

## “VISITING ANGONO, RIZAL: ART CAPITAL OF THE PHILIPPINES”

By Mark Anthony M. Morales



In the early weeks of December 2013, I was able to go home to the Philippines to conduct fieldwork in relation to my on-going dissertation research under our lab. Among the three study areas which I am to conduct my research on, it was the municipality of Angono that I would like to share through this article.

Angono is a small fishing village along Laguna de Bay in the province of Rizal, which is about 30 kilometers east of Manila. Famous as being the home of two distinguished Philippine National Artists<sup>1</sup> – Lucio San Pedro for music, and Carlos “Botong” Francisco for painting, Angono is famous as being the “art capital of the Philippines”.

Everywhere one looks, it is unmistakable that art is embodied to the very soul of the place and its people. From local signages and monuments made by the government, to the local commercial establishments (restaurants, souvenir shops, etc), it seems that the people here consciously cultivate and pass on a very strong sense of artistry in everything they do. During my visit to Angono’s municipal hall, I was pleasantly surprised that there is actually a government employee whose sole purpose every morning is to play local songs in the piano situated in the municipal hall lobby. And the fascinating part is that other employees routinely stop and sing-along to the songs being played in the piano; it was an impromptu concert to the delight of locals and visitors such as myself who go to the municipal hall for our respective businesses. When I asked the employees from the Mayor’s office if this singing and playing at the lobby is due to the Christmas season, they told me that this happens everyday, all year-round!



My courtesy call to Angono’s mayor, Gerry Calderon, became an entertaining and informative conversation with a man clearly in love with his town and who is using his leadership skills to rally

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<sup>1</sup> “The National Artist Award is the highest distinction bestowed upon Filipino Artists whose body of work is recognized by their peers and more importantly by their countrymen as sublime expression of Philippine music, dance, theatre, visual arts, literature, film and media, arts, architecture and design. These are artists who have promoted Filipino cultural identity and dignity through their art.”

Read more:

<http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/articles-on-c-n-a/article.php?igm=1&i=109>

his people into maximizing art and culture for the empowerment of all constituents, as well as long-term development of Angono. From raising environmental awareness among children and adults through various artistic platforms such as theater plays and musical performances; to integrating employment opportunities to his people with the artistic brand that Angono is known for; and in sourcing funds to build parks, baywalks, and other spaces that highlight natural sights and sounds that inspire artistic expression, love of nature, and improved quality of life among its people; it is apparent that the municipality of Angono is fostering an integrated urban development strategy that harmonizes the socio-economic needs of his people, the preservation of nature (where he says artistic inspiration depends and comes from), and the tempered need for sustainable urbanization.

It is for this reason that I was glad to have chosen Angono as one of my study areas. Though it is apparent that issues of replicability by this strategy still needs to be afforded a more detailed analysis, and compared to different urban scenarios such as city size, financial capabilities of residents and population number, but Angono is a very encouraging proof of the greater impact that art and culture can contribute to society.



Beyond the usual shallow aesthetic frills that art and culture is commonly associated with, Angono is proof that art and culture goes deeper and is actually used as a tool of empowerment and sustainable development.

Image sources:

<http://youthpinoy.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/angono1.jpg>

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/86/Ph\\_locator\\_rizal\\_angono.png/250px-Ph\\_locator\\_rizal\\_angono.png](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/86/Ph_locator_rizal_angono.png/250px-Ph_locator_rizal_angono.png)

<http://letsgopinas.files.wordpress.com/2008/11/pp-angono-003.jpg>