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From Street Bazaars to Shopping Malls: A Genealogy of Consumer Capitalism in Singapore and Manila

This presentation is the preliminary stage of an attempt to map the genealogy of consumer capitalism in Southeast Asian cities through a cultural history of commercial spaces in Manila. I am interested in public markets, commercial streets, amusement centers, street bazaars, and shopping malls that have held the popular attention. I will focus on Calle Escolta in the early 1930s, Avenida Rizal in the mid-1960s, and SM Megamall in the present day. The aim is to examine how public life and consumer capitalism have been imagined and experienced spatially, temporally, affectively, and visually by looking at changes in the value, form, and use of images, words, narratives, objects, spaces, and practices. This presentation will address questions of methodology in excavating the invisible structures of consciousness and experience that have prevailed at specific historical junctures.