint but also from its economic aspects. There must be a program adopted to remodel the present narrow and crooked streets and bad arrangement of buildings, and to reassign areas improperly used or designated for particular purposes."[85] Furthermore, he noted, there was a great need for more urban parks.[86] This call subsequently led to new green spaces being laid out in many towns and cities before the Japanese Occupation occurred. Significantly, during the Occupation, the Japanese Imperial Forces also sought to establish new open areas for public use.[87]

The increase of BPW activity following the passing of Act No. 3482 in December 1928 continued into the Commonwealth Era, and with reference to Table 1.1, new laws were passed after 1935 so as to expand ongoing public works and urban planning programmes. As a result of such legal developments, vast sums were spent on infrastructure projects, especially in Manila.[88] As Table 1.2 reveals, expenditure on public works comprised a significant percentage of the national governmental

Table 1.2 A table to show the Bureau of Public Works' expenditure between 1936 to 1941

Year	*BPW Expenditure (in Pesos)*	*Total Government Expenditure (in Pesos)*
1936	10,813,017	96,318,117
1937	14,078,123	112,266,445
1938	36,606,148	132,323,902
1939 (first six months)	18,470,367	41,581,000
1940 (fiscal year ending June 30)	52,211,096	91,520,000
1941 (fiscal year ending June 30)	-	89,149,000

Source: The Annual Report of the Budget Commission (1937, 1938, 1939), Annual Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs (1938), Economic Review of the Philippines (1941), and Manila City Directory (1941).

budget during the years between 1936 and 1941,[89] and using New Deal-esque type language Paul Steintorf in the *Manila City Directory 1941* stated: "The extensive public works program of the Commonwealth Government is an important factor in the Philippine economy."[90] As well, numerous Department Orders (DO) and Administrative Orders (AO) were issued after 1935. For example, AO No. 78 (in 1938) was issued so that a committee could be formed to select a site in Manila for a grand Triumphal Arch.[91] The aforementioned 1936 DO No. 6 led to municipal and provincial government's requests "for town plans, development plans for plazas, etc."[92] As well, and now briefly referencing the influential American architectural context, throughout the 1930s it became increasingly internationalised. As explained by Jeffrey Cody (2003), the US metropole radiated new ideas regarding building design, engineering, and urban planning. Such notions affected urban design practices in geographies and cultures as far afield as SE Asia, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.[93] The sprouting influence of the US upon Central American public works was identifiable in monumental projects such as the Inter-American Highway (initiated in 1933), and the laying out of new urban communities in the Panama Canal Zone.

Traversing southwards from Nuevo Laredo at the Mexico-US border to Panama City, Panama via Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, the Inter-American Highway[94] had a distance of 3,250 miles. It formed a new artery adjoining the US with the Central American nations, and represented "a dream of friendship, commerce, mobility, of the Americas, united."[95] Similarly, in August 1938,[96] the *16th International Housing and Town Planning Congress* was held in Mexico City, Mexico.[97] Offering an international, multi-perspective analysis of contemporary urban planning issues, according to Renzo Riboldazzi (2013) the event enabled US urban designing to come to the global fore[98] and gave new attention to Carlos Contreras'[99] (1892–1970) 1933 master plan for the Mexican capital city. The 1938 Congress, added Geertse (2012), encouraged new discourse to emerge and it brought new focus upon modern Latin American urbanism. Its character was summarised in the mid-1930s by Mexican revolutionary-turned-city governor Aaŕon Saenz (1891–1983) as being "not an issue of academic or abstract beauty," but rather it "suggests a cultural element to assert the national identity."[100]

Topics including housing in tropical and sub-tropical climes[101] were rigorously debated at the Mexico City Congress and, crucially, for the first time, "the familiar Western treatment of the housing question was bypassed to explore what the housing question meant to the rest of the world."[102] As well, debates regarding city administration and "planning recreation," specifically the planning of spaces to be used for leisure purposes, formed an integral part of the conference. As a result of widening vocational discussions two cultural identities, the international modern and the local traditional, materialised *and* then blended into a hybrid result.[103] Also, noticed Almandoz (2015), new, influential literature, as well as changes in planning terminology, were borne, e.g., in Latin America the term *planificación* replaced *urbanismo*.[104] This transition, he remarked, articulated structural shifts in planning education and the emergence of the region, not the city per se, as the main focus of urban planning. But in spite of these occurrences did they impact urban design affairs in the Philippines? Did new terminology related to urban

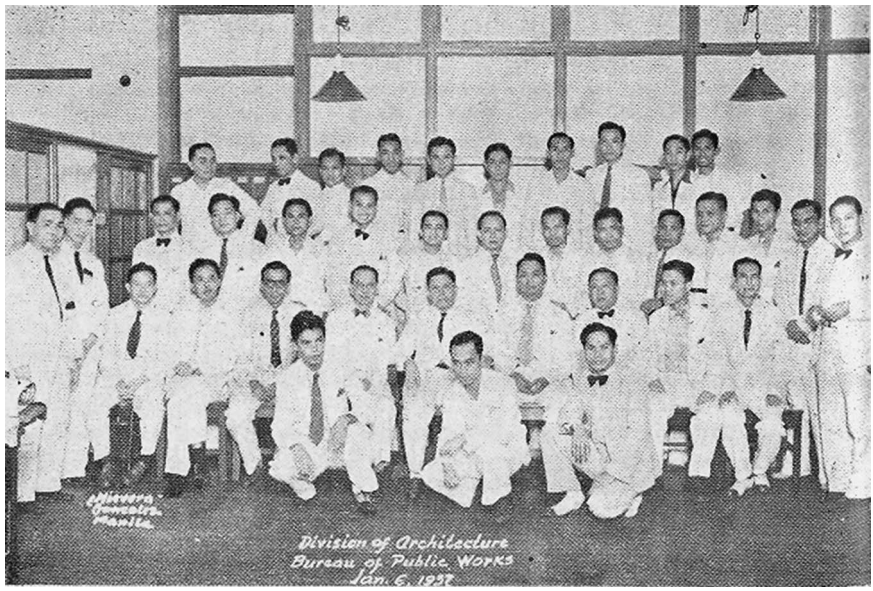

Figure 1.3 A photograph dated 6 January 1937 of the Division of Architecture staff. Juan Arellano is sat front centre.

planning appear there after 1935? Given that Michael Hebbert (2008) has shown that the word *urbanismo* is Latin in origin, and town planning and city planning were not – they are Anglo-Saxon[105] – therefore, which linguistic tradition/planning paradigm did the Commonwealth align itself with? And, did evolutions in North and Central American urbanism inform the activities of high-ranking BPW Division of Architecture (DoA) staff such as Juan Arellano (1888–1960) – see Figure 1.3, who is an architect central to Quezon City's planning chronicle? Having been someone who in 1926–7 toured the US in order to observe architectural progress, examine city planning schemes,[106] and visit planning commissions, what impact did North American excursions and Latin American events such as the 1938 Congress have upon him and his BPW peers? Presently, an answer to such a question is absent within Philippine historiography. In the light of such an intellectual vacuum the potential impact of foreign endeavours upon a project such as Quezon City, and other major projects within large-sized Philippine urban settlements pre and post-national independence, is unknown. A number of important points in relation to this must now be raised.

Whilst some Filipino scholars have claimed that Philippine architectural and planning practice in the first half of the 1900s followed what the Americans understood as "advanced,"[107] in fact prior to 1935 Filipino staff in the DoA were broadening their vocational practices. They had, as an example, devised a brand new approach which, when applied in the provinces, attained beauty and durability through the integration of modern practises with native traditions. Such a strategy

was perceived as being of extra importance after 1935. Writing in 1937, Daniel Buñag commented that BPW staff were well on the way to reinstalling the principle that public edifices should blend, not clash, with their surroundings. Moreover, he said, the Bureau had implemented a policy, where possible, to source local materials.[108] Owing to this situation, the DoA became widely perceived as performing a critical social mission. Buñag concluded that the DoA was seeking to satisfy the emergent Filipino quest for beauty and utility, but to accomplish this it needed to craft design forms by means of reviving "the arts of our forefathers in a modern setting."[109] The apparent value of DoA staff to social advancement was affirmed by politicians working at the very highest level of government. The speech by Sergio Osmeña, titled "The Architect: His Services to Community," given at the First National Convention of Architects (February 1941, in Manila) verified the role of designers in the national development process.

Amongst the numerous topics addressed in the now-all-but-forgot-forgot speech were beauty, healthy living, and functionalism. To validate his overall standpoint the "great contemporary French architect" Le Corbusier was cited by Osmeña, and the importance of Filipino designers to Quezon City's development was clearly spelt out: "A substantial contribution is expected from the architect in the development of our new model community – Quezon City. With wide boulevards, beautiful parks, and imposing government buildings, we are erecting in this new City a monument to the Philippines. In the residential section, healthful living conditions will be assured to all residents, including the laborers and low-salaried employees."[110] Osmeña stressed: "The work of the architects affects directly the welfare of all the citizens…Why then should we not look for the appropriate specialist when we develop a park, plan a city, or construct a building?"[111] To sum up, Osmeña remarked: "Planning, as an orderly process for growth, involves thinking in terms of the group instead of the individual, of teamwork instead of the lone player, of the community instead of the single house, of future generations as well as this one."[112] Therefore, to him and indeed others employed in the upper echelons of the Commonwealth Government, not implementing city planning would have obvious social and physical ramifications. Cities would be characterised by "slums, blighted and congested areas, poor street layouts, and unstable property values."[113] That's why, Osmeña proclaimed, "This [the Commonwealth Era] is an age of planning."[114]

In the wake of the hugely impactful Jones Act[115] being passed in 1916, and with the expansion of the colonial bureaucracy's Filipinisation from that time, many BPW projects became imbued with elements of nationalism. As this author has discussed in earlier research, public buildings, public space projects, and city planning by as early as 1919 became a tool exploited by Filipino architects to promote social progress *and* to articulate their sense of nationhood.[116] In the altered cultural-political environment after 1916, nationalism, a sentiment that was both representational and personal to many Filipinos working in the BPW, played a central role in the evolving urban design scene. Such sentiment was also evident elsewhere in SE Asia, e.g., in Vietnam, given that the country was striving to establish a new, internationalised status in the world. As Pham Phú Vinh (2021) explained, during the 1920s and 1930s in cities such as Sài Gòn, Vietnamese cultural identity

grew into a more advanced form. As an upshot, forays into Modern Architecture practice transpired.[117] Such development was also apparent in Central America. With Modern Architecture projecting the progress of Mexico's post-revolutionary governance and the Mexicans' broad hope of a better future,[118] politicians, social commentators, artists, muralists, and architects collectively reshaped the idea of what local architecture and space design should be. Fuelled by inventive ideas regarding the nature of art and building design, individuals such as José Vasconcelos (1882–1959), Juan O' Gorman (1905–82), Luis Barragán (1902–88), Carlos Obregón Santacilla (1896–1961), Manuel Amábilis Domínguez (1889–1966), and José Villagrán García (1901–82) led the movement away from historicism in painting and architecture to, akin to the contemporary Philippine situation, the production of structural forms and spaces perceived as "beautiful," "genuinely ours," and "related to our materials and climate."[119]

With the conceptualisation and practice of Modern Architecture broadly affected by cultural mores, psychological forces, climatic conditions, and building materials,[120] one means by which Modernism in Mexico[121] visually articulated indigeneity was by the use of murals and sculptural decoration. Wall paintings and adornments were utilised to represent native people and plants even though, as an example, the depiction of flora on elevations had been evident in American architecture, viz. architecture in the US, since the mid-1800s. But, their usage in the Americas as "Modern Design" was given fresh impetus during the early-1900s by Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. Sullivan and Wright's rethinking of architectural geometry and form inspired Mexican architects to reformulate decoration in abstract terms. Building upon nascent forces within local society the move by Mexican architects from Classicism to Art Deco and then to Modern Architecture between circa 1910 and 1930, critically, analogous to the Philippines, led them to identify their new building designs as "native" and in possession of "national spirit."[122] Critically too, as explained by Juan Manuel Heredia (2020), design experimentation gave rise to new self-confidence in terms of recognising the spirit of the time and the spirit of a place so that human potentiality and nobility could be unlocked in that locality.[123]

In the view of Kathryn O' Rourke (2016), ensuring Modern Architecture could be seen with "our own features" reinforced the belief in many countries that a truly national and up-to-date architectural language existed. More to the point, the value put upon aesthetic innovation and visual representation meant buildings such as Obregón Santacilla's Department of Health Headquarters in Mexico City (opened November 1929)[124] and Juan Nakpil's Quezon Institute (Figure 1.4) became important to their respective nations other than solely for their public health functionality. Situated within the triple political-cultural context of the national, the international, and the contemporary, these edifices contributed to the manifestation of a global approach to Modern Architecture in which designers in different places, coming to sometimes very different design solutions, wrestled with similar artistic, philosophical, and social challenges.[125] Like so, as a response, on one hand, to the conceptual issues raised during the early-1900s by new interpretations of domestic art and architecture and, on the other hand, with a surge of interest in cultural growth

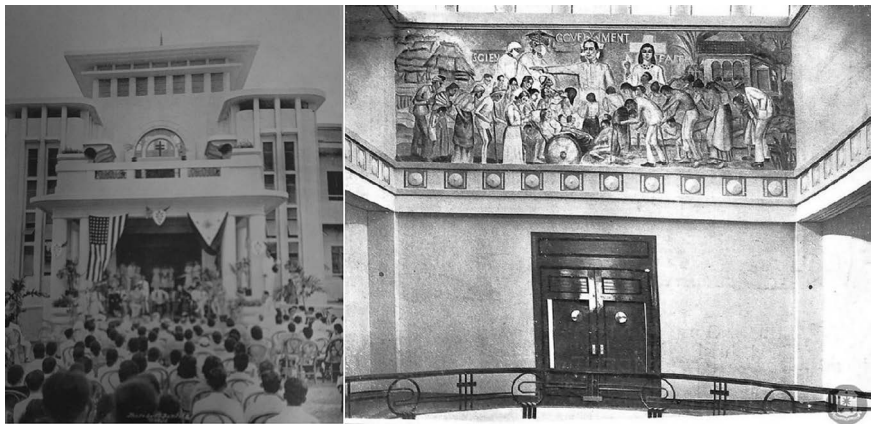

Figure 1.4 The centre of the Quezon Institute's principal elevation, and (right) the edifice's interior mural portraying President Quezon's valiant efforts to bolster the fight against tuberculosis.

and social reform, the Department of Health Headquarters and the Quezon Institute (Figure 1.4) embodied Mexican and Filipino attempts to simultaneously grapple with the legacy of local architectural history, reveal a new high-point in societal development, and pronounce a social consciousness which the Post-revolutionary Period and Commonwealth Era each demanded.[126] To sum up, new forms of architecture by the 1930s satisfied changing social needs. Old styles of design, basically, were perceived to be incompatible with changing societal requirements.[127] New forms of architecture, created *in* their respective countries and *for* their nation's evolution not only presented *and represented* a reorganisation of urban life, they were judged too to aid the function of cities in supplying social spaces necessary for citizens to have a decent life, i.e. one better than in prior times.[128] In a sense, in both Mexico and the Philippines, by the 1930s two modernities existed: one sought to articulate the zeitgeist; and, the other, expressed the yearning to marry the particular with the universal. In this milieu, logical societal management demanded the logical planning of built environments.[129]

To further discuss the surfacing social function of architecture, murals should not be downplayed. During the 1930s in the US,[130] Mexico[131] and the Philippines graphic art and mural painting was considered to be allied with progressive public architectural practice, the championing of "a pioneer way of life against alien influences,"[132] and the composing of murals was anyhow "governed by certain requisites if not dogmas of the art of architecture."[133] The reconciling of wall art with cutting-edge architectural practice had a number of notable impacts on how design was read in the political-cultural milieu of SE Asian and Central American "native inclusion:"[134] the application of textures and colours upon the exterior and interior of buildings not only built upon local art traditions but often displayed images of people, culture, and technology that referenced the local sense of place;[135] and, the integration of architecture with abstract art, said Paul F. Damaz (1963), led to the