

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2014

Fishermen dock their boats at the Guiuan Port Terminal. Manicani Island can be seen at the background (Photo by Arlene Lusterio)



## TAO launches Forum on Sustainable Communities

**Forum and exhibit focus on post-disaster rehabilitation; DILG Office of Usec. Fernandez co-hosts forum**

TAO-PILIPINAS RECENTLY LAUNCHED AN ANNUAL FORUM WITH COMMUNITY AND network partners on its anniversary month. Last August 29, coinciding with the celebration of its 13th founding anniversary, TAO held the first *Forum on Sustainable Communities* at the 8th floor multi-purpose hall of the DILG-NAPOLCOM Building in Quezon City. The forum is intended to become an annual event organized by TAO around issues on sustainable human settlements.

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## Former YP Intern co-founds design and research collaborative

**Shareen Elnaschie with Kimberly Pelkofsky set up DRRlab: Design + Research for Resilience; Shareen shares DRRlab's inception, challenges and current undertakings**

EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO I HAD THE PLEASURE OF PARTICIPATING IN TAO'S YOUNG Professional scheme as part of a masters degree in International Cooperation: Sustainable Emergency Architecture at Universitat Internacional de Catalunya in Barcelona. During my time with TAO as a YP intern, I was tasked to undertake a research project looking at the provision of medium rise buildings (MRBs) in resettlement projects. I focused on three MRB projects within Metro Manila: a Habitat for Humanity project in Taguig; and two National Housing Authority projects in the Smokey Mountain area: Paradise Heights and Katuparan-Vitas.

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“An advanced city is not one where even the poor use cars, but rather one where even the rich use public transport.”

- Enrique Peñalosa,  
urban activist and former  
mayor of Bogota, Columbia



## TAO launches forum... (From page 1)

For the maiden forum, the theme focused on post-disaster rehabilitation. In light of post-Yolanda recovery and reconstruction efforts that the government and various organizations are currently involved in, the forum aimed to provide a venue to introduce these initiatives, share lessons and facilitate conversation to push for the creation of sustainable communities in post-disaster rehabilitation work.

### *Forum speakers*

The roster of forum speakers was led by Fr. Jorge Anzorena who talked about community responses to disaster after the 2004 tsunami in Thailand. In his presentation Fr. Anzorena emphasized community participation in decision-making, resolving land-related problems, and establishing income or livelihood support along with temporary housing for people to recover from disasters. He also stressed important community actions such as initiating response without waiting for government help, building alliances and planning for the future.

The significance of community participation was built on by Architect Arlene Lusterio who followed with a presentation on the community action planning process undertaken by TAO-Pilipinas in Tacloban City.

"It's easy to do community profiling if you do it as a professional since you are trained to do it. But if you're going to do it together with the people, it is a challenge," Arch. Lusterio stated. She then discussed the methodology and tools developed by TAO so that the community can participate in technical processes and pointed out the merit of getting the community's input. "There is information about the community that only people in the ground can provide and only they can provide it more accurately than an outsider. That is one of the values of this community action planning process," she noted.

Arch. Lusterio also shared the challenges of community action planning such as the magnitude of work versus timeframe, language and communication, availability of preliminary data, accuracy of information used and generated, proper sectoral representation, unity and cooperation of community representatives in decision-making, and lack of local leaders who espouse participatory approach.

In the afternoon session, Ms. Simeona Martinez of UP Department of Geography discussed spatial data analysis and the mapping efforts that were undertaken along with TAO's community action planning process in Tacloban City. These efforts from the GIS team included digitizing community maps generated in participatory workshops, the conduct of field mapping, and geo-referencing of compiled data. She highlighted the importance of generating spatial information and



*TAO-Pilipinas' community and network partners listen to speakers' presentations at the forum.*



*Forum participants view exhibit of works on post-disaster rehabilitation by TAO-Pilipinas.*

GIS (Geographic Information System) maps in disaster risk reduction and management.

Dr. Antonia Tanchuling of UP College of Engineering followed with a lecture on disaster waste management. Dr. Tanchuling talked about how wastes generated following disaster impact hinder relief and reconstruction efforts and noted the need to set in place disaster waste management contingency plans. She also shared a case study on disaster waste management in Tacloban City after Yolanda. Dr. Tanchuling ended her presentation with the recommendation that solid waste management plans should be established and implemented as part of disaster preparedness by local governments.

The final presentation was given by Dr. Laura David of the UP Marine Science Institute. Dr. David looked at the lessons learned from Yolanda to guide community development in coastal areas. She first explained the impact of storm surges in coastal areas and showed a simulation of the storm surge and inundation that occurred in Tacloban City. She cautioned against the development of settlements near the coast and along rivers and called attention to factoring in sea level rise projections and storm

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# TAO's 1st Forum on Sustainable Communities



(From left) Forum resource persons include Fr. Jorge Anzorena, Arlene Lusterio, Simeona Martinez, Dr. Antonia Tanchuling, and Dr. Laura David



(From left) Audrey Esteban and Angel Sales serve as emcees and moderators; Juana Cavalida, Diane Antipuesto and Lolit Capariño of MASAGANA community



(From left) TAO's Arlene Lusterio with Jocelyn Vicente-Angeles of DILG; UN Habitat's Amillah Rodil, Rosalyn Veneracion of ASSURE with Audrey Esteban; Loreta Lomuntad and Mely Sevillana of SAPSPA with Faith Varona and Fr. Jorge Anzorena



(From left) Engr. Mannie Demdam of UE College of Engineering - Manila, former YP intern Melody Sonsona and Engr. Marycon Serrano of UE College of Engineering - Caloocan; Paolo Genzola and Cesar Aris of FDUP; and Veronica Arcilla of IDEALS



(From left) Jun Beltran of Suburban HOA, Tess Belen and Drissa Sogologo of Buklod Tao with Dr. Tanchuling and Dr. David; Engr. Elsa Calimlim of SHFC; Jacqueline Esello of SAMASISIP; and Arch. Dave Yap of UP Planades



UP College of Architecture students view mapping outputs featured in the exhibit



TAO's Ge Matabang guides participants through the exhibit



DRRLab's Shareen Elnaschie and Kimberly Pelkofsky give feedback



## Former YP Intern... (From page 1)

The preliminary study considered affordability, site planning and architectural design and an overview of the cases were presented to kick start a debate at a roundtable discussion organized by TAO and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG); attended by multiple housing stakeholders. A summary of this discussion is published in [TAO's online magazine](#).

After graduating last summer, a classmate, Kimberly Pelkofsky, and I decided to join forces to co-found an independent design and research collaborative, [DRRlab](#): Design + Research for Resilience, to explore resiliency in relation to architecture, city planning and disaster risk reduction. Our aim is to work with multiple stakeholders in order to promote resilient design and planning strategies using a participatory, action-based approach.

### **Setting research objectives and study area**

As we explored ideas for potential research contributions, I thought of my time at TAO. During the roundtable discussions it had been determined that there was a pressing need for further examination of past housing projects in order to establish evidence-based lessons. And this is where the idea for DRRlab's current project, *Lessons for Medium Rise Buildings*, began.

We wanted to address the knowledge gaps on MRBs and better inform housing delivery by providing in-depth socio-physical studies of past housing projects in order to understand the ability of the typology to respond to residents' spatial, service and social needs across multiple scales, contexts, and providers, and to assess community preparation, financing and delivery methods, and the role of additional support services.



*DIY extensions have resulted in the deformation of the original housing.*

We chose to build upon one of the three cases I preliminarily reviewed: the Katuparan-Vitas housing complex, as we felt it provided the greatest opportunities for learning. Katuparan is a resettlement and social housing project in Tondo, home to nearly 1,700 families. Although only twenty-four years old, it is highly degraded and at risk from condemnation. Katuparan is an extreme case with a complex history but as we begin to unravel some of these complexities, much is being revealed that may point towards future solutions.

### **Contact with the community**

Through our local Community Outreach Officer, Jazel Virtusio (recruited with the assistance of TAO) we first made contact with the community at the start of this year and over the last eight months have had regular contact to communicate our research needs and if, and how, they could align with the needs of the community. Given the precarious future of the complex, the research is timely, and in addition to contributing to a much wider understanding of MRB housing, the study has also allowed us to

provide tailored consultancy to the community who are currently assessing alternative housing options. Should the buildings be condemned the community will need to go through a resettlement process; if the buildings are salvageable, the buildings will need to undergo extensive repairs and upgrading.

After reviewing relevant literature, maps and various other forms of secondary data, we have spent the last month in Manila conducting an intensive on-site research phase to carry out essential mapping and community engagement workshops and interviews. We have covered a broad range of topics in relation to the physical housing provision: financing and expenses, livelihoods, waste, drainage and flooding, community health and safety, site management and unit design. Through this, we have gained a unique understanding of the successes and failures of the building fabric and delivery strategies, how communities have adapted to life in the complex, and we have begun to uncover evidence-based lessons.



*A ground floor resident of Katuparan Vitas stands outside her extended home. The original corridor is now used as a kitchen.*

### **Challenges and ways forward**

Being outsiders has presented many challenges and opportunities and as ever, communication has been central to success. Whilst many Manila residents speak good English, it has been important for us to work with a translator to ensure that we do not miss the nuances that will make this study so revealing. And having established the communities' needs, it was paramount to ensure that residents understood the purpose of our presence and how the information could be used to their benefit.

Katuparan is the first of several studies that we intend to carry out, and has been a catalyst for continuing the conversation with housing stakeholders. Over the coming months we will be collaborating with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to lead a series of discussion forums looking at these issues in-depth and we will share summaries of these forums through our blog: [DRRlab Resources](#).

Our current research would not have been possible without the opportunities awarded to me through taking part in TAO's YP internship program- their ethos centered on community and participatory design creates a unique and inspiring learning environment. Since setting up DRRlab, TAO have continued to provide mentorship to us and for that we are immensely grateful. (*Shareen Elnaschie*)



# TAO carries out project monitoring for Fondation de France's Post-Haiyan Reconstruction



(From left) House being completed in Bingawan, Iloilo; typical starter house in Bingawan, Iloilo; typical house-on-stilts in Ajuy, Iloilo; typical starter house in Roxas City, Capiz.

CATEGORY 5 TYPHOON HAIYAN (LOCAL NAME YOLANDA) HIT AN IMPACT area now known as "Yolanda Corridor" covering 6 regions , 14 province and 171 cities and municipalities in November 2013. A total of 14M people are affected, 3.98M people are displaced and 1.13M houses are damaged, the biggest devastation to hit the Philippines.

The northern portion of Panay, Eastern Samar and Leyte are the hardest hit in the Visayas. Fondation de France under its Solidarite Philippines 2013: Haiyan – Post Reconstruction Project, collected 2M euros to help the victims. The project aims to support shelter construction and economic projects in the provinces of Iloilo, Capiz, Aklan and Eastern Samar. Six projects implemented by French and Philippine NGOs are located in nine (9) cities and municipalities in Northern Panay namely: Passi, Bingawan, San Enrique implemented by Chameleon; Ajuy implemented by Coup de Pouce a Barrido; Estancia, Carles and Concepcion implemented by Iloilo Code; Sigma implemented by Sigmahanon Development Foundation Inc.; , Altavas implemented by Enfants du Mekong; Roxas implemented by Iloilo People's Habitat Foundation Inc.; and one (1) municipality in Eastern Samar namely: Lawaan implemented by PHILDRRA. The project targets to benefit about 600 households with core shelter and three (3) rural health units with solar panels for emergency lighting, solar fan and refrigeration system. The project started in April 2014 and is programmed to end in October 2015.

The shelter solution is planned to be a sustainable shelter that though it may not fully resist the next hazard/typhoon, it will sustain damages that are easy to repair and will make the house livable soon after the typhoon. Economic projects include livelihood for fishermen, patrol boat construction or repair, and reconstruction of a food processing plant.

TAO-Pilipinas, Inc. is contracted by Fondation de France to undertake periodic monitoring of construction and provide technical advice to partners. The task of TAO-Pilipinas is to conduct site visits in three stages: at the start of the project, middle of project implementation and at the end of construction. Technical assistance from TAO-Pilipinas includes advice on disaster resilient construction considerations, checking of design and structural/construction system as well as budget. TAO-Pilipinas is also engaged to design a typical unit for Enfants du Mekong shelter project in Altavas.

The project is in the middle of implementation with most partners in Panay in their last stages of implementation and a few are just starting. The project presents various models of shelter solutions all of which are implemented through self-help approach with supervision by a local project foreman and/or engineer. (Arlene Lusterio)

## TAO set to implement shelter assistance in Manicani Island

TAO-PILIPINAS HAS ENTERED INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH TERRE des Homes FR Germany (TDH) for the implementation of a sustainable shelter assistance project in Manicani Island, Guiuan, Eastern Samar. TDH is an international humanitarian federation advocating for children's rights and the promotion of equitable development. This new engagement follows TAO-Pilipinas' involvement in Project Pagbangon of the Philippine Misereor Partnership Inc. (PMPI) in the municipality of Guiuan wherein TAO-Pilipinas conducted the post-Yolanda shelter damage assessment in Manicani and Homonhon islands last March 2014. (See [YP Enewsletter March-July 2014 issue](#).)

Under the umbrella of PMPI's Project Pagbangon in Guiuan, the shelter assistance project is funded by TDH and aims to identify safe sites for housing and to build permanent houses in the coastal settlement. A total of forty households in the four barangays of Manicani are set to be provided with a sustainable shelter that is disaster-resilient, culturally-sensitive and cost-

effective. Prior to the actual construction of houses, capability-building and participatory planning workshops with the communities shall be facilitated by TAO-Pilipinas.

The shelter assistance project is scheduled to be implemented starting September 2014 and completed by June 2015. (GRM)



Location map taken from Google maps showing Manicani Island in Guiuan, Eastern Samar



# HDM Lund student designs community facilities for Masagana

WHEN FRIDA BLOMQVIST, IN HER THESIS DEFENSE LAST JUNE 2014 AT the School of Architecture in Lund University-Sweden, was asked by the juror why she took on the thesis project community day care center in the Philippines, her quick reply was that she wanted to do something relevant through architecture. Her thesis Community: Architecture for the Neglected-Not Neglected Architecture was a reflection of that intent to help marginalized communities. The goal of the thesis project was “to provide an architectural solution that is within the means of the community and that assists in redefining contextual identity for the relocated community.”

TAO-Pilipinas has been hosting students from Housing Development and Management – Lund University, Sweden since 2009. This link enabled Frida Blomqvist to have access to Masagana of Navotas Neighborhood Association, the partner community of TAO-Pilipinas since early 2000. Masagana relocated in an agro-industrial lot in Angat, Bulacan in 2011 after years of living in the fishponds of Navotas and plagued by perennial floods and storm surges during typhoon season, among others.



*Day care, chapel, and multi-purpose center design presentation at the Masagana General Assembly*

To assist Frida to come up with a design for Masagana Day Care Center, a community design workshop was held in mid-March at the Angat relocation site. The preliminary scheme was presented to the community by the end of March before Frida left for Sweden. By the end of the workshop, Masagana decided to ask for her help in the design of the Chapel and Multi-Purpose Center as well.

The draft scheme was validated in a workshop in April where details of the Day Care, Chapel and Multi-Purpose Center were discussed and refined further. The community decided to use masonry for the main structure (Day care and Chapel) and supplemented by bamboo on the walls, ceilings, floors, inter-connecting corridors, window treatments, and stairs. The roofing will be MCR (micro-concrete roof) tiles that the community plans to produce themselves. In July, the final design was presented in the Masagana General Assembly with guests from the local government (barangay council members/officers).

The main considerations for the design of the structures are as follows: affordability and accessibility of construction materials, community participation in the implementation (management and labor), disaster resiliency and appropriate design for local conditions, multi-functionality, and social acceptability. *(Faith Varona)*

## Network Activities

### TAO attends FGD on urban land constraints

ON JULY 28, 2014, TAO-PILIPINAS participated in a focus group discussion (FGD) on urban land constraints which was held on the 8th floor of the DILG-Napolcom Building. The FGD was slated for participants coming from non-profit and people's organization sector as part of a World Bank-funded study. The study aims to generate better understanding of land related constraints that hamper implementation of viable and sustainable housing and to identify

measures to progressively address these constraints. The FGD sought the opinion of different stakeholders on the preliminary study that has been done by Land and Governance Innovations Consultants, Inc. (LGI).

The program was divided into three parts. The first part focusing on the Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR) of Special Patents was presented by Atty. George Katigbak. He gave a general introduction on special patents and the steps taken

to apply for special patents to acquire a parcel of land. He also discussed the proposed changes to the special patents application process. After the presentation, focus groups were formed to discuss the important points included in the proposed IRR, the hindrances and difficulties encountered in government applications and transactions, and issues that should be clearly stated in the proposed IRR.

The second part of the program was about proposed amendments to the IRR of Batas Pambansa 220 (BP 220) and Fire Code of the Philippines. This was presented by Arch. May Domingo-

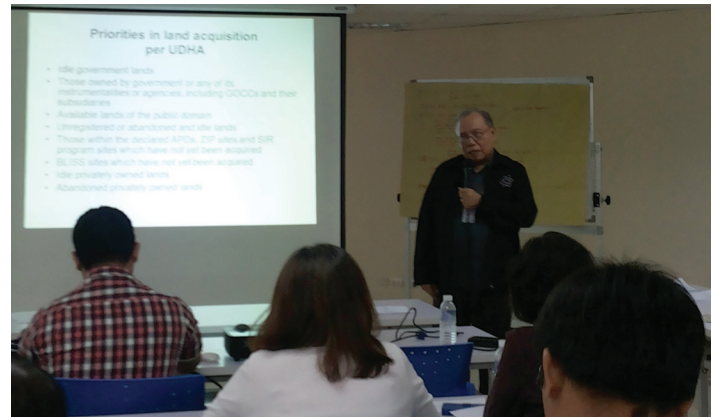
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## TAO attends FGD... (From page 6)

Price who gave a brief introduction on the contents of BP 220. Three focus groups were formed and discussions were facilitated by Arch. Arlene Lusterio and Arch. Angelus Sales from TAO-Pilipinas and Ruby Haddad from Homeless People's Federation Philippines. Each group was assigned a particular section of BP 220 to discuss. The first group discussed proposed changes to the application process for subdivision development permit; the second group tackled proposed revisions to the design and planning standards for subdivision development and low rise housing; and the third group discussed proposed changes to the design and planning standards for medium rise housing.

The focus of the last part of the program was on alternative tenure instruments, with Prof. Ernesto Serote of the UP School of Urban and Regional Planning (UP SURP) as resource person. He discussed the different alternative land tenure types for socialized housing and the reasons behind alternative tenurial options. He also gave examples of alternative tenure types for socialized housing in different countries such as South Africa, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Thailand, and Turkey. After his presentation, the participants were asked in the form of a questionnaire



*Prof. Ernesto Serote giving his lecture on alternative tenurial options.*

which tenurial types from the given countries are applicable in the Philippines and what difficulties may be encountered if these are to be implemented in our country.

The program ended with Ms. Felay Eleazar, the main facilitator from LGI, explaining to the participants that the same type of FGD is going to be held for government agencies, local government units, and the private sector. The results of all the FGDs will be processed and given to the different stakeholders. (AMPS)

## TAO launches forum... (From page 2)

surge potentials in zoning developments. Dr. David likewise recommended natural barriers such as mangrove greenbelts over sea walls to attenuate wave energy from storm surges. She outlined the strategies for "ecosystem adaptation" consisting of watershed protection, avoidance of building structures along coasts, relocation of communities in highly exposed areas, construction of disaster-resilient structures for essential facilities and habitation, soft engineering or coastal habitat protection and propagation, and hard engineering measures as necessary and in conjunction with soft engineering.

The presentations were followed by open discussions with the resource persons. Several forum participants shared their learning and insights gained from the lectures presented. Some also imparted lessons from similar situations in their own communities and reflected on the hazards that they face in resettlement sites. A number asked the advice of resource persons in addressing their communities' exposure to storm surge and flooding risks.

### *Exhibit of TAO projects*

Apart from the forum, a small exhibit of TAO projects was also mounted. In keeping with the theme of post-disaster rehabilitation, TAO highlighted some of its more recent (2013-2014) projects involving technical assistance towards recovery and reconstruction in disaster-affected areas. These included:

- Participatory Community Planning and Design Workshops for TS Sendong-affected families in Cagayan De Oro City (Social Housing Finance Corporation's Community Mortgage Program Express Lane Beneficiaries);
- Post-Yolanda Shelter Damage Assessment in Manicani and Homonhon Islands, Guiuan, Eastern Samar for Philippine Misereor Partnership, Inc.;
- Community Action Planning for Catholic Relief Services Philippines' Typhoon Yolanda Response in Tacloban City;
- Project Monitoring & Quality Control for Fondation de France's Post-Haiyan Reconstruction in Northern Iloilo and Eastern Samar; and
- Masagana Resettlement Project in Angat, Bulacan.

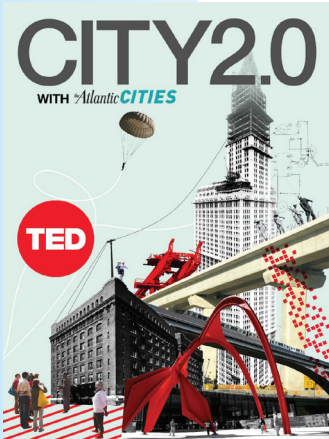
The exhibit also featured the original "community vision drawings" which were part of the outputs of the community action planning process facilitated by TAO-Pilipinas for CRS in Tacloban City. The illustrations reflected the shelter aspirations and concepts of an ideal neighbourhood by community groups representing 17 barangays in the Old Road Sagkahan district in Tacloban City.

Attended by about 60 representatives from TAO-Pilipinas community and network partners, the forum was co-hosted by the Department of the Interior and Local Government's Office of the Undersecretary for Urban Poor, Informal Settler Families and Other Special Concerns headed by Usec. Francisco "Bimbo" Fernandez. (GRM)



## YP Reading List

Books and other materials featured in this section are available at the TAO Resource Center & Library. Library use is by appointment and guidelines may be viewed at [www.tao-pilipinas.org/resources/library](http://www.tao-pilipinas.org/resources/library). You may call Angel Sales at 441-0998 / 436-7301 or email [lib@tao-pilipinas.org](mailto:lib@tao-pilipinas.org) to schedule your visit.

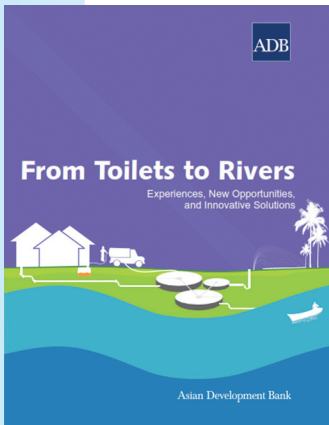


Title: **City 2.0: The Habitat of the Future and How to Get There**  
Editor: **Atlantic Cities**  
Publisher: **TED Books (2013)** (Kindle edition)

City 2.0 is a compendium of 12 essays on urban innovations, a short collection of ideas on urban living (from city transportation and residential buildings to food and art) that explores how cities can be made sustainable. The book tackles a wide array of topics and features actual projects around the globe as well as emerging technologies that can help shape our future landscapes. Among the more interesting essays are those espousing collaborative consumption with spaces for a “sharing economy” in the city; urban aquaponics or urban farming in city rooftops at commercial scale; citizens as sensors through crowdsourced data pool that provides localized data to improve city infrastructure and services; guerrilla urbanism or citizen-initiated actions to revitalize neighborhoods (without permit processes and political wrangling); and flexible housing that features hyper-efficient, technology-enabled spaces to transform tiny urban dwellings.

One of the more enlightening essays is that on walkable or pro-pedestrian cities, which substantiates the premise that people’s lifestyle choices are a function of the design of the built environment. The author makes the strong connection between how places are designed and the physical health of its society. Another thought-provoking piece in the collection is about remote-sensing technologies which treat the city as one big climate laboratory. By probing the city’s airspace for empirical measurements of its carbon footprint, pollution profiling can be made to guide the city towards more accurate policy decisions.

The essays in City 2.0 give a general overview of the topics mentioned and not a lengthy discussion but just a snapshot of the possibilities for cities of the future. Nevertheless, the book will make us reconsider how our city infrastructures are being upgraded to improve urban life and experience. It also provokes a rethinking of how we view public spaces and how we can translate the ideas and innovations presented here into scalable solutions for our own cities. (GRM)



Title: **From Toilets to Rivers: Experiences, New Opportunities, and Innovative Solutions**  
Editor: **Maria Corazon Ebarvia**  
Publisher: **Asian Development Bank (2014)**

*From Toilets to Rivers* is a compilation of good practices and working models of sustainable sanitation solutions. It provides project briefs of case studies from different countries. The summary of each case study contains an overview of the technology used, costs of the project, finance mechanism, institutional arrangement, and project outcome. The goal of the book is to inspire other countries to replicate the mentioned practices and integrate sanitation as part of institutional policies and practices. The case studies featured in the book show not only the challenges encountered in sanitation and wastewater management but the positive results as well.

The book is very informative and gives the reader an insight on the sanitation and wastewater management issues being faced by other countries. The case studies delve into different topics such as improved on-site sanitation, decentralized wastewater treatment systems, constructed wetlands, low-cost sewerage system, protecting water resources and coasts, and environmental sanitation. Most of the given case studies are located in Asia including a few good practices in the Philippines. Since the book is a compiled synopsis, additional references are provided for readers who may want to know more about each case study.

The downside to the book is that it is too technical and may not be appreciated by laymen. Though it is informative, reading it feels like a chore because it is text heavy and the photos provided are too small and unclear. The way it is written and laid out limits its readers to only those in the field of water and sanitation management. A glossary of technical terms could have been added to better understand the case studies presented in the book.

Overall, the book is useful for researchers in the field of water and sanitation management. The 46 case studies featured in the book can be a good take off point for water and sanitation management experts who are looking for innovative projects to be done in their community. (AMPS)



## YP Reflections by Frida Blomqvist



*Frida Blomqvist graduated from the Master of Architecture programme of Lund University, Sweden, in 2014. Although Swedish, she now lives in Sydney, Australia, where she is practising architecture in a local business. She previously had internship in Copenhagen, Denmark, and studied her fourth year of architecture at Edinburgh College of Art. For her degree project 'Community – Architecture for the Neglected, not neglected Architecture' she travelled to the Philippines where she assisted in designing community facilities for a people's organization. For full details regarding her thesis, follow this [link](#).*

ON A BUMPY TRAIN RIDE DOWN THE SOUTH COAST OF AUSTRALIA, I suddenly felt the light bulb switch on and I burst out, "I will go somewhere and do something!" Despite the somewhat ambiguous quest I knew exactly what I wanted to do; I just needed to figure out what, where, and how. The more I thought about it the clearer it all seemed to me, and I could feel the excitement and expectation well up inside me. Before the end of the journey, which lasted only another half hour or so, I had decided to go back to University the following year and finish my Master studies of Architecture.

When I got home I sent an email to my University and was referred to Johnny Astrand, the director of Housing Development Management of Lund University, which is promoting international cooperation and an exchange of knowledge aiming to improve and promote sustainable housing and development throughout the world, focusing on developing countries. The email covered my loosely defined aspiration to help people in need of architectural assistance and thus make something useful with my degree project.

Luckily, Mr Astrand understood my intentions and after a brief meeting the project leapfrogged into a new phase. I was introduced to Faith Varona, co-founder of TAO-Pilipinas and my soon-to-be tutor during the degree project. TAO-Pilipinas was providing unprivileged communities in Metro Manila with technical assistance and had since long been assisting Masagana, a community of former informal settler families from Navotas, in organising their relocation. They were in need of community facilities for their planned neighbourhood in the relocation site in Pulong Yantok, Angat, Bulacan. I was to assist in establishing a brief and in providing a design for these buildings.

I travelled for the first time in my life to the Philippines and stayed in Quezon City. I was not quite sure what to expect but was thrilled at the opportunity of experiencing another culture very different to my own. In order not to make a too big fool of myself and to reduce the impact of an inevitable culture shock, I had prepared myself as much as possible by reading any literature potentially useful for the event that I could get my hands onto. I was to stay in Metro Manila for four and a half weeks, out of which three would coincide with the study trip of the course Urban Shelter of Lund University, run by Mr. Astrand and assisted by Ms. Varona. This was very useful as I could participate in their lectures and planned site visits throughout the city to get an understanding of the culture and housing situation. As you all know, it is one thing to read about something, quite another to see things with your own eyes. I think the usual conclusion is that it is a lot harder to avoid looking when it is there, straight in your face and no hiding. I was no exception to this experience, but instead of turning my face away I was proud that I was finally there.

The area where the Masagana families came from was conforming to the same patterns as most other informal settlements in Metro Manila. The families were eager to be involved in the shaping of their new neighbourhood and so the project was set out in close cooperation with them. We organised two workshops where they built models of the community buildings and together we listed materials to be used as well as desirable features of the buildings. I believe this was essential for the project as it was the opportunity for me to get to know the people and to try and understand what they needed. It was also a moment of building trust and to show each other our sincerity and care. For me, it was also a positive experience to see with what enthusiasm everyone

**Pls. turn to page 10.**



*The author taking a picture of one of the outputs made by the community during the participatory design workshop of the community facilities for Masagana.*



Perspective from the east of the proposed developments

*The proposed design of the community facilities for Masagana made by Frida Blomqvist based on the results of the participatory design workshop.*



## YP Reflections... (From page 9)

was participating. Everyone cooperated delightfully together to form their mutual neighbourhood. It made me feel humble and to realise the magnitude of these people's struggle for a better home. I felt obliged to assist and fortunate to be a part of their aspirations. I tried my best to meet their expectations, but I also wanted to surpass them, to inspire their imagination.

During my time in the Philippines I travelled around as much as my schedule allowed me, visiting day care centers and interviewing people, as well as just getting an appreciation of the rural and native architecture of different areas. I regret that I didn't stay longer to have an even more frequent exchange of comments and ideas with the community, but this time it was not possible. It would have been good to have more opportunities to meet with Masagana face to face. It was sometimes difficult to evaluate which comments and ideas were more important than others and which directions to take. It was also a challenge to find a balance between what was expressed by the community and what I felt was their intentions, even if not clearly expressed.

Fortunately, the community was quite well informed of the basics of disaster resilient design from previous workshops and trainings led by TAO-Pilipinas, which made things a lot easier as they understood the reasoning behind decisions taken in regards to the design. Communication was sometimes difficult, both when it came to language and understanding of drawings, but with our positive outlook most issues were overcome. Having this in mind, I made use of imagery and diagrams to as large an extent as possible to explain the design. I am of the impression that this worked quite well.

I can only speak for myself, but despite all the challenges, or perhaps because of them, it seems that the outcome was rather successful. Most importantly, the families were very

pleased with the proposed design in the end. I hope that my proposal have raised the aspirations of the community as well, the same way as it has inspired me. If nothing else comes of the project, at least we can all share this. And as for me, I have opened my eyes and widened my perspective and this project has certainly become a milestone in my life so far.

Looking back at the initial phase of the project now, I am surprised at how smoothly the ball started rolling in the right direction. In fact, I was despite myself a little surprised that it was rolling at all. It seemed to me, that if it was this easy to start a project like this, why didn't other people or other students do it all the time? Why were there not more programmes to utilise architecture students' drive, skill and more importantly: time?

During the research I carried out as preparation for the project, I came across some University programmes doing just that, but I am still surprised at how little emphasis these matters receive in the curriculum in most schools. Way too often too little focus is given to the responsibilities and power to change peoples' living conditions that come with the architecture profession. In fact, I would nearly go so far as to state that it is essential for students to see and understand the part of the built environment that might not work and where it sometimes is a matter of life and death, and that this should be mandatory. Architecture schools need to take a bigger responsibility in raising awareness amongst the future architects and to utilise the resource that students actually are; (nearly) professionals with time to spend on projects without suffering from loss of income. Once again, I can only speak for myself, but I have gained immense experience and knowledge by doing this project and would recommend it to anyone. I hope projects such as this will inspire others to take a more active role in assisting the poor. It is worth it.

## Announcements

### Call for Internship

AS PART OF ITS THRUST TO DEVELOP SOCIALLY aware technical professionals, TAO-Pilipinas' Young Professional's Program is once again opening its internship program for architecture, environmental planning, and civil engineering students. We are looking for 4th to 5th year students who are willing to do development work and engage with the country's urban poor communities. The interns are expected to do technical work including, but not limited to, drafting, model making and cost estimates. They are also expected to conduct research and do site visits to our partner communities. For those who are interested, you may send your curriculum vitae (CV) together with your preferred working schedule at [yp@tao-pilipinas.org](mailto:yp@tao-pilipinas.org). To learn more about the organization, you may visit our website [www.tao-pilipinas.org](http://www.tao-pilipinas.org).

### Fundraising for Christmas Gift-giving

CHRISTMAS IS JUST A FEW MONTHS AWAY. AS PART OF OUR ANNUAL GIFT-GIVING TRADITION, TAO-PILIPINAS WILL RAISE FUNDS FOR THIS YEAR'S CHRISTMAS GIFT-GIVING. PROCEEDS FROM THE FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN WILL BE USED TO BUY GIFTS FOR OUR PARTNER COMMUNITIES. DETAILS OF THE FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN WILL BE POSTED IN OUR YP FACEBOOK PAGE AS WELL AS IN OUR WEBSITE SO BE SURE TO LIKE OUR [YP FACEBOOK PAGE](#) TO RECEIVE UPDATES ABOUT THIS CAMPAIGN.