

# A Fertile Middle Ground

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*Reflections and Responses*

Marco Antonio Luisito Villanueva Sardillo III

# Reflections

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- Self-Introduction
- Points for Pause and Reflection

# Responses

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- Asia Society Philippines
  - A New Orientation
- Some Results (and Further Opportunities)

# Self-Introduction

## Context and Circumstances

- **Previous Occupations**
  - Lawyer-Educator
  - Presidential Commission on Good Government
  - Intramuros Administration
- **Personal and Professional Context**
  - Public service
  - Development worker



## POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Suitable jobs for each skills and talents



REGULAR INCOME & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Building programs such as Community Cooperatives that will act as support to families



SOCIAL SAFETY NETS

Better access to loans & mortgages



ASSET GENERATION

## ASSET GENERATION

Low Cost Housing  
250,000 PHP



Far from the city  
Low Cost Materials  
Value don't appreciate  
Challenging access to basic utilities

VS

Socialized Housing  
450,000 PHP



✓ Better Location  
✓ Better Materials  
✓ Appreciates in Value  
✓ Access to Basic Utilities



SOCIALIZED HOUSING



# Self-Introduction

## “A Reading”

- **Personal Perspectives**
  - Lawyer-Educator
  - Presidential Commission on Good Government
  - Intramuros Administration
  - Public service
  - Development worker

In the Philippines, the middle-class has been characterized by diversity in terms of occupational backgrounds, family histories, and income levels (Kimura (2003). This heterogeneity has prevented the formation of a single, cohesive middle-class identity. Instead, as Pinches (2005, p. 293) argues, “the identities of those in the middle are to be discovered primarily in their consumer capacities and practices.” (Albert, et al, p. 5)

# Points for Pause

## Paradigms

- **An Agenda for the Middle Class v A Middle Class Agenda**
  - “Ambisyon 2040”
- **Wealth Creation for Expanding the Middle-Class**
  - Global megatrends, context, and vulnerabilities and risks
  - Opportunities and challenges
  - Policy prescriptions and directions

*Growing the middle class* is a theme that is more closely related to new *wealth creation* rather than associated themes such as *poverty reduction* or redistribution. To be clear the new wealth creation being envisioned is **not** exclusive to already wealthy households, but is based broadly and inclusively across society, involving the movement of the poor and other low-income into the middle class, as well as growing affluence of the existing middle class. (Albert, et al, p. 4)

# Points for Pause

## Who and What?

- What? A Challenging Definition
- Policy Prescriptions and Guidance for *Us*  
“Pathway for Middle-Class Expansion:” Wealth Creation Orientation
  - Social Justice in Natural Resource Management & Climate Change Transition
  - New Opportunities in Trade and Investments for MSMEs
  - Ensuring Future-Ready Workforce and Social Protection
  - Improving Digital Governance and Public Service Delivery

Structural transformation, export-orientation, diversification, and increasing product sophistication, remain essential for rapid and sustained growth. However, pursue [*sic*] of these today must adapt to megatrends conditioning the global economy, environment, and society, into the mid-21<sup>st</sup> century.

(Albert, et al, p. 24)



# Points for Pause

## Who and What?

- **Who? Implications on Us**
  - Larger middle-class > Income/Growth, Institutions, Social Cohesion
  - Progressive Policies → Long-Term Economic Growth (Easterly)
  - Key Driver for democratization and political stability (Huntington)
  - Diversified economy and reduced risk (Acemoglu)
  - Lower inequality (Milanovic) and buffer between rich and the poor (Ravallion)
  - Crucial role in shaping the political landscape and policy decisions in many countries (Amoranto) and can influence politicians (Acemoglu)

*Although the precise boundaries of the middle-class remain a matter of definition, there is a consensus that the middle-class rapidly expands, and becomes increasingly important as a country develops, with significant implications for consumption patterns, sustainable development, and socio-political stability. Understanding the characteristics, aspirations, and challenges of this segment is consequently crucial to navigate the emerging complex realities of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century global economy. (Albert, et al, p. 9)*

# Points for Reflection

## Who and What? (2)

- **For Whom?**
  - Critical Reader of “An Agenda for the Middle Class”
  - Translating and Story-telling for Mainstreaming and Cascading
    - Meta and Self-Reflexive: Awareness for Empowerment
- **What Now?**
  - For Further Unpacking and Interrogation
  - Dimensions, nuances, and situation of the *Filipino* Middle Class
  - Implications: COVID/pandemic, OFW-Filipino Family, Precariat(?), etc
  - Beyond investigation, an invitation

While income and consumption capacities are central to middle-class status, a comprehensive understanding of this group must also consider dimensions such as education, occupation, lifestyle aspirations, and global connections.

These multidimensional characteristics of the middle-class have important implications for their consumption patterns and the prospects for sustainable development in the Philippines. (Albert, et al, p. 9)



# Responses

## Asia Society Philippines

- **An Atypical Foundation: A New Orientation**

The Asia Society Philippines is a convenor for meaningful dialogue and conversations—and strategic partnerships and synergies—from the Philippines, for and among ASEAN peoples and the West.

Moving forward—and toward its 30th year in 2029—ASP aims to enhance its relevance, by positioning itself as the ASEAN-focused Center with a development-oriented trajectory.

Realizing the vision of a predominantly middle-class society will require bold and concerted action across these priority areas. IT will also necessitate effective leadership, coordination, and collaboration among government, the private sector, civil society, and development partners. (Albert, et al)



# Some Results

## Reposition for Relevance

- **The Value of Social Capital**
  - Convenor: Among *and* with industry leaders
  - Collective social, political, and economic capital—and concern
  - Network and relationships
- **USAID CATALYZE: An Anecdotal Example**
  - Agenda-Setting
  - Mobilizing Resources
  - Making connections: the bigger picture

Realizing the vision of a predominantly middle-class society will require bold and concerted action across these priority areas. IT will also necessitate effective leadership, coordination, and collaboration among government, the private sector, civil society, and development partners. (Albert, et al)

# Thank you

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Marco Antonio Luisito Villanueva Sardillo III  
[msardillo@asiasociety.org](mailto:msardillo@asiasociety.org)

*Juris Doctor* (Ateneo Law School, 2006)  
Master in Public Policy (LKY School of Public Policy, NUS 2010)  
Master of Science in Local Economic Development (LSE, 2019)