

The Spatial Politics of Cogon Market: Exploring how Physical Layout Reinforces Stratification

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Abstract: *This study explores the relationship between spatial organization and economic stratification among vendors in Cogon Market, Cagayan de Oro City. Employing qualitative research methods, including non-obtrusive observation and in-depth interviews with six participants, the research investigates how the vendors' economic capacities influence their positioning within the market's spatial layers. The findings reveal that while spatial organization does not directly determine stratification, it indirectly affects it through the vendors' pre-established economic situations. Vendors with stronger economic capacities occupy more advantageous positions within the market, offering greater opportunities for upward mobility, whereas those in the outermost layers face challenges influenced by weakened economic statuses, exacerbated by political activities. These insights highlight the nuanced interplay between spatial dynamics and economic stratification, suggesting that further research into the political influences on the market's spatial and economic structures is warranted.*

Keywords: spatial politics, cogon market, physical layout, reinforces stratification

INTRODUCTION

Public markets are vibrant spaces where social, cultural, and economic activities converge, reflecting the intricate dynamics of urban life. Cogon Market in Cagayan de Oro City, a central hub for commerce and interaction, is no exception. It serves not only as an economic lifeline for countless vendors, drivers, and consumers but also as a microcosm of the broader social hierarchies and spatial politics shaping urban environments. Within its bustling streets and tightly packed stalls lies a nuanced story of how space—its allocation, organization, and accessibility—plays a pivotal role in reinforcing social stratification.

Urban sociology highlights that spatial arrangements in public areas are rarely neutral; they are shaped by intersecting forces such as historical development, economic imperatives, and policy decisions. Studies have shown that prime locations within markets tend to be monopolized by those with more resources or influence, while marginalized groups often occupy peripheral or less advantageous positions (Burgess, 1925; King & McGee, 2019). This spatial arrangement has tangible consequences, affecting not only income generation but also social mobility and cultural inclusion.

The impetus for this research stems from preliminary findings gleaned from a non-obtrusive observation conducted within Cogon Market last November 2, 2024. Initial observations revealed discernible patterns in the spatial distribution of vendors, particularly about their ethnic backgrounds and the accessibility of their stalls. These preliminary findings suggest that the market's physical layout may inadvertently reinforce existing social and economic inequalities, prompting a deeper investigation into the spatial politics at play.

This study aims to delve deeper into the spatial politics of Cogon Market, examining how the market's physical layout and spatial organization reinforce existing social and economic inequalities. Knowing the underlying mechanisms that shape these disparities enables us to identify potential strategies for creating a more equitable and inclusive market environment.

Objectives of the study. Generally, this study wants to explore the spatial politics in Cogon Market of Cagayan de Oro City among the vendors whose experiences the natural order of social stratification was initially observed.

Specifically, it wants to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the spatial organization of Cogon Market?
2. What market dynamics are engaged in by the vendors?
3. How does the spatial organization affect these vendors' economic situation?
4. How is social stratification reinforced by these vendors' placement in the spatial organization?

Significance of the study. This study holds significant implications for urban planning, social sciences, and public policy. By shedding light on the intricate relationship between space, power, and inequality within Cogon Market, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of

urban dynamics and offers practical recommendations for creating more equitable and just urban environments. The following are the key areas of significance:

Urban Planning. The findings can inform future urban planning and development initiatives, particularly in the design and management of public markets. Planners can create more equitable and inclusive market spaces by understanding the spatial dynamics and their impact on market participants. It can also contribute to the discourse on spatial justice, highlighting the role of physical space in shaping social and economic outcomes.

Social Sciences. In the area of Sociology, this study offers a microcosm of urban life, allowing for a deeper understanding of social stratification, power relations, and cultural dynamics within a complex urban setting. Anthropologically, it can provide valuable insights into the cultural practices and economic strategies of diverse ethnic groups within the market.

Public Policy. The findings can inform public policies aimed at addressing social and economic inequalities, particularly in urban areas. Moreover, policymakers can use the insights to develop regulations that promote fair competition, protect the rights of vulnerable market participants, and improve market governance.

Operational definition of the concepts. In this study, the following concepts are defined:

Spatial organization – this refers to both the graphic and textual picture of Cogon Market.

Market dynamics – this refers to all activities in Cogon Market that were observed in the initial phase of the data collection as well as the description of the experiences of the vendors as they engage in the market activities.

Economic situation – this refers to the vendors' observed and perceived rank in the economic structure and their income. In this study, the effect of their position in the spatial organization on their income and economic situation is investigated.

Stratification – this refers to the perceived, observed, and analyzed layering of market groups that surface in the market dynamics. In this study, an analysis of spatial politics is brought to the fore.

Theoretical framework. This study explores the dynamics of urban market vendors within the framework of Burgess's Concentric Zone Theory and the Urban Cultural Perspective, which together provide a comprehensive lens for understanding the interplay between spatial organization and socio-economic adaptation in urban settings.

Burgess's Concentric Zone Theory. Burgess's Concentric Zone Theory posits that cities grow outward in concentric zones, with the central business district (CBD) at the core, surrounded by transition zones, lower-income residential areas, and eventually suburban and rural zones. It proposes that certain land users and resident groups will be located in certain zones based on socioeconomic status and accessibility to the urban core. The model views cities as ecosystems with competition for land near the urban center.

Urban market vendors often operate in these transitional zones, where spatial policies, urban development initiatives, and competition for space can influence their economic activities. The theory provides a basis for examining how spatial organization affects access to customers, market clustering, and the economic stability of informal vendors. Through this lens, the study considers how urban zoning decisions and the physical layout of cities impact the livelihoods of individuals working in informal economies.

Urban Cultural Perspective. The Urban Cultural Perspective emphasizes urban residents' adaptive strategies and cultural practices as they navigate city life's complexities. This perspective underscores the importance of agency, resilience, and social capital in shaping how individuals respond to challenges such as economic precarity, policy enforcement, and spatial restrictions.

Informal market vendors are often resourceful in responding to urban challenges, building networks of mutual support, and adapting their work practices to seasonal and policy-driven fluctuations. The Urban Cultural Perspective frames these adaptive behaviors, exploring how cultural resilience and informal social systems enable vendors to sustain their livelihoods. This perspective also allows the study to examine the broader cultural implications of urban policy in the informal sector.

Integration of Theories. The integration of Burgess's Concentric Zone Theory and the Urban Cultural Perspective provides a dual approach to understanding the intersection of structural and cultural factors in urban markets. While Burgess's theory focuses on the spatial and economic dynamics of urban zones, the Urban Cultural Perspective highlights the human agency and cultural adaptations within these spaces. This theoretical foundation supports an in-depth analysis of the interactions between urban policies, spatial arrangements, and the lived experiences of market vendors.

Assumptions of the study. This study is built around the following assumptions:

1. The closer the vendors are to the innermost part of the market, the higher their position in the hierarchy is.
2. Position in the hierarchy is parallel to economic capacity or economic situation.
3. Economic situation is acquired as one strives for it. Cogon Market becomes an avenue for the multiplication or increase in their economic capacity.

METHODOLOGY

Design. The study utilized a qualitative research method, incorporating non-obtrusive observation and in-depth interview techniques in data collection. They are techniques essential in spatial analysis as the study looked into how spatial organization reinforced stratification.

Locale of the study. The study was conducted in Cogon Market in Cagayan de Oro City. The initial data collection which utilized non-obtrusive observation was conducted on November 2, 2024 from 9am to 3pm. The observation started with the researchers traversing the Hayes Street, towards Osmeña Street, up to Yacapin Street, enclosing the observation site by traversing Capt. Vicente Roa Street. After about four times of careful and repeated observation of the premise identified, the researchers decided to limit the observation site to Osmeña Street, Yacapin Street, Capt. Vicente Roa St., and enclosing it by traversing J. Borja Street. About three times, the researchers walked around the said streets until major observation points were finalized. The following map shows the area where the observation was conducted. The area boxed in yellow is the coverage of the observation site.



The second data collection was conducted on December 2, 2024, and utilized an in-depth interview. The focus of the interview was on vendors located in the innermost part of the market, at the immediate outer part, and at the outermost part of the same vicinity. The following map shows the areas where interviews were conducted.



Innermost part

Immediate
outer part

Outermost part

Participants of the study. A total of six (6) participants were interviewed in the study. One of them is vendor of garments and dry goods located at the innermost part of the market, three (3) of them are fruit vendors peddling their products at the immediate outer part of the market, and two (2) others are seafood and meat grilling service providers.

Data collection procedure. Data collection was divided into two phases. The first phase was conducted on November 2, 2024 through a non-obtrusive observation where the researchers walked around the above-identified premises. All observations were documented by writing and photography. After four repeated times of enclosing the observation site, the researchers decided to focus on a more limited space such as that shown in the second map above. The new location was traversed three times until the observations were finalized.

The second phase of data collection was conducted on December 2, 2024, through an indepth interview with the participants identified above. Their consent was first asked, and then audio-recorded interviews were done. The researchers assured the participants that utmost confidentiality was observed.

Research instruments. The non-obtrusive observation was assisted by an observation guide which includes the following themes:

1. Spatial organization and layout – overall market structure, stall configuration, physical infrastructure
2. Market activities and dynamics – vendor activities, customer behavior, market hours, and peak times
3. Social and cultural aspects – ethnic diversity, social interactions, informal economy

Moreover, the in-depth interviews were facilitated by an interview guide which are based on the following concepts and indicators:

Concepts	Indicators
Spatial organization	Researcher-observed overall market structure, stall configuration, and patterned layering of infrastructure across the market vicinity. Participants' perceived reasons for patterned layering of infrastructures, and opinions on the plans fostered by the infrastructures.
Market dynamics	Description of conducted activities related to trading; beginnings of trading activities engaged into; experienced highs and lows in trading; challenges from all sorts of sources; resilient practices towards the experienced challenges; views on trading in Cogon Market; aspirations as traders.

Economic position	Perceived economic status; reasons for being into such status; perceived effect of spatial organization on economic status; issues related to present economic position.
Stratification	Experienced power dynamics in market activities engaged into; perceived reasons for or sources of such power dynamics; who gets or achieves what?; perceived effect of spatial organization on stratification.

Data analysis. Processing of data includes transcription of voice-recorded interviews and organization of data in a matrix or database where the participants' background information, responses to each research question, and miscellaneous but equally essential data that came out from the interviews were reflected. A collation of all transcribed data was read several times for analysis and alignment or deviation from the study's prior assumptions.

Themes were developed out of the collated data. These themes were discussed in view of the literature that formed this study's assumptions. Finally, an overall conceptual insight was mainstreamed as this serves as the main contribution of the study to the body of knowledge about spatial politics in an economic-driven sphere.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Spatial Organization of Cogon Market. Cogon Market in Cagayan de Oro City presents a fascinating study of spatial organization, reflecting the economic and social strata of its vendors. Its physical structure is characterized by a layered arrangement of stalls and vendors, reflecting the diverse economic activities within its confines. At its core lies a permanent, enclosed market building, housing a variety of shops and stalls selling a wide range of goods, from fresh produce to clothing and household items. This central structure provides a stable and organized environment for businesses, particularly those with higher capital investments.



Main building of the Cogon Market

At its core lies the *innermost part*, a realm of permanence and higher capital. This refers to the four edges of the main building of the Cogon market. Here, vendors selling garments occupy fixed, rented stalls, their wares displayed in an organized fashion. This centralized area serves as the market's commercial heart, attracting a steady stream of customers.



Encircling this core is the *immediate outer part*, a more fluid and dynamic zone. Fruit peddlers and other vendors with lower capital dominate this area, often setting up mobile or temporary stalls. This section represents a middle ground, where vendors balance stability with flexibility, adapting to market fluctuations and seasonal changes. The spatial arrangement here is less structured, with vendors forming clusters based on their products, creating a vibrant and chaotic atmosphere.



Beyond this lies the *outermost part*, a fringe characterized by informality and lower socioeconomic status. Here, fish and seafood grilling service providers operate from makeshift

stalls, their presence defined by the aroma of sizzling seafood. This area is a testament to the entrepreneurial spirit of those with limited resources, who capitalize on the market's foot traffic to eke out a living. The spatial organization is haphazard, with vendors often spilling onto the adjacent streets, blurring the boundaries between the market and the city.



The spatial organization of Cogon Market is thus a microcosm of the broader socioeconomic landscape of Cagayan de Oro City. The concentric layers, from the permanent core to the informal periphery, reflect the diverse economic realities of its vendors. This spatial differentiation is not merely a physical arrangement but a social and economic stratification, revealing the complex interplay of factors that shape urban markets. Cogon Market's spatial organization offers valuable insights into the dynamics of informal economies and the challenges faced by marginalized vendors. As the city continues to evolve, understanding these spatial patterns is crucial for

policymakers and urban planners to devise strategies that promote inclusive and sustainable development, ensuring that all segments of society benefit from the market's economic vitality.

This spatial organization can be considered a micro-illustration of Burgess' concentric zone model where he divided the city into various layers which include the central business district, transition zones, and lower-income areas. These layers are similarly reflected in this study in such a way that the innermost part of the market (which, in the next discussions will be termed the *inner layer*) represents the central business district, the immediate outer part of the market (which, in the next discussion will be termed *immediate outer layer*) represents the transition zones, and the outermost part of the market (which, in the next discussion will be termed *outermost layer*) represents the lower-income areas. In the inner layer, economic activity is very dynamic as a huge population is attracted to this center; in the immediate outer layer, business ventures are transitional or provisional as their incomes are dependent upon seasons or events that bring people to the market; and in the outermost layer, lower incomes of business ventures are affected by their distance from the center.

Market Dynamics Engaged Into by the Vendors. Three sets of interviews were conducted to collect data for this study. One (1) informant is a vendor who represents the innermost part of the market, three (3) informants represent the immediate outer part of the market, and two (2) informants represent the outermost part of the market covered in this study. Their activities in the market were investigated to surface the market dynamics in Cogon.

Fatimah (not her real name) is a ready-to-wear (RTW) garment vendor in the inner layer of the market. Her merchandise also includes *malongs*, or traditional Maranao cloth, and bags. Her stall is permanently fixed and is rented for P15,000 per month with additional expenses for light of up to P3,000 per month. Her business is established by what can be considered a significant amount of capital, usually ranging from P50,000 to P100,000 and more, with variations on the selling price of supplies.

Fatimah shared that she had been doing this economic activity since she was 12 years old. She has been a fourth-generation vendor since her family started doing the same business in the same market of the same city. She recalled that her parents would usually bring her to the store to assist in the marketing activity so that growing up, this has been the work that she was made aware of,

nurtured, and made an expert of. She is a Maranao who was raised in Cagayan de Oro City but whose ancestors are migrants from Lanao del Norte.

Fatimah shared that her routine generally revolved around the market. In the morning, after accomplishing reproductive chores for her three children, two of whom are schooling, she would directly go to the market and open her store to customers walking around the vicinity. Cleaning her stall, arranging the stocks, and waiting for customers are the major activities that she does in her business. On special occasions like the time when the stocks need to be replenished, she would take time to order stocks from Manila by contacting suppliers who she already got acquainted with. She elaborated that the ordering procedure is critical as she experienced losing about a hundred thousand pesos from scams. It was when she ordered a bulk of supplies that her payment was already sent, but the supplies did not arrive in her store while the bogus supplier could no longer be reached. Learning from such circumstances, Fatimah was able to devise means to ensure legitimate and safe transactions by seeking identification and more proof of legitimacy from the suppliers.

Fatimah's day usually ends at about 7 in the evening when she simply closes the stall and rests her mind on the thought that another market day is coming for her to work the business until she will be able to accomplish her practical obligations to her children, after her children finish their respective educational degrees like being an engineer and a doctor, and even after she already exhausted her strength to do such activity just like her predecessors.

John, Michael, and Roy (not their real names) represent the vendors from the immediate outer layer of the market. They are fruit vendors peddling their products around the main building of Cogon market. They are said to invest an amount ranging from P2,500 to P5,000 per day depending upon the season. On regular days, they spend P2,500 to buy 5 boxes of grapes containing 5 kilograms per box. They sell the fruits at P150 pesos per kilogram, letting them earn up to the gross amount of P3,750 pesos and a profit of up to P1,250. This amount is earned only in a day; can go down on off-peak days when they need to lower the selling price to P120 or P100 per kilogram if the day is about to end yet the stocks are still many; and can also go up to double the profit in peak seasons like Christmas, New Year, and other holidays celebrated across the city or the country.

Jay and Roy shared that they got into this business due to the closure of the dry goods store that they worked for as sales utility clerks working from 8 am to 5 pm for more than a year. Michael,

on the other hand, was influenced by the two others to do the business because of its perceived good profit. Jay is a migrant from western Visayas while the two others are only from Cagayan de Oro City. They shared that they have become accustomed to doing the business because they no longer need to be subjected to bounded work time schedules and employers' instructions. Also, they perceived that doing the business lets them earn higher than their salary received from former employment.

They shared that since they are no longer bound by work time schedules, they have the freedom to open their stall at their desired time. Jay mentioned that, at times, he would open the stall at 9 am, while on other occasions he would open it at 11 am. If their stocks are sold as early as 5 pm then they can go home and rest early, but at times they linger for up to 11 pm or 12 midnight if the return of capital is still not accomplished. during off-peak seasons, they peddle their stocks around the main building, looking for spots where there is a gathering of people or spots that have been observed as frequented by many people. During peak seasons, like Christmas and New Year seasons, they do not close their stalls as they have to keep their physical spot in the market, otherwise they will be taken over by other peddling vendors. Michael shared that to avoid his stall spot being taken over by other peddlers, he would take naps just beside his stall and allow his friend to look after his stall while he quickly takes a bath and grabs dinner or lunch at his home nearby.

Peddling is a violation of market rules because of a government policy requiring everyone engaged in merchandising in the Cogon market to pay some amount for taking up space in such a public space. The nature of Jay and his friends' business is mobile so they tend to escape the payment of tax. As a result, they are pursued by Roads and Traffic Administration (RTA) officers. When they are apprehended, they are punished by their products and carts being snatched from them, resulting in income losses and road panics upon seeing the RTA car approaching their spot where they would pull their carts the hardest and fastest that they can towards the areas where they can hide for about 5 or 10 minutes and go out again after the RTA car is already gone at the vicinity. Despite these, they continue to work the business out. They have been in the market for almost 2 years during the conduct of this study and confessed that they wish to persist as this is the work that is appropriate for them for the time being.

Belen and Sheila (not their real names) are relatives. Belen is the grandmother of Sheila. Together with Sheila's son, they live their lives out through their economic activity daily in the outermost layer of the Cogon market. They both accept seafood and meat grilling services while Sheila occasionally sells other seafood like crabs depending on the availability of capital. By seafood grilling service, their customers bring the seafood and meat that they bought from the wet market located at the main market building to the stall of Belen and Sheila for grilling. They are paid P15 for a piece of fish or meat and they report earning the highest gross total of P600 per day and the lowest gross total of P100 per day. These exclude their operation expenses for charcoal and water as they need to buy water for the washing of the seafood and meat before grilling because their stall is very far from the water source. They call the area "*canal*" as it is located on the market drainage that traverses the portion where their stall is located.

Belen and Sheila considered their income very low and were only able to provide three very simple meals a day. Sheila shared that at times, they can only provide two meals a day. They furthered that they can only earn this amount since they are located on the outskirts of the market, which is relatively far from most of their prospective customers.

Belen recollected that since she was young, she helped her parents in the same work. However, they were then located inside the main building where they take spaces near the wet market for seafood and meat. That way, the seafood and meat buyers can immediately think of availing of the grilling service since the stalls are only accessible. When the government reconstructed the market, they were displaced to a farther location since their operations emitted smoke that was inappropriate for business making of other ventures. Several times, they were relocated to several locations resulting in the loss of patron customers.

Belen and Sheila blurted that they did not influence the turn of events that affected their business and the resulting demise in their income. To make amends with this situation, they continued to work on it despite these challenges.

Spatial Organization and Perceived Economic Situation of the Vendors. This study initially hypothesized that the spatial organization of the Cogon market reflected the stall placement of the three groups of vendors within the vicinity, while their stall placement both influences and is influenced by their economic status.

Inner layer and economic situation. After the conduct of non-obtrusive observation around the study area, it being the first phase of data collection, it was noted that the inner layer of the market was occupied by those whose stalls are fixed and permanent, though rented, that rent is considerably high. Their placement in the center of the market is observed to make them accessible to the majority of customers from all walks of life. The majority of the products essential to customers such as seafood and meat, vegetables, rice, cooking ingredients, RTWs, and household items are present in this layer. By observation, one may consider that because this center is frequented by people, business operations are vibrant, and income may be favorable to vendors.

However, upon conducting the interviews, Fatimah, a vendor from the inner layer shared that her income is good enough to get her family through the day. She said,

“Okay lang gyapon ang akong sitwasyon [referring to her economic situation] as long as magtuyok-tuyok ang kwarta.”

(My economic situation is okay as long as the money keeps circulating.)

She furthered by saying that,

“Kuntento nako. naandan naman ni nako. gusto nako kaning akong mga bata maka skwela or makapili sila og college course sa pagdako nila ug as long as maka guide ko sa ilaha. yung ate niya gusto mag doctor.”

(I’m content. I’ve gotten used to this life. What I want is for my kids to be able to study and choose a college course when they grow up. As long as I can guide them. My eldest wants to be a doctor.)

One of the reasons for this implied retreatism was her experience with trading challenges. One of these was her experience of being scammed during the COVID-19 pandemic. She shared that when she placed a bulk order of stocks in Manila through phone and online transactions, her payment was taken but not one item was delivered. It crossed her mind that she may be deceived by the mode of the transaction entered into but still proceeded because of the need to earn. When asked why she trusted the contracted supplier even in a suspicious transaction, she blurted,

“Syempre kay para makahalin pero unsaon man mang scam man sila sa mga patas mu baligya... unsaon ta man ingon ana man ang business? Laban lang gyapon kay syempre naa man kay anak nga ga gatas ug diaper pa. atimanon gyud na nimo.”

(Of course, to make a profit, but what can you do if they scam honest sellers?...But what can we do? That's how business works. You just have to keep fighting because, of course, I have a child who needs milk and diapers, and I have to take care of that.)

She may sound like she is retreating, but by the tone of her statements, she sighs out resilience. Accepting the nature of business and her place in it appears to be the adaptive strategy that enabled her to sustain until this day.

Another challenge that her business continually experiences is the decreasing number of people shopping at her stall due to a change in government regulation that caused many street food vendors in front of her stall to be relocated to another spot at the farther end of the market. This relocation caused many customers to chase after such stalls in the relocation area. Consequently, those customers who she considered as prospective buyers and window shoppers who may turn into buyers, decreased. Based on her experience with the usual behavior of buyers, the people would go around the main building, causing them to check on her items and some would resolve to buy. Thus, Fatimah shared that when people are numerous, her income opportunities are high, but when there are only a few people, her income opportunities are low.

Vendors of her category were tempted to complain about this new ordinance. However, Fatimah again retreated with the following statement:

“Oo [makaingon ko nga dili maayo ang decision nga ibalhin ang street food vendors] kay magpundo ra sila didto [sa relocation area], dili na sila mutuyok diri sa amoa dapit. [Wala mi nagreklamo]. Wala, kay choice man na sa govenrment kay para ma chada sad ang syudad ba.”

(Yes [it wasn't a good decision to move the street food vendors], because now they just stay there and don't go around our area anymore. [We didn't complain]. No, because it's the government's decision, and it's also for the improvement of the city.)

Immediate outer layer and economic status. The experiences of Jay, Michael, and Roy, whose stall placements are in the immediate outer layer of the market are also worth noting. Their placement in this transition zone was initially observed to be fluid and temporary. Looking at the physical

size of their stalls and the volume of products, it was hypothesized that their capital input is relatively low with income results that are thought to be similarly low.

Data collected from interviews confirm such observations as Jay, Michael, and Roy shared that they only invest at an average amount of P2,500 per day and gain an amount of P1,250 per day when the products are all sold out but can lessen when they need to lower the selling price of their product due to their perishability.

The observed fluidity and temporality of their situation were also confirmed in the interviews when they shared that they sell their products in a semi-mobile fashion. Their fruit products are placed in a wooden cart attached to makeshift wheels that enable them to pull the cart to another location which they observe to be flocked by prospective customers. Jay shared that as he starts to open his stall from 10 am or 11 am, he would set the cart up and wait for customers. But there were cases when he would pull his cart to another location where there was a buildup of people.

Another picture of the fluidity and temporality of their business venture is its dependence on the number of people in the area as well as these people's market behavior. When asked why they don't open as early as 5 am or 6 am, they agreed to Jay's statement when he stated that,

“Mingaw man kaayo kung ingon anah na mga orasa. Ang mga customer diri, hapon naman kasagaran mutunga kay syempre ang mga customer namo kasagaran kay ga trabaho baya.”

(It's very quiet during those hours. Most of our customers usually come in the afternoon because, of course, most of them are working during the day.)

Adding to this, he shared that they change their schedule of opening and closing of their carts during holidays like Christmas and New Year. During these seasons, they open at a very early time and no longer relocate and close their carts so that they would retain their spot as they could be taken over by other peddling vendors. The aspect of fluidity notable in this case is due to the threats posed by competing peddlers as well as the increasing number of prospective customers as determined by seasons. It may seem to be natural to general business dynamics but has become specific to Jay and his friends as their placement and economic situation made them vulnerable to such factors.

Lastly, data from interviews revealed that their placement in the market is fluid and temporary as they have become open to income decline and even failure when they are apprehended by the RTA. He shared his story of running fast as the RTA approached,

“Kung naay RTA, mudagan nami diha [referring to a hidden alley]. Mailhan man nimo kay green man ang color sa iyang sakyanan. Dako siya mao nga maklaro ug naa dayon suga sa taas.”

(When the RTA (Road Traffic Authority) comes, we have to run. You can tell they’re coming because their vehicle is green, it’s large, and it has lights on top.)

The three further shared that even when they ran fast, they experienced being apprehended, and their goods confiscated, and they were not able to do anything but only cry over their losses. Escaping and hiding from the RTA deprives them of a more stable business routine and product patrons that may boost their income and dismisses them to a threatened business environment that is brought about by their placement in the market.

Despite these challenges that predisposed them to fluidity and temporality, leading to income variability and even failure, they persist in doing the business venture and think about their economic situation as generally okay. Michael shared,

“Wala man koy problema anah [referring to experiences of being apprehended by the RTA] kay naa naman koy puhunan. Bisagn ginagmay ra, maka kompra man gyapon mi.”

(I don’t have a problem with that because I already have capital. Even with small amounts, we can still buy stock.)

Roy affirmed,

“Contento naman ko sa akong income, bahalag ginagmay ra atleast naa. Maka kaon lang ko sa isa ka adlaw, ika tulo, lipay nako anah.”

(I’m content with my income, even if it’s small. As long as I can eat once or twice a day, I’m already happy with that.) Jay continued by saying that,

“Mas dako ang pagpamaligya pero kapoy lang. Init kaayo ug syempre bawal mi diri sa gawas, dagan-dagan lang kung naay dakop.”

(Selling earns more, but it’s tiring. It’s very hot, and we’re not allowed to sell here outside, so we have to run and hide when there’s a raid.)

He was even able to build resilience in these challenging situations so that continuing the business is for him a worthwhile venture. He said,

“Oo. naa naman koy ginansya sa tubo sa presyo sa imong gibaligya. Pag naka ginansya naka, mao na sad tong imong gamiton para pang palit sa imong ibaligya. Ang ginansya nimo sa grapes, for example, gamiton napud toh nimo sa pagpalit sa orange na imo gyapon ibaligya. Balik-balik lang na proseso hangtod sa mudako, para pag abot sa December; daghan naman tao mamalit anah, so dapat dako na akong business capital anah na time.”

(Yes. I earn profits from the marked-up price. Once I’ve earned a profit, I use it to buy more goods to sell. For example, the profit from selling grapes will be used to buy oranges. It’s a cycle that grows over time so that by December when there are many buyers, I’ll have more capital.)

Outermost layer and economic situation. Initial observation notes that being pushed to the outermost layer of the market is a disadvantage as the sources of income - the people - are not there. The outskirts were also observed to be the place for hidden or concealed ventures such as passenger motorcycles, tricycles, and multicab services that are not registered with drivers’ associations. To make ends meet, they either operate at night or stay away from the business center where the RTAs are present. Very small sari-sari stalls only attached to a big building’s wall just to have a place where business can be facilitated are also present in this layer. They are pushed to this end because they cannot afford to invest in ventures within the center or the immediate outer layer.

In this same layer, the stalls of Belen and her granddaughter Sheila are present. Their stalls’ placement during the conduct of the study was both due to the irregular nature of their business as well as the lack of capital for investment in ventures within the center or even in the immediate outer part of it. An interview with Belen revealed that they had been pushed to this location because their grilling services emit smoke that is inappropriate in the center.

She shared,

“Diri mi gibutang kay nagreklamo man gud sila kay tungod sa aso daw kaayo. Na transfer dayon mi october 2023.”

(We were moved because people complained about the smoke. We were transferred here in October 2023.)

She also recalled many experiences of being relocated to various locations because of changes in city government leadership and many other reasons:

“Gipabalhin mi diri,adtong lahi napud ang mayor. Lisod man ning bago napud ang mayor oi kay gipabalhin-balhin mi bisan asa...”

(We were transferred here during the term of a different mayor. It’s tough when there’s a new mayor because they kept relocating us.)

Alongside her grilling services, her granddaughter Sheila also sells crabs. She is persistent in staying in her present location because they don't have space in the inner and immediate outer layers. She quipped,

“Wala man mi pwesto so diri ra mi sa daplin.”

(We don’t have a proper stall, so we just stay on the side.)

In her expressed aspiration for an ideal situation, Belen revealed their dire circumstance of being in a dirty place, lacking water, and not properly positioned. She expressed, *“Pero sa among kabahin, gusto namo nga naa gyuy makatabang sa amoa nga mabutang gyud mi sa sakto nga pwesto nga dili ingon ani. Gusto namo ang pwesto nga limpyo. Gusto namo nga naa gyud mi kaugalingon nga pwesto nga naay tubig. Bahala og magbayd mi, basta lang nga plastar mi ug limpyo ang among pwesto kay aron daghan sab ang mupalit.”*

(For our part, we just want help to be placed in a proper area, not like this. We want a clean place, somewhere we have water, even if we have to pay. As long as we can be placed in a proper and clean spot, we believe more people will buy from us.)

Like Fatimah, Jay, Michael, and Roy, Belen and Sheila perceived that despite all these economic disadvantages that were partly affected by their placement in the Cogon market, they continued to be resilient and expressed hope for surviving the day and even days ahead.

Sheila said,

“Basta ang isipin lang na makapera ka, maka kain ka.”

(I just think of earning enough to eat.)

Her grandmother Belen affirmed,

“Okay nami basta maka kaon mi ikatulo sa isa ka adlaw. Usahay ikaduha ra mi makakaon. Kung wala mi halin, di pud mi maka kaon.”

(We're okay as long as we can eat three times a day. Sometimes, we can only eat twice.

If we don't have sales, we can't eat.)

Spatial Organization and Stratification. Considering the discussion of the various concepts explored in this study, the following are mainstreamed.

Inner layer and stratification. The table below shows a summary of the data revealing the descriptive interrelations of economic status, spatial organization, and stratification. Results reveal that stratification is not affected by the spatial organization but that stratification was earlier established by the vendors' economic capacity. Due to this long-established setup, the vendors have become accustomed to it so that despite challenges experienced, they continue to show resilience and hope for daily survival.

economic status	market dynamics	stratification
<p>Capital rising to P100,000</p> <p>Spends high cost for rent and light</p> <p>Income can also rise to thousands as selling prices are also high.</p> <p><i>"I'm content."</i></p>	<p>Increase and decrease of income depends upon the number of people going around the market</p> <p>Increase and decrease of income also depends upon seasons</p> <p>Relocation of street food vendors in front of the stalls affected the flow of people shopping their stalls</p> <p>Vulnerable to transaction scams that can lead to failure of up to hundreds of thousands</p> <p>Daily working on the venture with utmost diligence</p>	<p>placement in the higher level of the economic ladder was <u>not reinforced</u> in terms of being facilitated to go higher in the ladder as they remain challenged by the increase and decrease of the number of people going around the area</p> <p>perceived economic results remain average, implying that income results only compensate for input</p> <p>what is being <u>reinforced</u> is their retained position in the inner layer only because of their economic capacity</p>

Immediate outer layer and stratification. The table below shows a summary of the data revealing the descriptive interrelations of economic status, spatial organization, and stratification. Results reveal that stratification is also not affected by the spatial organization but that stratification was earlier established by the vendors’ economic capacity. Similarly, the vendors from this layer perceived that their economic situations remain stable as the challenges experienced have become part of their daily endeavors.

economic status	market dynamics	stratification
<p>Regular investment is at P2,500 per day</p> <p>Can gain up to P1,250 per P2,500 capital per day</p> <p><i>“I don’t have problem with that...”</i></p>	<p>Increase and decrease of income depends upon the number of people going around the market</p> <p>Increase and decrease of income also depends upon seasons</p> <p>Managing the RTA to avoid product losses and even income failure</p> <p>Daily working on the venture with utmost diligence</p>	<p>placement in the middle economic level was <u>not reinforced</u> in terms of being facilitated to go higher in the ladder as they remain challenged by the increase and decrease of the number of people going around the area</p> <p>perceived economic results remain average</p> <p>what is being <u>reinforced</u> is their retained position in the inner layer only because of their economic capacity</p>

Outermost layer and stratification. The table below shows a summary of the data revealing the descriptive interrelations of economic status, spatial organization, and stratification. Results reveal that stratification is also not reinforced but was weakened by spatial organization. The methods by which the vendors representing this layer were pushed to the outskirts have been a result of political activities and parallel economic activities.

economic status	market dynamics	stratification
<p>No exact capital investment, only operational cost of up to P250 for a sack of charcoal and less than a hundred pesos for water</p> <p>Least amount of income per day is P30 for 2 fishes grilled or can rise to P600 per day but with deduction of expenses for charcoal, water, and sticks used for grilling</p> <p><i>“We’re okay as long as we can eat...”</i></p>	<p>Increase and decrease in income depends upon the number of people who have known about their grilling service location</p> <p>Managing the RTA to avoid product losses and even income failure</p> <p>Daily working on the venture with utmost diligence</p>	<p>placement in the lowest economic level was <u>not reinforced</u> and can be considered to be weakened by spatial organization</p>

CONCLUSION

Based on the results revealed in this study, it can be concluded that spatial organization did not directly and radically affect stratification. However, stratification or the layered economic situations that have long been established by the vendors are brought about by their economic capacity. This capacity, nevertheless, predisposed them to be situation in the Cogon market’s layers where opportunities or chances to move up or down the stratification ladder lie. Thus, it can be considered that spatial organization may have impacted stratification, not directly, but via the economic situation pre-established by the vendors. Moreover, the hint of weakened economic status among the vendors from the outermost layer as influenced by political activities is worth further investigation to possibly enlighten the direct effect of spatial organization to stratification.

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