

Searching for the Genius Loci: San Juan Pride of Place

Research and publication

Location : San Juan City

Date : February to December 2010

Project partners

- University of the Philippines College of Architecture – History, Theory, and Criticism Studio (UPCA HTC) Laboratory

Funding support

- National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA)

Contract / agreement value

- PHP 247,000



The research team with the San Juan City mayor during the research output presentation to LGU officials

Project brief

Through a project grant from the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA), TAO-Pilipinas conducted a research study on the “pride of place” of San Juan City in Metro Manila in collaboration with the University of the Philippines-Diliman College of Architecture – History, Theory, and Criticism Studio Laboratory.

The goal of the research was to define the genius loci or spirit of place of San Juan City. The project sought to determine the perception of San Juan residents about their town with regards to socio-cultural and physical aspects; identify and document relevant landscapes, structures and architecture with cultural significance; and raise people’s awareness by disseminating information and advocating for the preservation of the town’s unique character, sites, and cultural identity. San Juan was chosen as project site because of its historical significance.

Research was done in three phases - data gathering, community integration and survey, and data analysis using cognitive mapping techniques and focus group discussions. The research team mapped out the general elements identified as well as the perception and ideas of the residents during interviews. Cognitive mapping resulted in four themes that represent San Juan’s spirit of place – *alaala* (memory), *pamayanan at pinuno* (community and leaders), *tahanan* (home), and *pagbabago* (change) –which are all linked to water. From the construction of the oldest waterway to the San Juan River serving as town boundary, the character of San Juan is inextricably linked to water.

The result of the study was presented to local government officials of San Juan on December 06, 2010. The project was an initial step towards establishing the unique identity of San Juan. Recommendations on how to move forward after the research were given during the presentation. A narrative photo essay was published as the main research output.

Project outputs

- Terminal project report
- Narrative photo essay

{ End of Project 1006 Profile }