



Tayabas: The First Filipino City Beautiful Plan

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The historiography of the City Beautiful in the Philippines has, in broad terms, been dominated by two American planners, Daniel Burnham and William E. Parsons. In some ways this is to be expected: both individuals were known to have strong personalities; Burnham's monumental 1905 plans for Manila and Baguio were central to a new urban design paradigm being manufactured in the country, a planning model which replaced the Spanish colonial spatial model based in the Law of the Indies (1573); and, Parsons from 1906 to 1914 as Consulting Architect to the Philippine Commission propagated the City Beautiful via comprehensive city plans and grand civic centre projects. But where in the Philippine City Beautiful narrative do Filipino planners fit? To date their role in the city planning picture during the American colonial era has been, at best, portrayed as minimal. However, given the author's recent uncovering of new planning works by Filipinos, e.g. in Tayabas and Iloilo Province, is it pertinent to ask if planning historiography needs to be revised?

Keywords: City Beautiful, the Philippines, American Colonization, Filipino architects, nationhood.

Introduction

City planning was a fundamental component of American colonial governance in the Philippines. It was used from the early-1900s to help 'uplift' and 'civilize' local society, and to additionally aid the American regime to demonstrate to Filipinos that a different cultural and political era had begun: urban designing in this political-cultural framework was used to not only remodel cities' built fabrics so that they could be 'modern', but to also turn life within them away from church-lined plazas dating from the Spanish colonial period (1565-1898). However, what is generally not known about planning activity in the country during the American colonial era was that, from 1919, it was undertaken solely by Filipinos. They, to be brief, made use of the need to alter the urban form so as to capture, and thus articulate in built form, changing social and political values in Philippine society.

The narrative of modern urban planning practice in the Philippines, or more precisely City Beautiful-inspired city planning, commenced in 1905. In that year Daniel Burnham produced two major city plans, for Manila and Baguio, and these in the following years acted as a model which Consultant Architect William E. Parsons propagated throughout the country in the form of comprehensive plans (for Cebu and Zamboanga), plus new civic districts within provincial capital cities. Yet, so as to bolster the 'uplifting' of local civilisation, from 1913 the colonial civil service was Filipinised. Incorporating Filipinos into the upper levels of the colonial bureaucracy this process of political assimilation was sped up in August 1916 when the Jones Act was passed. It declared the American objective of retreating from the Philippines in the future and, in conjunction, to recognise Philippine independence "as soon as stable government can be established therein".

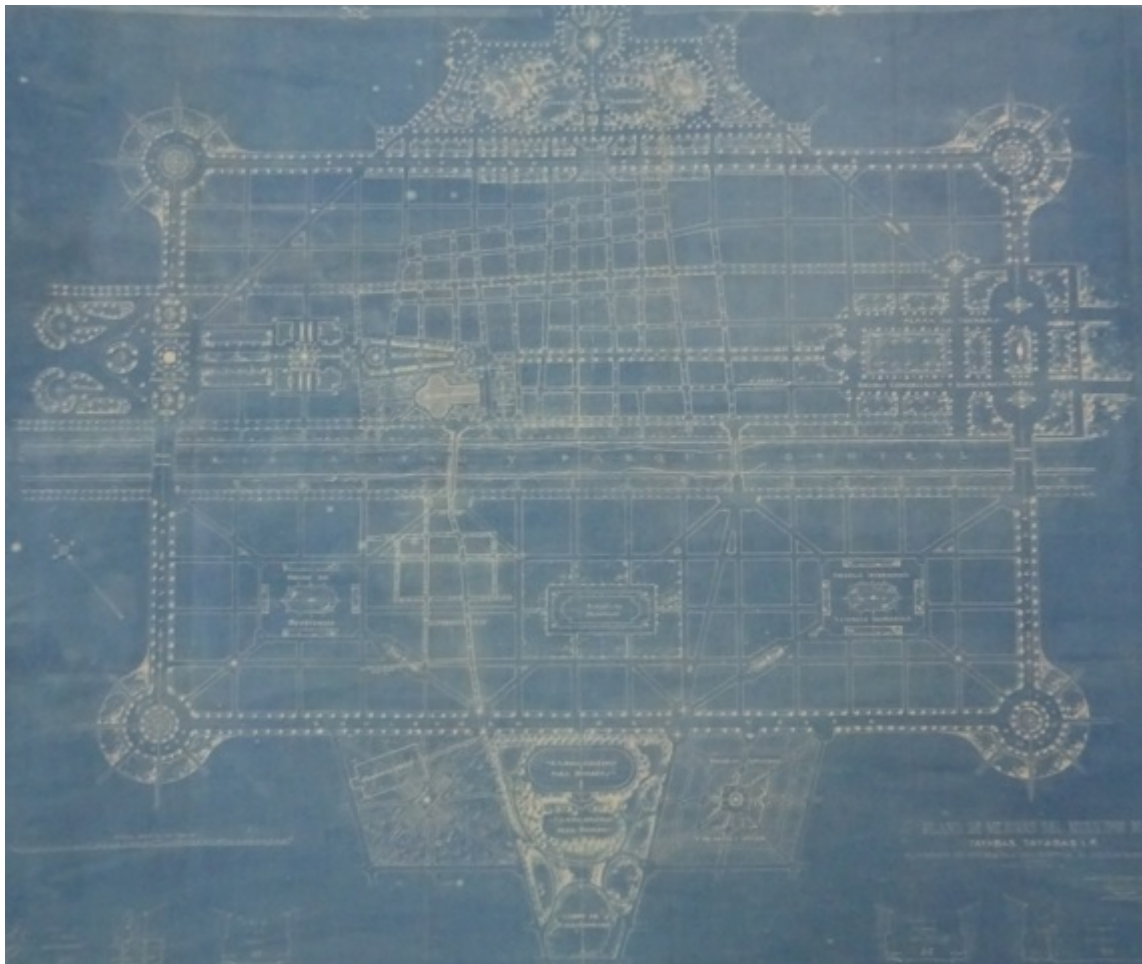
Permitting Filipinos to hold key administrative positions so that they could make a greater contribution to colonial governance, Filipinization resulted in far more than the mere substitution of American civil service personnel with Filipinos. It resulted in two major governmental changes: firstly, it granted opportunity for Filipinos to, for the first time, sway the regime's capacity to reshape local life; and, secondly, it helped modify government policies more towards Filipino priorities. Certainly in the Bureau of Public Works' (BPW) Division of Architecture, the department responsible for designing public buildings, spaces and, when necessary city plans, this advancement was evident by 1919 when Juan Arellano and Tomas Mapua were appointed as Consultant Architects. Yet the first major articulation of the Filipino city planning came via a private source, a civic group based in Tayabas, which commissioned Juan Arellano's brother, Arcadio, to create a plan for the city. It was produced in 1919. Even though the plan, financed by the Club de Los 33, was never implemented it nevertheless has importance: it helps historians to rethink Filipino planning influence, which up to now, has been missing from the story of American empire, and City Beautiful; it grants new opportunity to evaluate how Filipinos utilized City Beautiful planning to promote social progress, *and* to articulate their sense of national identity in the run-up to the establishment of the Philippine Commonwealth in 1935.



Arcadio Arellano and the 1919 Tayabas Plan

Broadly understood as a pioneer of Philippine architecture little is actually known of Arcadio Arellano's urban design work. Whilst it is recognised that in 1901 he became the first Filipino to be employed by the American colonial government as an architectural advisor, what has been researched of Arellano by-and-large explains his professional activities through the medium of changing architectural forms during the American colonial era. To date little has been investigated of, for instance, his role in preparing plans for monuments to Philippine revolutionaries. Charged by the colonial government in 1915 with this task after Act No. 2494 was passed, Arellano's work from that time evidently provoked him to consider larger scale matters of environmental surveying and design. As such the planning of Tayabas in 1919 – Figure 1 - represented a logical, natural professional development. But why a plan for this small-sized city? A number of points must be appreciated. To begin with it is known that Arellano held patriotic leanings. He was related to a revolutionary hero, Deodato de la Cruz Arellano; was in the Philippine Engineering Corps during the latter stages of the 1896 Revolution; and, in 1908, he designed the Mausoleum of the Veterans of the Revolution in Manila's North Cemetery. Moreover, Tayabas was by 1919 a city with a national reputation owing to it, on one hand, having resisted the Spanish colonial forces prior, during, and after the Philippine Revolution and, on the other hand, in 1912 and 1916 its citizens helping elect Vicente Lukbán as Provincial Governor. He was a well-known protagonist for Filipino freedoms and independence.

Figure 1. The 1919 Tayabas plan by Arcadio Arellano. The river axis through the plan runs north-east to south-west.





Titled the *Plan of Improvements of the Municipality of Tayabas, Tayabas Philippine Islands Accompanied With a Descriptive Report to the Municipal Council*, Arellano's plan sought to completely alter a settlement with a history dating back to the pre-colonial period. Advancing some of the environmental design notions introduced into the Philippines by Daniel Burnham in 1905, e.g. park systems, a road layout mixing narrow streets with lengthy tree-lined boulevards, the laying out of large symmetrically-formed public spaces, etc., Arellano's concept was to expand Tayabas's Spanish colonial era grid layout in the form of a rectangle measuring about 1.9 kilometres in length by 1.3 kilometres in breadth. At the four corners of this configuration were to be sited roundabouts, surrounded by park areas, from which a number of roadways – they being positioned geometrically - dispersed into neighbouring urban districts or the surrounding countryside. Demarcating the city on its northern, southern, western, and eastern flanks with broad tree-lined boulevards, running north-south through the middle of the built environment was the Alitao River: in Arellano's planning proposal its formerly meandering banks were to be straightened and greened so as to form the Central Park. Such a feature was original to urban planning in the Philippines at that time.

Arellano's Tayabas plan incorporated a number of environmental features: a road system arranged in a grid pattern; the placing of monuments at the centre of plazas; the development of a commercial district; a civic centre; and a park system. For example, situated midway along the East Boulevard and West Boulevard were large-sized green spaces. They terminated the western and eastern ends of the principal east-west alignments in the city plan: the position of the axis in the eastern section of the city plan directly corresponded with the site of the Rizal Monument (erected in 1915 by the Club de Los 33).

A primary element of Arellano's plan was to enlarge the existing pattern of roads. The grid configuration of the Spanish settlement was preserved in the 1919 planning proposal albeit with new roadways intersecting at greater distances than existing ones so that larger blocks of land could be created. Yet one major transition was apparent. There was to now be four types of roads – see Figure 2: Type A Boulevards; Type B Avenues; Type C and Type D Streets with each having a different width and cross-section. Noticeably for types A and B, the widest roadways, they were designed as tree-lined parkways.

Figure 2. Road types in the Tayabas plan by Arcadio Arellano.

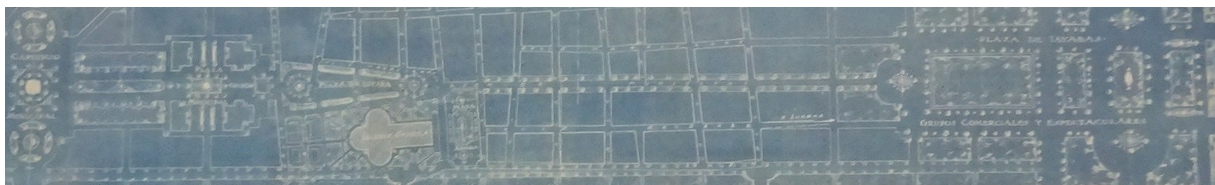




In terms of the siting of the four road types they were to be put into particular parts of Tayabas's built environment. For example, Type A boulevards were to be located on each side of the Central Park, and at the four edges of the urban sprawl. These peripheral thoroughfares thereby functioned as ring roads to enrich circulation between the different districts of the settlement. Type B avenues, of which there was to be only two in the city plan, likewise granted direct links between different quarters of the city but also provided grand vistas to prominent public buildings and spaces. The vast majority of roadways, categories C and D, had no additional role other than, it seems, permitting easy navigation throughout the urban environment. With additional regard to the Type B avenues they, of substantial length, were to connect the most important civic edifices in Tayabas, i.e. the Municipal Capitol and Municipal Group, to the business district at the opposite/southern end of the city. These roadways, Municipal Avenue and Manuel Quezon Avenue, akin to almost all roads in the city plan, were straight in form.

In keeping with early-twentieth century American logic that urban planning was an indispensable component of a progressive society, the Tayabas plan enunciated what a spatially organized and civic-minded, modern community was. Demonstrating that city planning included much more than physically arranging a built environment, Arellano's scheme promoted municipal sentiment which, in the post-Jones Act context, assisted Filipinos to disclose to their colonial masters that they were capable of successfully managing cities, and accordingly society at large. The north-south axis from the Municipal Capitol to Plaza de Tayabas – Figure 3 – was crucial in this regard. Not dominating the city plan but nevertheless helping present the existence of civic spirit the ability of citizens to see along Municipal Avenue to public edifices and the business district let them be aware of four matters: first, citizens could appreciate that public authority was being operated by elected Filipinos to protect and develop life, health, and property as part of the advancement of local civilization; second, the vista southwards along Municipal Avenue to the business district informed people of the enlargement of the local economy and the possibility of affluence hitherto unimaginable; third, to look along Municipal Avenue meant seeing buildings, monuments, and spaces belonging to a distinct people and their culture, and in this context impressive vistas along the thoroughfare helped elicit civic esteem and pride in the nation; and, finally, new monuments and existing ones served to present tangible images of Filipinos historically associated with the pursuit of self-determination which, following political developments in 1916, was guaranteed by the Americans to be forthcoming. Notably too, given the passing of new laws by the American colonial government from 1898, new civic rituals were to take place (on new public holidays in the new spaces) about the monuments dedicated to national heroes, i.e. the individuals who, pre-1898, had fought against Spanish oppression and/or helped promote Filipino civil rights at that time.

Figure 3. Plan of the axis between the Municipal Capitol and the Plaza de Tayabas.



The Broader Philippine Planning Picture, c.1916-1935

The Tayabas city plan, although not implemented, must not be seen as an isolated design proposal. Rather it must be seen as the opening act of a new planning narrative: one determined from 1919 by Filipino rather than American actors. Yet very limited research has been undertaken on city planning by Filipinos during the years between the passing of the Jones Act and the establishment of the Philippine Commonwealth. In the light of this fact the following section of the paper outlines urban design activities by Filipinos employed in the BPW. From 1919 to 1935 city planning by Filipinos took on a number of forms. These included comprehensive city planning, zoning planning, the designing of new civic districts, and the revitalizing of Spanish colonial plazas. So that an introduction to the Philippine situation at that time can be tendered focus is now put upon one major city, Iloilo, and one territory, Iloilo Province.



In historiography Juan Arellano's 1930 *Proposed Development Plan of the City of Iloilo and Vicinity* is noted as being the first city plan by a Filipino. Evidently such a 'fact' is fundamentally flawed given the author's recent uncovering of Arcadio Arellano's 1919 Tayabas scheme. Furthermore Juan Arellano's planning activity in Iloilo began in 1926, not 1930 – see Figure 4. In the 1930 plan, Arellano's 4th version of the scheme, Iloilo's built environment was characterized by its riverbank development, an urban sprawl incorporating once isolated villages, a major arterial boulevard about the suburbs, the establishment of a suburban prison, farms, and cemetery, plus a large elliptical-shaped park laid out immediately north of the Iloilo River. A civic core and exposition grounds, respectively situated north and south of the river, were also evident in the scheme. However in the original/1926 plan the banks of the waterway were left undeveloped and outlying communities not integrated into the built fabric of the municipality. Additionally the major arterial boulevard circumventing the city was absent, as was the development of land in Mandurriao, the drainage canal and park in Molo, and the train station and airport south of La Paz. The generic road layout was different as well. The 1926 plan contained a large volume of straight roads so that blocks of land could have, for the most part, four straight sides. In the 1930 plan curved roads could be seen in many districts, the large plaza near the mouth of the Iloilo River was also omitted, and where in the 1926 plan a cemetery was to be sited north of the waterway a large elliptical park could be seen in the 1930 scheme.

Figure 4. Top: The 1926 plan, and (bottom) 1930 plan for Iloilo by Juan Arellano.

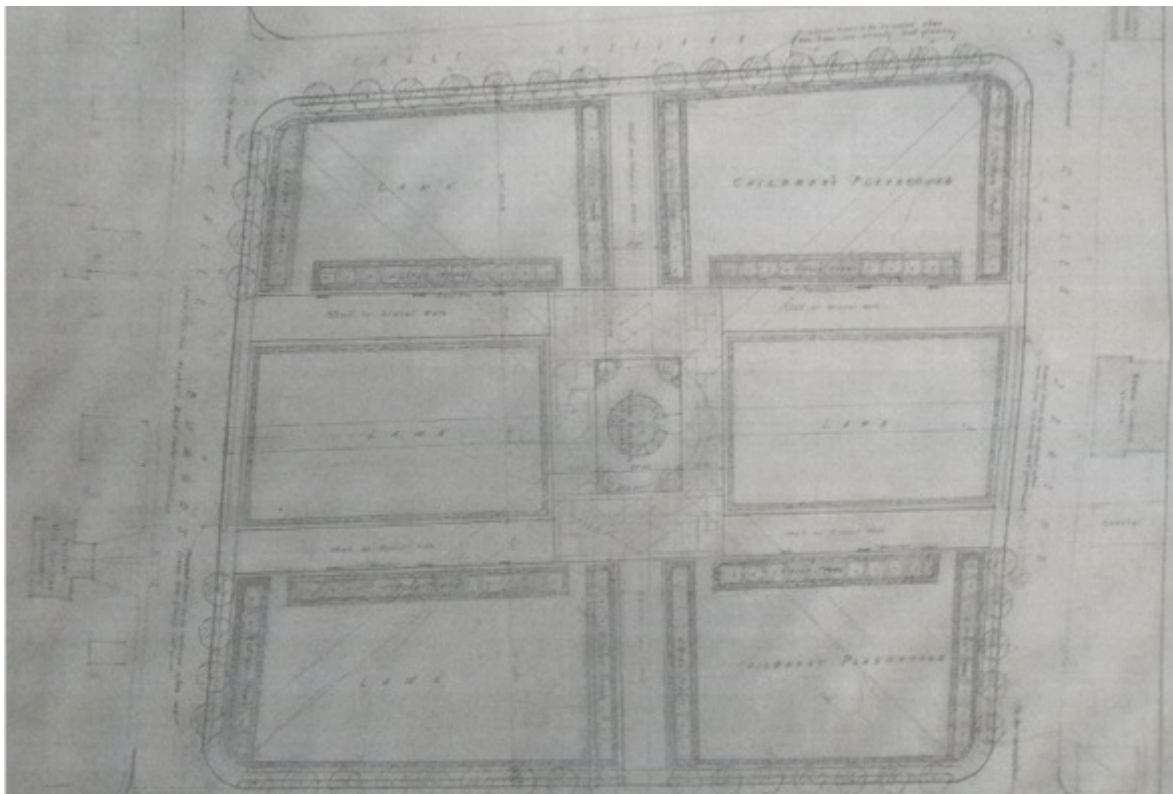




With respect to Arellano's 1926 plan, three features determined the city layout. First, there was the use of land zoning. Residential Zones, for instance, were to be developed throughout the city. Second, approximately 500 metres north of the Iloilo River, there was a circular plaza (with monument). It was to be surrounded by eight symmetrically-shaped blocks of land. In proximity to the space was the Carnival Ground with green areas positioned at its western and eastern sides. From the plaza roads dispersed through three Residential Zones to the urban fringe where additional green spaces were located. Grand vistas to/from the plaza and its monument were, therefore, created. Third, south of the Iloilo River was the new civic centre. Situated about 1.5 kms to the west of the business district the civic core was organized with a major central axis. Presenting an impressive vista north to the Iloilo River and south to the Iloilo Strait the axis was accentuated by the siting of two public buildings, the Market Buildings and City Hall, and numerous green spaces along it. Surrounded on four sides by a Residential Zone four major roadways led to/from the site of the City Hall: one roadway headed west to Molo; another went east to downtown; two roads headed northwards. One of these north-bound thoroughfares went toward the cemetery, the other to the aforementioned plaza and Carnival Ground.

In the light of Juan Arellano's Iloilo scheme being comprehensive in nature, and BPW finances having to be spread amongst a large number of environmental projects throughout the Philippines – in 1929, for example, the Division of Architecture designed/constructed 319 structures - it was executed in sections. These included the laying out of the north-bound roadway from the City Hall to the Carnival Grounds, and the construction in 1933 of the City Hall. Now used by the University of the Philippines-Visayas, the City Hall was once the largest building in the Visayas Region, and has been noted as being the sole surviving architectural landmark of Arellano's city plan. With sculptures by Ricardo Monti on its front elevation, and sitting originally within a 16 hectare plot, the classically-designed building is imposing. But in spatial terms by the late-1930s, as part of the undertaking of Arellano's city plan, dozens of plazas in communities surrounding Iloilo had been revitalized - at least 14 of which had been redesigned by Juan Arellano. Significantly, these plaza renewal schemes, and similar projects in other provinces, as yet have not been acknowledged in Philippine planning historiography. So, by discussing and explaining these government-funded projects a more truthful grasp of what urban designing by Filipinos occurred, and greater cognisance of planning's value to American colonial governance can transpire.

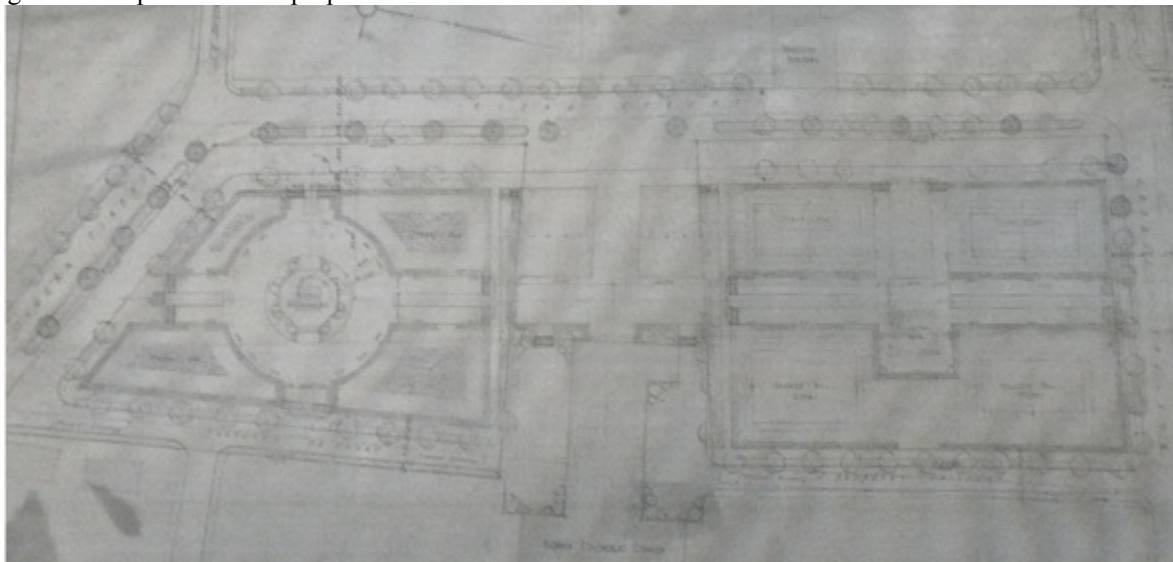
Figure 5. The plaza renewal project for La Paz.





Between 1933 and 1935 29 Spanish colonial plazas were redesigned in Iloilo Province. No other region in the Philippines was subject to so much urban planning activity at that time. Such schemes varied in character, and could on one hand be somewhat simple in nature, e.g. laying out symmetrically-formed lawns about a centrally-placed bandstand in the plaza in La Paz – Figure 5, or laying out a tennis court, children’s playground and erecting a bandstand in proximity to the Church in Leganes, and arranging lawns about a monument in the plaza in Miagao. On the other hand, some plaza redevelopment schemes were somewhat more complex in nature, such as those in Lumbanao and Tigbauan which included the construction of a number of architectural features as well as the arranging of green spaces: in Lumbanao, for instance, the Spanish colonial era space was lined on its sides by thin green lawns into which, on the west and east sides of the plaza, were planted trees. With most of the plaza being greened/transformed into lawns for lounging or playgrounds for children, the central axes of the space were arranged to directly correspond with the grid plan of the settlement and the position of the nearby Church. For example, the central north-south axis of the plaza which corresponded with the centre of the Church, was given the same width as the roadway directly to the south of the space, which the central east-west axis which was marked by two monuments and a bandstand aligned with the locations of two nearby roadways. Thus as a citizen was to travel about the central core of Lumbanao vistas were to be formed to the new architectural features in the space, and when approaching the plaza from the south, the church’s main elevation in the background framing the view of the bandstand and green spaces about it. Evidently when approaching the plaza from either the east or west citizens were able to view the plaza and the monuments within it.

Figure 6. The plaza renewal proposal for Arevalo.



As to why plaza redevelopment projects were a fundamental of Filipino urban designing a basic grasp of the use of the spaces, and in turn reference to Filipinos architects’ appropriation of an imagined, soon-to-be self-ruling nation is necessary. Whilst some scholars of Philippine Studies have indicated that during the American colonial period Filipinos rejected Spanish heritage from a planning perspective this is not true: after the Jones Act’s passing, and the Filipinisation of the colonial bureaucracy, existing urban spaces were utilized for the first time by Filipino architect-planners to help promote a sense of nationhood. Since through their education in the US and work experience in the BPW Filipino architects had learnt that architectural and environmental reforms were central to the American modernisation of the Philippines, the renewal of spaces alongside grand city plans post-1916 provided opportunity to nationalise/decolonise local cityscapes. With respect to the architecture of Capitols and other nationally important edifices, the use of decorative pediments that referenced *La Madre Filipina* (Mother Philippines) along with native characters helped to voice in built form a fresh interpretation of the developing nation as it headed towards independence. Furthermore, these new artistic references in the setting of political evolution, were suggestive of the expanding Filipino pursuit of liberty and happiness. As such redesigned plazas provided, literally and figuratively, a setting into which Filipino architects could articulate *the new construction of their own nation, one not American but Filipino*. Moreover, as an upshot of this actuality, the postcolonial historiography that encourages the viewpoint that Filipino post-1898 sought to partition and remove their Spanish heritage, given that it was viewed as something that should not be preserved, is flawed.



Such a way of thinking is unsound. Spanish spaces were to be kept but redefined in terms of use and meaning. The historiography, in particular, draws no reference to the changing use of plazas and the redesign of plazas after Act No. 3482 was passed: the Act (dated 1928) encouraged municipalities to consider issues associated with urban environmental design, and in turn developed common bonds between people within their urban communities. Development plans associated with renewing existing plazas became a staple of BPW public works from that time and can be seen in Iloilo Province settlements that included Pavia, Arevalo, Barotac Nueva, Carles, and Pototan. As places typically ignored within historiography, akin to the aforementioned Tayabas, there is a need to re-evaluate both the context and implementation/form/meaning of city planning in the Philippines during the American colonial period. Furthermore, in this intellectual milieu, it is appropriate to ask what factors influenced the approach of the Filipino designers? Until now, in written history, the answer lies in just one factor: Filipinos who worked in the BPW had received Beaux Arts-inspired education in the US. But is this grasp of Philippine planning history so simple?

To grant a broader account of the Philippine City Beautiful there is a need to check the Filipinos' renewal of plazas after Act No. 3482. Historically, of course, plazas were the hub of Philippine communities. Within the spaces, traditionally, social and religious celebrations occurred. However, during the American colonial era, with the construction of new monuments within the spaces, and with the establishment of new public holidays as well as in 1916 the kick-starting of decolonization, urban spaces became 'nationalized'. Crucially as part of this process the erection of new monuments to national heroes became entwined with the 'progressiveness' of local culture, and the broadening social understanding of matters associated with the quest for freedoms and civil rights. Consequently, not only did the erection of a new monument help tie in the local place to the national framework, a cultural environment associated from the late-1800s with Filipino emancipation, but now it also acted as a symbol of community prosperity and civic advancement. Whereas during the Spanish colonial era urban spaces had been directly connected to the Catholic Church, and so by the 1900s seen as part of its social control over the populace, firstly after 1898 under American 'benevolent assimilation' the spaces became used for secular activities and, secondly, from 1919 they became venues to advertise the growth of the Filipino nation as it headed towards self-rule. Hence to develop a maybe elaborate, but at least well-kept plaza, was a sign of a thriving, and indeed civically alert community. Part of this articulation of progress, evidently, was tied to the BPW architects who not only reshaped the physical structure of places but also designed within them statues and bandstands: as to why bandstands became important to social progress it must not be forgot that they were where local politicians made speeches to local people on days of civic celebration. As such bandstands were platforms for local democracy to be, literally, voiced at key dates in the calendar. As a result, as indicated at first by the 1919 Tayabas plan, should Filipinos wish to show to their colonial masters their capacity to express civic pride, spatially organized environments could also present an awareness that Filipinos had come to understand what public authority was for, and what 'public good', i.e. the cornerstone of democracy, was.

Conclusion

For about half of the American colonial period city planning, of a form shaped by contemporary American practices, was undertaken solely by Filipinos. Beginning in Tayabas the process of reforming the Philippine cityscape was vital to Filipinos demonstrating their evolving sense of nationhood but also the presence of public authority in their hands, and it post-1916 being applied for the benefit of the general public. Significantly as well, much of this planning activity has not been written about in Planning History, and as an outcome the role of city planning to colonial governance is not yet fully explained nor important schemes comprehensively discussed. As such many planning projects throughout the country have not been integrated as yet into historiography. This author's research takes a small step to address this problem.

The Filipinization of the City Beautiful, as this work has presented, entailed far more than Filipinos for the first time being urban designers in their homeland. The changing nature of City Beautiful urbanism post-1916, an articulation of the colonial state realigning itself, helped to supply opportunities for Filipino national identity to be put into built form and revealed how nationalist architects working within the BPW's Division of Architecture were successful in modifying the design form of built fabrics to this end. As a consequence, two matters need recognizing: first, the role of Filipinos within the working of the American empire during the 1900s needs reiterating. To date their function has barely been acknowledged. Their role was much more than incidental. Second, the historiography of the City Beautiful, as schemes by Filipinos from 1919 show, needs to extend beyond Manila and Baguio. Many town and city plans were composed pre-1935, and such was the volume of plaza renewal schemes that they topped three figures by the early-1930s. Thus, if the US was the spiritual home of the City Beautiful then the heart of its application was, arguably, in the Philippines.



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Ian Morley is an Associate Professor in the Department of History at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He has published widely on the design of city environments during the American colonial period in the Philippines. In June 2018 his new book, *Cities and Nationhood: American Imperialism and Urban Design in the Philippines, 1898-1916*, was published by the University of Hawaii Press.

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