

**Building the Imperial Imagination:
The Politics of American Colonial Urbanism and Architecture in Manila**

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ABSTRACT

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Manila as a new American colonial city in the first decade of the 20th century received a massive urban transformation aimed at concretizing America's imperial imagination in the tropics. This imperial ambition drove the colonial authorities to structure Manila's urban built environment as a model colonial outpost. The urban revision was initiated to facilitate efficient colonial governance and to signify the power and prestige of the new colonial order. Manila, perceived by the colonist as a pathologic space, became the vortex of colonial urban reengineering that systematically transformed the city into a sanitized, ordered, and regulated domain so structured to enhance the flow of economic activities.

Through the lens of critical post-colonial architectural historiography, this study is a formal and discursive analysis of the power inscribed in the architectural and urban aspects of American colonialism in Manila from 1898 to 1934. The study also seeks to investigate how colonial urban space was effectively re-organized and restructured using new modes of monitorial methods and disciplinary tactics that replaced the harshness of military force and brute coercion yet nevertheless generated an effective means of panoptic control over the natives. Implicated by the new spatial order were the negotiations of power between the municipal authorities and the native populace in shaping, representing, and using the urban built environment in colonial Manila. The ordering of the built environment in the Philippines under the American colonial authorities necessitated a radical approach to social and urban planning policy, the implementation of which was directed towards sanitation, mass housing, and urban aesthetics – all the physical consequences of colonialism's tactic of enframing the colonial subjectivity and installing the infrastructures of colonial modernity. These strategies maneuvered in the language of reform that included sanitary surveillance, the modification of the domestic spaces, the introduction of a modern utilities system, the establishment of zoning regulation and control in the use of public space, and the gardenesque transformation of Manila from the new colonial master's perception of Hispanic medieval squalor to a neoclassic imperial imaginary guided by the principles of Daniel H. Bunham's "City Beautiful" master plan.

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