

# Cogon Flea Market and the Surrounding Area, a Vibrant Center

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Cogon Flea Market in Tagbilaran City's Cogon neighborhood is a vibrant center facing severe challenges. The closeness determines the quality of being vibrant to daily excess requirements and other places essential to inhabitants' daily lives, and these destinations are walkable. The emphasis of this study is on the intangible qualities of social elements and their related functions. The paper required us to thoroughly examine pertinent literature, a desk review of local ordinances, oral interviews with Boholano history specialists, people of the surrounding region, and site inspection. The findings indicate a disparity in the regulation produced with the functions of the area's vibrancy, notably on the 'walkability' to satisfy the excess requirement of the inhabitants while resolving traffic congestion. It impacts the quality of life in the following ways on a macro scale: smart growth, economic consequences, health, and well-being. These findings imply that if the morphological feature of the region were altered in some way, the Center would lose its intended purpose.

**Keywords:** Urban Design, Modernization, and Conservation, Walkability, Desk Review, Review of Related Literature, Mixed Land Use, Social Cohesion, Philippines, Asia

## **INTRODUCTION**

Cogon Flea Market and its surrounding area are some of the vibrant centers of Tagbilaran City. Still, today's urbanization process faces a threat, and if neglected, it will lose its sense of vibrancy. Conserving its

functionality will benefit not only the district of Cogon and its residents but also the city of Tagbilaran. This paper's inclination is more focused on the intangible values of the social aspect and its function. Rather than values of aesthetics and physical form, this study is focused entirely on the social and function dimension of urban design.

Conserving its morphological aspect would mean preserving the area's vibrant quality, social cohesiveness, and spirit of place (*genius loci*). Nevertheless, in the absolute sense, if such vibrancy of the place is conserved, it induces 'Smart Growth' and supports the New Urbanism Concepts. Today's trends in the City of Tagbilaran bring a significant threat to this vibrant Center. The foresight of the local city government is to give more importance to vehicular activities rather than the pedestrian activities such as 'Street Life.' Showing cars would mean setback requirements for buildings that catered to businesses, altering its physical form to accommodate car parking. Aside from this, the local zoning ordinance suggests that residential areas must be far apart from business areas. Tagbilaran City's zoning ordinance still follows the conventional zoning practice that separates residential areas to destinations essential to everyday life (low order needs), as stated by Walter Crystallier's theory of 'Central Place.' The zoning regulation overturns pedestrian activity and devolves the functionality of the local shops, making the area less sociable and thus loosening its connection.

**Cogon Flea Market and Its Surrounding Area.** The historical background of the Cogon flea market is based on Boholano author, historian, and columnist, Dr. Jes B. Tirol. Somewhere in 1949, during the time when Pedro Belderol was Mayor of Tagbilaran City. He was fascinated with the idea of expanding the area of Tagbilaran. He opened many roads by bulldozing a few barren landscapes of Tagbilaran to make way for avenues to connect different areas of the city. His major work during those times was the interconnection of Carlos P. Garcia road, which is now the main highway, and Ma. Clara road. In his endeavor, he succeeded in connecting the road of Cogon Elementary School to the adjacent street, which is now Graham Avenue, a coastal road. Due to a lack of heavy equipment during those early years, the demolishing was based on land's natural contours, which means that if obstacles such as a large rock are encountered, the bulldozing would change course and proceeded to its intended destination to connect to other roads that caused cadastral problems today. Nevertheless, Pedro Belderol was considered

one of the best mayors of Tagbilaran City (Ligalig, 2018). His vice mayor, Hilario Bruñidor, a resident of Cogon District, proposed building a Flea Market in his area and the bulldozing of roads connecting to the proposed flea market.

During the time of Mayor Venancio Inting, the flea market of Cogon was built from 1962 to 1964. To make the Market accessible and viable, they connected Remolador Street and Lamdagan Street to the airport road and Pamaong Street to Carlos P. Garcia Street. In 1946, Mr. Tabaco, who worked at the United Nations, donated a considerable part of his area to connect Ma. Clara Street to Belderol Street. The said street today bears his name, Tabaco Street.

**Factors of authenticity.** One of the factors is physical structure of the market. Although the physical structure changed over time, the original wooden frame of the market and few old houses and retail stores are still intact. These structures are 50 years old.

**Function as a Vibrant Center.** The function of the area, from the conception to the present Cogon Flea Market, remained a vibrant center of the Cogon District Area until the current time (March 2018). The intention of the late mayor Belderol and other prominent stakeholders who donated parcels of land to connect the coastal street of Graham Avenue and the main road is still intact and functional until today.

**The inter-connecting streets and their Morphological Aspects.** There were no additions or alterations to the inter-connecting street patterns. The only morphological changes are setbacks of old buildings to give way to vehicular activities and car parking.

**What values to conserve?** Values identified that are essential for conservation are; Historic Values, Social/Functional Values, Aesthetic Values, and Economic Values. Cogon Flea Market and its surrounding area and still functioned as a vibrant center. The late Mayor Pedro Belderol and other prominent stakeholders intended to make the Cogon Flea Market the central business of Cogon District and as an alternative to Agora Market area and to connect the main road C.P.G. Avenue to the coastal road, which is Graham Avenue.

The values to conserve are more aimed towards functionality and sociability. Its function as a vibrant center, which means the proximity of the daily surplus needs and other destinations essential to everyday life to residents are within comfortable reach. Based on the figure shown below (Figure 1), Social/Cultural values are the priority value, an essential

catalyst for socialization and social cohesion. Being vibrant serves as social capital to the area, creating networks of relationships, allowing that society to function effectively. The second is the historical value, and the third is the economic value.

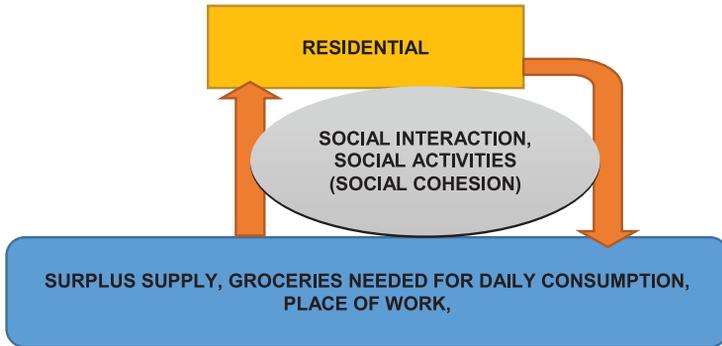


Figure 1. Theory of Vibrancy

The Theory of Jane Jacobs from ‘The Life and Death of Great American Cities.’ suggested that for communities to be successful, they must have specific characteristics such as mixed-use, short blocks (walkable), mixed-age, and overhead structures that allow for a diversity of business and population density.

Getis and Getis (1966) used Walter Crystaller’s Central Place Theory. This theory described the number, size, and location of human settlements. He stressed two aspects of items: Low Order, which refers to things required daily, and High Order, which refers to products that are not required daily. These items must be easily available, while the term “High Order” refers to specialist services. His theory comprises two fundamental concepts: Range, which refers to the most significant distance a customer is willing to purchase or travel to obtain products or services, and Threshold, which refers to the market region in which a producer must operate to earn an expected profit (See Figure 2). this would mean if transportation cost will be higher due to distance, the Range will go down, and Threshold will go up. The same with income; if there is a rise in revenue, the Range will go up, and the Threshold will go down (See Table 1).

Table 1. Threshold and Range Effect

ACTIVITY	IF	RANGE	THRESHOLD
Transportation Cost	Up	Down	Up
Income	Up	Up	Down
Preference	Up	Up	Down

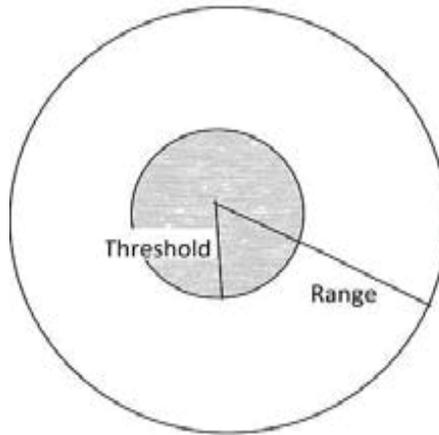


Figure 2. Illustration of Central Place Theory

**Significance of the Study.** This paper’s findings may enhance people’s views of public places. Furthermore, it provides perspectives and analyses on fundamental values that must be safeguarded. Such values are inextricably linked to economics, history, and sense of place (genius loci).

In a larger sense, the dynamic nature of the Cogon Flea Market region, if protected and properly maintained, may assist to reduce traffic and contribute to the area’s small business incubation, therefore supporting smart growth. Furthermore, it reintroduces walking as a healthy alternative to automobiles.

**The Intangible Values.** In a micro sense, the essential aspect of the Cogon Market Area is to maintain its status as a ‘Mercado.’ A Spanish term meaning Market. Still, Tagbilaranons refers to the ancient market setting style where customers may engage in a ‘touch and feel’ environment and negotiate with the vendor. This Mercado setting has multiple diverse shops where you can dine and savor traditional Boholano food and snacks

like Biko (rice cake), sikwate (hot chocolate), and pan bantuk, a traditional bread that will last for a week without the aid of refrigeration.

This current Mercado setting created a unique culture of the area, which is unique compared to other Mercado of Tagbilaran City due to its Terminal, which is situated in the middle of the Market. Myriad of food and dry goods stalls surrounding the Terminal started its operation in the '70s, and the Marcela supermarket located in front of the Market was also born. This setting congests people with different social backgrounds, which is essential for social cohesion. Studies have also shown that social cohesion is an integral part of the community to improve the quality of life and promotes good health (Stafford, Bartley, Sacker, Marmot, Wilkinson, Boreham, & Thomas, 2003).

In the Mercado setting of Cogon Flea Market, small businesses are owned by different owners and thus would mean direct household income compared to mall settings usually owned by corporations that require employees with higher educational attainment.

The Cogon Market and its surrounding area shaped its culture through the period with its myriad of social interactions. It is said that cultural significance is embedded in the environment's settings; the association of the resident to the space is the catalyst of what makes its unique culture. Within it lies the different values of the place.

Culture's spillover effects assist in creating social capital on a larger scale. This catalyst is in charge of bringing communities together, resulting in social cohesion, which is an essential component in enhancing one's quality of life and sense of belonging (Sibbald, McPherson & Kothari, 2013).

The present situation of Cogon Market and the surrounding area functioned as a walkable community with vibrant rates. However, sidewalks are not clear to be seen as paths due to uncontrolled use of sidewalks as parking space and other vehicular traffic, and obstacles such as posts, pipe-line meters, etc. The Tagbilaran City L.G.U. can improve and develop the area's walkability by conducting a thorough study and developing a policy prioritizing pedestrian over vehicular use. Improve pedestrian safety and promote pedestrian walkability through minor enhancements such as leveling the pedestrian lanes for functional and aesthetic purposes, removing obstacles to make the paths clear, and making the paths legible. Creating a mental construct to people for walking as an option to reach a specific destination or collect surplus essential for daily needs.

With walkability, it would result in different benefits such as improving accessibility to shops, increasing the impact on consumers' savings, reducing external costs. It entails land-use efficiency, enhances the community's livability, and promotes a healthy lifestyle by improving fitness (Litman, 2003).

Walking, cycling, and its variants are examples of active transportation, according to Litman (2013). Known as non-motorized and human-powered travel, it offers a number of advantages, including the reduction of motorized cars and traffic congestion, as well as the promotion of a healthier way of life. It is becoming increasingly popular. Moving about provides psychological advantages. Walking is dependent on the effect of the immediate social milieu as well as the qualities of the outdoor urban environment, which may include natural aspects, in which one is situated.

Less traffic congestion saves consumers money, reduces energy use and emissions. It also reduces parking fees (Pojani & Stead, 2015). Smaller and medium-sized cities are critical to achieving meaningful progress towards more sustainable urban development, according to the authors. Their scale enables for urban expansion, "green" transportation, and environmental protection. Smaller and medium-sized communities have fewer resources to implement new transportation initiatives and are more susceptible to global economic swings.

The current policy of the Tagbilaran Zoning Ordinance is to segregate residential areas and business areas into different locations rather than incorporating them (mix used). Since Cogon Flea Market area is considered a business area, the Local Zoning Ordinance of the City of Tagbilaran requires old residential buildings to be transferred to another area. This condition will result in more traffic congestion. People are temporal, which means they travel from home to place of work or residence of destination to acquire a surplus of supplies for daily needs and vice versa at almost the exact times (Carmona, 2021).

As the current situation of Tagbilaran city's surge in population growth, Local Ordinance separates residential areas, institutional areas, and business areas; more residential buildings are now situated at the periphery of the city's boundary. They would require vehicular travel rather than walking to the desired destination. This current situation promotes sprawling, and one direct effect of sprawling is vehicular traffic congestion (Brunner, 2013).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

With regard to appearance, the current trend in 'International Style' construction is depreciating in quality. Due to the absence of this attribute, this object does not distinguish itself as being one of a kind. By combining the ancient and modern aspects of a construction, it is easier to evaluate the value of a piece of land or building. Travel disclose accessibility will be required due to the current City Ordinance, which separates the residential home from the place of business. As a result, the Vibrancy of Cogon Market and its surrounding area will be lost, affecting both tangible and intangible qualities of the area's environment.

In a micro sense, the findings of this study will raise awareness of the public's perspective of public places and the role they play in their everyday lives in general. Social engagement, which fosters social cohesiveness, is crucial for improving the overall quality of life, and walkability promotes excellent health, reduces traffic, reduces air pollution, and reduces noise pollution caused by automobiles, among other benefits.

If the Mercado Setting is maintained—small businesses owned by a variety of individuals—this would result in direct income for the home.

In a macro perspective, the study indicates that the Cogon Flea Market and its surrounding area have the ability to be active, which will serve as a social capital web in the long run. By retaining its morphological context (the mix of materials utilized), it will be prevented from sprawling, which will result in vehicular traffic congestion.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Tagbilaran's zoning legislation should use a mixed-use strategy rather than a segregation-based approach, according to the city's planning commission. In order to improve the quality of life on the streets, it is advised that a route be utilized as a roadway be selected and placed in strategic locations. For the purpose of promoting the region's culture while also complying with health and sanitary laws, standardized stands for local produce would be required. The construction of high-rise buildings with parking would not only alleviate the city's parking problems, but it will also produce cash for the city, which will increase the city's walking accessibility as a result.

The advice will be used to inform government policies and activities, as well as non-governmental organizations. In order to maintain the vibrancy of the area, it is necessary to promote and protect the health and well-being of the people while also supporting their financial benefits. This endeavor must not compromise the health and well-being of the environment.

A smart growth and anti-sprawl development approach would reduce the distance between people's residences, their places of work, and their services. It would also reduce the cost of infrastructure and public services, so advancing the concept of sustainable development.

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