

Reflections from the Manila Workshop

The Philippines
January 2006



SIGUS - Special Interest Group in Urban Settlement

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SIGUS

links housing and community interests in the Departments of Architecture and Urban Studies. It explores the new professionalism emerging for architects and planners focused on service, participation, and non-traditional client groups. It offers workshops, short courses, and carries out research and outreach programs stressing participatory methods in promoting affordable and equitable housing. The program is directed by Reinhard Goethert with the support of students and staff from throughout the MIT community.

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Preface

An outpouring of development aid to the Third World was driven by concerns about the 60% of the world living in poverty in very marginal shelter conditions. Since the late 1940s, international development agencies have promoted programs and policies in tackling poverty issues, and tremendous funds and energy have been invested. What has been the impact after these 35 years? And to us as architects and planners who purport to be experts in spatial issues, what has been the effect on housing?

This theme guided the 2-week SIGUS workshop in Manila, January 2006. MIT students in partnership with students from the Santo Tomas University of Manila revisited housing projects developed in the late 1970s. The goal was to take a fresh look at housing with as little preconceptions as possible – no in-depth background reading was required nor wanted. The documentation format and approach followed the experience from a previous workshop in Lima, Peru, which focused on squatter settlements from the 1960s and which now are an integral part of the city.

Three projects were chosen in the port area of central Manila, all which had been highlighted in the pivotal 1976 conference in Vancouver, which formalized the acceptance of squatter housing.

- 1 – The Tondo Foreshore project, a World Bank funded project, which was the first large-scale urban upgrading project where houses were improved in situ.
- 2 – The Dagat-Dagatan project, which was a pilot low-income housing project with small core 'starter houses.
- 3 – The Kapitbahayan project which was an instant built, architect designed community in the Dagat-Dagatan area as showcase from the Government of Philippines for the Vancouver conference.

The workshop also visited several Gawad Kalinga projects – a local NGO which promotes an integrated, holistic and sustainable approach to housing. Students participated in the construction of units while engaging

with GK staff in understanding the philosophy and goals of Gawad Kalinga.

In the three projects, student teams interviewed families and documented housing changes over the past 30 years. Two categories of families were interviewed and their housing documented: the selection was determined by houses where the families obviously succeeded as indicated by the height, finishing, and size, and houses where families were still struggling as indicated by houses which showed little or no change. Gawad Kalinga families were not interviewed since they had only just moved in. The underlying goal was to understand the impact of housing programs and policies at the family level: if programs, projects, and policies do not result in a better situation for families, a fundamental rethinking of housing intervention is imperative.

Upon return, the MIT students were charged with preparing 'reflections' – a short essay which gave them the opportunity to contemplate their experience. None had been to Manila before, and few – if any – had contact and experience with very low-income families in a Third World country. The individual reflections offered the opportunity to re-think what they had experienced, and to re-examine their role as professionals in low-income housing. The essays were not to be prepared while in Manila, but students were required to wait till the return to Boston to allow impressions and thoughts to mature.

To the reader, some of the essays may seem harsh, since students were encouraged to be as free as possible without deference to a potential audience. Only afterwards students were asked if they felt a wider distribution would be acceptable. All agreed, but with much thought and discussion, and with particular concern for the new friends in Manila.

The interviews and documentation of the three areas are available in presentation format. The 'reflections' and the interviews and housing documentation are best when seen together and provide a full and better understanding of the situation.

Dr. Reinhard Goethert



Dr.-Ing. Reinhard Goethert
Director of SIGUS, MIT



Now and then (from left to right):
Kapitbahayan New Project, Tondo Foreshore
Upgrading Project and Dagat-Dagatan Re-
settlement Project

Surveys Teams

Team 1 (left):

Mark Jason Go, Reilly Rabaillat
William Ho, Brittany Murillo
Viktorija Abolina, Jason Uy Tan, and
Kellyn See



Team 2 (right):

Antonio Amado, Luis Canizo,
Dalia al-Husseini, Nikki Boncan,
Eveth Facun, Jeff Peteza, and
Jien de Roma



Team 3 (left):

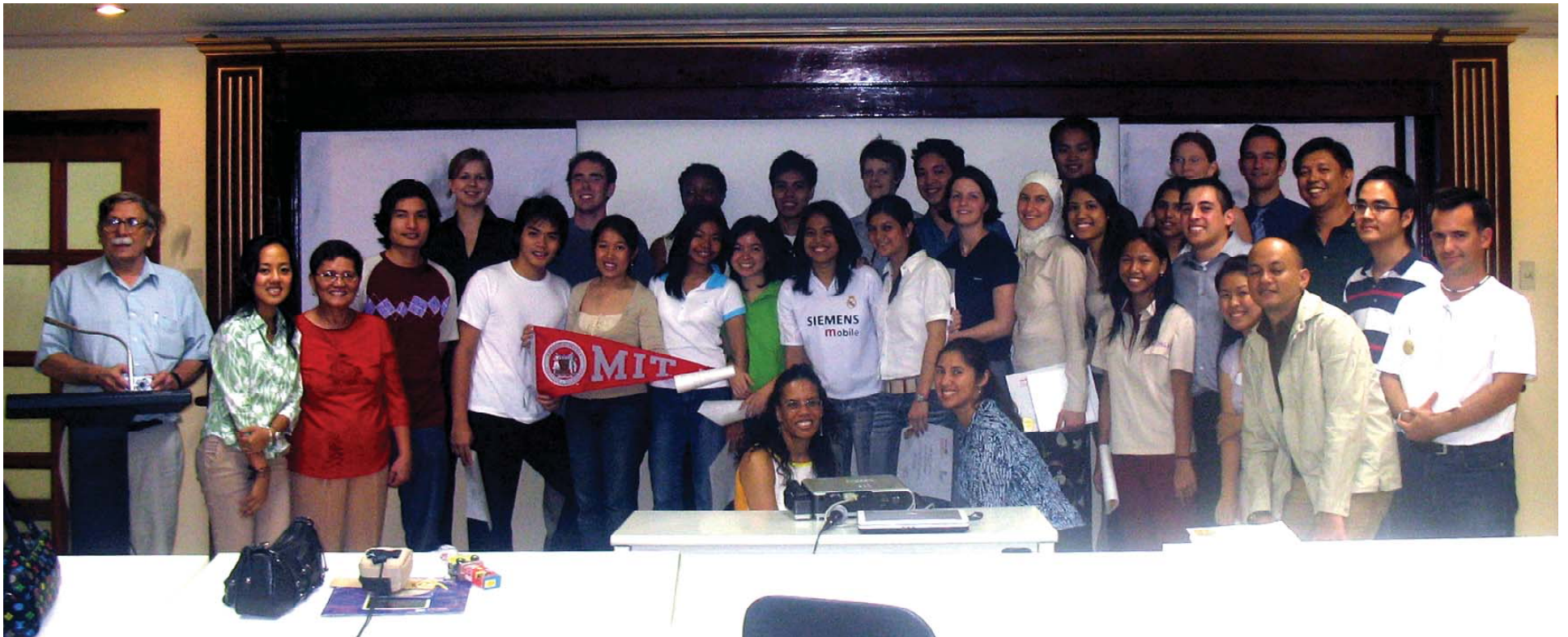
Non Arkaraprasertkul, Nathan Fabe
Emily Lammert, Joan Ling,
Molly Markarian, Michelle Petersen,
and Diwi Reyes



Team 4 (right):

Ploulomi Chakrabarti, Ifeoma N. Ebo
Jan Schultheiss, Vincent Cabochan,
Virllin Alcantara, and Maci Valmores





Workshop's participants from MIT, University of Santo Tomas, GK, and community's leaders

Manila: Perceptions of Life and Development...



Smiling faces of kids at the Smokey Mountain in Manila



Poulomi Chakrabarti

Master of City Planning candidate in International Development and Regional Planning. Experience in policy studies in energy and environment and urbanization for agencies in India. Developed proposals for international development agencies including European Union and the World Bank. Interests are in sustainable urban development within the context of developing countries.

I grew up in the city of New Delhi in India. This is a settlement where more than half the city, about 7 million people, lives in so called informal settlements and slums. I cannot claim that my visit to the Tondo foreshore was an eye-opener to the plight of majority of the humanity. Over time, I have come to view slums more as a response or even a solution to the urban crisis rather than a problem. The workshop did however make me sensitive to how policy level decisions at the 'top' influence the urban form and living experience at the neighborhood level. Kapitbahayan, Tondo and Dagat-dagatan represent this difference in policy – compete construction, in-situ upgradation and sites and services. I was intrigued by the work by the NGO Gawad Kalinga who seem to have made a huge impact on low-income housing in the Philippines. This paper is an attempt to capture some of these impressions. Although it is not intended to be a research paper, I have tried to relate my experiences to my understanding of these issues from an academic point of view.

This paper is divided into three sections. The major part of the paper tries to explore the possible reasons of Gawad Kalinga's success in generating resources and public support in such a short period of time. I have drawn extensively from my previous coursework on international development and NGOs while reflecting on this issue. The second section presents my understanding of the study area and the Dagat-Dagatan experiment in the context of the larger urban fabric of the city and the role of planning professionals in

this development process. The final section is a more general (and eclectic) account of my impressions of the social and cultural life of the people of Manila while I was there.

Part I Why I think GK works?

Gawad Kalinga was formed about five years back and has since constructed more than 600 communities comprising of 16,000 families at an average cost of less than \$1000 per unit. This, in my opinion, is a commendable achievement by any standards. The organization also enjoys enormous popular support and already has a volunteer base of more than 100,000 workers. It has been able to mobilize resources from overseas Filipino workers and large corporations to fund their projects and have hence been able to provide housing free of cost to the beneficiary families (though the families do participate in construction of the structures). The organization's next goal is to build 700,000 new communities in the next 7 years. Over the course of this paper I will argue that Gawad Kalinga defies the conventional wisdom about NGOs, and although it has used 'out of the box' solutions to address macro-level development issues, its fundamental approach is not very different from some of the other NGOs and grassroots organizations that have been able to make an impact at a large scale (1).

'Development from below' and NGOs emerged as the new paradigm of development in the 1970s as a result of the failure of the state and market institutions to address issues of economic growth and equity. It was assumed that these



institutions needed to be autonomous and disconnected from institutions at the top to avoid political and economic exploitation from the dominant classes. They had the comparative advantage of being spatially closer to their target population and more aware of the particularities of local resources and constraints. This helped them in being innovative in designing projects and hence more transparent, accountable and effective than government agencies.

Gawad Kalinga however attributes its success to linkages with the government and large corporations, which they term 'partnerships'. Geographical closeness to the power elites further allows them to draw support and concessions from a host of government agencies and market institutions. Their headquarters are strategically based in Manila, close to the seat of power, although their operations are spread throughout most of the country including rural areas. For example, land is usually provided free of cost or is leased at a minimal premium by the local government. Line departments and various parastatal agencies like the water board, sewerage authority, electricity department, etc provide services to these communities at lower than market rates. Various large corporations have adopted GK villages and have financed construction of houses and other social programs, as discussed later.

This collaboration between NGOs, market institutions and the state is similar to some of the other organizations that I had read about earlier. The Grameen Bank, now an independent financial institution, was initially linked to the Bangladesh

Central Bank. Only when the scale of operations expanded, did the government of Bangladesh create the Grameen Bank. Proshika, another NGO in Bangladesh, benefited from the government's directive requiring private banks to provide credit-in-kind to poor landless farmers.

I was also impressed by the political astuteness of Gawad Kalinga. It has been observed that since and the government and NGOs work on the same sectors and NGOs generally do not depend on state funds to run their programs, distance and mistrust prevails between the two bodies. GK consciously invites key government officials and politicians to its functions to 'share their success' in an effort to co-opt the government. One of the GK conferences we went to during our visit had a number of government representatives, including mayors of many cities. Politicians in turn gain social capital by being associated with GK because of its mass social appeal. This further gets translated into more financial benefits towards the organization. For example, Senator Ralph Recto, who was awarded for working closely with GK in one of the recent sessions, further committed to build 50 school houses from his Priority Development Assistance Fund.

Perhaps the most important reason why their program is effective on ground is because of their volunteer base. They, along with the actual occupants of the house, help build the houses and work in community programs thus reducing the cost of the project by more than half. Most of the volunteers who are associated with GK over a long term belong to a religious movement called



'Couples for Christ' (CFC). CFC volunteers also comprise the 'caretaker team' in GK villages that continue to be assist the communities in health-care, family planning, livelihood support etc years after the actual construction of the houses. I found that very interesting because most of the NGOs and other agencies that I was familiar with in the housing sector restricted themselves to construction and service provision while the problems of the communities they work with are more than physical.

Most of the GK's members themselves belong to CFC. But unlike Gawad Kalinga, CFC is a hierarchical organization with activities and infrastructure spread over all provinces and cities in Philippines. Although GK itself is new, it uses a network of highly motivated and structured volunteer base that took more than 25 years to develop. It has been argued that CFC is the backbone for implementation of GK projects in a country where more than 85% of the population is Catholic. For example, when GK was asked to work on post disaster reconstruction in Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the Tsunami and they refused because of the absence of such a volunteer network there. It is also worthwhile to mention that CFC has an international presence in more than 134 countries which makes it possible for GK to spread its operations in other countries. They have recently started working in Zambia, Indonesia and India. There are two aspects of this development which interested me. First, in spite strong linkage between Couples for Christ, GK officials are very careful to not sell their program as a 'religious', to both the beneficiaries and donors. This is because

it is relatively easier for a secular organization to approach corporations and individuals for funding and to expand its operations to non-Christian areas. Surprisingly their projects have been successfully in the Muslim dominated and communally tense regions of the south. Second, government of Philippines again is a secular entity. Although a community development program can draw support from a motivated faith-based group, it politically difficult for the government to initiate and fund such experiments itself because they can be accused of being parochial. In other words, GK is able to carry out programs that the governments itself cannot.

An important aspect of understanding a non-governmental organization is through its interaction with the society – individuals as well as institutions. This is an area which has not been widely covered in the literature on NGOs that I have had a chance to go through so far. GK frontman Tony Meloto describes marketing as being the central reason for their success. They have used two key strategies in this regard. One, they have been able to find their market niche through gauging the sensitivities of the people, especially oversees Filipino workers. Their campaign is based on 'nation building' and 'heroism'. Philippines has been under centuries of foreign occupation which has resulted in a feudal mindset of the population. There is a clear mistrust towards their governments, that have been mired with corruption for years. Only last week there was yet another coup attempt on the present government. The economy has never been able to fully recover from the depression on the 90s. Gawad



Kalinga tries to portray its work as 'nation building' and the benefactors as 'heroes' in an environment of negativity and stagnation. Much of this campaign is targeted towards overseas Filipino workers, most of who work as low-status laborers in developed countries. These people see GK as a means of regaining personal pride through contributing towards the growth of their native country and gaining social capital in the process.

Two, they rely heavily on corporate imaging in creation of a sellers market. One of the first things that GK did when its program started gaining momentum is hiring some of the best media and public relations personnel in the field. They market themselves internationally through the World Wide Web and the global network of CFC. A sister foundation called ANCOP is has been created in the US for marketing their work and collection of donations. The CEO himself spends more than nine months traveling abroad in an effort to generate resources.

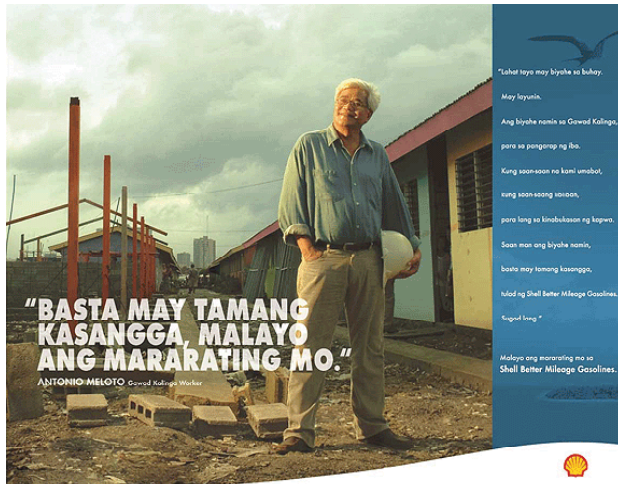
They have introduced measures to attract donor confidence. This includes certification and accounting that allow donors to know that their money well spent. Further, due to the free labor and land component in their development, their costs are much lower as compared to other organizations in the housing sector, which makes investment in GK more attractive. They have established alliances with large corporate bodies who fund their villages and help advertise the GK brand. All Gawak Kalinga villages are located on main roads for visibility. The houses are brightly painted, which has come to represent their identity

as an organization.

Gawad Kalinga started its operations with a relatively narrow focus, i.e. to provide housing to the poor and community development. Although they did realize that the problems of these neighborhoods needed to be addressed at many levels i.e. income generation and livelihoods, crime, health, education etc, these concerns were added to their program later. Even now GK continues to be known for its work in the housing sector. This represents the ability of GK to identify and prioritize factors needed for the organization to function well rather than designing programs in terms of popular assumptions about what is needed or the client population, and in expanding its operations in an incremental fashion. Poverty alleviation interventions often fail because they are too ambitious (2).

This strategy has helped in two main ways. One, it helped them build capacity in a particular field. They have been able to develop a technical team of architects and engineers who specialize on low-cost housing (though they are still improvising their design). This has also instrumental in formulating a standard system/ methodology for their construction process for rural and urban areas respectively. This 'franchisable' process once perfected could be applied anywhere throughout the nation without many alterations, which makes management of their operations simpler. Two, concentrating on a particular sector gives them an opportunity to bargain for their clients as a 'class', whereas generalist organizations negotiate on behalf of individual clients or





small groups of them. Further, it also allows them to market their funding requirements in a format which makes it easier to understand for a donor.

This draws semblance to some of the NGOs programs I had read about earlier. Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) in and Annapurna in India started out with providing only credit, specifically as credit brokers. They were also passionate about larger social issues and added programs that dealt with them later on. However, credit remained the focus of their program. Gawad Kalinga too has recently ventured into other income generating activities like fertilizer plants in rural areas and commercial development in the periphery of one of its villages (currently under formulation).

The development philosophy of Gawad Kalinga might also have an important role to play in their effectiveness. They view poverty more as a behavioral problem than an economic issue. Their ideology is based on influencing the social behavior of communities through engineering their physical environment. As mentioned earlier, all Gawad Kalinga neighborhoods are characterized by brightly painted houses and landscaped common spaces. They feel that ‘middle-class environment would instill middle-class aspirations’. ‘Community building’ and ‘values formation’ form an important component of their work. Donors, referred as partners, are required to participate in the construction of houses in an effort to build a relationship with the beneficiaries. The beneficiary families are further required to participate in the construction of their as well as their neighbor’s

houses. This helps lower the cost of constructions and builds a sense of community in the neighborhood.

Part II The Competition and Thereafter

As preparation for the workshop and in an effort to understand the community that we were going to work with, we tried to read about the competition and the design of Ian Athfield. His design incorporated the traditional Filipino community called Barangay surrounded by a wall and integrated commercial and residential land uses as a means of livelihood to the residents. The competition and the conference in Vancouver in 1976 represented a major concern and a new understanding of informal housing in the developing world at a global level. To the Filipinos however it represented yet another attempt on part of the West to impose their development ideology on the third world. Maybe it should not have been so surprising for us to find out Athfield’s plan never got implemented. But the neighborhood that we did study, Kapitbahayan, was designed at about the same time as the competition on somewhat similar principles. The process of development of this neighborhood is perhaps the single most fascinating story I came across during the course of the workshop.

Imelda Marcos was then the Minister of Human Settlements and Governor of Metro Manila. She wanted to display to the rest of the world that Philippines was perfectly capable of addressing issues of its squatter population by itself. She hired an organization called Planning Resources

Operations and Systems (PROS), a think-tank of architects, planners, sociologists and economists who were concerned about the plight of the urban poor in Philippines. PROS at that time had designed a number of low-income housing communities and specialized on social architecture.

The entire project was designed in less than 7 days (and nights!) under the constant supervision of Imelda Marcos in an attempt to finish the design before the competition. An important feature of the design was the delineation of community spaces on the basis of the social and behavioral patterns of the low-income households. There was a clear hierarchy of open spaces, from private spaces outside the individual dwelling unit to cluster level spaces at the level of the module and finally to neighborhood level spaces comprising of the Church and other common facilities. As we observed during our visits, the urban fabric of this neighborhood is clearly distinguishable from the rest of the city and in my opinion encourages a more active social behavior.

The design was however hurriedly implemented in order to be finished before the Vancouver conference. There was an overriding emphasis on the outward appearance and larger issues of infrastructure, affordability and long term sustainability were ignored in the process. The site was a reclaimed fishpond near Tondo foreshore and required land-filling of more than five feet. In order to minimize project expenditure, only three feet was filled. No cost was however spared on imported tiles from Indonesia for the roofs. Galvanized iron was used to support the tiles, which over time got

rusted in tropical weather. The neighborhood has since sunk by another 18 inches and gets flooded everyday and experiences severe flooding during monsoon months. At the level of the dwelling units, roofs leak during most parts of the year. Further, the roof-style architecture made it very difficult for households to expand with growth of family members.

Although I can empathize with a developing country institution in its need to prove itself and in the value of local knowledge, this does raise larger questions about the role of planners in the decision making process. To me it was frustrating to see that so little was at the hands of the 'technical experts' and even the basic 'facts' of the case are ignored in this political struggle. And since development is so directly related to the life of the people and the public sphere, it also made me wonder if this would have been substantially different in a democracy.

Part III Society and Cultural Identity

Perhaps the first thing that I observed when I landed in Philippines was the strong American influence on the culture and urban landscape of Manila. The strips malls on the way from the airport were more reminiscent of suburban Los Angeles than a south-east Asian country. It was clear that L'Enfant's DC like design of Quezon City's, scores of American radio and television channels, fast food chains and Starbucks were not merely a recent product of globalization but represented a well established socio-political history. But what surprised me was how the indigenous culture had





been eroded in these centuries of foreign occupation. Even the local museums that I visited did not seem to display a very rich account of the history prior to the Spanish invasion. Tagalo is written in the roman script! It was interesting that the only 'local flavor' that I had witnessed in Manila was in the squatter communities that we surveyed!

It stuck me because although this pattern is more starkly visible in Philippines for obvious reasons, Americanization of urban space and has emerged as a global phenomenon in recent times. The newer developments around Delhi and Beijing and Manila all look the same. The new middle-class in these cities is developing similar cultural tastes and consumption patterns. As we observed in Manila, urban spaces are also becoming more exclusionary. It is now possible to live in a city in a developing country without ever having to see the face of a slum. I find it disturbing because cities and people are losing their cultural diversity in this process. So much of it is determined by economic factors that I feel that no amount of academic or political debate can reverse this trend.

On a happier note, I remember the first day when we gathered in the hotel lobby to share our experiences and first impressions of the communities we had visited. Emily pointed out that the people looked so cheerful and content in the face of such adversity. I agree. Their houses get flooded everyday, half the people we interviewed were unemployed, they had not been able to pay for their houses in thirty years...an amount less than our individual airfares to Manila. Further, they live in a country that lies in most disaster-prone

belt in the world, is mired in poverty, political conflict, corruption and environmental destruction. Another common observation we had as a group was the importance of community and family ties in their lives.

As I was thinking about it later, I remembered reading an article about 'the Filipino way of life' about a year back. Filipinos are amongst one of the happiest and most self-satisfied people in the world! (3) The author pointed out that for Filipinos, happiness isn't material, it's social. They have learnt to expect nothing from impersonal institutions and seek happiness, resilience and self-sufficiency through their social networks. I will end this paper with an excerpt from that piece that stayed with me and exemplifies the spirit that I am referring to.

"My wife recently met a 43-year-old Filipino named Nestor Castillo, and they started chatting about a proposed government program in the Philippines to give poor people food stamps. Castillo was against it: he didn't believe the politicians and the bureaucrats would be able to pull it off honestly. And yet Castillo could use those stamps. Four years ago, he lost his job as a janitor at the Quezon City Hall. He and his family are now scavengers, living out of a wooden pushcart. This is Castillo's idea of happiness: "Once I found nearly half a fried chicken wrapped in plastic," he told me. "I knew it was still edible because it was still cold, just came from the refrigerator. We had a feast that day."

Around the world, people are searching for hap-

piness. For Filipinos, happiness isn't a goal: it's a tool for survival." (4)

Notes:

- (1) Bish Sanyal, *Myth of Development from Below*
- (2) Judith Tandler, *What ever happened to poverty alleviation?*
- (3) World Value Survey, *University of Michigan*, November 2004
- (4) Alan C. Robles, *Time Magazine*

Twelve Peso Coca-Cola and Couture Malls: Filipinos Behind The Brands



A peaceful corner in Kapitbahayan, the model project



Viktorija Abolina

From Latvia, she is a Masters of Architecture candidate, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Interested in architectural design and theory, as well as documentary photography.

The workshop focused on analysis of re-location of squatter settlements and addressed the issue of low income housing. This essay could address the globalization and its effects on a developing country. It can criticize the commercialization of charity, the corrupted officials, the lack of government subsidized health care, and so on. The issues of birth control need to be addressed, but will not be. Finally, the question of MIT students analyzing the poor and proposing recommendations can be questioned in this essay but will remain untouched. However, it is the division of a country's people in to categories that I choose to address. Is this society as divided as it might seem? Are there similarities in the way people live, regardless they social class and religious beliefs? And what is common to a Filipino, both rich and poor.

I woke up in a three star hotel on a Sunday morning, took my bottle of Evian that I bought in Frankfurt, and headed to brush my teeth with bottled water. The cockroach climbed out of the sink, disgusted I flushed it down; little did I know...it was one of the smallest of its' species. I strolled to the reception desk to get my breakfast from the "Bed and Breakfast" deal, but instead was given a coupon to McDonalds. I did not know McDonalds has coupons! I don't eat in McDonalds but went there anyway out of curiosity. It was only one block away and I was approached by a couple of kids asking for money. I didn't find it to be striking, since in Latvia, where I am from, that happens all the time - especially in the hotel district. McDonalds was full of people. I took my coffee and joined others. We spoke about cockroaches and our below-average

hotel, partly so not to address the fact that all of us were eating at McDonalds in the Philippines.

Later that day we met Tito from Gawad Kalinga NGO (GK). I liked the man; he was wearing the GK polo and architects' glasses. We hopped into two vans and went to a site in Baseco, where they were in the process of rebuilding the village burned in fire a couple of years ago. The air on the way was polluted and the traffic was bad, causing us to spend an hour in the van. There would be many more of those cold, air-conditioned microclimate van-hours.

In Baseco it was hard to comprehend how one can call it a village. It was an area covered by a fabric of shacks put together from cardboard boxes and other junk. There was clean laundry drying everywhere. I could see TVs through cracks in people's homes. I felt uneasy taking out my camera, not for safety reasons. It was the sense of capturing the portrait of the person that lives there that I feared. However, I did take my camera, and found the usual relief one gets from looking at the world through a 35mm lens or an LCD screen. People were friendly and spoke some English. The houses GK built were small, hot, dim, and crowded. Nevertheless, their bright coloring stood out on the background covered in the grey fabric of shanties. On a tour around the GK village the identity of an individual was never brought up, as their slogan states; "Less for self, more for other, enough for all."

I felt the GK officials were some sort of celebrities in the area. The Poor as GK referred to people; had no face, their face was Antonio Meloto – the founder of the GK. He was also Shell's new





face for charity.

I could continue describing every day of our two weeks in Manila. However, I want to speak about the phenomenon that struck me the most; brand names. Wherever we went: GK villages, Tondo, Dagat Dagatan, the business district of Manila, or the touristy boardwalk, the brands were always present. In Tondo I saw several posters advertising a Coke for twelve pesos (\$0.20), in a mall in Mahati I would pay thirty five pesos for the same soda, much less than in Boston, but also three times more expensive than in Tondo. So the poor and the rich drink the same soda, it is just that the rich pay more for it.

On Wednesday, we interviewed Diday, a woman from Dagat-Dagatan, she has nine kids, six of whom live with her in a small house. She felt that the neighborhood was good but not a good place to raise children. The conditions they lived in were very poor. We were there during lunchtime and before we knew it her son brought our team of four each a burger and Coca-Cola. We enjoyed the fast food avoiding meat in the burger, thanked the hostess and moved on to the next house. The generosity of the families was unbelievable, much like GK's slogan - less for self and more for others. Maybe "less for self and more for others" is just the way Filipinos are, and GK just adopted that amazing quality of people?

Later that day, after working closely with the University of Santo Thomas students interviewing families, we were invited to a restaurant in a mall. I was stunned to see how elaborate the mall was.

Brand name stores lined the walls of the mall, and restaurants flooded several floors. Urban landscape was framed with fountains and palm trees that grew out of the concrete floor. There was a surreal, air-conditioned reality created to forget the reality of the city. We dined at a chic restaurant, and enjoyed a delicious meal. My meal probably was equivalent in cost to a monthly income of one of the families we interviewed.

I had a Coke with my dinner. It was the second Coke that day but in a very different environment. We were disturbed by how different the mall was from our daytime experience and we decided to have a beer afterwards. The UST students kept insisting that Manila isn't all poor and that there are nice places like this mall. But the artificially created environment of the mall was almost surreal and didn't make relieved about the conditions in Manila. Before we realized the UST students picked up the bill, and refused to accept our money. Filipinos were extremely generous, I felt a bit uncomfortable at being treated to a meal twice in one day. Other malls were overflowing with people as well. Shopping for Gucci, Ralf Lauren, Calvin Klein, and such, wealthy people were after brands to show their status. Ironically, on the streets in Dagat Dagatan and other developments that we went to interview, people were wearing the same brands, fake I presume, but not different. We visited a market where one can purchase fake copies of famous designers for a fraction of the price. Besides, can one be certain of what is original in the contemporary world, and what is fake?

Another rather curious problem was cockroaches. They seemed to be an across the social

class problem. They were in hotels, malls, in rich peoples' houses, and the poor. In a way they were a proof of the natural order that things follow. The order, that transcends social class, religious beliefs, and geographical location. Ironically, these rather unpleasant creatures unified the nation.

What does it say about the culture where people consume the same fast food goods, wear the same polo shirts and jeans, but pay different prices. Does the price you pay for initially the same thing put you in a different class? Or is it the ability to flush the toilet that differentiates the rich from the poor? In my opinion Filipinos form a society where everyone is dominated by brands, they all live with cockroaches, and follow celebrities on TV. At the end of the day, even though Filipinos can be divided by social class, income, religion and such, they are friendly, generous, and open people, that hate cockroaches but cannot do much about them.



Reflections on the Road from Manila 2006



A Sari-Sari store in a squatter



Antonio Amado

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January 6, 2006

I finally arrive in Manila International Airport, and there is nothing but chaos at the airport; this was just the beginning. I have left the USA in search of architectural work of John de Monchaux. He worked in Dagat Dagatan area of Manila in the late 1970s. I searching for public housing projects that were designed and built by some of the world's best architects. Finding them and identifying them was a problem for the group of MIT students after thirty years of deterioration and use. We were briefed on the project, yet I still was not quite sure what we were doing or trying to analyze. I guess I was expecting a sheet that had all the steps required and had an objective attached to it.

Top: Manila skyline view at Ninoy Aquino Airport

Bottom: Panoramic view of Dagat-Dagatan



January 7, 2006

We wake at what felt like the break of dawn to go to an area of Manila called Intramuros where a facility was built by an MIT SPURS fellow, Illac Diaz, that houses male mariners. On our way we go from what I considered a “second world” downtown near our hotel to another place where street vendors flourish. To me, street vendors are not new. I typically have eaten from them in foreign countries such as Mexico, Jamaica, and Cuba. What took me aback was the density of squatters as seen in Figure 3. I have seen poor housing before and lived in some questionable housing conditions myself, but the sheer amount of people living in substandard housing was impressive. The three, four, and five story squatter structures amazed me and brought to mind “Hooverville’s” USA’s great depression. Most of the shanties were made of box wood, scraps of metal, and any other material that were durable.

Top: Squatter settlement near Intramuros
Bottom: Overseas Filipino Worker doing laundry in Diaz's housing.



After the initial amazement of the height and density of squatters in Manila, we went to Diaz's affordable housing establishment as seen in Figure 4. Illac's dormitories for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) was a sustainable model of running housing because it could cover operating costs through affordable \$1 rent. The dormitories were clean and had order to them. It almost seemed as if the OFW's were trained in a military fashion and lived as if they were on a boat in small quarters. Illac's social entrepreneurship helps many OFW's to stay off the streets by providing a sense of community within the marine oriented workers.

January 8-11, 2006

Today we went to Kapit-Bahayan and visited with Ellen, the Barangay's chairwoman. Ellen was very kind and offered us a plethora of sodas while we talked about the area and community. Ellen's house did not appear like the surrounding dwellings because it was five stories, decorative architecture, and elaborate tile. I wondered if this was a benefit of being the chairwoman or happen by chance that she was at the right place at the right time. If you notice in Figure 5 the house on the left is part of the original structure of the project in 1976 and has deteriorated over the past 30 years. In comparison Ellen's exterior and interior of the house were well maintained relative to the houses in the immediate area. What we came to know was that remittances were sent by two of her daughters in Switzerland and Saudi Arabia. With this money she was able to tear down her original house and rebuild an entirely new designed building that suited her growing family. She also received income/services through renting out her top floor of the house. Relative to her neighbors was a "success" story. We also interviewed a family that lived in the green house in Figure 6. We noticed the modifications to the original structure were significant. In Fig. 6 one can tell that the red roof house is different from the green one, even though they were originally designed identically. Both houses were extended out to the property line in order to build for more livable space. Figures 8-11 show the changes made to the original structure in order to accommodate family needs and/or the financial situation of the family.



Top to bottom, from left to right: Ellen's house in cream color, First interviewee's house in Kapit Bahayan, Added staircase, Added room in green house, Added rooftop above room in Fig 8

January 12-15, 2006

We start to learn more about the squatter settlements of Dagat Dagatan by looking for designs and official documents. During this time we visit various offices of the National Housing Authority in Tondo and Kapit Bahayan. We look at stacks of design and site plans for the areas we are studying (Fig 13). At the same time, many of us are gathering information from local officials and architects who worked on the projects in the late 1970s. We came to find out that flooding as seen in Figure 16 was caused by three things: high tide, absence of a pump station, and by the land having been swamp area previously. We also learned that the projects were very well maintained for about 15 years after they were built. After that the rules of the public housing authority became lax and the development really began to change. First, degradation of the housing started because maintenance was not kept up, then stores were added onto the house (as seen in Fig. 14), and additional undesigned rooms were added onto the house with spare materials. This led me to question the fine line between public and private space. In my opinion, the separation of private and public space adds value to everybody in order to maintain demarcations of uses for people that live in the area.

With little enforcement of the rules the privatized space starts to invade that of the public realm. I ask myself if western culture is needed or accepted in these squatter settlements. In Figure 12, the squatter houses impose themselves along the a street composing an urban fabric streetscape. The squatters have taken over the space of the



Top to bottom: Ground floor business, Squatters encroaching the street, Site plan for Kapit Bahayan, Washing of clothes

sidewalk and provide no public or semi-private space around which neighborly relationships could develop. The invasion of the sidewalk has forced people to walk on the street where cars are zooming by, which is dangerous. By contrast (Figure 15) in another part of Tondo, public space is used for building community in an odd way of washing clothes and talking to each other. However, once again the public space has been converted for private use and has been neglected (overgrown plants as seen in Fig.15). Although, the sidewalks in Figure 15 have foliage, it could be maintained better so that it reflected the model of a "Garden city." From a planning perspective the real travesty of squatting is that the quality of life is lowered for everybody by taking up valuable and precious space.

January 16-20, 2006

Some of the area. We visited the area of Dagat Dagatan and interviewed a case of squatter housing that is "still evolving." Esmeralda's (see Fig 19) compelling story really showed me how fortunate I am to have a home and the value of American programs like Section 8, which helps the lowest income bracket. Esmeralda was an original Tondo Foreshore squatter from the 1970s. She moved all the materials from her first house to the new Dagat Dagatan project along with her hopes for a better life. When she got there all the supply of housing was filled and she settled on

We have been in Manila for about a week and have gotten to know a site and services plot of land in hopes she would soon have a house of her own. Esmeralda never got a house of her own and she continues to live in housing that she has always lived in, a shanty (as seen in Fig. 17, 18, & 20). She has collected newer materials such as metal sheeting and newer wood from scraps of construction sites to make her house structurally sound. Yet, she continues to live without electricity, water, and plumbing. Her only source of light at night is the light seen in Figure 20, which her neighbor's let her tap off, in exchange for washing clothes. Flooding season is the hardest on her because the water comes into the house and she tries to block the water with sand and other materials seen in Figure 21 and 22. Esmeralda has no stable income and her children could not provide for her because one is mentally challenged, the other got hurt at work and is handicapped, and her daughter got married and lives in Dagat Dagatan. Lastly, Esmeralda is cur-



Top to bottom, left to right: Sewage flooding of the streets, Esmeralda's house; front view, Esmeralda's house; side view, Esmeralda



rently facing eviction from her land because she is a year and a half back due in her mortgage payment to the government. She is so close to paying the mortgage off (within 5 years) yet these hardships on her family in recent years has made it more difficult in achieving land ownership.

After Esmeralda's interview, we went on to interview more "evolving" and "successful" families in Dagat Dagatan, Tondo, and Gawad Kalinga settlements. I think that those who will face the greatest disadvantage in the next fifty years, will be the children of these areas (see Fig. 21). They will be facing a new globalized world and the rising cost of housing that continues to be a problem not only in the Philippines, but around the world. Populations of squatter will continue to grow at a higher rate than that of Western countries, and squatters can no longer be ignored. Although they live in the shadow of city skyscrapers ignoring the problem and the millions of families who live in them in South America, Africa, and Asia will not make it go away. It's a problem that will continue to grow if something is not done. As architects and planners we need to take them into account in our designs and programs to avoid further stark contrasts between the well-off and everyone else. Hopefully, people like us (See Fig. 24) can help ameliorate the problem.

Top to bottom, left to right: Spare materials for house and flooding, Esmeralda's only light and interior view of house, Trash accumulation outside of Esmeralda's house



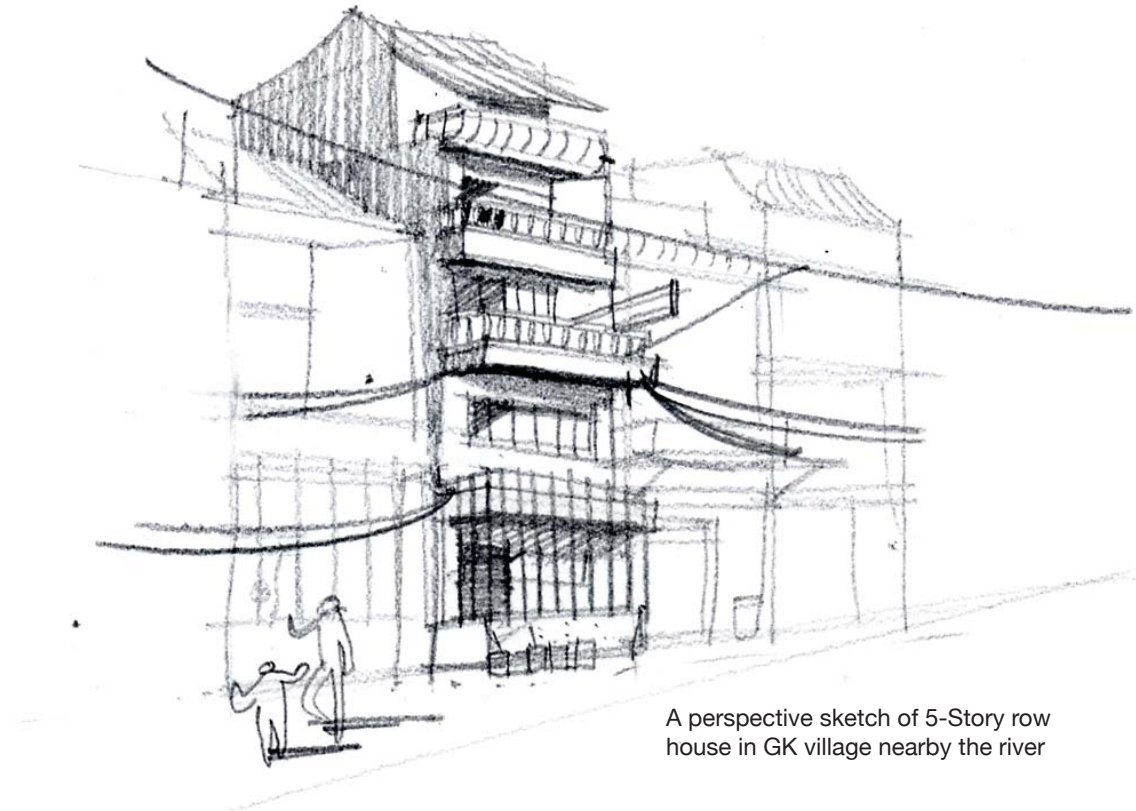


Children of Dagat Dagatan



Top-Nikki Boncan, Eva Ruth M. Facun, Jien Carmela De Roma, Dalia Al-Hu sseini Bottom- Antonio Amado, Luis Canizo, Jeff Petezaalation outside of Esmeralda's house

Manila Sketch Book: Recorded Memories from SIGUS Workshop



A perspective sketch of 5-Story row house in GK village nearby the river



Non Arkaraprasertkul

Master of Science in Architecture Studies candidate in History, Theory and Criticism of Architecture; Fulbright scholar and Asian Cultural Council (Affiliate of Rockefeller Brother's Fund) research fellow. Lecturer at Thammasat University, Bangkok. Interests in methods of historical analysis that retain socio-cultural and historical values of a city.

City has “memory” and it is this memory that makes each city a place for people. City, as a case study of urban settlement in the Southeast Asian –in this case, Manila-- is vibrant because it has a true sense of authenticity, culturally and socially. The Philippines today is experiencing unprecedented urban transformation through a process of global urbanization. Southeast Asian urban growth is different from its Western counterparts. What was proposed and determined upon considerations manifested back in 1796 must be traced via its historical and theoretical trajectory, with an intensive understanding of the essence of urban culture.

organic integration of Western and Eastern development. My contributions will be greatly on the historical research of the site and the critical discourse of the paths this urban alteration takes place. This opportunity will associate me in a more pragmatic framework of my recent research, funded by Asian Cultural Council and Thammasat University, in urban development and architectural identity of Bangkok.



A perspective sketching of house in Dagat-Dagatan

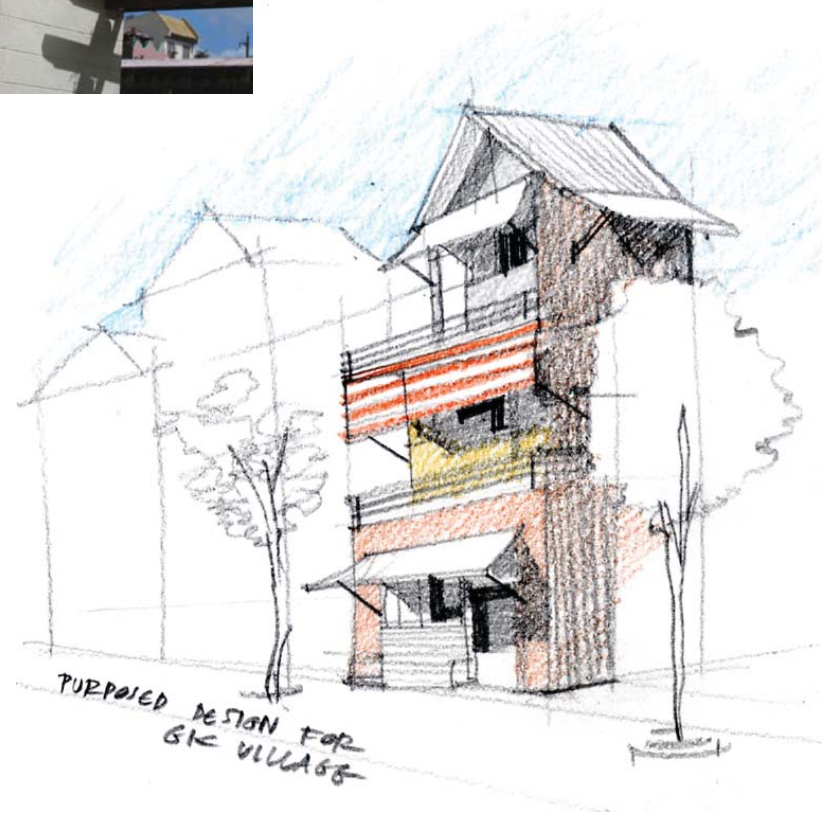
To conduct an urban analysis of Eastern cities, implementation of urban planning and design is mandatory with extended investigations of Eastern perspectives. The decision to shape the city is not dependent solely on physical aspects, particularly for a hyper-growing city like Manila but also on social structure and cultural traditions. The city where I come from, Bangkok, Thailand, is also shaped by the same forces. As urbanization is unavoidable, urban designers must anticipate changes that lead to urban and regional sustainability.

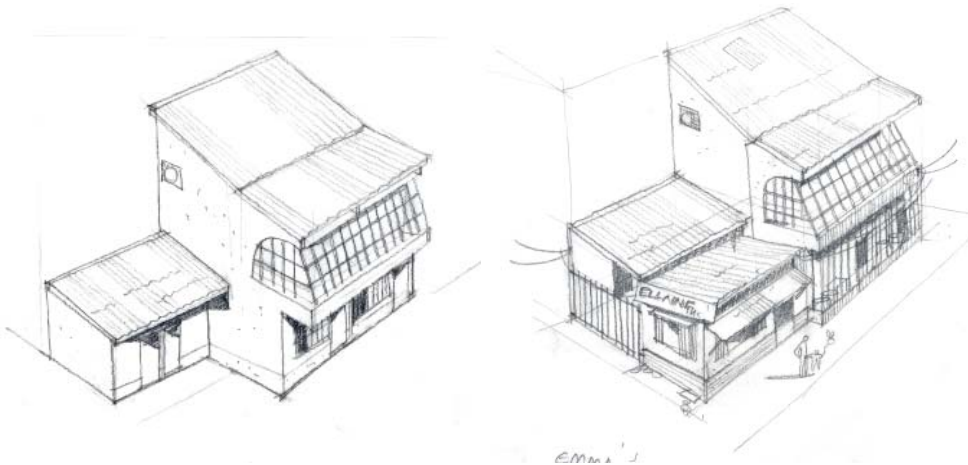
In these circumstances, I believe it is necessary to develop a method of historical that retains the cultural and historical values of the city. My experience in several collaborative projects in South-East Asia and extensive teaching experience and professional practice as an architect will serve as a springboard for creating model of urbanism appropriate to eastern culture, to achieve an



Top: Snap shots of several GK villages visited by the author

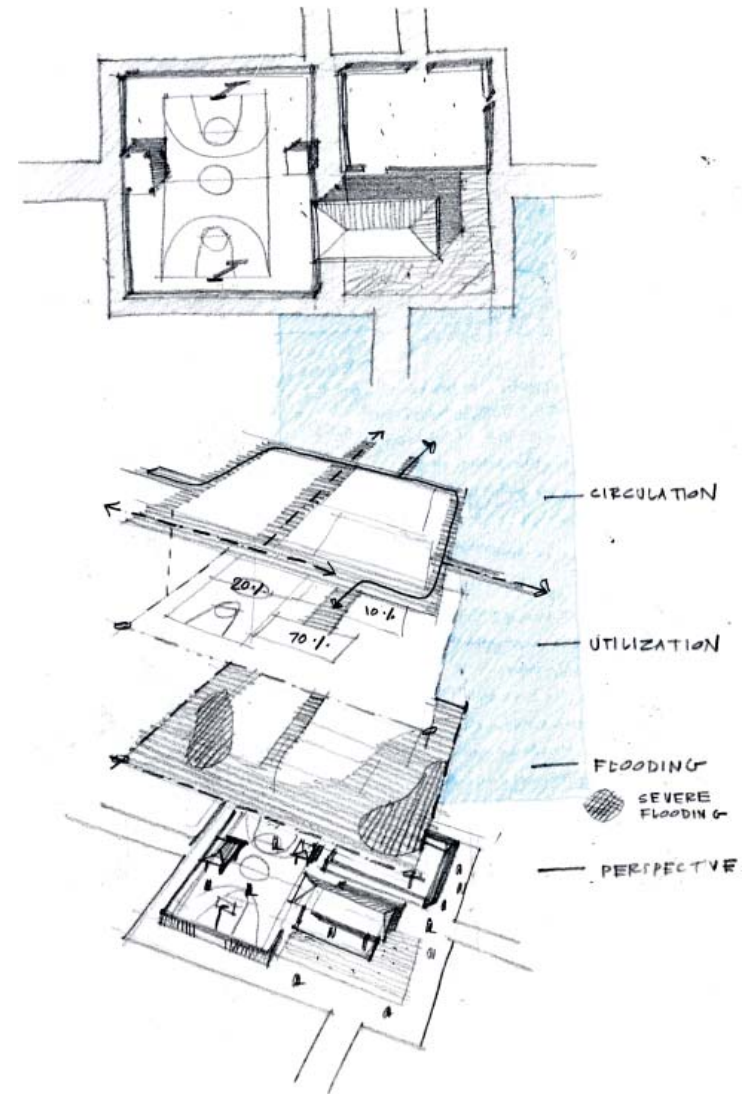
Right: Possible proposed renovation of the GK village near by the river

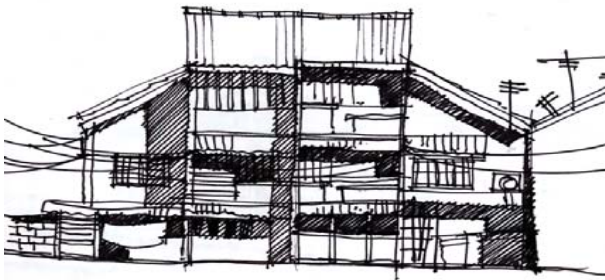
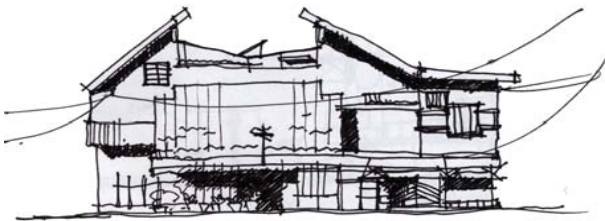




Top: Emma's house and the observed changes from 1976 to present. The house is extended to the open space to accommodate more members of the family and generate more income: rental rooms and grocery store.

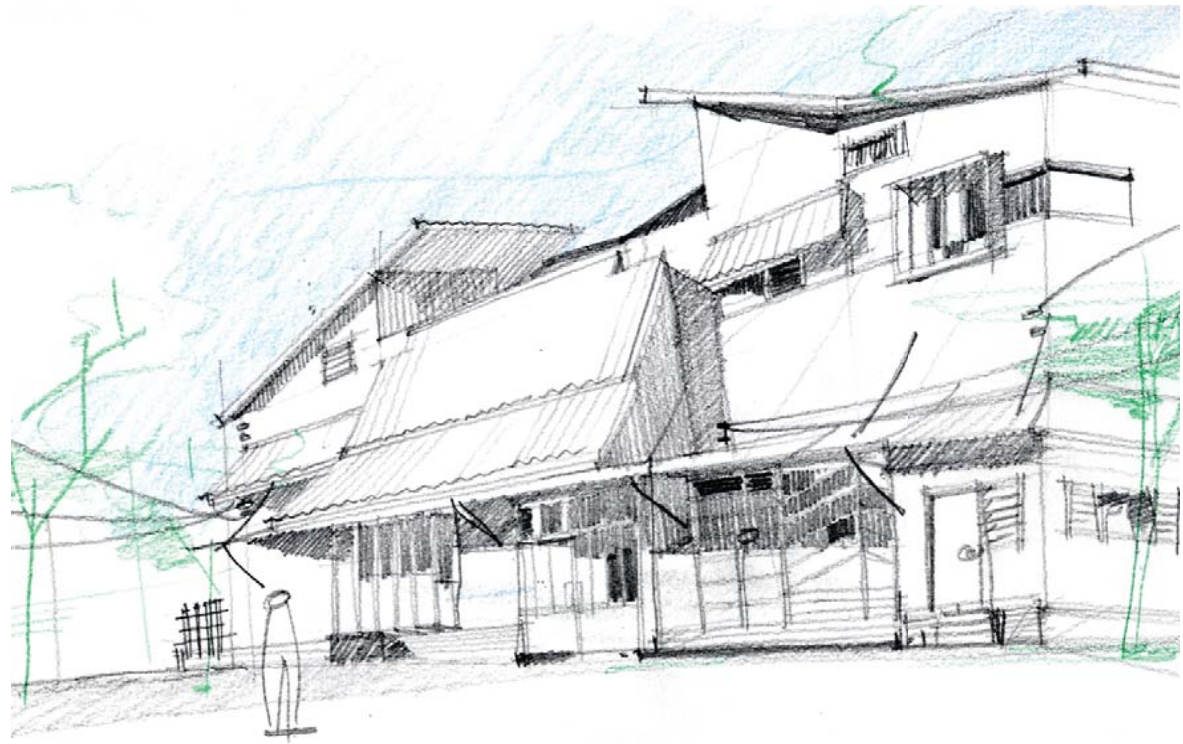
Right: An analysis of courtyard in front of Emma's house. There are four layers of system: circulation, utilization, flooding, and the physical condition, which have been adapted for the change in their usage, condition and spatial hierarchy through time.





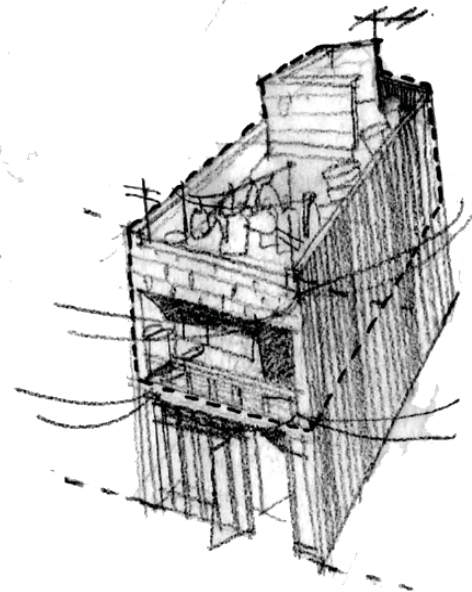
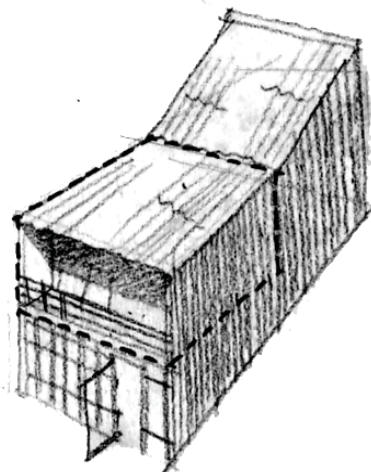
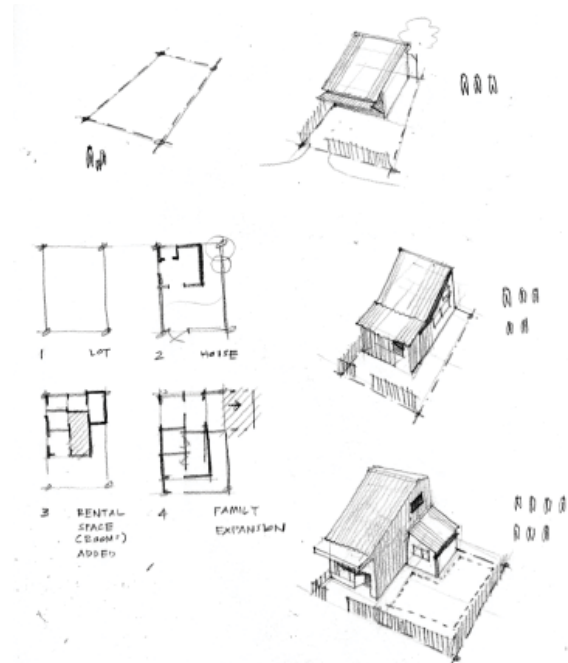
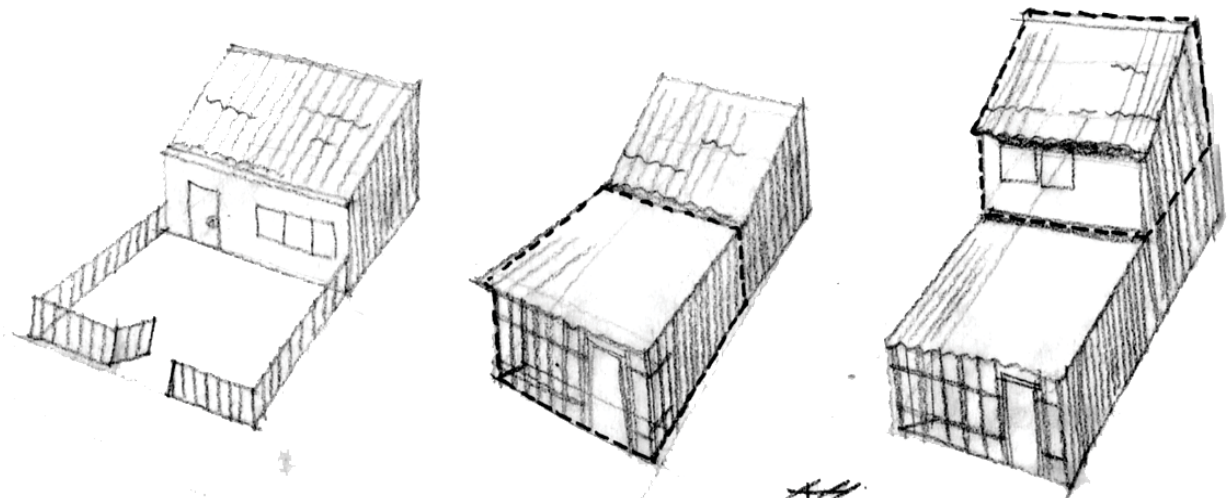
Top: Typical elevations of cluster in Dagat-Dagatan

Right: Perspective sketching of house in Dagat-Dagatan



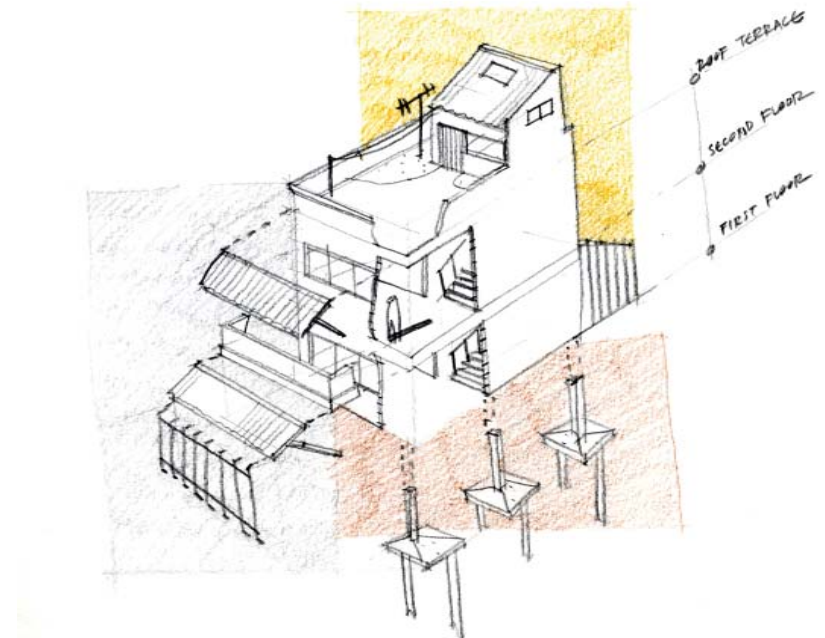
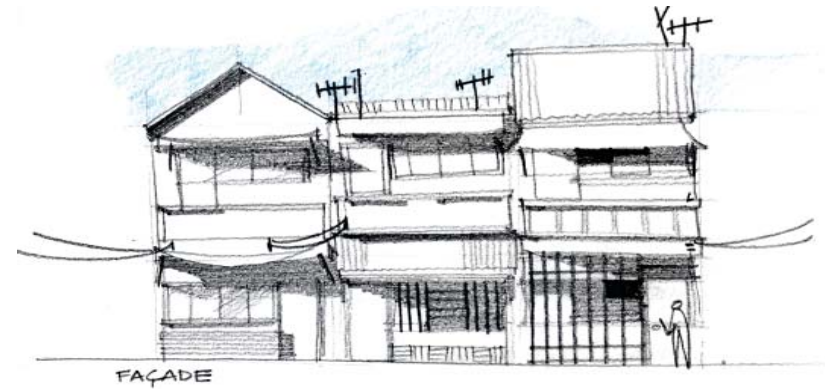
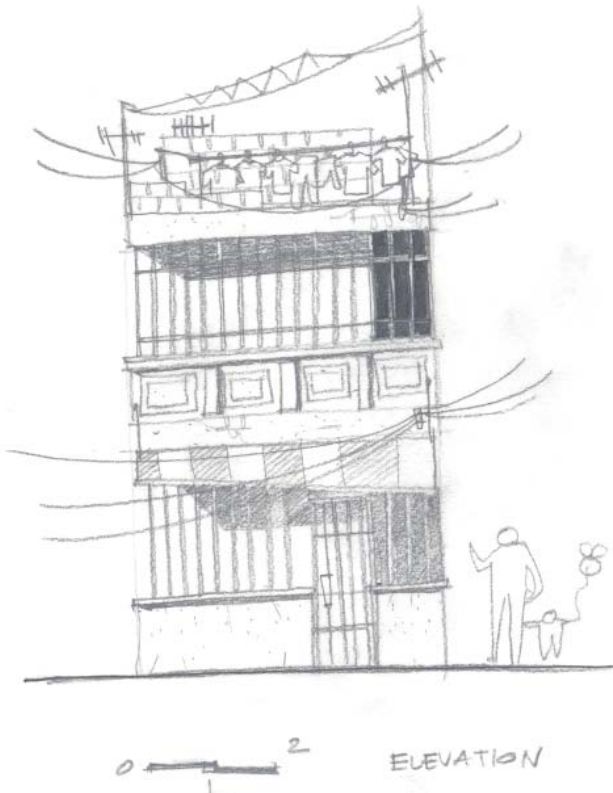
Left: The general process of expansion of typical row houses in Tondo. After people inhabit the lot, they first build a small house that can only accommodate family members sufficiently and then expand it by the time the number of members increased.

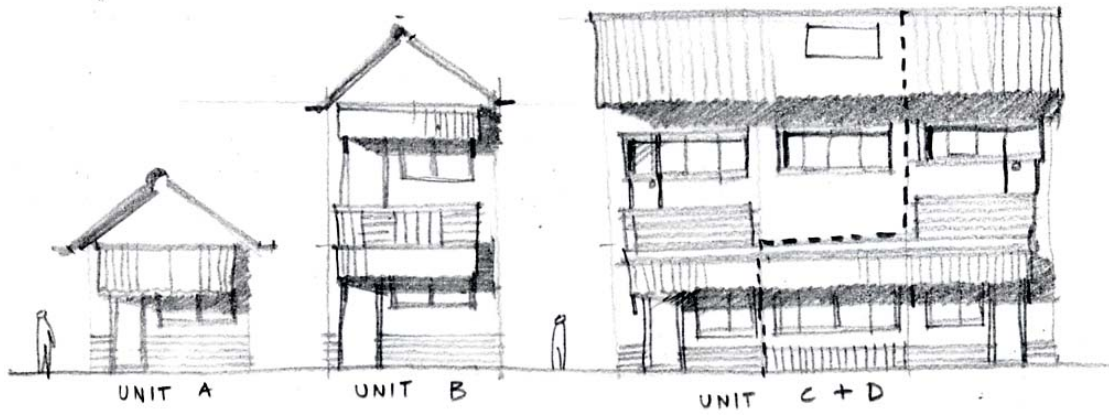
Right: The expansion process of Jonas's house



Left: An elevation of Jonas's House

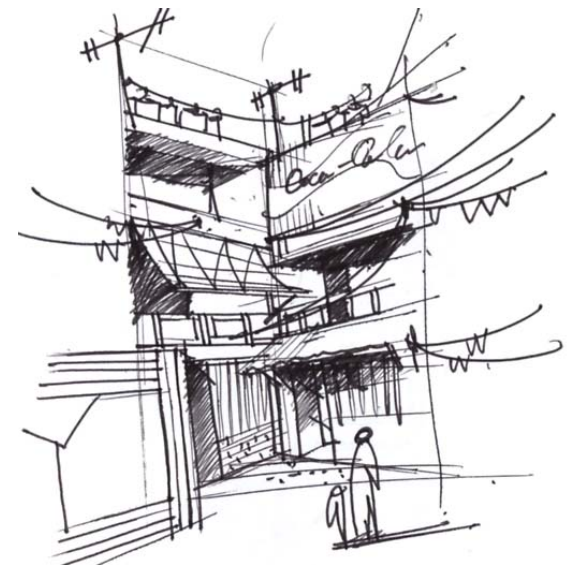
Right: An analysis of building system in Tondo





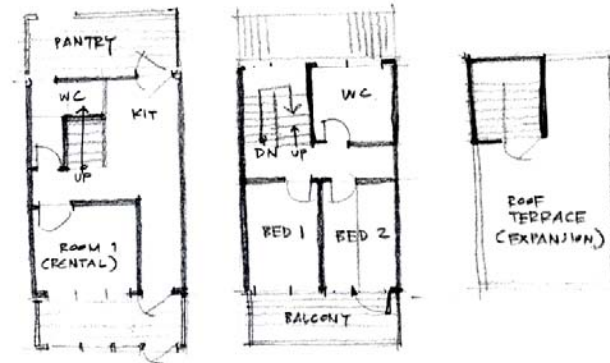
Left: A proposed possible plan for the development of housing condition in Tondo

Right: A perspective sketch of the houses in Tondo

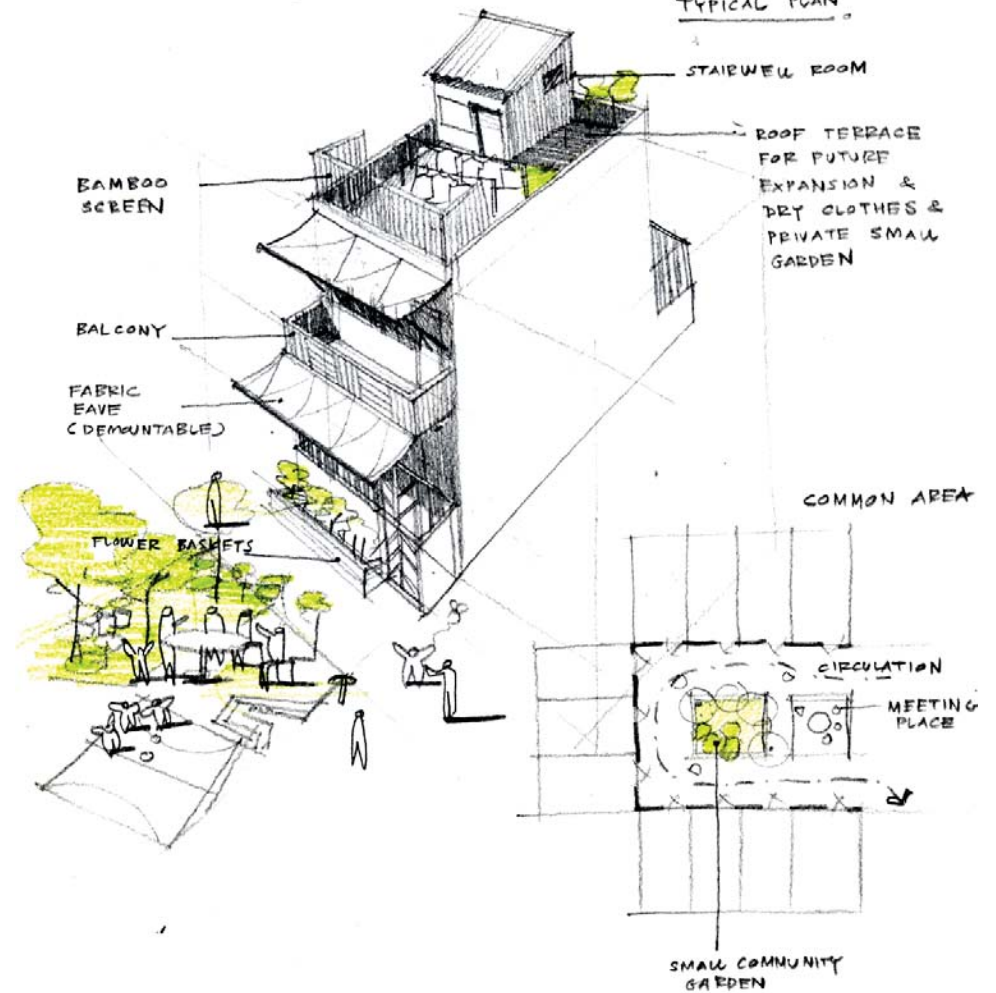
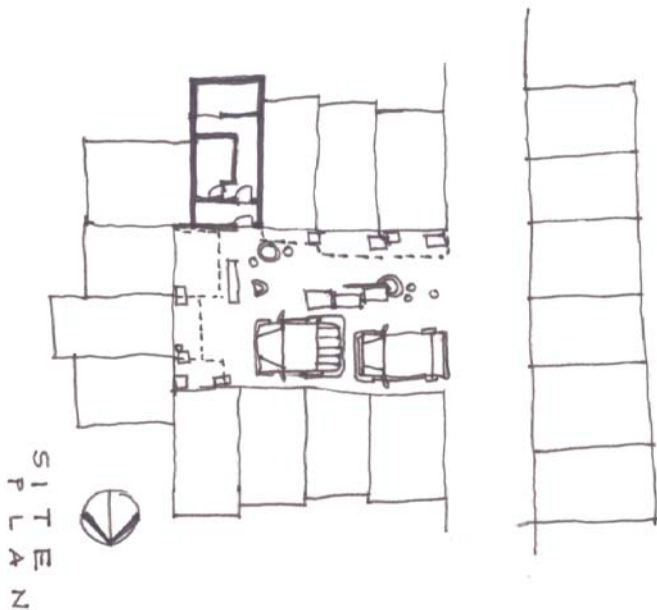


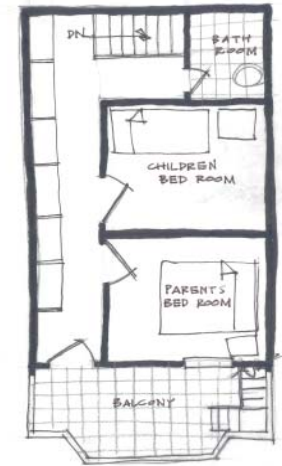
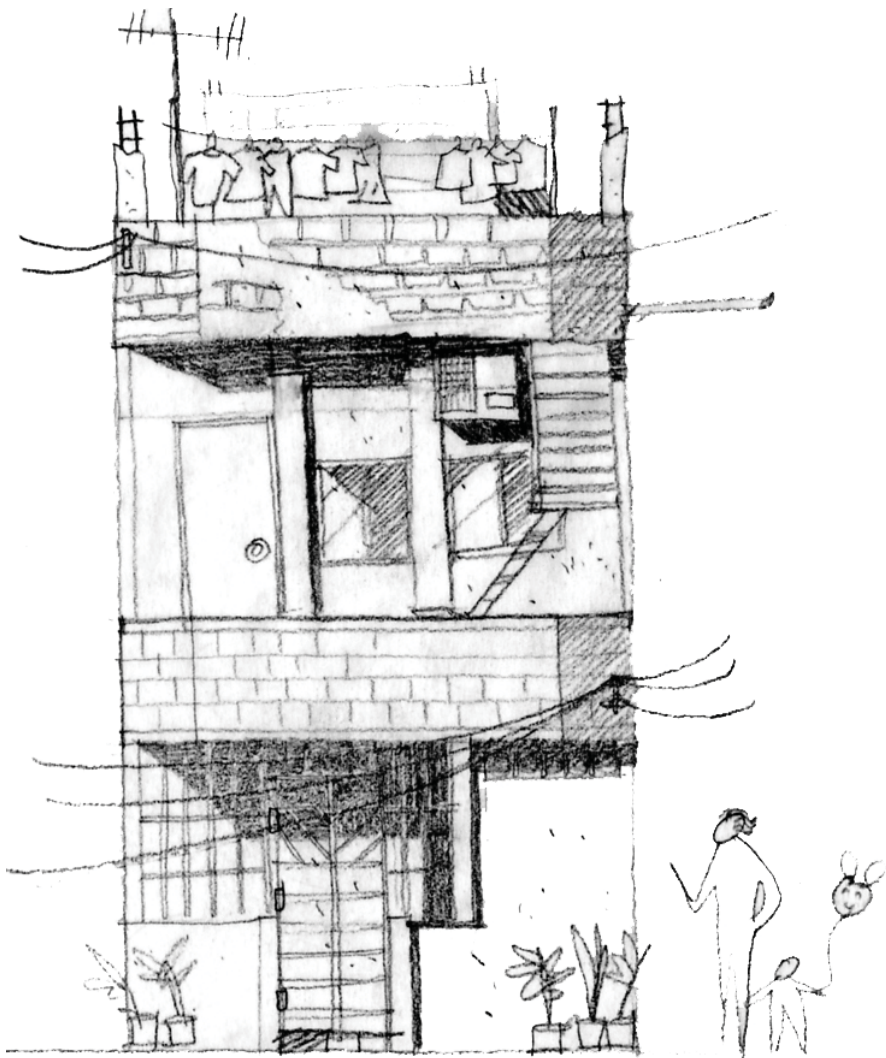
Bottom: An existing condition of courtyard in Tondo. This plan shows that it is mainly occupied by motor vehicles as parking space and being used as storage rather than community gathering area.

Right: A proposed possible plan for row house in Tondo and the developmental plan for the use of courtyard.



TYPICAL PLAN



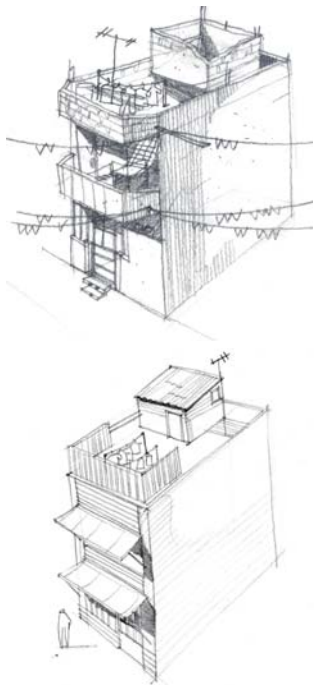


Left: Existing elevation and plans of Gonzalez's house. The original building was torn down and the family built the new house according to their understanding of family's need by themselves: no architect was involved in the design.

Top: Plans of Gonzalez's house

TONDO

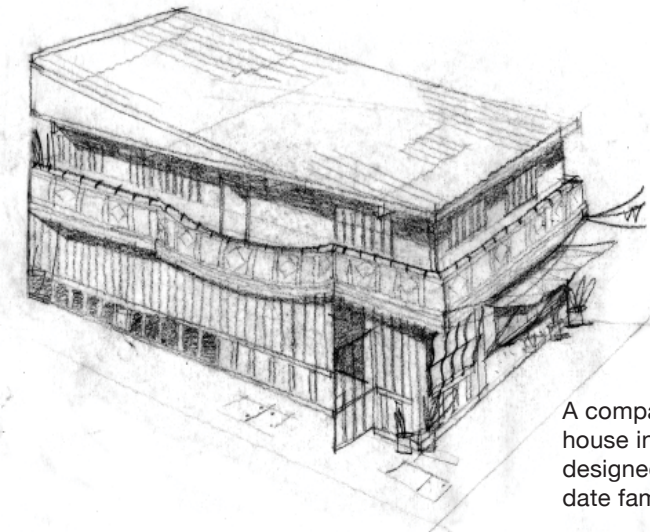
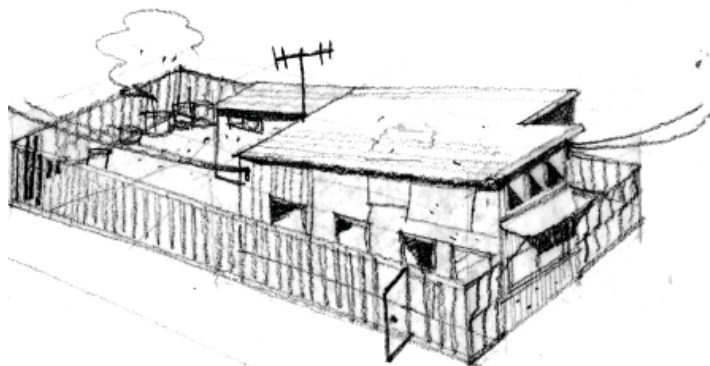
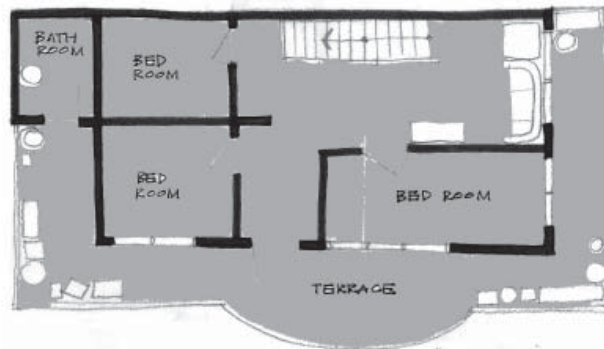
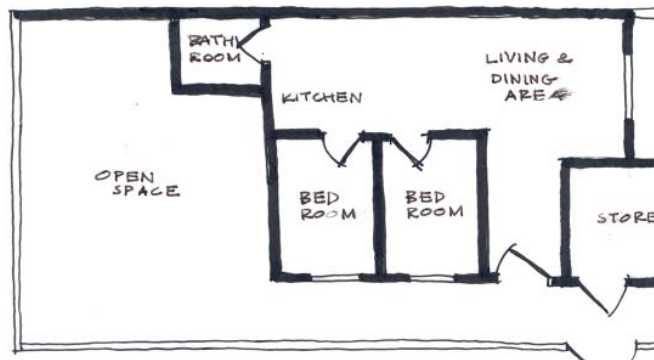
MANILA SKETCH BOOK - 12



Top: A perspective sketch of Gonzalez's house (left) and the proposed idea for the physical improvement of the house

Right: A bird-eye-view perspective sketch of Gonzalez's neighborhood (view from roof deck of Gonzalez's house)

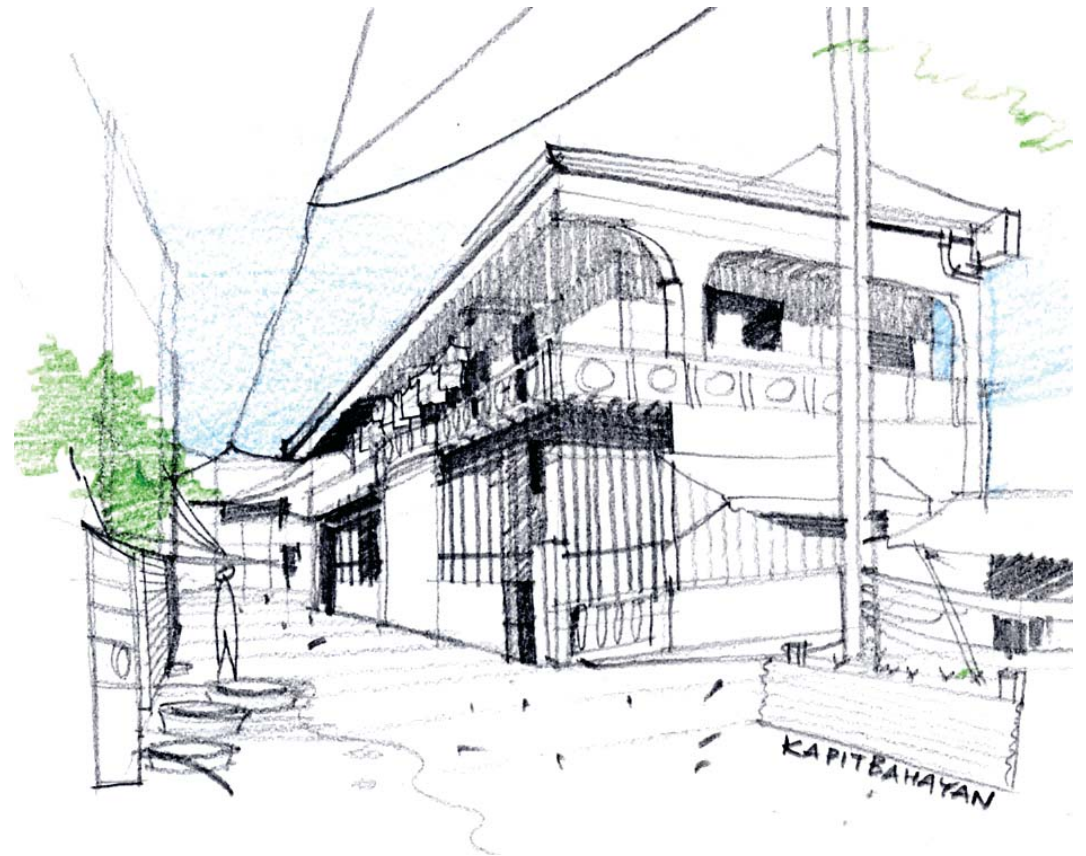
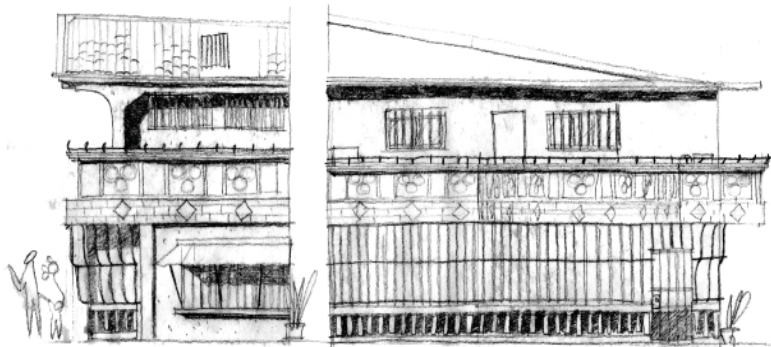




A comparison of Lena's original and the new house in Kapitbahayan. The new house was designed with numbers of room to accommodate family members and renters.

Below: Elevations of Lena's house

Right: A perspective sketch of Lena's house

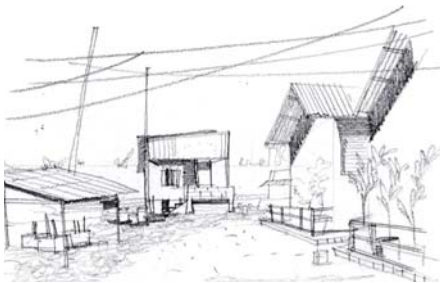




Left: A perspective sketch of Shell GK village emphasizing an employment of pigment colors

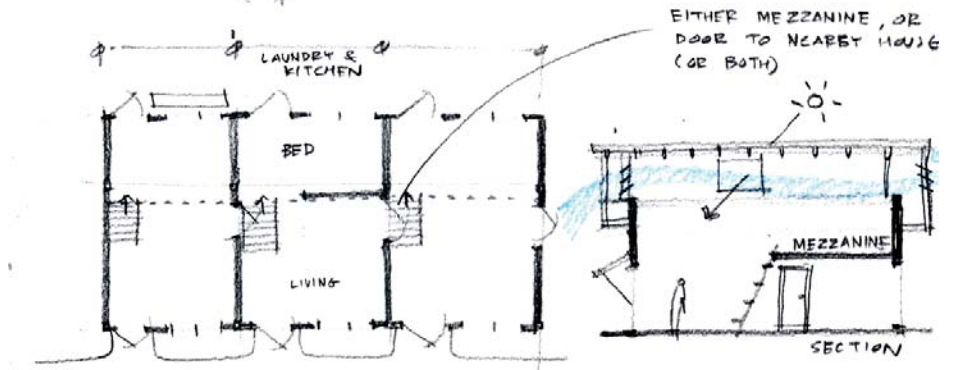
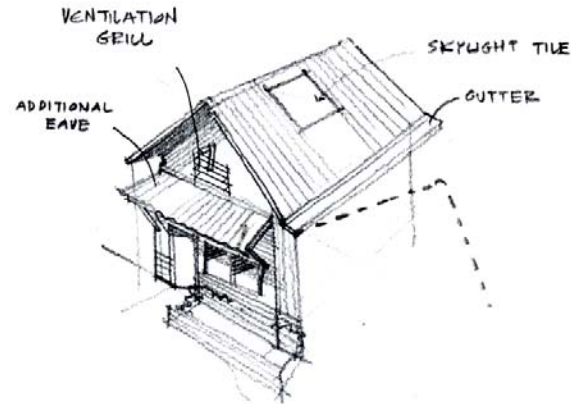
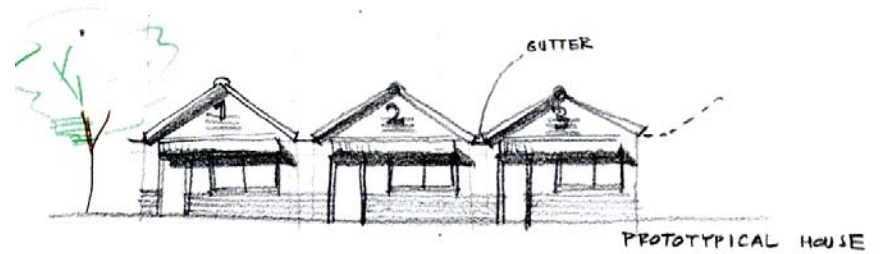
Top: Photographs showing the color schemes of visited GK villages (continue to next page)

MANILA SKETCH BOOK - 16



Top: Juxtaposition of developed GK houses (right) and undeveloped man-made shelter (left)

Right: Some proposed ideas of re-designing typical GK village for 3 main reasons: to enable the house to be able to self-ventilate, for to house to be able to accommodate more family members, and for an individual style



Slums in Manila



Unusual Settlements --Slums--
in Tondo Foreshore



Luis Canizo

Dual degree candidate in Master of Science in Real Estate Development and City Design; Fulbright Scholar. Extensive experience in real estate development and large urban civil engineering projects. Particular interests in producing housing for the low income in developing countries through private sector initiatives.



Room added for rental income. The family rents this 10m2 and pays \$16 per month. The house is by the canal, (<http://images16.fotki.com/v272/filezw79/b1034/7/79299/3192288/KapitBahayanDay1062.jpg>) it severely floods in high tides Kapitbahayan, Dagat-Dagatan.

Framework of analysis

SIGUS approach to evaluation is based on a series of case interviews. Teams of students conduct field interviews to residents and gather data on the evolution of the family and its home through the years. The interviews are selected among “successful” and “unsuccessful” families who were originally squatters. The selection of the families is purely based on opportunity, and physical appearance of the dwelling unit. Then, the teams attempt to draw conclusions.

Despite the “soft approach” of that methodology (statistically significance, assessment of success/non-success, lack of aggregated data, etc.) the exercise provided us students with the very unique experience of entering the world of slums, poverty, and real cases of human achievements and dramas. The impact on our conscience and heart will probably be lifetime-lasting in most of us.

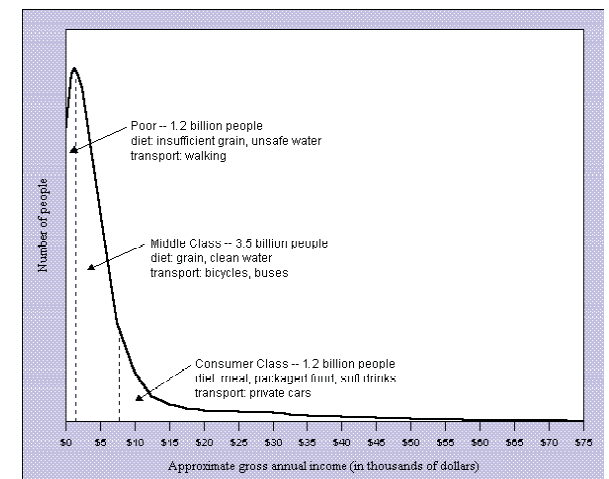
Five decades lost?

Driving everyday through the slums of Smoky Mountain in Manila gave me the real dimension of the cold figures that I skim over preparing for the trip. The inhuman conditions of living in many fast-growing slums across developing countries are breathtaking.

As the world population increases steadily and the income distribution diverges into tremendous levels of inequity, one can only turn to the international agencies and ask where are we heading to? Furthermore, as an educated professional I'm puzzled to wonder Why such a terrible collective failure passes "unnoticed"?

Is there an audacious and bullet-proofed scheme to put an end to urban slums? Who is to blame -a profession, an institution, a government, a religion, a culture - for all the endless cases of failures in coping with inhuman living conditions? What can I do now?

Scalability has not been achieved. Not by big international agencies, nor by local and otherwise successful NGOs as Gawad Kalinga. Scalability can only be achieved with a combination of the right "business model" (i.e. franchise) and the multiplier of Community Empowerment (as used successfully by GK). Furthermore, the forecasts of increasing pressure in slum areas in the upcoming years as population keeps moving away of agricultural-based economies, makes Scalability one of the central issues at stake.



Source: Brian Douglas Skinner, Gumption; Memo 1993.



Narrow streets seams enough in a site & services design. But 30 years later Tondo Foreshore is a vibrant neighborhood where many residents have cars. Tondo Foreshore.

Resilient effect of Planning in the urban form. As we revisited Tondo upgrade project and Dagat-Dagatan relocation project dating both back in 1976, I noticed the restrictions posed to growth and development caused by the Master Plan and urban design of the area.

As the neighbor families progress through time and raises its standard of living, the sense of place has to have room to evolve too. Houses are expected to mutate with additions. Public spaces, street layout, plazas... all needs to be designed with buffer space so it can be also upgraded. A terrible example was Tondo. Families living there for over 30 years have nowadays a quite reasonable income level. We have seen proof of typical middle-class appliances, wide-screen TVs, and of course the ubiquitous car. But the narrow streets between Tondo's "superblocks" are to tight to allow car traffic, yet alone parking.

As Toni Meloto of Gawad Kalinga puts it, housing the poor of the poor is rather an exercise of "providing them with the dream of a middle-class life". Well, the physical design has to be able to catch up with that dream.

Sense of community

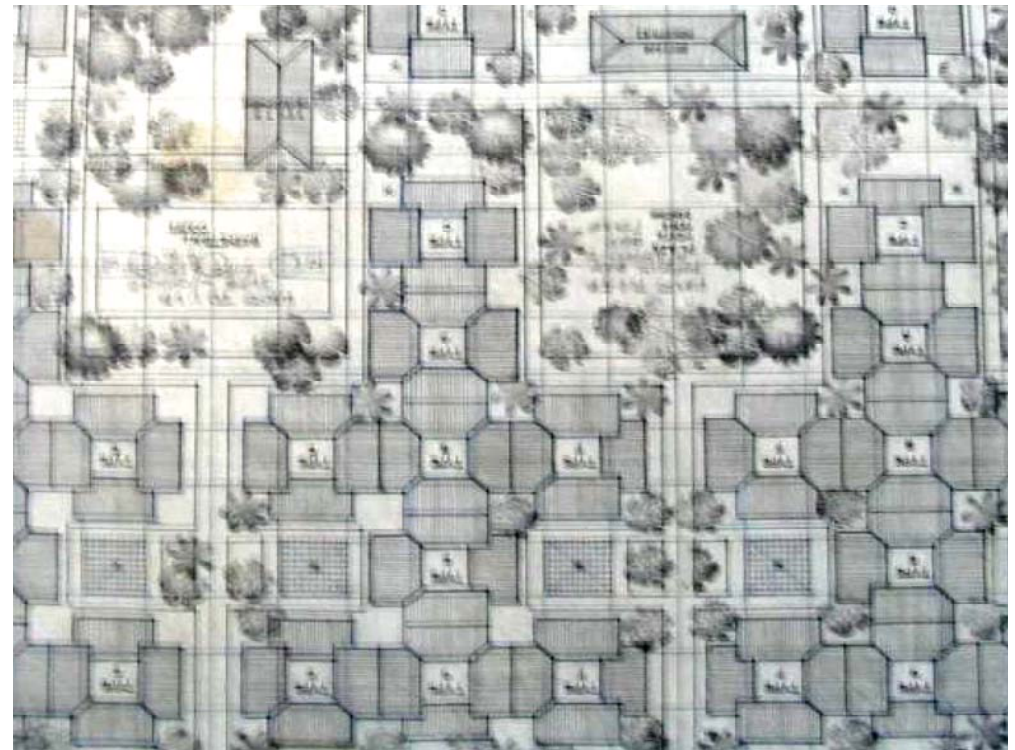
We were lucky enough to visit very different approaches to informal settlements in Metro Manila: Tondo Foreshore, Dagat Dagatan, Kapit Bahayan, Smokey Mountain, Makati Railroad relocation to Laguna, Gawad Kalinga Baseco. A powerful theme across how each one of them made me feel was the sense of community conveyed by each neighborhood.

The different hierarchies of space and clustering of the Kapitbahayan project provided for a well-thought model of community-building spaces: shared semi-private patios (now completely consolidated and built-up), clusters of 25 dwelling units around a cozy and vibrant plaza, organization of neighbors in sections of 500 families.... In an interview with the architects, we learn that only one half with 500 units of the total plan was finally built in the 70's.

As I reflect on the reality of Philippines, it seems that sports and basketball in particular seems to be a specially appropriate vehicle to reinforce a sense of pride, belonging, and dignity sought by these people. The recent settlement of Smokey Mountain was an example of the miracle played by team sports to keep neighbors engaged and the individuals out of trouble: improvised basketball courts, baseball game with the transvestite community, (no soccer, very different from what I saw afterwards in Rio de Janeiro). Looks to me that those animated places are very valuable for the neighbors, and thus should proliferate in slums upgrade programs.

Furthermore, one of the most fulfilling experiences was the reaction of children to spontaneous “programs” of singing and dancing, or playing small games with us. There might not be hunger for food anymore in most of these places, but there is a lot of hunger for neighbor activities.... What a powerful and cheap way to improve the quality of life of thousands of people!

Kapitbahayan urban design makes an excellent job in creating a sense of place for its neighbors with clusters of semi-private and public spaces organized hierarchically. Archives of NHA in Dagat-Dagatan



Children in very poor conditions responded happily to any interaction with us. very well to spontaneous.
Archives Luis Liwanag, Smokey Montain



A note on happiness.

A common misconception is to classify all “poor people” in the same basket. Most people do, even myself when I started looking into poverty issues. But also the Government approaches the subject of squatters in a similar fashion.

Among these armies of poor, a portion is lucky enough to enjoy reasonable health and enough food to carry out a normal life in an otherwise very modest and humble neighborhood. The children in that category appear to be happy. Strikingly ‘happy campers’ indeed.

The smiles and eyes of these kids, specially the ones that I found in the Baseco community surrounded by the most disgusting ambiance, are a challenge to our own wealthy life. Ironically, they seem to be more happy than many other wealthy people I met during this trip.

Just a little beyond that childhood, the teenagers that I saw could be on the other side very scary. Different attitudes, not so friendly faces. How can human kind change so rapidly in few years?

The politics of squatters

The vote of 2 squatters (if they register to do so) is worth double than the vote of an ivy-league educated person.

An influential Congressman invited us to attend a squatter's relocation project, along with a non-programmed performance by the President Gloria Arroyo and Vice-president Noli de Castro.

Some twenty thousand people live in an 8-meter wide strip of land reserved for the railroad. A very precious location as it passes through the center of rich neighborhoods, even if it entails to move aside for few seconds as a train passes by every other hour. Squatting in Makati railroad is expensive, and usually reserved to those who work in stable jobs with "low but decent" salaries. Squatters, like any other person, pay the price of convenience in a central location. Usually the "fee" is P1,500 per month (\$30/m) paid to an obscure "squatters association" under the shadow of "to cover water and electricity services".

After 3 years of negotiation, an agreement to relocate the families in a 45km distant La Laguna location has been apparently reached. Army of journalists followed President Arroyo as she delivers land awards to few lucky families, and waves them 'bye-bye' as they depart in trucks to their new destination. Happy ending a la Hollywood. Later, as four of us go deeper into the railroads, we find out that most of the squatters don't have the intention to move to distant places. They happily will take the subsidy of financed land and

construction materials, but surely enough they will be squatting again in the neighborhood to keep their jobs. A perfect win-win: the President gets its bath of multitudes on TV, and the squatters take good advantage of it.



Makati Business Center in Manila is a very desirable location, even if it means to squat along the railroad. The strip is efficiently served by private rail carts. Squatters need to go since the rail is now exploited by a Korean company that is upgrading its infrastructure to provide with a much-needed public transport to the city center. Makati railroad. Archives Luis Liwana (right)



Hundreds of families in Kapitbahayan (Dagat-Dagatan) have been following very closely the moon cycle. During high tides, the sewages reverses and spits back all black waters flooding the neighborhoods. More puzzling is to learn that the malefic spill has been taking place for some 15 years. Is as normal and accepted as being born poor.

Equally disrupting is to learn that the neighbors have a vague idea of the real cause for their suffering. The crude reality is that along the reclamation of land of the fishing pond where the neighborhood now stands, someone decided to pocket part of the construction money, and the area ended up with a ground level some 2 meters below what was projected. Add to that a poor execution on the compacting of soil resulting in another 18 inches of sedimentation through the years, and the laws of physics will do the rest to prevent sewage water from properly draining.

A sewage pump station was built few years ago, but couldn't be completed due to lack of budget (corruption again?). Thirty years later, the poor neighborhood remains condemned.

Shelter programs *a la carte*

Philippine government seems to be inclined to follow a site & services approach. Under that scheme, squatters that comply with determined parameters are relocated and awarded a track of land (30-70 m²).

The value of the land is assessed by to an the government; in the case we saw 45kms away of the Manila center, it was valued at \$2,000 per lot. The recipient must repay in monthly installments for a 15-30 years period depending on his economic profile. The monthly payment is set to be \$14 to \$40 (same as what he was paying for a shanty in central Makati). Poverty level in Philippines is nowadays around \$140 per month of family income. The policy seems reasonable and a good value for the squatters.

Furthermore, squatters have access to a Construction Materials Loan for up to \$1,000 worth of materials. Again, the market valuation of the materials is done by the government, so it might be an issue there.

The bottom line, a squatter can borrow \$3,000 in kind from the Government, add its sweat equity to build its home, and pay it off in 15-30 years.

Great deal. Why then, are still increasing number of squatters?

1. Maybe the policy is indeed too good, and it creates an incentive to squat
2. The policy doesn't cover the reality of the Poor of the Poor, those who have no stable income and therefore cannot even meet those affordable monthly payments. (1)

The only hope for those absolutely poor (a huge percentage of the population in a country with 52% living under the poverty line) is to rely in programs like Gawad Kalinga, where no monetary contribution has to be made by the recipient (it is subsidized by government and private donations).

Local Municipalities run their own low-income housing programs for their employees and squatters (although they don't mix in the same buildings). I have seen finished condo units awarded, as small as 15 m² for a \$3,000 loan.

Note:

(1) Loan amortization payments are not corrected by inflation, but the interest rate seems to be fixed, thus guaranteed by the Government. In high inflationary countries the value of the payments will be rapidly eroded. The relocation program of Dagat-Dagatan (15 years old) had people currently paying \$2 per month

Tondo convenient location near to Manila commercial Port has been a popular place for squatters to settle. The various relocation programs run by the NHA has acted perhaps as a further incentive to further attract more "professional squatters". Tondo Foreshore, Manila. Archives Luis Liwanag.



Building technology

All vernacular forms of architecture, using traditional or low-cost materials has no room in the slums. Shanties in Philippines are made with plywood, plastics, and metal sheets. Upgrades use concrete, lots of concrete. Hollow cement blocks are the norm. Even basic structures with short-term life are built with expensive permanent materials.

I think the reason is Industry Practice. Labor is widely trained in the use of a specific material; architects and engineers are also used to the predominant building material, and thus is applied without discrimination even in low-cost projects. In Latin American slums, concrete masonry units are replaced by ceramic bricks.

Good design and smarter allocation of resources would save a lot of money and would be more environmental friendly. Something like...

GREEN HOME DEPOT

A franchise of a construction materials warehouse, ubiquitous in all slums, providing with:

- low cost materials: compressed earth blocks, natural textile isolations, etc
- technical support: how to...
- micro-credit program to finance the upgrade.

Cemex has done it with its cement products, so is feasible. In fact, the Government

should consider privatization of the operations of its Materials Bank program.

(For more information on Cemex, see: http://www.cemex.com/cc/cc_cc.asp and <http://www.changemakers.net/journal/02september/herbst.cfm>)



Example of construction in a Gawad Kalinga village in Metro Manila. The use of masonry concrete units is dominant even if the life cycle of these structures is short. Gawad Kalinga Village, Metro Manila



Example of consolidation by upgrading a settlement with more durable materials after property rights have been awarded to the squatter. Fabela Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Learning from Communities: Road from Manila



Ifeoma Ebo volunteers on a GK building site



Ifeoma N. Ebo

Master of City Planning candidate in City Design and Development. Overseas experience in architecture and community design, and planning employment in the U.S. Interests are in the physical development of cities and the provision of housing for low income populations as an 'entrepreneur for the poor,' with the eventual goal of working with international development agencies. Ifeoma received Bachelor of Architecture from Cornell University.

Top to bottom: Prof. Goethert, Tony Meloto (Gawad Kalnga Executive Director) and Ifeoma Ebo at GK village.



Volunteering on the GK site was a great experience. However, I could not help feeling that our second appearance was not desired and that our trips to other GK sites were used to divert our attention away from the building project. I wanted to feel the satisfaction of seeing a home grow from foundation to roof. I appreciate the opportunity to see other GK sites, but I thought we were going to do a charette for the rural site. It seemed that the session in the rural village was an opportunity for GK members to let the spoiled Americans know how privileged and large we are. The insults seemed to be another attempt to drive attention away from cracks in the perfect GK picture. However, it seems that no matter what obstacle stands in the way, GK will build homes.

If there are no funds, or adequate building supplies, or materials, people still find a way to continue working on a project and things work themselves out in the end. I have observed this in other developing nations, but not in the US. As Americans we are accustomed to planning every aspect of a project or event down to the last nail and can not seem to function without a plan. There is much to be learned from the experience of working in a developing country especially where disaster stricken environments are concerned.

I did not appreciate that particular opportunities were not available to all students. For example, speaking to the architect behind one of the housing developments, meeting with the

President, and various other opportunities. I am very much interested in issues affecting urban settlements and would have liked to participate in the diversity of opportunities available to learn more. I think we had a great group of dedicated individuals who always seemed full of energy and excitement and eager to learn. I learned a great deal about myself and Filipinos.

We were walking around Kapit Bahayan one day and stumbled upon this setup in an alleyway. Apparently the dark corners, empty and forgotten locations are the only places for residents to mourn their dead. I wondered how long the casket had been sitting in this pathway, literally steps away from the street engulfed by the flood. Does this mean that the design of the housing development did not have adequate community spaces for such activities? Will the body stay there in the alley until the family can raise the money for burial? I wonder if there is a procession from the courtyards to the alleyway during the wake. It was a heavy experience to be so close to the dead unexpectedly, without any security or supervision. Seeing the flood definitely allowed me to witness the strength of Filipino people. Despite the flood, business continued as usual. People walked through it, peddlers rode their bikes through it, and life had to continue. It made me think about the flood in New Orleans. The people of the Philippines do not cry for the residents of Kapit Bahayan. The government does not evacuate the neighborhood, or provide them with a means of dealing with the flood. Imagine the amount of illnesses that have occurred as a

result of the weekly flooding. Why doesn't an organization like Gawad Kalinga provide assistance for communities such as this one? In addition to creating communities from scratch, they can also assist communities in distress. That may not be as sensational, and may not make the newspapers, but it would be very necessary. Kapit Bahayan, Tondo, and Dagat Dagatan can learn some things from GK villages. For example, the use of color would do wonders for the visual appeal to the place and it seems that GK villages have a better system of maintenance, but GK villages have not been around for thirty years either.

At first glance the Gawad Kalinga villages seemed almost perfect, but all of the exposure began to present some cracks in their perfect picture. I thought about the stigmas that typically surround low income housing projects in the US. In Boston, designers often use design and color as a tool to create vibrant developments for low income residents. However, these housing development often blend into the surrounding neighborhood in a way that a passerby would not notice them. This is important for not only physical integration, but also social integration of residents. How else can you provide someone with middle class ideals unless you allow them to feel a part of middle class neighborhoods. When low income people live in GK villages they are always reminded of their position in society, especially when their home looks like a Disney land of poverty. How can the poor be integrated into mainstream society if their community has a big colorful sign telling the whole city where they live. The GK villages stand out on purpose which would prevent



Top to bottom: Urban Gawad Kalinga village , (right) Rural Gawad Kalinga village sponsored by Shell.

Rural Gawad Kalinga village sponsored by Shell.



residents from living a normal life. It is almost as if poverty is hailed as a fun place to be in where rich supporters can visit on the daily spreading their financial good will.

According to GK officials, they create social programs to bring education to the children or bring them to the schools, however, every time I visited a site, there were children running around in every corner or ready to entertain guest with the infamous GK song. Despite the fact that GK is obviously doing great work and seems to be genuine, something about its mode of operation does not feel right. This gut feeling may be just my American instincts taking over and at times those instincts should be ignored especially when dealing in an international context. I can't help but feel that there is another agenda that underlines the humanitarian ideals of the organization, and that there are more and higher powers involved in its administration.

The public and common areas in each of the housing developments seemed to be very important to residents. Even though some of the walkways seemed really narrow and dirty, these spaces were important for children to play with each other, mothers to wash clothes and talk, and even karaoke. This says a lot about the nature of Phi lip pi no culture and its relationship to the built environment. Neighbors do not seem to invite each other into their homes, but use the alleys, courtyards and general open areas as an extension of their living room. It is interesting how the quality of these neighborhoods transform overtime. forever changing and

never static. Although the buildings are not built with the best quality of materials, it is beautiful image that transforms over time. The built environment presents a wide diversity in color, height, and materiality. In the end, the neighborhood is a true representation of family growth, struggle and compromise.

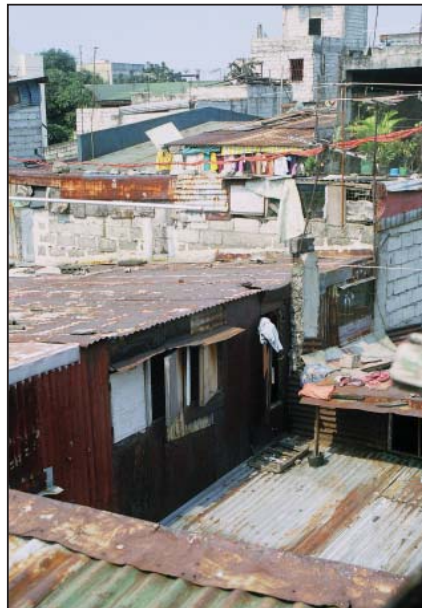
Perhaps the development of these environments and its process can truly strengthen community relationships. The communities felt very close knit and collaborative. I think new communities in the US can learn a great deal from the nature of relationships in the Philippines and the power of design to affect those relationships. However, I wonder if community members have a say in regards to the presence of churches in community courtyards. I find it disturbing that the church was not open to community members on a daily basis and the fact that it was the only place of worship in the community. The presence of the church does not seem to leave room for other forms of spirituality.

I was completely amazed by the dirty spaces that children use as their play areas. The filthy river that floods the Kapit Bahayan neighborhood. How can the community keep the younger children active in cleaner areas? It seems that there was a big attempt to create active areas where children can play basketball and other sports, however it seems that those recreational areas are only used by older children while the younger children are left to run the streets. The river should be completely blocked and transformed into an open space, so that it can be more

Top to bottom: Kapit Bahayan: Children stand by river canal, Squatter communities by the roadside.



Left to right: Dagat Dagatan - alley between homes, roofs of housing development, Kapit Bahayan - Community courtyard.



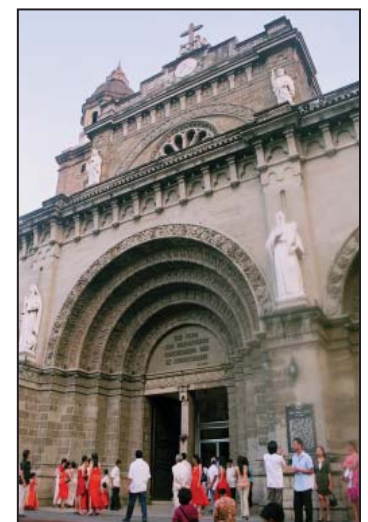
useful to the surrounding communities. I felt so overwhelmed by the site of the water; dark, thick, like a deep abyss. And the stench was awful. What would happen if a child fell into the river? Would they survive?

And those that don't live by the riverfront, fortunate to escape the weekly flood. Those that live by the roadside. Is life any better for them? I witnessed old men standing next to young babies lathering up on the roadside. I don't think I have seen living as worse as that, to the point where people have to bathe on the same road that major trucks pass by on a daily basis. Which community is considered a priority to the government? Those that live by water, or by the road? When will the squatting end? It seems that when you clear one squatter settlement, another will grow on or next to the same site. That means that there are greater problems at stake beneath the housing problem. Is employment so much greater in the city that people will leave the security of rural areas to live in squalor? Perhaps the rural areas are the places to begin any upgrading project. Projects should focus on how to improve the rural landscape to prevent further migration to urban areas.

Why is it that color is used to uplift a low income community? Rich communities do not use neon colors in their housing developments. Why isn't housing design, room configuration and finishing enough? What is it about color that no longer makes a person feel poor? What is it about color that helps a person rise above poverty? Is it truly the color that achieves this, or is color really

used to convince outsiders that the neighborhood is safe?

I found the preserved Spanish architecture a beautiful sight to see, but it just made me think about the relationship between foreign rule and poverty in the Philippines. I have seen the same occurrences in parts of Northern Brazil and China. Historic parts of the city are beautiful and well preserved, while the rest of the city looks as if poverty and neglect has taken over. What is more important? Maintaining a world heritage site or preventing a slum from getting worse? While beautiful churches stand as testaments to a colonial past, children run around swamps as playgrounds. It seems that as much as time moves forward, the world continues to move backwards. I also play a role in all of this as a tourist/explorer/exploiter. I like to marvel in the fact that I have traveled to many places, some for leisure, others for humanitarian volunteer efforts, but in the end I have taken and learned so much. The communities that I have learned from continue to live in the same conditions. I continue my existence living in a privileged society, where my only worry is how to get a high paying job so that I can pay my loans off. Fortunate to have the opportunity to look for such a job, or have loans to support myself. In reflection I feel like I have exploited a community, taken their pictures shared them with friends and will soon forget the experience.



Top to bottom: Squatter community by the river, Gawad Kalinga housing development, Preserved Spanish colonial church.

Developing Communities or Sterilizing the Slums



A peaceful corner in Kapitbahayan, the model project



William H. Ho

Master of City Planning candidate in Housing, Community and Economic Development. Extensive experience in community work, including housing advocacy as well as helping communities articulate design and planning preferences. Interested in exploring skills for effective planning in today's shrinking and fast paced global environment.

I entered the SIGUS program questioning the ability of students to come up with a thoughtful project proposal in only two weeks. While we did have a final project for presentation at the end of our research period I still have to question the thoughtfulness and depth of our recommendations. The project on a whole was worthwhile and an experience I am sincerely glad to have had but as with any academic research project I felt it was a lot more taking than giving and that the time frame of the work was far too short given the scope of the project.

I do believe that our final product was the best that it could have been, given the short time span of two weeks that we had, however, I felt that the scope of the project should have realistically taken months. We worked to the best of our ability and given the amount of time we were limited to the final product was quite remarkable. In the end I was proud of our work but left Manila feeling like I still had a debt to pay to all the families that we interviewed.

The families we worked with were amazingly optimistic given their current socio and economic situations. I have worked in slum areas before and was not all too surprised by the conditions I encountered in Manila; it is always alarming to see people, families, and children living in such poverty but it is also always inspiring to see the resilience that

these people have in the face of such harsh circumstances and obstacles. While in Manila I couldn't help but feel sympathy and a bit of responsibility for the conditions that these families were living in, especially knowing the tenuous history between the United States and the Philippines.

Through the interview process I can only recall one family that was not positive or optimistic about their situation. The female head of the household detested where she was in life and dreamed of going back to the rural province where she came from. She couldn't stand the cacophony of noise and the lack of privacy that came with living in the city. She also felt that many of her life ills were due to corrupt influences that resided within the city and the neighborhood that she was located in. It was easy for me to understand her point of view and as a student of planning I wanted to know what could be done to change her experience or was this just a matter of personal preference.

From an urban planners perspective it was extremely eye opening to be in the slum areas and to see a neighborhood evolve so organically. In the US and other developed countries communities are planned every step of the way, even in colonial cities you can see how sterilized older neighborhoods have become. Many of America's great cities lack any of the dynamism that they once possessed. In the name of progress these cities have become



Rigid. Conforming. Sterile. Repetitive.

shells of their former self.

Walking through the slums of Manila I had to wonder if this was what the outskirts of Boston or Philadelphia might have looked like in their earlier stages. The streets of Manila are teeming with people at all times of day and children run from household to household without fear, there is a life and vibrancy to the streets that is sorely lacking in the United States

I tend to romanticize the chaotic and organic nature of past cities and because of this it was hard for me to accept the Gawad Kalinga (GK) model for communities. The GK model of housing the “poorest of the poor” drastically changed the life and character out of the slum neighborhoods. I’m sure that GK’s model did make things more stable for the families that lived there and I suppose much safer as well, however, it did so at the cost of community character and vibrancy.

GK offered a very interesting and different approach to improving the lives of slum dwellers but came up short in significant ways. The rigid social and physical structure they provided reminded me of the early days of public housing in the US. GK’s resident screening process selected the best of the poor to work with and in doing so wasn’t really helping the “poorest of the poor” but only segregating those families that were likely to succeed from those that needed the most help. Their strict rules

regarding external changes to the house were created with good intentions but limited the ability of families to adapt their environment to ever changing conditions; walking through some of the GK villages seemed like walking through army barracks because of the uniformity and repetitiveness of it all. As we found from interviewing many of the slum dwellers, their family structures change over time and thus require adaptation and modifications to their housing unit. By limiting the ability of a family to modify their house I have to wonder if they are inadvertently limiting the family structure as well. Their social focus also seemed to lack in some respects. GK villages appeared to be much safer and orderly than the surrounding communities and I would have to say that a lot of it had to do with the residents of these villagers having a certain posture to their situation. Families in the GK villages knew that they weren't that well off but at least they weren't those people that resided outside the GK village boundaries, which seemed to give them an innate sense of superiority and drive to care more for their surroundings and own physical appearance so than their less fortunate neighbors.

GK's focus on returning the male to the alpha role in domestic relationships was also something of concern. They may be partially correct in their assessment of why having a dominant male presence is important, however, their reasoning lacked clear explanation as to how this approach

gets at the root problems of domestic violence, crime, and alcoholism, as the GK spokes people claim. The staff at GK gave little transparency as to their inner workings and the leadership selection process, of targeting males, only made me more apprehensive about their approach and style of work. GK's claim that the organization was welcoming of others who were not Christian seemed also to be misleading. After attending their annual meeting there was little doubt about what their view on religion is and by what doctrine people should live their lives. I believe that religion can be an amazing thing but only if people come around to it themselves, free of any type of coercion. It seemed that in every GK village we visited religion, more specifically Christianity, played a central role in the day-to-day operations of the facility. From the central church-like courtyards to the hanging of religious banners and the beginning of meetings with prayer there is little room or influence left for other religions.

Even with all the negativity that I have espoused about the GK model it does seem to be working, in the sense that GK is actually "improving" the quality of their tenant's lives. GK families appear to be stable and most adult members of the households we talked to seem to be willfully employed. However, this "improving" appears to be coming at the cost of one's own freedom of expression and perhaps freedom of religion, which is an extremely high cost to pay for "improvement".

Looking back on this experience I wish that we could have had the opportunity to interview more in depth with the GK families and get a better understanding of what conditions really are like in their villages. Perhaps I am being a bit too cynical in my reading of this experience and should accept the fact that we were there to learn and not necessarily there to create broad sweeping change. It was extremely worthwhile to be exposed to the international context of housing and slum development. I learned a lot in the SIGUS workshop, however, I can't help but feel a slight bit guilty for seeming to take more from the communities we visited than what we gave. I can only hope that the families we met with, the children we played with, and the public officials we met with got as much out of this experience as I did.



Organic. Chaotic. Vibrant. Dynamic

Manila: the city, the slums, the life and the stories



Colorful jeepney - the crosses between a jeep and a bus



Dalia al-Husseini

Master of Science in Architecture Studies Candidate; Fulbright Scholar. Previous studies in Architectural Engineering at the University of Jordan. Experience in surveys and policy development in low-income communities in Aqaba, and documentation of historic monuments. Interested in bottom-up decision models for low-income communities.

The City:

Two weeks, I thought, that's not enough to time to do much of anything. Our visit to the Philippines was to be short. One week to carry out surveys in slums, and another to do a build with Gawad Kalinga and visit several of their sites. Yet to sit and reflect on our "short" visit, I've come to realize the wealth of experiences that we had in those two weeks. When my plane touched down in Manila's Ninoy Aquino airport, I honestly did not know what to expect in the Philippines. I got into a cab, and Manila took me by storm. Taking a cab from the airport to downtown Manila at 1.00pm quickly gets one into the thick of the city: the hustle and bustle; the noise and the grime. One of the first things I usually do on arriving in a city is to take a walk around to get a sense of what the life of the city is like and a taste of what it has to offer. A group of us took the short walk to the Intramuros, the walled old city with its massive fortifications (and moat-turned-into-golf-courses!).



The first thing Manila strikes you with is its amazing juxtapositions. The pretty right next to the grimy, rich next to the poor, signs of modernity next to vestiges of traditional life. One thing it doesn't lack is character, from Christmas decorations on Spanish colonial buildings, to its colorful jeepneys - the crosses between a jeep and a bus - with their mystifying routes. Taking a tour of the numerous churches in Intramuros had us walk into several weddings in progress, and past countless wedding receptions being set up, all

extremely colorful. Amidst the overwhelming sites and sounds of the city, one could feel the palpable pulse of its vibrant energy, alive with its inhabitants, colorful and beating like a pounding heart.

The Slums:

It's very hard to describe one's feelings at walking through a slum for the first time. No amount of reading about them, seeing photographs, or even watching videos can prepare you for the overwhelming feelings that overcome you when you see the circumstances that people are living in: the absolutely horrifying conditions, the overcrowding, pollution and extreme poverty. Realizing that there are people whose entire existence begins and ends in them falls like an enormous weight on your shoulders and brings forth a deep sadness accompanied by a frantic search for an answer to this pressing problem, as if one could conjure a magical solution from the wild concoction of feelings and thoughts one is having. Thinking of it on a rational level, the scale of the problem seems beyond daunting, and so the nagging question remains: What can one do to solve a problem like this?

Talking only of problems is a bit misleading however, even in the slums. Writing to family and friends at first, I couldn't really sing the praises of the beauty of the Philippines, having not seen much of anything yet beyond the downtown and the squatter settlements we visited.

But what I could write about was my firsthand experience with Filipinos' striking beauty of spirit. Their cheerfulness, their ready smile, their amazing optimism, contentment and happiness that is just contagious. The fact of the matter is that you could find this as readily in the slums as you would on a lush university campus. Manila really is a city of its people, and it's again true to its juxtapositions. The contrast between the spirit of the people and the environment in which they live is astonishing. The physical conditions of the slums might be overpowering, but a squatter settlement is so much more than just the sum of its physical manifestations and problems. It's also an expression of the resilience of the human spirit. Squatter settlements are built by squatters whose daily lives, pasts and future, and their hopes and dreams are as tangible a part of the environment as the rusty rickety corrugated metal roofs. This may sound quite a bit naïve, and self-absorbed, but talking with a slum's inhabitants quickly brought home the realization that it's a place where there is life; it was not just a horrifying mess that needs to be eliminated. Talking with the people, listening to their stories, one sees beyond the misery that the environment conveys. Even though the conditions were miserable beyond a doubt, the people's spirit and outlook seemed to belie the fact.

The Life:

If the endless smiles and friendliness were expressive of the Philippines, so are its children. Being a predominantly Catholic country, children abound, and with so many children come much laughter and smiles. I made my first two young friends, Reia and Devina, the first day we went to the neighborhood of Kapitbahayan, the model project set up by Imelda Marcos. Unlike the makeshift slums along the side of the road, this project had been around for close to 30 years. It was one of the three locations where we carried out our interviews and surveys. This well established community was inflicted with a host of problems as well: terrible crowding in chopped up and partitioned units, pollution, and the fact that at least twice a month the houses and streets of the area would be flooded with the high tides, sometimes up to the knees.

Reia and Devina as with the other children would wade in it, and along with all the inhabitants they just go on with their lives. Families just raise their furniture when the flooding happens and clean afterwards, in the meantime going around the streets in makeshift polystyrene rafts. Still, they smile and are happy. What was striking was to realize how different intervention priorities are. As architects it's easy to come and being immediately horrified at the existing conditions with the lack of ventilation, unhygienic conditions, structural instability, and flooding, make a list of what we believe should be immediate interventions. Yet every time we would talk to the families, asking them what they needed in terms of



changes, or interventions, their list was different from ours. It's vastly important to listen well, and to get to know the people, we might mean well as architects, but at the end of the day people want to be in charge of their lives, and whether they are rich or poor they need to have their voice heard, and their story told.

The Stories:

One thing I regret is not having gotten a fuller understanding of what Manila is like, both as a physical entity (in its entirety) rather than just as isolated areas that we visited, and as a complete social entity. Our vision of what we saw is limited in more ways than one. Both the length of our stay and the restriction of our experience to the slum areas certainly prohibit us from making judgments of any kind. But I have formed impressions, from the glimpses into the life of the city. I noticed things, and I formulated ideas around them, hypotheses, fully aware that my observations might have been of the aberrations rather than the rule. Yet no amount of observing would suffice without getting to know the people, talking to them, and listening to their stories. Our stay was short, but hearing people's histories, and sharing their family's history added dimensions to our experiences.

Yes, I do have regrets, I almost wish that my cab drive to Intramuros on my last day in Manila had been farther so I would've been able to talk to the driver for a little longer and ask him a couple more questions. On the street, it was a

different story from the interviews had been carrying out in the slums, where we would be asking most of the questions. On the streets of Manila, obviously a foreigner to the country, and obviously Muslim with my head cover, I was the one getting all the questions; sometimes a barrage of them. I would answer them as briefly as possible but with a smile. Slowly I learnt to turn the tables, and ask questions in return. The driver mentioned that he was born in Tondo, and that he now lives in Makati. My only experience in Makati had been going there at night for dinner at a glittering mall, with glittering shops and glittering people (good food as well!). I was aware that this wasn't one of our interviews were it was easier to lay the groundwork and ask the questions, but I certainly was burning to find out how this movement out of slum came about. Sadly, I had gotten to my destination.

In our work we had to draw some conclusions regarding the level of success of the family we were interviewing, but the concept of success is quite subjective. At the end of the day, isn't moving out of the slum (not into another) to make a respectable life as a middle class family even more successful? Notable of course were some examples of people in the slum who could obviously afford to move out of the slum, but hadn't. Instead they had built what can almost be called a mansion. Some even afforded hiring interior designers. When asked why they hadn't moved, invariably the answer would include a mention of how important the sense of community in their neighborhood is.



Somehow a slum's success in creating a sense of community is obviously tied to the passage of time allowing the community to build, time that is obviously the result of being "stuck" in the slum, with nowhere to go. So, can it be said that the "best product of these slums – their sense of community – is the result of the "worst" aspect of living a life in the slums? One thing is for sure, Manila opened up a world of new experiences, and with it a wealth of questions to ponder over. Hopefully we'll keep looking for answers.



My Reflection



Colorful wall of one of the houses in Tondo Foreshore



Emily Lammert

Master of Architecture candidate. Previous studies at Washington University. Experienced in field work with communities and graphic communication, as well as “traditional” architectural employment. Interests focused on bridging the increasing disparity between rich and poor through critical reinterpretation of architecture’s goals.

Introduction

Our academic endeavors in Manila, Philippines included two main goals: 1) To investigate three approaches used in northern Manila to house the very poor as seen through the lense of the family over time. These included Tondo as a slum upgrade; Dagat Dagatan, a project that provided sites and services; and Kapitbahayan, houses designed and built specifically as a neighborhood. 2) To understand the intentions and built products of the NGO Gawad Kalinga (GK). This entailed visiting several existing sites, discussing at length with their representatives, and participating in the construction process.

While at first appearing disjointed, the two goals eventually became informative of one another and began to play an integrative role in the processing of the other. Much of the research regarding goal #1 was summarized in each group's final presentation and corresponding notes. This was also informed by the investigations stated under goal #2. Instead of reiterating the information contained in the final presentation, this paper will attempt to describe the trip from several perspectives that I felt were also significant: Observations and Interpretations, Shifting Perspectives, and Technical Issues. Because our time spent in Manila was short, my reflections offer limited ideas and suggestions to the problems observed. I believe that to assert country-wide solutions to problems seen from western eyes for only two weeks is a superficial approach for a student who is by no means an expert. However, I feel there is

value in gaining an outsider's perspective. Therefore, with some issues I have reserved judgment and with others I have proposed alternatives.

Observations and Interpretations

To begin, I ask myself, what memories remain with me from this experience? What stood out? As we heard, 80% of Filipino people are squatters or slum dwellers, a stunning statistic. Yet it is difficult to understand what that means without the details of everyday life. Facts and figures can be convincing, but description of experience may offer more for architects and designers who operate often in the physical world. In one way, visceral observations made my experience in Manila concrete and real, but I recognize that I speak from a position of privilege. Being there, rather than just reading about it, meant experiencing sensual details of the environment. In addition to affecting my worldview, these details can signify larger issues for the communities and country, whether positive or negative, and serve as a powerful window into the experience. In no particular order, several of these observations and perceptions are listed below:

Squatters build on the shoulder of highway, kids play in the road. Perhaps the most difficult squatters to observe were the ones immediately adjacent to a busy road or major transportation zone, namely the highway and train tracks. Their proximity (1-2 feet) from a dangerous zone caused many incidents such as children running in front of a car. Several families we interviewed mentioned their kids had been hit by

vehicles. While we were there, the president of the Philippines was involved in a massive exodus of train squatters to make way for a private commuter train development. The families had even been living in moveable shacks on top of the tracks.

As I carry them, CMU bricks crumble in my hands. Often cast on a GK site by unskilled workers, these brittle masonry blocks break with little stress or awkward handling. They will be stacked on top of one another, reinforced and filled with concrete which pours from the joints and is often left to dry creating a messy, unfinished surface. Craftsmanship is not the objective here, to build something that is good enough for the job is what is important.

Dirty kids sleep on cardboard in front of the Quickie mart. As I buy bottled mineral water in the morning from the 24 hour convenience store, I walk past two boys curled up next to the entrance, a fairly public place to me. They have taken over this little corner for their own use. Perhaps their family is selling goods down the road, or perhaps they are working in the area that week. What is certain is that this is one example of squatting taking place all over Manila where public and private spaces shift constantly.

I breathe a stench from flooding sewage river water. Although attempted, one could not avoid inhaling the odor of rancid water that filled Kapitbahayan nearly every week. Because it would flood major circulation arteries, locals would trudge through the mess into as much as at waist level, kids would continue to play in their

flooded public play areas, and life would march on for the inhabitants of this community. Their ability to adapt to and thrive in this neighborhood became a cornerstone of our findings.

Kids take my hand and place it to their foreheads. This gesture was explained to me as a sign of respect for elders. The kids' hands were dirty and rough, but they were less hesitant than I to break down barriers and make physical contact. Mostly, it shattered the bubbled world I was living in and forced me to see them as a part of myself. This brings the MIT motto, mind and hand, to an entirely new level. There were so many little minds and hands there that would not be offered an education as I was at their age. How can I make my education and experiences mean something for them?

No soap in bathrooms, even in major institutions. This phenomenon permeated class boundaries. Often in restaurants, major colleges, the National Housing Authority, houses of rich folks, houses of poor folks, pay bathrooms, etc, there was no free soap offered. Additionally, the observed behavior of fellow patrons revealed that they skipped the washing altogether. Coming from a country where soap is required by law in public places, this was a striking example of the difference between developing and developed, and has large implications for public health and sanitation.

Older white males couple with young Filipino women. This was a pattern repeated nearly everywhere in Manila, from fancy restau-

rants to brothels along the street. Many of these girls seemed to still be children. I wondered if it was child prostitution, a way out of the slums, or simply a lack of choice for the girls' own survival. Either way, these behaviors left over from the U.S. occupation of the Philippines continue to thrive. They were heart wrenching to watch. I would encourage education, job training, and lots of sex education to give these women hope beyond the slimy money offers from European and American men.

Pollution is ever present on ground and in air. Smelling the exhaust fumes, stepping around trash and mini- garbage dumps, watching the smog mix with humidity, waiting in traffic, constantly hearing horns and construction noise, and touching the grime and layers of dirt built up on buildings and infrastructure, was characteristic of daily life in Manila city. The chaos of people and cars was exponentially increased by the relics and results of their waste. The effect was contamination of nearly anything fresh, green, and growing. This pattern of environmental degradation will be perpetuated until public transportation is effective, dumping and littering regulations are enforced, and perhaps folks stop having ten or so kids.

Religion is the excuse for excess. "Children are gold," we were told as almost a sloganistic coping mechanism for dealing with the extreme amount of kids that showed up just about everywhere. Often families will have several children in hopes that one of them will succeed and bring money back to the family. Statistically, I guess this is true, but how do you justify bringing life

into the world without the means to support it? We interviewed a family that could afford to send only 1 child out of 7 to school. All of their hope was in him. (And I thought I was under pressure at MIT?) As in many developing countries, good birth control would help empower families, women especially, to take control of and plan for their future. Alas, the Pope disagrees. Most Filipinos are Catholic and many relief organizations, including GK, adhere to the dogma of the church. This results in lack of access to sex education, birth control, and abortion rights for many in the country. Sex is a healthy part of life for all humans, so for a country to have a healthy balance, it must shed the extreme views of any religion.

Shifting Perspectives

One premise of the project goals was to assess the results of the Architectural Record's design competition held in 1976. An extensive amount of our readings outlined competition entries and its main goals. However, after preliminary assessment in 2006 of the neighborhoods that were planned for the winning design, we found little evidence of a complete, realized design. Rather we found in Kapitbahayan, scattered ideas and forms that may have been generated from the original competition designs. It should be noted that a few members of the group interviewed architects and other key figures from the 1970s that were influential in these neighborhoods. It would be interesting to hear more about these interviews to gain a better understanding of the original forces shaping these communities. However, the issue of the competition became less important to

our research goals when the three neighborhood strategies moved into focus and the interviewing process began.

After assessing the housing strategies, parallels were drawn to the GK housing initiatives and discussions regarding our research ensued. We were asked to give reflections and ideas regarding all of the GK sites we had been exposed to. We gave brief reflections one by one in a large room where it was often difficult to hear. Additionally, the founder of GK, Tony Meloto, became defensive after just a few comments and interrupted to "explain," or really dictate the values of his organization. Then he left the discussion early to go to another meeting, both actions sent a strong signal to us that he thought we really didn't have much to contribute. I felt that as a group, our comments were insightful, diverse, and well thought through. Yet we barely began to scratch the surface with our ideas. A more effective strategy for communication would be to split up into different groups with certain themes, architectural, design, neighborhood, GK's organizational strategy, etc. and be able to have a discussion with the corresponding GK representatives involved in those areas. I was able to do some of this briefly at lunch with the landscape architect and one of the design architects.

GK was also clear in expressing their opinions regarding design competitions: Since competitions are generally out of touch with the culture, context, and reality of the problem, they offer little to the client. As an architect, I can accept that criticism as is many times is the case in

design. Yet, something should be said about the client being open to new ideas and approaches that may not always seem to work immediately, but contribute to long term goals. There is a further parallel that can be drawn from two scenarios – one that happened in 1976 and one that happened in 2006. While the Philippine government in 1976 discarded the architectural world's design intentions, GK responded similarly to MIT's discussions and suggestions which we prepared for them. In both cases, the initial gesture was accepted as symbolic, and then ultimately set aside under the guise of cultural misunderstanding and contextual difference. This mindset functions as a barrier to both client and designer--stunting possible interaction and leading to extreme inefficiency of time and energy.

Another interesting GK directive was “behavior modification” in the communities. The reason used over and over for why Filipinos lacked financial resources was that they were lazy and didn't work hard. Explicitly stated by GK was that the problem of the country was not economical, it was behavioral. The reasons used for this were that people were jaded with the years of dictatorial regimes in their country, and the warm climate meant that they did not have to work year round or else they would die in the cold seasons. This was said mainly by GK representatives and Filipino families. When they had a lot of time on their hands, family members would give in to vices like drugs and sex, so the logic went. Therefore, much of the GK mission was dedicated to behavior modification in order to fundamentally change the way all Filipinos approached work to keep

them busy, involved in the community and church, and covertly, not having kids.

From a different perspective, Trinidad G. Repuno was a barangay organizer and leader from the 1970s to today in the Tondo area. She underwent torture and harassment under the Marcos regime because she was outspoken for her community and human rights. She stressed that the people need to be a part of the solution in any development situation. They need a certain amount of control over their lives, houses, and community. This is the approach that is missing from the above discussion regarding government, GK, or MIT arm-wrestling for the most insight into development or design solutions. There must be a willingness to let go of certain controls and an increased faith in the people whom the solution will affect most, whether that means letting families paint their house red rather than orange, accounting for increased growth of the family in the structure, or a recognition that the pristine design will be changed over time without the inhabitants consulting an architect. It is a way of thinking that is almost contrary to what architects learn in school, and contrary to the “solutions” that NGOs or Governments often try to provide.

Technical Issues

When the debate over the technical sustainability of the GK houses came to a head, the main engineer articulated the problem as such: How to make a structure last a lifetime and still be cheaply constructed. GK builds a house for \$1,000 or 50,000 Filipino Pisos. This is the core element of their construction objectives and marketing

concept. They are able to build many more homes because of the low cost, and perhaps more importantly, are able to show their corporate sponsors the impact made in a community in a very visual, spatial and functional way. But, as in many cases, the cost limits the house design, most importantly, in terms of quality and space.

As pointed out by Professor Goethert, nearly every construction rule has been broken in their value engineering of the construction components. At the Baseco site, specifically, the concrete masonry units (CMU) blocks are weak, stacked without interlocking bonds, and do not attach substantially to the light gage frame. The house frame including columns, beams, and purlins are all light gage steel shapes. The front and back walls which have fenestration are made from light gage aluminum studs with sheathing on the exterior side which is primed and painted. The insulation and interior finish is determined by the specific family. I noticed that some families cast rock and concrete in the few inches of exterior walls, thus reinforcing the house stability and security.

There is no sub-structure or exterior gage sheathing to the roof composition or protective membranes such as rubber sheets or building paper. The corrugated metal roof is painted with several layers which appear to play a role as a sealant for moisture protection, especially at the ridge connections. In fact, there is not always a seal between the roof eaves and the exterior wall, allowing air, light, and moisture to penetrate into the house space. The foundations are built of

CMU, are shallow, without footings, and are unreinforced. Often the foundation only penetrates the soil 1-2 CMU blocks deep. The slab is reinforced with rebar in two directions. There is no deliberate connection between the slab and the foundation, i.e. an expansion joint, and relies on the bond between the poured concrete and CMU wall. The slab is poured on a gravel bed and the concrete pour depth varies between 2-4 inches. Interior construction is composed of aluminum stud and sheathing for the interior partitions. Nails are used to connect the bottom stud tracks to the concrete slab as well as to the CMU party wall. Manual rivets are used to attach studs together and to attach the sheathing to the studs. It is assumed that there would be a ceiling condition for the bedroom and bathroom spaces because the top of partition level to the top of ridge level was approximately 5'-0", but I didn't get a chance to observe how this was constructed.

The tradeoff for the poor quality of construction is a reduced prospect for the house to actually last a lifetime and to promote the health of the inhabitants. The space of each home is 20 square meters in every house GK builds. Yet this is below the United Nations standard which calls for 10 square meters per person. Additionally, the construction, cheap materials, and detailing could cause roofs to collapse, frames to rattle and twist, and ultimately, people to die. When we asked the main engineer how he deals with the poor construction quality from a structural point of view, he said, "I pray." In my professional experience in the U. S., when a piece of the building falls or breaks, fingers point in every direction to blame "the other

person" involved, whether that is the engineer, contractor, architect, etc. Huge litigations and law suits could potentially ruin a company or organization which is a gloomy prospect for GK who is trying to build a strong reputation around the world.

Beyond increasing the construction quality, several architectural ideas emerged from the exposure to the three housing approaches in Northern Manila, as well as from the analysis of the GK houses:

- Utilize local materials such as bamboo in housing designs.
- Promote natural ventilation through varying openings in house.
- Design sun shading device – perhaps as an integrated clothes hanger, security bars, and sun shading.
- Include a structure attached to house to emulate historic Philippine welcome hut and increase gradient of public/private to increase "front porch" and extend house.
- Allow for increased user control of space to be able to expand or modify as needed – anticipate and design for expansion, build better foundations so that they are longer lasting and can withstand additional stories.
- Allow family to paint house color of choice from palate – allow for individuality of family to be expressed in designs or details.
- Utilize loft space – design roof higher to allow additional ½ story above room ceilings. Could be used as kids' sleeping space.

- Add roof drains/gutters to promote water collection and utilization of site assets.
- Reduce “gettoization” of area by promoting mixed income and varying housing types.

beliefs and cultural traditions. At all scales, and from nearly all perspectives, this was a universal expression of community and our interconnectedness as people everywhere.

Conclusion

In many ways, our group size isolated us from the rest of Filipino society. We stayed in a hotel with each other, were driven around by a private transport, and worked in groups the entire time which allowed us to retreat into (for some of us) our American-ness or at least into our analytic MIT way of thinking. I think this limited our ability to integrate into the culture and to challenge some of our comforts. Not that I feel the time was wasted from an academic and humanitarian standpoint, but that I want to keep challenging the way the workshop is treated in the future.

In conclusion, while this paper was a critical analysis of the few weeks spent in Manila, my experience was not all negative. I had several moments of inspiration, awe, and respect for the culture. One highly visual example was found in the streetscapes of the Tondo neighborhood. Because a religious holiday was approaching, residents spent hours stringing up colorful flags, pieces of plastic, and decorations in rows across the street. The effect was that the street was completely transformed into a celebration, a festival – something that the residents were proud of. The strings tied the rich houses to the poor houses in this neighborhood and the entire country together with its expression of religious

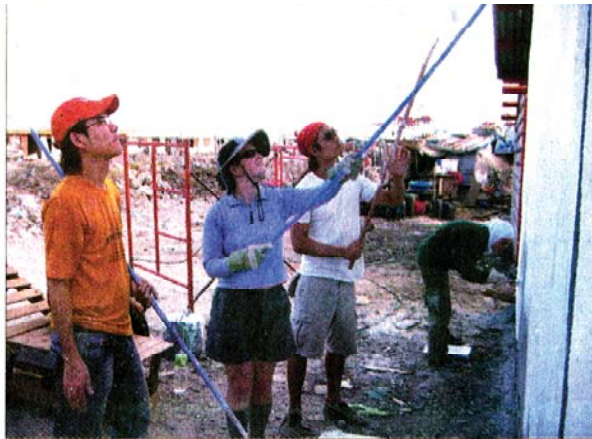
A Reflection on Housing Developments: Gawad Kalinga and the National Housing Authority



Molly Markarian

Master of City Planning candidate in Housing, Community and Economic Development. Experience in neighborhood economic development and microenterprise, both in US and abroad. Interests focus on successful design and implementation of housing redevelopment initiatives.

Article about the project in Manila's local newspaper; Molly Markarian (second from the left) helped the GK building houses in Baseco site in Tondo



■ MIT students (from left) Non Arkarepraserkul, Molly Markarian, William Ho, Dalia al-Husseini hard at work in the Baseco site in Tondo.

tensive support throughout the two weeks was provided by the NGO Gawad Kalinga, guided by Tito Cajulis, and by staff of the National Housing Authority.

Rising young Fil-Italian entrepreneur Illac Diaz (2006

TOYM awardee and son of art gallery owner Silvana and renowned painter Ramon Diaz), who is an MIT student for focused advanced studies, was the key liaison between MIT and Manila.

The projects targeted two

SUCCESSFUL FACADES

I have been home for about three weeks, so as expected I have shown my photos to family and friends over and over again. The funny thing is, rather than comment on the appalling living conditions depicted in my panoramic shots of the Baseco waterfront or in street scenes near Smoky Mountain, everyone has mentioned how nice the Gawad Kalinga (GK) neighborhoods look. In particular, people have signaled out the brightly colored homes and lush landscaping of the RFM and Philtown GK Community, sited attractively along a riverfront walk, complete with trash receptacles, flags, and other festive decorations. Even my vivid descriptions of extremely narrow passageways, seven square meter homes, and the terribly polluted river do not seem to dampen the charming photographic image of this “revitalized” neighborhood outside the Philtown factory complex. At first perplexed by this reaction to my photos, I soon realized that this is exactly the outcome the GK organization is looking for – projecting an image of successfully transforming the slums into healthy middle class neighborhoods. While this may work for those who look at the images from afar, having spent two weeks visiting several GK sites in the Philippines, I am not as easily convinced.

SUSTAINED INVOLVEMENT

In looking at the new GK sites at Baseco, Philtown, and elsewhere, complete with health

clinics, pre-schools, livelihood programs, upgraded roads and other infrastructure, I cannot help but wonder if areas such as the Kapitbahayan neighborhood initiated by Imelda Marcos in Dagat Dagatan were once as vibrant. Resident descriptions of Kapitbahayan indicate that the neighborhood indeed was once the object of envy with abundant vegetation, community and livelihood programs, senior center, health clinic, and pleasant “riverwalk”. In fact, government publications on Kapitbahayan, Dagat Dagatan, and Tondo Foreshore all point to the importance of a “holistic” approach to housing development. Interestingly enough, these documents do not mention how they will sustain the levels of funding and employees needed to maintain the original level of services provided to the communities. In Kapitbahayan, the lack of planning in this regard led to the closure of the health clinic and the scaling back of livelihood programs, not to mention that the lovely riverwalk is lined with garbage and the elegant lampposts no longer have lamps. When we first learned of GK’s approach to housing development, I was excited to learn that they did have plans for sustaining the quality of the developments and their involvement with communities through Couples for Christ caretaker teams.

Although GK’s approach is unlikely to be replicable in more secular developments due to faith and guilt motivating the caretakers, I believe the strategy is quite compelling. Unfortunately, I found out later in our stay that, for example, in the Brookside Community, now about three years old, the caretaker families are starting to disengage themselves from the site as GK has deemed the

community “successful” and nearly self-sufficient. I have a feeling Kapitbahayan might have been considered successful at age three, as well.

LASTING COMMUNITIES

In using Kapitbahayan as the basis for comparison, I believe there are other lessons to be learned. The first is that for housing developments to last, they have to be designed keeping in mind future family needs for expandability and subdivision of the units. As a result of the rigid structure of the homes in Kapitbahayan, today we see that families have either completely torn down their homes in an effort to make them meet their current needs or they have expanded into common space. Although GK has a sound reasoning for building its homes the way it does, it may be wise to learn from past examples. The second lesson is that a successful project cannot be thrown together “overnight” nor without due diligence. Imelda Marcos purportedly commissioned the Kapitbahayan project to be built 70 days before the 1976 Vancouver conference in an effort to show the world that the Philippines did not need an international competition to design housing for its poor. I do not think I need to waste space listing the disastrous results of this endeavor, but after listening to GK’s description of its new Proctor & Gamble-sponsored waterfront mixed-use development, I worry that it, too, could have a similar fate without a bit more time and care in planning.

“GOOD ENOUGH”

I have been thinking quite a bit about Professor Reinhard’s assertion that perhaps the construction methods and final product of the GK building process are “good enough.” I understand the underlying “community building” philosophy of GK’s construction methods, and I realize that GK is arguably the only organization in the Philippines that is working to overcome the seemingly insurmountable challenge of eradicating slums. I also recognize that the homes and neighborhoods that GK has built are far superior to the slum conditions in which most GK residents lived previously. However, I still cannot help but question the practice of building a home that is not as structurally sound as possible (not offsetting concrete blocks) or on a potentially contaminated site (Cardinal Sin Village).

Viewing the film, *The Constant Gardener*, last week only served to strengthen my belief as it made me realize that the attitude that the GK homes are good enough for their residents/owners is very similar to the idea portrayed in the film that it is alright for pharmaceutical companies to test drugs on a population that “is going to die anyway.” As an affordable housing development professor of mine has said, two good tests for determining if affordable housing is successful are whether or not you can tell that it is affordable housing and whether or not you as the developer would actually want to live there. While it is true that the characteristics that identify the GK homes are actually an asset for the community and thus the first test is not relevant in this situation, I

believe the GK homes would likely fail the second test, even if measured from the Filipino perspective.

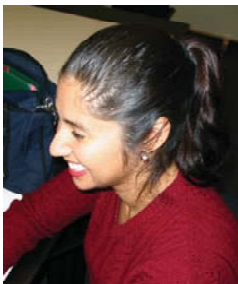
A COMMITMENT TO OWNERSHIP

One of the features that impressed me the most, both in the GK villages and in the National Housing Authority (NHA) housing developments, is the apparently strong commitment to land and home ownership for low-income families. Ever the skeptic, I must admit that I am a bit wary of the mechanics of the ownership transfer process for both organizations. Nonetheless, I still wish this approach to housing for low-income families would rub off a bit on our counterparts in the United States as asset building is essential for stabilizing families and neighborhoods. It has been well documented that most federal incentives for home ownership in the US do not target low-income families, and as a result, although we boast of the highest home ownership rates in history, most low-income families do not own their own home and if they do, it is often a result of succumbing to predatory mortgage brokers and real estate agents. The federal government and non-profit organizations do provide some affordable home ownership opportunities to low-income families, but the vast majority of both public and private funding for affordable housing goes to rental developments. If the ownership policies of the NHA and GK are actually as progressive as they seem to be, we would do well to take their lead in promoting home ownership for all, as well.

Moments, Conversations, and Thoughts



Kapitbahayan New Project



Brittanya Murillo

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My reflections are based on the moments, the conversations, the thoughts that people in Manila shared with me.

“What’s your name? What’s up?” These are the English-language welcomes spoken with a Filipino accent by the youngest residents of the barangays we visited. Our group stuck out like a sore thumb. With a tall German from Harvard, a petite woman wearing a hijab, a woman with dreadlocks who had to wear a scarf to cover her head because so many kids were touching her hair and saying “Rasta,” there was no way that our group ever blended into the crowd.

This strange group of foreigners was greeted by children and these words, which were the few English phrases that many seemed to know. They were the words they used to get us to respond to them. They engaged us with their clingy-ness. They followed us like were movie stars, or maybe aliens? It was however odd that it was in the middle of a school day that so many kids were home. I was told that although public primary school is free, that there are many “fees” that are involved that make it not affordable to those with the most modest of incomes.

“I love the United States!”

When our group visited the infamous “Smokey Mountain”, Antonio and I were walking back to the car. After standing atop the sewage treatment plant, the fumes had given me a headache and the heat had made the retreat inside the air condi-

tioned mini-van sound like a real paradise. On our walk back the van, a young boy asked Antonio if he wanted to join a game of volleyball. The game was on a concrete court that looked to be the foundation of an unfinished Housing Authority building. The game was already in process. The girls on both sides of the net were young- maybe 19-25 years old. Most were wearing short shorts and half tops. The girls were asking me if Antonio was my boyfriend or my husband. After I said no, it was the green light to giggle and flirt with him. To my surprise, upon closer inspection of the faces of the girls playing volleyball, I realized that they were not girls at all...

The young boy who invited Antonio to join the game had a great command of English. He asked me if I knew that the athletes were gay. I admitted that I had noticed. One of the men dressed as a woman began to ask me about the States. She said that she loved the United States. I thought that it was an odd comment since she told me that she had never been there. She said that she had a friend who was living in the U.S., but did not know where. This woman loved a place that she had never known. She loved the idea of a culture and a place where she had never stepped foot. She was living a vicarious love affair with a country she did not know. Her imagination was captivated solely by the things that she had seen and been told about the U.S.

Remittances

The families that my group interviewed were the “success stories.” Although one of the two families owed their success to working abroad,

the second family made their money from a local-based business (which they made sure to tell us was legal). It was the second family who suggested that although they were the exception, that most of those who did well for themselves owed that success to remittances from abroad.

For those of us who are children of immigrants, the concept is not unknown. One moves to where the opportunities lie. It was still however a bit overwhelming how many Filipinos work abroad. Conversely, it is impressive how few opportunities were available in the Philippines.

There is no middle class. Our drivers both agreed that to be the case; that there were great disparities between the “haves” and the “have-nots.” They understood that the exchange rate was favorable for us as Americans, but asked us to consider how expensive the cost of living was and that it was beyond the means of what many Filipinos earned.

Not only does the difference in currency lure Filipinos to work abroad, but it also draws them back after they retire. At the airport, I met two Filipinos nationals who spent their adult lives and raised their children in Los Angeles. This husband and wife could retire in relative luxury in their mother country and returned to care for their parents. Their pension even allowed them enough to travel back to the States periodically to visit their children. Of the many things we learned about the NGO Gawal Kalinga (GK), what fascinated me the most was the way they targeted Filipino-Americans to become “partners.” The work appealed

to their patriotism and their desire to improve the conditions of Filipinos in the Philippines.

Filipinos are welcoming to foreigners, but not to our own people. One of the drivers was reflecting on the comments made by one of our students. The student had remarked that the hospitality that he was shown by a Filipino friend and his family embarrassed him. He said that his Filipino hosts had been very gracious and generous with him. The driver replied in agreement, adding the comment above. His sense was that the generosity of spirit that Filipinos showed to the foreigners that they loved so much was not shown to their own brethren. He thought that the kindness that Filipinos showed to those from the outside may not always match what they more regularly express to their own compatriots.

Filipinos of Chinese descent are the minority, but they own the majority of the wealth. This was surprising, at first, but when I looked at the composition of the students from our university partner Santo Tomas, I saw that most of them were of Chinese descent. I understand that this is the same situation found in Malaysia. The riches of the country are owned by others.

They keep the bodies of the deceased out until there is enough money to pay for the burial. When we visited Smokey Mountain, one of the sights that Tito explained to us was the coffin sitting outside. In the open space between two of the many Housing Authority buildings, under an awning was the body of a deceased member of the community in an open coffin. Apparently, the

local custom is to keep the body out for viewing as long as it takes for neighbors to donate to the burial costs. It is also the only occasion in which gambling is allowed because a portion of the winnings can then be a contribution to the family's costs. Bodies are sometimes on display as long as four or five weeks.

Tito further explained one of his ideas, which could both meet a need and generate revenue to support GK's community efforts. He thought that if GK could open a chapel and funeral business, fair prices could be offered and a space to mourn would be provided. Although a somewhat morbid topic, it was an "out of the box" solution to meet the needs of families and of GK's efforts at Smokey Mountain.

Personal conclusion

My visit the Philippines was, for me, an opportunity to observe and contrast its development to that of Mexico. As former colonies of Spain, I expected to find some similarities. What I found was that the legacy of conquest is perhaps not as significant as the commercial conquest by the West and by its neighbors. It was impossible for me to understand what was essentially Filipino; things appeared to me as Asian or American or Indian. It is a history that I thought to be distinct from what I knew Mexican cultural to be. Mexico still retains a distinct Mexican "flavor," even if the influence of the U.S. is so near (...so far from God, so close to the United States).

What was similar was the class disparities, the importance of remittances, the importation of American consumerism, and the strong desire of many to reach the U.S. Repatriated Mexicans to Mexico share the Filipino's dream to spend their golden years in their home country. Most unable to "make it," choose to leave, lead a new life in a foreign place. Some return to their home country to enjoy a life that they might never have enjoyed if they had not left. American music is heard in both places, but in Manila it dominates. Perhaps that is Filipino culture- sounds Western, but it looks Eastern and it feels familiar.



From left to right: Shell GK Village, Students from MIT having conversation with Tony at one of the GK villages

Observations on development projects in Manila



Row houses in Tondo



Michelle Petersen

Master of Architecture candidate. Previous studies in Fine Arts in Seattle, and abroad in Rome. Experienced in art and visual communication, as well as varied employment throughout the service industry. Interests focused on the relationship between architectural theory and practice.

When I am asked about the trip to Manila, which has been frequent over the last few weeks, I have to pause before deciding how to respond. I suppose this is because of the magnitude and complexity of the issues we were looking at combined with the intensity of trying to synthesize what we saw in such a short period of time. In this paper I will attempt to synthesize the research we did over the course of the trip and state the observations I have based on that research.

I feel that it would be useful to first clarify the intentions of our group in traveling to Manila. The intention was to look at how the upgrade projects implemented in 1976 have matured over time. After looking at the current conditions of the upgrade projects on the scale of an entire community and also on the scale of a few individual residents, we would have a better idea of not only what the needs of the community are, but also where the projects met the needs of the community and where the projects could be better adapted to the needs of the community. Our contact with Gawad Kalinga allowed us to see an alternative, fresh approach to the issue of squatter settlements, which has only been becoming more severe over the last thirty years. Although we cannot make a direct comparison between the GK and the other projects we visited, it was beneficial to see each in light of the other. In this paper I will look at these two aspects of the trip separately and make what observations I can of each approach.

Before talking about the communities of Kapitbahayan, Dagat-Dagaten and the Tondo where we conducted our interviews, I would like to acknowledge the cursory nature of our presence in these communities. We were only able to spend one afternoon or so in each community. Hopefully our observations are of some value but they are, without question, on a superficial level due to the time constraints of the trip.

The communities of Dagat-Dagaten and the Tondo appeared to be fairly similar in their levels of development and apparent economic stability. The concerns of the families we interviewed seemed also to be consistent between the two neighborhoods. When asked to identify the strengths of their community, all the families we interviewed commented on the continuity of residents. They felt that communities where the turnover of residents is low are much more cohesive, safer and thus healthier in general. The common concerns that were cited by the families were issues relating to unwanted activities in the street, lack of common space (especially playgrounds) and income instability.

From an outside perspective the communities seemed to be pretty healthy but the condition of the houses varied drastically from one to the next. In our interviews we tried to figure out the reasons behind this discrepancy. The multi-story houses which had been completely rebuilt were almost always partially funded by income from abroad. Education also seemed to be a large factor in the apparent success of the families. The families that seemed to be struggling the most

Luiz Canizo played with kids during a visit to Kapitbahayan, a model project.



lacked education and job training. Consequently they were having trouble finding stable income sources, at times to the extent of not being able to make the monthly payments on their land. In contrast the most successful families were well educated, generally with a college degree, and they regarded education as a top priority for their children.

So, in the Dagat-Dagaten and Tondo communities we saw the mature manifestation of what began as site and service projects in the late 1970s. In general the communities seemed to be thriving and healthy although the development and condition of the houses changed dramatically from lot to lot. There was a noticeable correlation between the success of individual families and their access to education as well as access to income from abroad. The families we interviewed felt that the consistency of residents over time was a key factor in the safety and health of the community. The most common stated concerns were income instability, suspicion of activities in the streets and a lack of common space like playgrounds.

Coming from the perspective of an architect, Kapitbahayan was an interesting point of comparison because it was a designed community. In the previous communities the residents have either built their own houses from scratch or they bought a basic starter house with the lot in 1976 and have then expanded on that. In contrast Kapitbahayan we saw a community where the spaces had been designed by an architect and built without input from the beneficiaries. So it is

MIT students visited and conducted interviews in Kapitbahayan, a model project



An unpreventable daily flooding in Kapitbahayan; a “routine” disaster of the people there, “you just have to get used to it,” one of the kids says.



interesting to see how the maturation of this community differed from the previous two. A first observation about Kapitbahayan is that almost every house had been modified. Most modifications were an effort to expand the interior space and/or to subdivide the interior space in order to create a rental unit.

The original design of the houses did not lend itself to this kind of modification easily for a couple reasons. First, there was very little room for expansion in the original design because of the small lot size and the roof design. The small lots prohibited lateral expansion with the exception of the potential to enclose the small yard that was originally attached to each unit. The sloped roof design prohibited use of rooftop space as well as upward expansion which is the most common type of expansion throughout Manila. This forced the inhabitants to expand into the common interior courtyards and into the small yards adjacent to the houses. Because the units relied on the common interior courtyards for ventilation and light, the interior spaces became very unpleasant after people expanded. The fact that people consistently did this despite the unpleasantness of the resulting interior spaces demonstrates how much they needed more space.

The Kapitbahayan community had somewhat unique issues because of the weekly flooding. This was, naturally, the most pressing complaint of the families we interviewed. The families talked about the community as a paradise of sorts before the flooding started. It would be very interesting to see what would have happened to

that community if the flooding had never occurred; I wonder if it would have remained a paradise in the eyes of the inhabitants had the flooding not started. Other concerns were the lack of maintenance of the communal spaces and inflexibility of the housing units. One can only speculate on how well the common spaces would be maintained without the flooding, but maybe the lack of maintenance is an indicator of a disproportionate amount of common space for the number of residents. The lack of flexibility, or expandability, of the housing units is obviously an issue. In Kapitbahayan as well as Dagat-Dagaten and the Tondo, the interviewees cited the consistency of residents as one of the primary strengths of the community.

The Gawad Kalinga approach to squatter settlement development is very different from the projects previously discussed as a result of their ideology, which I will attempt to briefly summarize. The GK model is based on the concept that building a community is the primary goal and constructing housing is one of the steps in that process. They feel that the sweat equity approach where every member of the community is required to work not only on their own house but also on houses and facilities for the rest of the community is a way to create and then strengthen community ties. They say that they are teaching middle class values to the poorest of the poor and instilling in them middle class aspirations, which they feel is a key to alleviating poverty.

I am impressed by some aspects of their approach but I am also concerned about some of their assumptions and about how the communi-

ties will mature. The organization has succeeded in quickly transforming a relatively large number of squatter settlements into much healthier looking communities in a short period of time. I think there is something to be learned from their basic premise that creating a strong community is the key to successfully helping people out of poverty. This kind of talk is common in most development projects, but GK seems to be much more successful in actually doing this.

Because GK is such a young organization we have yet to see how their development projects will fare in the long term. There are a number of issues that I feel deserve some attention. All of the GK houses are single family homes and are quite small considering the average number of children per family. There are very strict rules banning any person not in the immediate family of the beneficiary from living in the communities and there is no room for expansion of the houses. This means the children will have to move out once they reach maturity. If the goal is to build a strong community in the long term, this seems counter productive. In the mature projects we visited the vast majority of families had several generations living in one house and the continuity of residents was almost universally seen as a sign of a healthy community by the interviewees. So my first question for the GK approach is what happens when the children grow up? An obvious answer would be to build houses that can be expanded upward, but with the current design that would be virtually impossible because the houses are not structurally independent.

My next concern is with the quality of construction in the GK sites. I saw a number of instances of what seems to be less than safe construction practices. One very alarming example is in the Cardinal Sin site where the re-bar was exposed in many of the load bearing concrete beams. This is due to an improper concrete mixture which compromises the strength of the material. In the Baseco site the technique that was being used for laying the CMU blocks was worrisome. Because they were laying the blocks directly on top of one another without offsetting, and then laying re-bar in the joints instead of through the blocks, the walls have no structural integrity. They are not load bearing walls, but if there were an earthquake I wonder if the walls would crumble. It is clear that there is a need to build housing quickly and inexpensively but I think it is also very important to also be aware of some basic safety standards.

I also feel that there are some problems with the GK ideology in more general terms. They are expecting people who are struggling to feed themselves to be able to cut back on their hours at a paid job while they work for free at the GK site. They actively encourage big families and the few family planning programs that do exist teach abstinence as the best method of birth control. It seems to me that if you are trying to help a population out of poverty, one very obvious concern would be family size. Giving families the option of a smaller family size is going to dramatically relieve the financial strain on the family. How realistic is it to expect married couples to practice abstinence as a method of birth control? This

Street decoration for an annual festival in Tondo





places unnecessary strain on the relationship. In my opinion GK is placing their beneficiaries in a very hard position by setting up guidelines on how to live that are almost impossible to follow. Improving the conditions of the people living in squatter settlements in Manila is obviously a complicated problem, as it is for squatter settlements around the world. The trip to Manila allowed me a better understanding of some issues involved in development projects. In retrospect I can identify some themes that seem to be of great importance in development projects. Flexibility and expandability of housing is a major concern when it comes to housing design. If nothing else is clear, we can be sure that the beneficiaries of these projects will need to expand their houses and probably subdivide, so it makes sense to design with this in mind. It seems to make the most sense to design houses where rooftops can be utilized and the houses can be expanded upward. The ratio of built space to open space is another big issue. Too much common space has the potential to result in overly cramped living conditions and poorly maintained public spaces while too little common space forces children to play in the streets. It seems to be very important to consider the continuity of residents in development project planning to encourage the long term health of the community. It seems like these communities might benefit from some sort of long term presence in the form of job training or services providing better education. Although I don't agree with parts of the GK model I think there are very successful aspects of the model. Their emphasis on building communities and trusting the community members with that responsibility seems to be

very successful.

In Manila we had a chance to look at these upgrade projects on a fairly superficial level which was a great way to get an idea about the issues that are involved. It would be beneficial to go back for a longer period of time to look at each project in depth and attempt to gain a comprehensive understanding of what has taken place over the last thirty years and isolate the successful and the problematic aspects of the projects and their implementation.

Kids in a colorful GK Village in Baseco



A Cultural Perspective of Architecture



Inward looking from the courtyard of the GK courtyard village



Reilly Paul Rabitaille

Master of Architecture candidate. Previous studies in design, construction and planning at the University of Florida. Extensive experience in CAD applications, as well as practical 'hands-on' field experience. Interests focus on perceptions of internationally significant piece of architecture by those who interact with it on a daily basis.

For the last several years, I have had an interest in architecture as an element of cultural perspective. This interest began during my travels to Europe as an undergraduate. I was there to study architecture, and thus saw a wide variety of works from historical to contemporary, praised and controversial. However, what interested me the most about these pieces was how they were used by those who interacted with them everyday. I became curious as to their perspectives on these pieces, whether they appreciated them and in what aspect. I believed, and still believe that their views on these pieces would be reflective of their culture, and how that culture affects their views on other matters important in their lifestyle (i.e. history, education, community, economics, etc.)

One of my primary interests in attending the SIGUS Road from Manila Workshop came from the alternative twist on which I could observe this idea of cultural perspective on architecture. In the past, those works of architecture or city planning in which I observed people interacting were recognized by Western studies as successful, or at least favorably notable, by today's standards. The Manila Project, on the other hand had been recognized by the world precisely for the opposite reason – the squatter settlements had represented failure. From what I had understood going in to the area known as the Tondo was that the region at least at one time was physically, if not also morally, deplorable – so much so that the entire world decided that it would step in and, by means of competition, help improve the

community and lifestyle of these people through new initiatives in urban planning and architecture, and some implementation of policy. As we later discovered that the competition was never realized in its full form, I had no reason to expect that the situation would have changed much over the thirty years since it had been initiated.

Despite what we learned from our initial meetings on the background of the project and environment, I resolved to still travel to Manila with as open a mind as possible. This was, I must say, difficult, as even from my airplane window the squatter settlements looked expansive. For nearly as far as I could see, squatter homes stretched in all directions. Then, in my first cab ride to the hotel, I had my first glimpse of the inhabitants: children playing naked near the highway, parents washing with what could only be dirty water, crammed homes of rusted discarded materials. I asked myself how anybody living in this area could be anything but miserable... Over the course of the two-week workshop, my group interviewed five families in three neighborhoods, under an array of social and economic stages of development.

While each family had a unique story to tell, I noticed certain common trends among each of them. I believe these trends relate to a part of the general Philippine culture as I experienced it during my time in Manila. Although I had read about prior to traveling, I had not anticipated the senses of community and family to have such an overwhelming prevalence in the lifestyle of the people. While the ideas of “community” and “family” seem simple concepts, to see their effect upon the members of these neighborhoods was, to me, quite

startling. Not only did these ideas have a direct effect upon people's determination of success within their locality (which into and of itself deserves discussion), but these ideas also effected the way these people lived in general. Further, these ideas seemed unbound by economic class, and could also serve as a means of drawing people together under a common goal.

Although most families we interviewed expressed a desire to stay in their current situation despite physical hardships, nowhere was the situation more interesting than in the neighborhood of Kapitbahayan. This area of 500 homes was conceived and executed by former First Lady Imelda Marcos as a response to the international attention of the squatter settlements, and the 1976 competition that ensued. Although it was supposed to be a model community, the area began to sink due to poor ground preparation only a few years after its completion. This in combination with the local government's lack of civil maintenance resulted in periodic flooding of the neighborhood with a river of sewage waste water. Even though this resulted in a myriad of problems of community including health and transportation, the local family that we interviewed insisted that they were happy where they were. They even went so far as to praise the efforts and vision of Mrs. Marcos, who in many circles is reviled for her representation of a corrupt regime.

This power of community was echoed in most families, and as a result, created similar patterns in family lifestyle as well as perspective. The Kapitbahayan family, like several others we interviewed, consisted of multiple generations living under a single roof. Some even had taken strangers into

their homes as live-in or "adopted" children, despite that these strangers were actually adults. This family dynamic not only resulted in an interesting building pattern of subdivision and vertical expansion of homes (the Kapitbahayan family had split their home nearly in half to accommodate their son's entire family), but it also created an interesting interdependence of generations, in which children depended on parents to raise them until such time as the children could get jobs that would support the parents. In fact, the extent of this interdependence seemed to play the primary factor in determining our "successful" and "unsuccessful" families.

As said before, our trips also took us to the neighborhoods constructed by the N.G.O. Gawad Kalinga. This organization claimed to offer a better life for the people than what the squatter settlements had to offer. However, when we toured several sites under the organization, what initially struck me was the lack of elements which I would have declared bare-minimum requirements for a typical (at least American) "better" community. Certain things like proper sewage treatment, garbage collection, and plans for future expansion were absent in an area that, in many cases, contained five or more children. Although it was clear that the G.K. intended to show us only the best their communities had to offer, a quick off-the-tour expedition would show that the better life was not always being lived, and people were still crowded and jobless while living in unfurnished or barely furnished homes. Rather than addressing these issues, the organization apparently chose to concentrate a major portion of their efforts into seemingly superficial and aesthetic gestures like group songs, brightly colored homes,



From top to bottom: Led by Luiz Canizo, MIT and UST students played games with kids in Tondo, Dr. Reinhard Goethert discussed plans for interviews and surveys with students at the local housing authority

and paved walkways. Still, what was interesting to me, and important to note, was that most residents actually believed that they were living a better life at the Gawad Kalinga sites. They actively participated in singing the songs, and building the houses, and heading the local administrations. In some instances, this group was even capable of getting people to abandon their larger homes in favor of the G.K.'s smaller row-houses, just to be a part of this community "idea".

While it is important to point out that Gawad Kalinga has only been in progress for a few short years, it was still amazing to see how the organization could so effectively rally the people under the cry of "Less for Self, More for Others, Enough for All", and create a community where there previously was none. At the very least, I think it is worth watching the organization simply to see how long the people will continue to live up to its ideals. In the end, I think that community and family is a major part of the Philippine lifestyle. I had been prepared previously for my trip through books that described the Filipinos as "friendly" and "sociable", yet I never expected those qualities to be so imbedded in the culture of the people at large. I was particularly amazed that in none of the communities that I visited did I ever feel fear or pity – two qualities that I had completely expected to feel in my ignorance prior to arriving.

It is not to say that I never felt these emotions, but the truth is I felt them more even near the hotel, where there was no sense of community, than in the areas of Kapitbahayan, Dagat-Dagattan, or the Tondo Foreshore (supposedly the most dangerous of them all). Regardless of how this sense of community made me feel as a guest in a foreign country and culture, it is clear to me that these aspects do affect the lifestyle and dynamics of the families there – and thus, it affects the way they build, and the way they develop as cities and neighborhoods.



Viktorja Abolina, Reilly Rabitaille, Non Arkaraprasertkul, Michelle Petersen, and Dalia al-Husseini on the beach relaxing after workshop

Grasping the limits and promise of urban planning



Jan Schultheiss

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Having never experienced an environment of comparable social and economic conditions, the SIGUS trip to Manila was eye-opening for me, a learning experience at once enriching and challenging. While it reassured me in my eagerness to become permanently involved in the production of housing for low-income people, it also to some extent disillusioned me about the effectiveness of the planning profession in general and the possibilities to realize my idealism in particular.

In graduate school thus far, I had come to see planning as a relatively clearly defined and systematic process that may ultimately “change the world.” However, driving through Manila’s seemingly endless expanses of slums, I kept wondering about the inherent value of well-meaning pilot programs that upgrade a few hundred slum dwelling units in the midst of tremendous and constantly increasing need for humane living conditions and in light of an allegedly inefficient government and massive economic disparities among the population. What changes will I be able to bring about through the built environment considering that the vast majority of the world’s population lives like many of Manila’s poorest residents, not like myself in Cambridge or Mosbach, Germany? What is the most promising strategy to raise the standard of living for a majority of the population? Can public policy and education build more fertile grounds for social and economic change than planning and architecture, or are these disciplines naturally dependent on each other? What are the most efficient levels of intervention for professionals in policy and design – the level of the family, the house, the city, the nation?

Our SIGUS group’s goal to test whether the housing policies growing out of the UN Conference on Human Settlements are still valid was high, at least in retrospect, if not impossible to accomplish and I wonder about the value of our visit. Do the observations and data we collected provide valuable and meaningful information for others? Do they make up one whole that starts to consider the larger circumstances? I also wonder what impression we left on the families we interviewed. Were they able to understand the reasons for our visit to them? Did they have a real choice whether or not to participate in the interviews? Did they get enough feedback so that they would not consider us another instance of outsiders planning for them? Would they have been able to gain a better understanding of our task if they had been able to attend our final presentation?

While I do not feel quipped to make a thorough assessment of the housing policies set forth by the 1976 conference on the basis of our small sample investigation, I will attempt a few observations. To begin, I wonder if the policies indeed addressed the needs of the poorest of poor. It seemed as if the success or nonsuccess of families depended to a significant extent on their overall socio-economic circumstances and, perhaps to a lesser degree, on circumstances beyond one’s control, such as floods and death of family members. In other words, families that were relatively well-off from the onset were usually able to secure or expand their assets while families who already struggled initially often continued to worry about their future well-being. For instance, in one family, the widowed head of household, a community activist without a steady income, lacked the resources to pay utilities, to do even elementary repairs, e.g. to her leaking roof,

and to make land payments, as a result of which she faced the potential threat of eviction. At the same time, one of our “successful” families in the Tondo district was able to accumulate significant real estate wealth. Such economic growth may have a stabilizing effect on the neighborhood at large and may allow the family to move to higher-income districts. Nevertheless, it seems that the balance of both accommodating growth and sheltering the most vulnerable members of the population remains a contentious policy challenge with implications far beyond the Philippines.

In addition, I have come to wonder how planning can encourage a community’s long-term care for their neighborhoods. This became evident in the stark contrast between the well kept-up Tondo-Foreshore area and the Smokey Mountain housing project, of which the community seemed to have much less ownership and subsequently took less care. Can such processes be planned for or at best facilitated, or do they only evolve organically?

Gawad Kalinga (GK) with its projects of various contexts and scales was shown to us as a model for a new era of low-income housing and community building. I am impressed by the organization’s aspirations as a transformative and empowering force, of which their colorful homes are a poignant symbol. While the organization’s official rhetoric of nation-building sometimes touched me as too rehearsed and emotional, I can only begin to imagine what it must mean for marginalized residents to finally live in safety and dignity and to help rebuild their nation’s long-lost identity. Nevertheless, I am not entirely convinced that GK’s strategies are truly as stabilizing and empowering as they seek to

Kids play in a small hardscape, which they uses as a playground in Kapitbahayan.





be. For instance, I wonder if GK's focus on the victimized poor rather than the persistent historical, political, social and other causes is sufficient to create the momentum needed to bring about large-scale change. I imagine that such a bottom-up approach could be effectively complemented by lobbying for permanent political and social reforms. One such goal, however intangible, may be the encouragement of a more participatory democracy in which citizens gain active control over the planning of their communities through techniques like participatory budgeting.

Similarly, I hesitate to accept GK as a true model for community building. Instead of actively engaged community members who jointly plan for themselves, I felt that its development and implementation process still resembles paternalistic elements as it plans complete communities and assumes their residents' needs and aspirations. I cannot help but turn to Jane Jacobs' notion that architecture and planning may not be able to replicate the complex urban systems that grew organically over time to suit all the demands placed upon them. The limited success of GK's master planning may be reflected in the fact that its communities appeared like islands that were disconnected from the larger urban context. While a full-fledged grass roots approach may not be feasible in Manila's socio-economic circumstances and while the sheer size of need may not allow a reliance on incremental planning, I wonder if GK could encourage more community participation and better utilize its communities' creative forces, thus making them ultimately more sustainable.

While I understand that one of the major reasons for our affiliation with GK was to help

legitimize them in the midst of government scrutiny and to win MIT as a permanent partner, it may have been interesting to get a contrasting point of view to GK's, e.g. by further exploring the Habitat for Humanity model, which GK claims only provides housing and fails to invest in the communities' long-term health.

In the search for an answer on how to best support the production of high-quality and equitable housing, I have also come to speculate about the most effective level of government intervention. In both developed and developing nations, many have come to reject conventional government-initiated housing policy, whose strong top-down planning processes have left little room for resident participation and have produced complete housing packages that have all-too-often been shortsighted and have failed to meet residents' changing needs and to consider their communities' lasting health. Moreover, unpredictable and dwindling long-term funding capacities, especially at the municipal level where resources seem to be of particular importance, often undermine good initial intentions. In Manila, in deficiency of traditional government planning became evident in the haphazard planning and construction of the new Kapit Bahayan community on a land-filled lagoon. Political gains from quick implementation prevented that adequate consideration was given to the potential flooding and sinking of the land, both of which now compromise the neighborhood's health and quality of life.

At the same time, others, like Peter Marcuse, have argued that pure self-help housing, too, has proven to be inefficient, as it can be socially divisive, does not in itself redistribute resources

and, perhaps most importantly, fails to address the underlying societal conditions. I expect that a collaborative, multi-layered middle ground – combining activities of municipal, state and international agencies and allowing for resident participation – may be better equipped to start to address the complex housing needs.

Among the many lessons that the workshop taught me, one was particularly instructive. Our interactions with community members challenged me not to impose my values and judgments on the people and local conditions. For instance, our experiences confronted my limited middle-class notion of “the home” and its desired qualities. For many lowest-income residents, the home is a functional unit that not only provides shelter but also holds an intrinsic economic value for the generation of commercial and rental income. My preconceptions of a home having to carry strong aesthetic qualities seemed out of place. Conversely, the social and economic life in the neighborhoods we visited seemed to occur in the – remarkable lively – streets, not in the privacy of the home as in higher income groups (upon returning to the U.S., streets seemed strangely empty and no safer than in Manila's low-income areas). Facilitating these conditions should continue to be a high priority for planners and architects. In fact, I believe that the creative ways with which low-income families in developing countries use their dwellings could hold valuable lessons for improving the economic well-being of low-income residents in developed nations. I suspect flexibility in room configuration as well as in allowable uses and regulations would help ensure this, although our continued love-affair with Euclidian zoning may limit the success of such strategies.

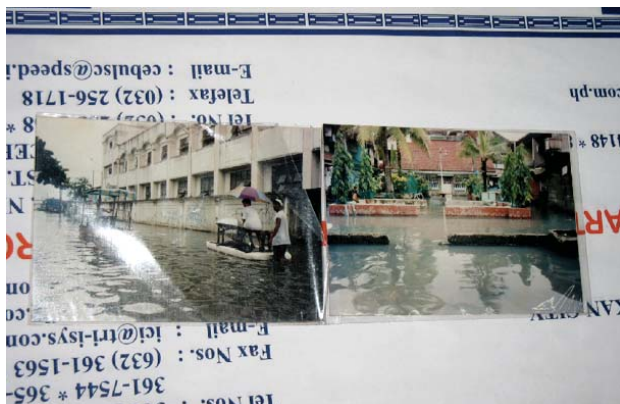
Similarly, the time spent in Manila forced me to reflect upon on how to measure the happiness of the people for who we plan and design. Can we assume that if people seem content with what they have that our duty as planners and architects is fulfilled? Should we suppose that the poorest of the poor have simply come to accept their fate and have stopped dreaming about a better future, in which case any “improvement” is laudable even if the end result falls short of standards of health and dignity? For instance, can we accept the public housing project near Smokey Mountain, which continues to contaminate the air, because it offers previous squatters a permanent roof?

From a month’s distance and in the midst of an urban planning studio on participatory planning in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, it seems exceedingly valuable to have become familiarized with the idea of integrating and supporting the informal sector of the population with different versions of slum upgrading. However, I suspect that the experience may have felt more complete if it had gone beyond the scope of two weeks in between semesters, perhaps through the integration of the trip into an academic module, which in turn would have allowed for deeper inquiries. For instance, our assessment may have gained from a more detailed analysis of the demographic, socio-economic and political forces that shaped housing conditions in the first place. In addition, I may have profited from some prior familiarization with the various forms of low-income housing and different theories of interventions in developing countries, with special focus on the Philippines. I think this awareness would have allowed me to make more refined observations and a more

informed analysis of the three different development areas. At the same time, however, I suspect that my limited prior knowledge of different low-income housing policies also enabled me to make fresh, less biased observations.

The visit to Manila may have been unsettling as it has raised many more questions than it answered. It pushed my thinking of what planning is and can accomplish. It has also made me wonder if my graduate education in urban planning has prepared me well for the time when I leave the academic safe-zone. I am grateful for having had these experiences, and I ultimately hope that I will encounter more Manilas to challenge my preconceptions as I transition into my professional career.

Photos of the flooding in Kapitbahayan on the community bulletin board



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