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## ***Social Spaces of Child Play: Discourses, Identities, Practices, and Imaginaries among Slum-dwelling Children in the Philippines***

This thesis delves into the complexities of **slum-based childhood play** in San Jose del Monte city (Philippines) during the COVID-19 pandemic and its early aftermath. It examines the different discourses, identities, practices, and urban imaginaries that shape play spatialities in urban informalities through a child-oriented lens. The aim is to generate knowledge from a **Southern urban perspective** using a **countertopographic approach** that challenges the dominant, adult-centric, and paternalistic views of children's urban spaces.

There were four task-based methodological techniques in this study—**drawing, storytelling, photovoice, and creating fictional cities**. Such methodologies were conducted in both online and on-site settings, mixing the use of digital technologies and low-tech cartographic techniques to reveal the rich, complex and important aspects of children's play spaces in their city.

This thesis contributes to urban geography in four ways: 1) introducing the process of **here-there-and-back-again in Southern urban theorising** beyond the dichotomy of parochial vs global; 2) **interrogating the exoticisation and pejorative bias against slum leisure**. Valuing leisure among slum-dwellers and taking their own narratives as reliable data in urban planning and policy making allows to break the stigma about what kinds of leisure are legitimised in urban spaces; 3) producing a **two-in-one thesis** with a **child-friendly counterpart made for children**; 4) generating **new and thick data** for a slum neighbourhood in San Jose del Monte, a site that has rarely been in urban planning and policy literature. All these in hopes to thicken the urban scholarship *for* and *with* children.