Entrance to Seafood City Market in Eagle Rock Plaza, Eagle Rock, California, 2010.

Photograph courtesy of the author
Why We Gather:
Localizing Filipino America and Community Cultural Development

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Better City, Better Life
—Theme from Expo 2010 Shanghai


—World Heritage Sites in the Philippines, designated by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Gintong Kasaysayan, Gintong Pamana [A Glorious History, A Golden Legacy]
—Mural in Historic Filipinotown by Eliseo Art Silva

World expositions, UNESCO designations, and local visual culture that “depicts 4,000 years of Filipino and Filipino American experience and history” illustrate a wide range of what we classify as “cultural heritage.” There have always been individuals and groups in communities that focus their time and resources toward preserving a vibrant cultural heritage. Likewise, there have been other individuals and groups in those communities that have opposed their efforts. Cultural conflict seems to be inherent in the process of creating culture in communities. Culture matters, and, because of its political importance, people fight for it or against it, as the case may be. Controversies over artistic freedom and freedom of speech emerge out of public dissension over what constitutes proper art, whether it be Maya Lin’s design...
of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Andreas Serrano’s photo *Piss Christ*, or Manuel Ocampo’s *Ugat Pilipino*. Each of these pieces challenges our perception and understanding of deeply felt ideals of who we are as a people. But because these productions are public and publicly funded, the issue of *which* culture matters is politicized.

Clearly, this list relies upon two different aspects of culture: culture as way of life in the anthropological sense and culture as the representational process through images, writing, artifacts, performances, and so on. This is grossly oversimplified, but placing these two aspects of culture closely together highlights how difficult it is at times to differentiate what is at stake in cultural conflicts—a specific way of life, an artwork, a legal or political position, or the image of ourselves seen by others. Of course, defining culture, as Raymond Williams famously elucidated, is neither simple nor is it reducible to a conflict between what we consider to be “the traditional” and “the modern.”

Similarly, “community” is not easily defined and what we mean by “community” relies upon a dynamic context of specific location, geographic scale, and historical experience. On one hand, the Chinatowns of major U.S. cities exemplify the spatial manifestation of an Asian American community from the perspective of dominant American culture and society. Each supposedly has an insular and internal logic of belonging maintained by myriad practices ranging from work, shopping, and cooking to habitation patterns and a particular design aesthetic. Yet throughout the history of Filipinos in America, a sense of community has relied upon mobility and networks of acquaintances fostered over time. In this sense, from a dominant American perspective, Filipino American community is ostensibly part of Asian America, even though the actual lived social spaces of Filipino America may not necessarily conform to the widely assumed forms of Asian American spatial formations that resemble highly orientalized and controlled neighborhoods in dense urban settings. This point reminds us of the diversity within the rubric of “Asian America” and the uneasy contradictions that arise whenever we refer to an idealized “Asian America,” “Filipino America,” or otherwise. More importantly, I want to highlight how perceptions of Asian America and Filipino America presume certain spatial forms of cultural and community development.

In Asian American Studies, I suggest that we recontextualize our discussions of “development” in terms of culture and commu-
nity. One way to focus our attention on the intricate relationship between cultural development and community development is to introduce the combined term “community cultural development.” The term sprang largely in part from Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard’s *Creative Community: The Art of Cultural Development*, which was the product of a project funded by the Rockefeller Foundation that sought to document how communities create culture. In the report, “community cultural development” was defined as “a range of initiatives undertaken by artists in collaboration with other community members to express identity, concerns, and aspirations through the arts and communications media, while building cultural capacity and contributing to social change.” Adams and Goldbard insightfully argue that culture and development are inseparable and that, more importantly, community cultural development is a global phenomenon not limited to any one nation or community. It is in this sense of “culture” and “development” that we are reminded of the role that non-profit organizations fulfill in building cultural infrastructure both within and against dominant American culture and society. In other words, cultural production is a key process of community development, but it is not the singular determining factor in defining the meaning, limits, and potential of any one community.

On a global scale, UNESCO and other similar organizations have explicitly linked culture and development. These organizations serve as mediators between cultural conflicts around what exactly constitutes “heritage” worth recognizing and preserving. From temporal and ideological definitions (traditional or modern) to questions of authenticity and uniqueness (cultural or natural origins) to geographical concerns (local, regional, or global), the debates over cultural heritage are global, but always necessarily local as well. In this context, I discuss local Filipino American cultural development as more than merely cultural or culturally nationalistic. Instead, I suggest that we consider local community cultural development in a wider perspective that places it within and part of global flows of cultural and social power.

These flows coalesced in a 2003 Filipino American community cultural development project undertaken by the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFAA), with support from the Ford Foundation. The project convened meetings and conducted interviews to gather the insights of a wide range of Filipino American cultural workers such as artists, arts administrators, academics, consumers, curators, writers, and business
owners. The final report, *Towards a Cultural Community: Identity, Education, and Stewardship in Filipino American Performing Arts*, provides remarkable insights into Filipino American cultural production in the U.S. In the report, the authors elaborated on Adams and Goldbard’s definition of community cultural development as “social action geared toward developing infrastructures that would enable not only the continuous transmission of inherently yet constantly dynamic values, but also to resist those values imposed upon them in the face of modernization, a capitalist market economy, and globalization.” This definition defines cultural practices as actively engaged with conflicts inherent in community formation and cultural production. Further, it focuses our attention on “infrastructure” as the key element that enables us to mediate these conflicts. For a community bearing lingering echoes of U.S. imperialism and colonialism such as Filipino America, this conflict with the global pressures of development and progress motivated by the logic of capital accumulation is not a recent phenomenon. However, meeting the ongoing challenge of these conflicts, Filipino Americans have embraced cultural practices to shape the lived hierarchies of power, opportunity, and resources experienced on an everyday basis.

In Asian American and Filipino American Studies, cultural production is a critical area of study. In particular, Theodore S. Gonzalves’s work on Pilipino Culture Nights and Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns’s research on performance exemplify such an approach to examining Filipino American community cultural production. Additionally, the journal *AAPI Nexus: Asian American and Pacific Islanders Policy, Practice & Community* published a special issue in 2007 on arts and culture that demonstrated an increasing concern for seeing cultural practice not only as a feature of community struggle and empowerment, but also as being embedded within institutions of power on multiple scales, ranging from the Smithsonian Institution on the national scale to historical museums, public libraries, and art galleries on the local level. Focusing on the institutional context of cultural practices, the *Nexus* special issue suggests a conceptual shift from analyzing culture as a site of representational violence or redemption to examining culture as a site of negotiation with the structures of power.

A focus on “community” as the privileged social formation also remains a vital focus of study in Asian American and Filipino American Studies. Insights from the works of Rick Bonus, Benito M. Vergara, Jr., Yen Le Espiritu, Linda Trinh Vo, and Linda
España-Maram have substantiated the importance of social space and community organizations to the process of community development. In her study of Filipino Americans in Los Angeles, España-Maram demonstrates the historical importance of organizations in the struggle for this power and the formation of individual and communal identity. Much earlier, in his 1934 unpublished thesis, “The Filipino Occupational and Recreational Activities in Los Angeles,” Benicio Catapusan remarked:

At present there are in Los Angeles about six thousand Filipinos. They are so widely distributed that they do not appear menacing in any particular spot. The great majority of them are found in the neighborhood of Main and First Street [in downtown Los Angeles], where are found also the Filipino restaurants, pool halls, dance halls, side-shows, and various other amusements.

Eighty or so years later, Filipinos are as dispersed as ever amid Southern California’s sprawl of people and places in far-flung cities such as Cerritos, Carson, Eagle Rock, Moreno Valley, Panorama City, Walnut, West Covina, and the recently designated neighborhood of Historic Filipinotown in central Los Angeles. Within this region of roughly 17,000 square miles centered on Los Angeles, spanning Riverside County to the east, Orange County to the south, and Santa Barbara to the west, the 6,000 Filipinos in 1934 have grown to approximately 400,000 Filipinos in southern California, which is 16 percent of the approximately 2.5 million Filipinos in the U.S. As the 2010 Census will no doubt demonstrate, close to half a million Filipino Americans live in the region spanning Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara, and Orange Counties. Including San Diego County brings this number to over half a million Filipino Americans.

In particular, Bonus has demonstrated the geographic complexity of community cultural development in San Diego. In his groundbreaking study, he identifies the infrastructure that makes community and culture possible. From local Filipino markets and community centers to beauty pageants and news media, Bonus argues for the centrality of social space within this infrastructure of Filipino America:

Space...attains importance as a site where constructions and reconfigurations of identities become possible or denied. On one hand, space is an arena in which negotiations regarding the meanings and practices of identities are imagined and enacted. On the other, a form of reterritorialized space itself con-
stitutes identity articulation, as it brings about experiences of dislocation, nostalgia, and resettlement by immigration and even offers possibilities for community and agency.¹¹

These “reterritorialized spaces” mark the sites through which we can read how Filipinos in America create a sense of rootedness to place, both in America and Filipino America. Through local or transnational connections via newspapers, social groups organized around Philippine hometowns or colleges, business groups, sports teams, and churches, these “localizing practices” embody the spatialization of Filipino American cultural community into an everyday lived reality.

In this essay, I aim to explore the question of how Filipino Americans in Los Angeles localize, create, and, importantly, sustain a concrete and figurative space for Filipino America. The essay presents various formations of community cultural development, some that are organized on a temporal basis and other developments that are spatially grounded in specific neighborhoods within Los Angeles. Beginning with non-profit community-based organization FilAm ARTS, the essay examines the cultural infrastructure of Filipino America in Los Angeles. The essay then examines several key programs of FilAm ARTS, including the Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture, and the Why We Gather project. Finally, the essay concludes with a discussion of spatial forms of community cultural development and Filipino America.

Temporal Community Cultural Formations: FilAm ARTS and the Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture

The emergence of FilAm ARTS coincided with the emergence of the Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture. In May 1992, a group of artists and community organizers produced the first Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture. From the beginning, Search to Involve Filipino Americans (SIPA), the well-established non-profit community-based organization located in Historic Filipinotown, nurtured the Festival. For several years, the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department financed the Festival to promote multicultural events in the city. With support from both the Filipino American community and the city at-large, the Festival emerged as an expression of Filipino American and Los Angeles heritage. In addition to SIPA and FilAm ARTS, many other Filipino American community-based organizations in Los Angeles fostered this growth; besides cultural organizations, other community organi-
zations range from regional or hometown associations to professional associations.

While these organizations form vital parts of many Filipino Americans’ sense of community, I am interested in how the expansive range of programming activities illustrates FilAm ARTS’s commitment to cultural production as a strategy of community development. In addition to the annual Festival, FilAm ARTS, for instance, has produced two major events for the Ford Summer Nights Series at the Ford Amphitheatre: the Philippine Ballet (1996), featuring the nation’s leading professional dance company, and the Philippine Jazz Festival (1998). FilAm ARTS also supported the establishment of Eskuwela Kultura (a Filipino cultural school), and the Pilipino Artists Network, and has integrated cultural and social services, such as a neighborhood-based arts education program in collaboration with SIPA. From bringing Philippine-based cultural performers to the U.S. to developing locally based cultural programming, FilAm ARTS has simultaneously fostered cultural development and community development.

The first Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture took place in 1992 when a group of volunteers produced the first and second Festival at Los Angeles City College. From 1994 to 2000, organiz-

Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture, Point Fermin, San Pedro, California, 2010.
Photograph courtesy of the author
ers held the Festival at Cabrillo Beach; since 2001, the Festival has been at Point Fermin. Located in San Pedro, Point Fermin is southwest of downtown Los Angeles, near Long Beach and close to large Filipino American communities in the South Bay area in Carson, Torrance, and Wilmington. The size and complexity of the Festival have grown over the years, and work on the Festival begins a year in advance, culminating in a weekend-long festival in early September. The Festival’s audience has grown to approximately 25,000, as ever more people, both Filipino American and others, have come to see and hear performances, which include Philippine ethnic dance, pop singing groups, literary readings, spoken word, and visual art.

The Festival’s origins also reveal the challenges of community-based cultural production. The first Festival in 1992 happened amid an atmosphere of heightened race- and class-consciousness that arose after the Los Angeles uprising. Like Los Angeles in general, the various Filipino American communities in Los Angeles do not share a homogeneous vision of themselves as a cohesive whole. Strong affiliations with regional associations organized by province or hometown of origin, language barriers, and differences between more established and recently arrived Filipino Americans created formidable obstacles to organizing the Festival. Eventually, these conflicts were reconciled through an exhaustive series of public forums and meetings over several years. As a result, FilAm ARTS emerged in 1995 as the recognized group responsible for producing and programming the Festival.

Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture
The Festival’s continued success as the premier showcase of Filipino and Filipino American culture in Los Angeles relies upon a continued commitment to providing space for diverse Filipino American interests and talents. For example, the 2002 Festival included specific venues such as the Mainstage, with headliners ranging from the well-known dance company, Kayamanan ng Lahi, to popular singing groups such as Pinay. The Generations Stage sought to bring together different generations, with performances including the Fourth Annual Balagtasan Collective Poetry Slam Competition, readings from the Literary Program, a vegetable competition from the Seniors Village, and puppet shows for kids. The Filipino Arts Pavilion housed for the first time a specific venue for Filipino American visual artists to display and
sell some of their works, including photographs, paintings, chapbooks, CDs, and mixed media pieces. Off-site and in collaboration with Los Angeles’s leading Asian American visual media organization, Visual Communications, Pinoyvisions screened Filipino American visual media, such as Michelle Mondia’s *Balut* and Rex Navarrete’s *Maritess vs. the Superfriends*. The Youth Pavilion held workshops on ancient Filipino script (*Alibata* and *Baybayin*), puppet shows, and traditional Filipino games like *patinero* and *iring iring*. The Seniors Village housed a farmer’s market and cooking demonstrations.

Along with the cultural programming, an “ethnic marketplace” was created from food vendors and booths for books, Filipino arts and crafts, music, and other stores. Corporate sponsorships ranged from local businesses to transnational conglomerates like Macy’s, Verizon, and Sony Pictures. Community participation continues to form the backbone of the production. With approximately 150 volunteers, the event’s staff has largely been volunteers who return year after year. Community input into programming reinforces community investment and ownership. FilAm ARTS’s Executive Director Jilly Canizares-Tanedo repeatedly stated that the programming should not reflect the individual curator’s choice, but instead be an expression of the community. The increasing attendance and dedicated volunteer base demonstrate the Festival’s continued popularity as a tradition for parts of the Filipino American community.

As a spatialized manifestation of Filipino American self-representation, the Festival is not unique to Filipino America. Other festivals in Los Angeles define a multicultural landscape that includes the Lotus Blossom Festival and *Cinco de Mayo* celebrations, which focus on Asian American and Latina/o American communities, respectively. Each in its own way provides a site for a specific ethnic community to gather and share its culture and history, while implicitly supporting multiculturalism as the dominant ideology for envisioning the social formation of Los Angeles in general.

The embedded ideological function of festivals is also not new. The recent work of FilAm ARTS and the Festival fostered a balance of cultural nationalism and multiculturalism centered on the Filipino American experience. In the early twentieth century, world’s fairs, such as the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair with its infamous Philippine Reservation, manifested the exhibitionary logic of American Orientalism that served to rationalize Ameri-
can racist nationalism and imperialism. Within the Philippine Reservation—the largest ethnographic exhibition at the World’s Fair—American visitors saw for the first time a version of the Philippines and Filipinos as primitive natives worthy of colonial salvation. Over a century later, Filipino Americans continue to encounter this lingering history within America’s dominant social imaginary. As a response, Filipino American cultural nationalism has sought to reclaim Philippine indigeneity as an affirmative basis of Filipino American identity. The programming of FilAm ARTS and the Festival clearly demonstrates a positive representational strategy. It also seeks to undermine the vestiges of American imperialism and the realities of American racism that linger from the turn of the twentieth century through reappropriating the exhibitionary logic of American Orientalism to produce its own social space of Filipino America proper.

The festival as a social space reveals the contested intersections between community belonging, cultural identity, and place. For example, the 1992 Los Angeles Festival manifested what Lisa Lowe calls “narratives of opposition.” Lowe uses the example
of a Korean shaman’s visit to a Korean American strip mall during the 1992 Los Angeles Festival to highlight the contradiction between the history of shamanism in pre-colonial Korea and the dominant Christian affiliations of Korean Americans in Los Angeles. Lowe’s example demonstrates that ethnic identity is not just a matter of shared geographic origin or visible appearance as multiculturalism’s most simple form of identification would suggest. She critiques a form of multiculturalism that oversimplifies social differences at the cost of occluding material, historical, and geographic inequities. For Lowe, the Los Angeles Festival highlighted the many contradictions of multiculturalism and reveals the radical potential for reconceptualizing multicultural identity. In effect, Lowe suggests that the festival can potentially destabilize and make visible identity formation as a so-called natural process, and, in so doing, widen the range of possibilities for identity formation. The Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture shares with the L.A. Festival a desire to present a narrative of opposition to prevailing biases based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, residency status, and so on. While the L.A. Festival sought to create a version of multiculturalism to “heal” a fractured Los Angeles, the Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture nurtured a form of local Filipino American multiculturalism that engaged with local, regional, and transnational forms of Filipino American community cultural development.

The Festival materialized the figurative Filipino America into a living museum with many competing narratives, not unlike what Lowe found in the Los Angeles Festival. Narratives of authenticity permeated the Festival’s programming, such as traditional Philippine dance performances, that sought to preserve these “lost arts.” Consistent efforts to avoid one Philippine ethnic group from dominating the programming was important to promoting Filipino America; festival organizers periodically translated the yearly theme into Ilocano or Philippine languages other than Tagalog, which, as a major dialect, forms the core of the Philippine national language. Curators also sought to balance the performances by seeking out participants from as many different performing groups as possible. Variety permeated the programming with endless juxtapositions of so-called “traditional” art and “modern” or contemporary art. Performances on the Mainstage, for example, included traditional ethnic dance, contemporary hip-hop, and pop singers.

Explicitly a form of cultural hybridity, variety was the rule rather than exception. Examining the programming historically,
earlier Festivals, on one hand, produced booths such as Ifugao Huts and Native Crafts (1994 to 1996) and the Freedom Ring interactive historical installations (1997). On the other hand, the emergence of the Generations Stage in 2000 specifically showcased emergent forms of cultural expression, such as DJ mixing next to traditional forms of Philippine storytelling and literature. Both demonstrate the Festival’s commitment to traditional and contemporary Filipino American culture, and, like the Los Angeles Festival, the Festival displayed the potential to develop local cultural heritage.

The Festival also created space to reframe cultural heritage beyond a focus on defining traditional and modern versions of “the Filipino.” For the 2007 Festival, Justice for Filipino Veterans (JFAV) reenacted the 1942 Bataan Death March to rally people to their cause and remind them of the human costs of the Philippine-U.S. special relationship. While Filipinos in World War II fought and died with Americans and were promised veterans benefits, it was a promise left unfulfilled and JFAV’s presence at the Festival illustrated precisely the kinds of the material and historical inequities that a simplified multiculturalism shrouds, as Lowe warns us. So while the Festival provided a space for exploring Filipino American community and individual ethnic identity, the Festival complicated that process by creating space that contextualizes ethnic community and identity formation as more than merely an individual concern, but as a result of uneven historical and transnational relationships.

Obviously, the Festival is not the only Filipino American festival in Southern California. Others include regional association picnics and college-based Pilipino Cultural Nights (PCNs). Various versions of PCNs range from short performances to three-hour galas with hundreds in the audience, such as UCLA’s PCN. Set within universities, these performances occur in a privileged setting in which student organizers have access to a wide variety of on-campus resources, such as credit, capital, time, facilities, and university staff assistance, as well as off-campus community resources, such as expertise in costume design and dance instruction. Gonzalves presents us with perhaps the most insightful analysis of PCNs, arguing that a consistent essentialist ideology permeates many of the shows to promote a fixed structure of identity and community.16 They also explicitly participate in a highly structured and controlled infrastructure of a self-selected group of audiences and participants, supported by campus funding and university
policies. However, Gonzalves also shows that other PCNs have developed alternative expressive forms, including spoken word and contemporary musical forms, that affirm and critique different versions of Filipino American identity. By disturbing traditional programming, the emergence of dynamic programming reveals how contemporary Filipino Americans have rearticulated the on-going conflicts between notions of the traditional and the modern. In a similar way, I suggest that the Festival challenges the production of “Filipino America” and “Filipino American” as static social categories.

When we consider Filipino American community cultural development in relation to historical American community cultural development like the Philippine Reservation at the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair, the rearticulation of Filipino America within a multicultural ethnic identity discourse can be seen as directly related to early twentieth century American colonial discourse. The long reach of history and global structural forces manifest on the everyday as visual experiences, such as Silva’s mural of 4,000 years of Filipino history in a local park in Historic Filipinotown, on one hand, and highly mediated sites of ethnic identity formation in community-based festivals such as the Festival, on the other. As an annual but temporary public space that manifests a complex intersection of historical and spatial social relations on multiple scales from local and regional to national and transnational, the Festival illustrates an emergent form of social space.

From a broader perspective, the Festival evokes Arjun Appadurai’s suggestion for conceptualizing globalization as five interconnected flows which identify the movement of people, media, technology, capital, and ideology as interrelated networks that structure and enable a particular organization of social space. In this framework, the Festival can be seen as a nexus of these different flows and exemplifies how community cultural development in Filipino America is not only about establishing ethnic neighborhoods or persevering authentic cultural representation. The Festival shows us how Filipino America engages continuously on multiple spatial scales with intricate circuits and networks of local, regional, national, and global power.

Articulating Filipino Identity: Why We Gather

In an example of how community cultural development relies upon an institutional infrastructure for cultural heritage, FilAm ARTS’ Why We Gather project collected oral narratives from Fili-
pino Americans in Southern California from mid-2007 to early 2008. Why We Gather (WWG) staff implemented the project in three phases. In the first phase, program staff and volunteers created gathering booths at three sites of Filipino American cultural production: the Lotus Festival on July 13-17, 2007; Historic Filipinotown Celebration on August 4-5, 2007; and the Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture on September 8-9, 2007. The project collected over eighteen hours of unedited audio from 198 individuals. In the second phase, a community curatorial panel listened to the audio clips; the panel consisted of Alma Anderson (Lecturer, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, UCLA), Eloisa Bora (Head of Public Services, Rosenfeld Management Library, UCLA Anderson School of Management), Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns (Assistant Professor, Asian American Studies, UCLA), Annalisa Enrile (Assistant Professor, USC School of Social Work), and myself. After reviewing the recorded discussions, the panel met in April 2008 to help identify key themes. For the third phase, WWG volunteer sound engineer and radio show host Wendell Pascual produced a radio segment that was later broadcast on KPFK’s Aziatik Rhythmnz program on August 30, 2008.

The California Stories program of the California Council of Humanities funded WWG. Since the early 1990s, the Council has been supporting statewide humanities programming, including the California Stories project, which focuses on everyday narratives “to connect Californians and foster understanding by uncovering personal and community stories that, once gathered and woven together, tell the story of today’s California.” Arguably, the Council’s ongoing projects enact a multicultural logic of expansive inclusion in its grantmaking and continues to implement community cultural development as a broad strategy of interventions across and within the myriad range of communities in California. WWG and these other projects collectively reflect a deliberate cultural policy that echoes the L.A. Festival’s strategy of building wide-ranging multicultural representation.

Filipinos in America have an extensive experience with how the state has tried to manage the literal and figurative status of Filipinos in the U.S. WWG sought to capture stories of gathering as one way for Filipinos to challenge this power to form a fundamental part of the Filipino American community. From a wider perspective, WWG illustrates how FilAm ARTS accesses a broader network of relationships that may or may not coincide with FilAm ARTS’s expansive strategy of producing Filipino American cul-
tural heritage. And in so doing, FilAm ARTS supplants dominant American culture’s role in creating and managing the normative subject-citizen of Filipino America.

Spaces of Filipino American Cultural Capital: Historic Filipinotown and Eagle Rock Plaza

One strategy for preserving cultural capital is to authenticate it as “heritage” and history. Another strategy is to create sites in which cultural spaces are replicated and everyday practices are repeatedly performed. For example, one can experience American cultural heritage in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia:

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation operates the world’s largest living history museum in Williamsburg, Virginia—the restored 18th-century capital of Britain’s largest, wealthiest, and most populous outpost of empire in the New World. Here we interpret the origins of the idea of America, conceived decades before the American Revolution. The Colonial Williamsburg story of a revolutionary city tells how diverse peoples, having different and sometimes conflicting ambitions, evolved into a society that valued liberty and equality. Americans cherish these values as a birthright, even when their promise remains unfulfilled.20

Historic Filipinotown, Los Angeles map.

Courtesy of the author
Unfulfilled promises indeed. For Filipino America, one possible path for community cultural development would be to create a Historic Filipinotown Park that “operates the world’s largest living history museum” of Filipinos in America similar to Colonial Williamsburg. Yet, as Néstor García Canclini observes, not all cultural capital is equal:

(A) hierarchy of cultural capital exists: art is worth more than handicrafts, scientific medicine more than popular medicine, and written culture more than culture transmitted orally. In the most democratic countries, or where certain movements managed to include the knowledge and practices of indigenous people and peasants in the definition of national culture, the symbolic culture of the subaltern groups has a place, but one that is subordinate, secondary, or on the margins of the hegemonic institutions and apparatuses. Therefore the reformulation of the patrimony in terms of cultural capital has the advantage of not representing it as a set of stable and neutral goods with values and meanings that are fixed once and for all, but rather as a social process that, like the other kind of capital, is accumulated, reconverted, produces yields, and is appropriated in an unequal way by different sectors.  

García Canclini’s insights destabilize our notions of cultural production and accompanying institutional infrastructure as neutral and isolated. Instead, he correctly argues that we should consider cultural practices by subaltern groups, such as Filipino Americans, as social processes that locate that group in relation to some dominant or hegemonic power. As such, these cultural practices hold a potential to challenge and change that relationship of power. FilAm ARTS’s community cultural development work exemplifies precisely this potential for the social process of creating, investing, and multiplying Filipino American cultural capital in relation to dominant American culture and society.

Considering the complicated history of Philippine-U.S. relations, community cultural development has always taken place within a transnational structure of cultural, economic, and political practices. García Canclini’s observations on the transformation of cultural practices in a postcolonial context illustrate the multiple flows of globalization. Filipino America is one such space that makes legible these flows and leads to various forms of territorialization. One type of territory reflects the usual meaning of development and the idealization of the neighborhood as the privileged spatial manifestation of a community. As a result
of the advocacy of local Filipino American activists, a Los Angeles City Council resolution on August 2, 2002 designated one such neighborhood in the Temple-Beaudry area just northwest of downtown Los Angeles as Historic Filipinotown. Since then, Historic Filipinotown has become the symbolic center of Filipino America in Los Angeles. Several important Filipino American-related organizations, including Search to Involve Pilipino Americans, Filipino American Service Group, Inc., Pilipino Workers Center, Remy’s on Temple Art Gallery, and the Filipino Christian Church are located in “HiFi.” The Filipino American Library sponsors several bus tours throughout the year that include a visit to Silva’s mural, Gintong Kasaysayan, Gintong Pamana.

In 2006, Historic Filipinotown Neighborhood Council incorporated with the mission to “to make Historic Filipinotown safe for residents, attract businesses and put Historic Filipinotown in the tourist map of the City of Los Angeles (sic).” Each year, a festival and fundraising run attempt to “re-Filipinize” the neighborhood by literally inscribing Filipino American culture into the landscape. A map of Historic Filipinotown records these sites and identifies the not-so hidden infrastructure that marks the geography of Historic Filipinotown as Filipino America. Yet even though Historic Filipinotown is not a “historic” or natural center of L.A.’s Filipino American population, as España-Maram’s final
discussion in her text shows, HiFi remains an important anchor for various and widespread Filipino American communities in Southern California.24

Another form of Filipino America’s spatialization can be found at the Eagle Rock Plaza, which is located northeast of Historic Filipinotown. Here, local residents and the leasing pattern of the Plaza’s owner, Centro Properties Group, have transformed the long-standing Eagle Rock Plaza into an indoor mini-Filipinotown. The Plaza includes a range of stores including a supermarket (Seafood City), mainstream retail stores (Target and Macy’s), and restaurants (Jollibee). Upon entering the main entrance leading to Seafood City, one can turn to the left and send much needed money to loved ones in the Philippines at PNB Rapid Remit, then cross the entry hall and purchase medical uniforms, Filipino music CDs, or Philippine handicrafts at Fil-Mart. Then one can stride into Seafood Market, which like other ethnic supermarkets, specializes in offering ethnic-specific items needed to prepare favorite dishes, including imported goods from the Philippines, locally-sourced bakery goods, or difficult-to-find vegetables used in Filipino cooking. As these responses from Yelp.com, an Internet site which provides lo-
cal reviews, reveal, visitors have had a wide range of experiences in this local space:

* This mall is so trippy, I felt like I was in SM [Shoemart], when it was only Macy’s. (HF January 27, 2008)
* The smell of fish makes you vomit. . . only go there for target. . . will never walk out of target to the “mall” the smell is all over the “mall” if that’s what you want to call it. piece of crap place. its a Filipino town [sic] (CM September 28, 2009)
* I used to go to the eagle rock plaza years ago when i was a child. After going through many changes throughout the years, the plaza has finally become a predominately Filipino mall. You will find a Seafood City supermarket, a few fast food places: Jollibees, Goldilocks, and Chow King. There are also a few clothing stores, and other mall type boutique stores along with vending carts in the center aisle. Its interesting atmosphere, and kinda makes you feel like you are in the Philippines for a second. [sic] (PS December 16, 2009)
* My mother is Filipina, therefore we go to this mall. (SG December 31, 2009)25

For some, Eagle Rock Plaza transplants the typical mall experience in Manila to the U.S. For others, whether Filipina, Filipino, or otherwise, the mall is far from a profound reaffirmation of local ethnic identity. Similarly, visitors to the Festival, audiences of PCNs, and residents of HiFi may not experience the same implied Filipinizing space. Yet within the constructed space of the indoor shopping mall, what emerges is the visible and legible interplay of circuits of capital in various forms—human labor, finance capital, and cultural capital. Eagle Rock Plaza also reflects a different spatialization of Filipino America in relation to the recently designated ethnic space of Historic Filipinotown.26 Nonetheless, these parts of Filipino America in southern California work to create a geographic landscape of Filipino American cultural heritage.

Historic Filipinotown is a City of Los Angeles-designated neighborhood, while the Plaza is a privately owned shopping mall. Both seemingly incongruous spatializations of Filipino America illustrate the range of possible articulations of development in terms of property and ownership. They may not be world heritage sites such as the Baroque churches, historic towns, or rice terraces in the Philippines, but Historic Filipinotown and Eagle Rock Plaza constitute a localized territorialization and Filipinization of urban space in southern California. In contrast, FilAm ARTS’s Festival
of Philippine Arts and Culture, Why We Gather, and other projects exemplify a deterritorialized Filipinization. The Festival creates a temporal manifestation of Filipino America that appears annually for a weekend. For those moments, the disparate Filipino American communities in southern California gather to make that social space an annual version of Filipino America.

Just as the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair heralded the dawning American century and the 2010 World Expo underscores China’s ascendance on the global stage, FilAm ARTS and the Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture continue to work to define Filipino America as more than merely cultural, but as culture that matters. FilAm ARTS’s Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture, Why We Gather, Pilipino Artists Network and other projects, along with Pilipino Cultural Nights, Historic Filipinotown, and Eagle Rock Mall constitute the apparatuses and modes of Filipino American community cultural development. In this way, Filipino American community cultural development builds an infrastructure for spaces through which we can cultivate heritage and cultural capital as not solely about the past, but also the future.

Notes

1. UNESCO-identified sites in the Philippines are divided between two categories: cultural (Baroque Churches of the Philippines, Historic Town of Vigan, and Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras) and the natural (Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park and Puerto-Princesa Subterranean River National Park). Information on these sites is available online at: http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/ph (accessed January 15, 2010).


18. The Council is an independent, nonprofit state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

19. Currently, California Stories has three specific programs: How I See It, the California Documentary Project, and the California Story Fund. How I See It focuses on youth under 21 to document their experiences and perspectives. The grants provide youth with opportunities to create their own videos and to share their ideas through photography, writing, and websites. The California Documentary Project provides funding for experienced filmmakers, video makers, and radio producers to document and explore California. Recent projects ranged from Forget Me Not, which tells the story of the AIDS
Memorial in Golden Gate Park, to *Metropolis in the Making*, which documents urban development in Los Angeles, to *Filipinos: Forgotten Heroes of the UFW* which presents the story of the forgotten role of Filipinos in the early farm-worker movement. Finally, the California Story Fund focuses upon relatively small $10,000 grants to support story projects in local communities.

In addition to Why We Gather, the Council has funded story gathering from communities identified by ethnicity or affiliation, such as African American elders, Ethiopian Americans, Afghan Artists, and U.S. Navy sailors, and projects on focused on communities and place such as The Hole in the Head Gang: The Saving of Bodega Bay, Las Historias de Ladera (Latino families in San Luis Obispo), and the Angel Island Oral History Project.


25. As Yelp describes itself, “Yelp is the fun and easy way to find, review and talk about what’s great—and not so great, in your area” (http://www.yelp.com/la).