

## YP Reflections



*Ownery Rose Diala is a BS Architecture senior student at Mapua Institute of Technology. She joined TAO's summer internship program and was assigned in the technical assistance project for SANAGMANA community in Tanza, Navotas City. She shares with us part of her reflection journal for the YP internship.*

.It is really true that life outside school is very different. I learned a lot of new things when I worked with TAO-Pilipinas Inc. as an intern. Designing with the community was a new experience for me and I enjoyed every moment of it. During my internship at TAO, I was assigned to design the chapel in SANAGMANA. And as one of the requirements, I was instructed to facilitate community workshops to know the residents' preferences and ideas. I was excited and at the same time nervous because I had never facilitated a workshop before.

The design process used in the workshop, which is called participatory planning, is far different from the one that is taught in academic training. Participatory planning involves a lot of people - the architects, engineers, and the community members. Many minds are involved to solve a problem. The planning itself would come from the owners of the project --- the community members --- and with an acceptable design outcome, there is a sense of ownership because their ideas are integrated in the design. Whereas the one taught in school has a different approach --- as a designer you would be the one responsible for your own actions and ideas because you alone would think of the solutions to the problem presented by your professor.

Back when I used to work for a private firm, I also designed on my own given the design problem. I was forced to make all the decisions in the design and afterwards, present it to my employer. The advantage of working in that private firm was that the process was easier, quicker, and there was more freedom in designing. I just had to follow what my employers instructed me to do unlike in participatory planning, where I had to act like a leader so I could make community people participate in the discussion and make sure that they would not be intimidated from expressing their ideas and opinions. The main goal was to know all their thoughts since they would be the ones who will eventually use the structure. I refrained from imposing what I personally wanted in the design, but in some cases, there were things that needed to be explained and altered (especially when their ideas were unattainable or impractical) so that we could help them achieve a more viable and efficient design. I also observed some disadvantages in participatory planning. It is a longer process because we were trying to incorporate all their ideas in the design and sometimes there were conflicts with regards to decision making which had to be resolved before coming up with the final design. We also had to conduct lectures and seminars to educate the participants in technical designs since most of them are laymen. Indeed, I had to expand my Tagalog vocabulary just to simplify the technical terms we use. The workshops were a strenuous activity especially if they were done so often. One has to invest time in traveling to the communities and waiting for workshop participants. Nevertheless, even though it was tiring, I considered it as a learning experience.

When I first visited the SANAGMANA community in Navotas, I was amazed by the bamboo bridge they built to cross to the resettlement site. I sensed their commitment to improving their lives and the discipline they have as a community. I facilitated two workshops for the design of the chapel, with Arch. Arlene Lusterio as my mentor. The first workshop was for the youth and children where I brought some drawing materials such as papers, pencils, and boxes of crayons. Some of the participants were a bit hesitant to draw at first, reasoning that they weren't very good in drawing. And so I tried to encourage them and told them that the workshop was not a contest but an exercise to put in paper what we want their chapel to look like. The second workshop included the community members. The participants in that workshop were very much aware of the objectives and purpose of the activity since Mariano De Veyra, president of SANAGMANA and also known as Mang Ano, made a prior announcement of the meeting. At first, I was quite nervous because the community leaders and members were much older than me.

Turn to page 4



*Ownery, with her co-interns at TAO, crossing the bamboo bridge to the resettlement site...*



*... and facilitating the workshop discussion*



*Children's drawings for the community chapel design are posted.*



*Community leaders discuss the chapel design schemes.*



*Ownery answers questions by community members about the chapel design.*

## Culminating activity (from page 2)

*Participatory Design Process (SANAGMANA Experience) by Ownery Rose D. C. Diala.* The intern's project objective was to make a documentation of the participatory approaches used in designing the SANAGMANA community chapel as well as the outcome of the workshop activities. Workshop facilitation and direct observations, key informant interviews and readings on participatory design processes were the methods used for the project. Ownery's report discussed the (1) difference of participatory design processes from conventional approaches, including its strong and weak points in community development planning; and (2) the technical professionals' process of translating the community's idea of the chapel into a cohesive design.

*Land Registration, Surveying and Titling Processes in Metro Manila by Mark Anthony I. Lopez and Aaron Andro V. Ching.* This research project was conducted to achieve the following objectives: a) document and verify the established procedures for land registration, surveying & titling processes in Metro Manila; b) translate the procedures into step-by-step guidelines and flowcharts; and c) identify the problems or difficulties that may be encountered by an applicant and how these may be resolved. Methods used include document review of relevant and interviews with informants from government offices, academe and urban poor communities. Aaron and Mark's report included (1) a narrative step-by-step guide and process flowcharts to land registration, surveying and titling for urban poor communities; and (2) a discussion of the issues and challenges in land registration, surveying and titling process.

*Research on Alternative Building Materials and Technologies for Social Housing (SABMAT-Phase 2) by Rose Anne R. Evangelista and Paulo Nico S. Noble.* The SABMAT Project was a research activity conducted by TAO-Pilipinas in collaboration with PUP-CAFA (Polytechnic University of the Philippines-College of Architecture and Fine Arts) during the second semester of SY 2006-2007. After the results of the first stage of the activity were compiled into a draft output, Rose Anne and Paulo Nico (who were students from the same class) continued with phase two of the research. Anne and Nico's report focused on the analysis of the Phase 1 draft outputs based on a set of criteria for evaluation and a summary of recommendations in the use and construction of various building materials included in the research project.

~o~o~o~o~

## Field visits (from page 2)

UP Civil Engineering Department's Engr. Charlene Tan coordinated with TAO to facilitate exposure to informal settlements for her students, Sandy Gaspay, Cherry Mateo, Doreen Candelaria, and James Ong, who are in the stage of drafting proposals for their undergraduate theses. TAO accompanied their group to the SHEC-organized communities along the Maricaban Retarding Pond and the Habitat for Humanity housing site in Mallibay, Pasay City.

The group of volunteers from the student organization, UP Task Force Arki, also visited the Montalban resettlement site where families affected by the Pasig River Rehabilitation project are to be relocated. They are presently involved in a project to develop incremental house design improvements to standard relocation housing designs.

~o~o~o~o~

## YP reflections (from page 3)

It was really apparent that the design of the chapel was given so much importance by the community members and reflected their devotion to religion. They listened attentively to all the discussions I presented, questioned some designs, and cooperated in the group activities. They drew their ideas of the facade, symbols and spaces they wanted to integrate in the chapel. Some ideas were rather grandiose: one participant even suggested the roofing made of stained glass. From these ideas drawn out from the workshops, we made three schemes and they were asked to vote for a preferred design. In choosing the final design scheme, some were adamant in sticking to the scheme they initially wanted. By then, Arch. Lusterio had helped me out by asking some questions regarding the design of the chapel. We made a list of questions concerning the use of the chapel and building materials to be used for its construction. They responded that the chapel would not only serve as the worship place of the community but also as an evacuation center in times of disaster so that they stressed the placement of a second storey. They agreed that the chapel roofing can be made of MCR tiles that the community can produce and the structure should be on-stilts, much like how the houses are built in SANAGMANA. They also reasoned out that they wanted their chapel to be beautiful to compensate for the simplicity of their houses.

It's the architect's job to translate the community's design of the chapel into a cohesive design by taking into consideration all the comments and ideas they presented during the workshops. After going through this process, they were able to choose a final scheme for the chapel design. When we consulted Mang Ano on the how the chapel will be built, he said that they are raising funds for a phased construction. This also meant that the design should be able to consider incremental construction and the use skilled laborers from the community to lessen expenses.

After two consecutive months of working at TAO-Pilipinas, Inc., ending my internship is not an easy thing to do because in a short span of time I built relationships that somehow changed the way I think and act now and made me recognize another perspective in life. But I know that every end of a journey actually introduces the beginning of a new one. I've come to realize some things that never crossed my mind before, such as my role as an architect in the country's problems of poverty and inadequate housing. Being with the SANAGMANA community for a number of times also made me think that being poor is not actually a hindrance in striving to have a well-organized and disciplined community. I saw their hopes and it inspired me to help them achieve their vision in the best way I can. They remind me of a bamboo shrub --- ever yielding but never breaking --- and the bamboo bridge that symbolize how they stand together to bridge their future.

~o~o~o~o~

## YP Reflections



**Michelle G. Galarion** is a senior student of BS Civil Engineering at University of Sto. Tomas. Prior to joining the summer internship program, Michelle was also one of the participants of the 2006 YP Workshop in Infanta, Quezon. As an intern, she worked on two TAO projects – the documentation of the SAPSPA housing project in Tondo and the subdivision development planning of SANAGMANA site in Tanza, Navotas. Michelle considers her internship experience as an eye-opener, realizing that “there are a lot more things to learn and see beyond the four walls of the classroom...”

As a civil engineering student, I found it difficult to have self-help housing. Before, I thought that civil engineers are only primarily needed for large infrastructure, high-rise buildings and highly modernized construction. I thought that for simple houses with small floor areas, civil engineers are not needed that much since there are already the construction foreman and laborers who can build the house. But when we visited the houses in Tondo, I recognized more the importance of having civil engineers involved in any structure to be built. In Tondo, it is important to consider the stability of buildings which is the main expertise of a civil engineer. Houses in Tondo face the problem of structural stability because of the soil conditions which cause the land to gradually subside. They cannot just put up concrete floors and heavy structures because of the problem of land subsidence, so it is important that house construction is also supervised by engineers.

I also appreciated that there are organizations like SAPSPA which continuously help the people in the community in their many needs, through SAPSPA’s housing loan program. Through the years, there are already a number of batches who have benefited from it. The P70,000 housing loan that were availed by the beneficiary-families helped a lot in reconstructing houses already submerged or in starting their dream houses. The beneficiaries also played a big role in the self-help house building process. They had to find additional money to pay for laborers and expenditures (other than the construction materials covered by the loan). They worked with a positive attitude, were so very eager to complete their house, and they really worked hard to earn enough money for its construction. I think they are a wonderful people that the community should be proud of.



Other technical professionals should reach out their hands to poor people. I know some people think that professionals are only for the service of the rich but they should realize that sometimes they really need to come to the ones who are oppressed and the ones who cannot afford to give them the professional fee. They should not wait for the poor to come to them; they should extend a helping hand. We must reach out because that’s the spirit of living in a decent society.



**Jasmine M. Soriano** is a senior student of BS Architecture at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines. Jasmine helped develop the 3D scaled model of TAO’s design prototype for Disaster Resilient Housing. She was also part of the project team that handled the documentation of the SAPSPA housing project in Tondo. Jasmine says that the internship taught her to be “more sensitive to the social issues and problems that the urban poor communities face” as an architect.

As I worked on the monitoring and evaluation of five beneficiaries of the SAPSPA housing loan, I saw how the program works for the people and how it actually is a three-way collaboration among the beneficiaries, the people’s organization and the technical assistance groups. These members compose the body, heart and head of the program.

There have been about one hundred twenty-three beneficiaries of the program and we interviewed five of the present batch with on-going house construction. Each of the families we interviewed had different number of family members, lifestyles and life plans but they had a common denominator...the need for decent shelter. So how do they work as the body of the program? The families who benefited from the housing-material loan have been given the full responsibility to execute the building of their houses...the “self-building” way. Either with immediate relatives or friends, the physical construction of the houses was done by them. Monetary supplement for the building permit and construction workers came also from self-funding. Through this duty, they are taught to work for their own betterment and in a way, “reap their harvest”.



The SAPSPA organization, also known as the “Pabahay”, is the heart of the program. The community in Magsaysay Village has been troubled for decades by land subsidence and limited resources to construct and repair houses, so SAPSPA serves as the intermediary between the people and groups that could help the community in its housing problems. SAPSPA works on the evaluation of housing loan applicants, repayment schemes, bookkeeping, as well as sustaining the Pabahay office and other administrative tasks.

Lastly, the technical groups taking part in the program serve as the head in bringing this project to life. With professional skills and knowledge, they help the community achieve their long-term endeavors by giving assistance in house designs and making sure that plans conform to building laws. They help in monitoring the construction process and building materials used and in checking that the actual construction is in compliance to the building plans approved by building officials.

Man lives holistically with his body, heart and head and it’s the same principle at work in this self-help, self-build housing project. If any of the three actors in the program do not work efficiently, sustainability would be hard to attain. Programs for urban poor communities need long-term planning and development but must also look into the people’s way of life and involve them in the planning. The housing project in Magsaysay Village entails hard work and may not bring profit, but it brings shelter to people’s lives so they may live decently.





## TAO launches YP Design Challenge

TAO-Pilipinas launched its latest YP project, the Young Professionals Design Challenge, at the Institute of Social Order (ISO), Ateneo de Manila University last June 6, 2008. The project is a design competition for young professionals that aims to generate ideas and design solutions for sustainable community development in urban poor settlements. The competition website [www.yppdesignchallenge.tao-pilipinas.org] was also presented during the launch.

*Guests during the competition launch – (left to right) Engr. Francis Uy of Mapua CE-ESE; Engr. Guillermo Bernabe of PUP-CE; Arch. Ted Inocencio of PUP-CAFA; and Arch. Nicolo Del Castillo of UP-CA.*

The YP Design Challenge is comprised of three design challenges, working around themes of sustainable community development. Each category has its own set of competition guidelines, judging criteria and prizes. Participants may choose to join in any or all of the following design challenge categories: **Sustainable Shelter, Trash Transformation, and Portable Playground**. The academe is encouraged to consider the design challenges as student design plate/project and see it as an opportunity for design students to put forward innovative, environmentally-sound, appropriate and affordable design solutions that can benefit poor and informal communities and improve the livability of social housing sites.

SELAVIP (Latin American, African and Asian Low-Income Housing Service) and MISEREOR (German Catholic Bishops' Organization for Development Cooperation) are the main sponsors of the competition. Support for the YP Design Challenge launch was also given by Davies Paints and Starbucks Philippines-CSR. Posters of the YP Design Challenge may be seen on the community boards of selected Starbucks stores.

Registration is now open and closes on August 29, 2008. The competition guidelines and registration forms may be downloaded from [www.yppdesignchallenge.tao-pilipinas.org](http://www.yppdesignchallenge.tao-pilipinas.org) or request for copies can be made by calling Mai Ilagan at (63-2) 441-0998. (See competition poster on page 4.)

~O~O~O~O~

## YP Reflections



Jenny Bore is a senior student of BS Geodetic Engineering at the University of the Philippines-Diliman. She entered the YP summer internship for her course's OJT requirement. She was assigned to work on two research papers - "Validation of Research on Land Acquisition, Registration, Surveying & Titling in Metro Manila" and "Land Acquisition among Urban Poor Communities: A Case Study of Payatas & Malibay."

When I enrolled GE 198, my plan was to look for a company that would accept me as intern, learn and gain experience from the training program, complete all the requirements and get my grade. That was simple enough...until I started working with TAO-Pilipinas. The experiences I had in the course of the training program made me realize a lot of things.

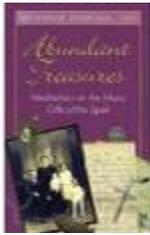
I became more aware of the present condition of the urban poor communities - that they are not problems in society. They are Filipinos with problems that need assistance from us. They are also entitled to rights that we enjoy. I really felt sad after learning the situation of Phase I of SHEC's housing project, where the members of the community ended up filing cases against one another due to circumstances we cannot control. I can see from the tired face of Ate Estrella the hope of securing the land they occupy for her children.

As a geodetic engineering student, I thought that our main role is to survey and subdivide the land for the client. I learned however, from the case study I conducted, that the process of land acquisition is a long and complicated process for poor communities. I also learned that they are not going to initiate acquiring the land they occupy not only because of lack of funds but also because of their lack of knowledge of the process. I believe that professionals have a great role in helping them understand the process and educating teaching them on how and where to secure or furnish the documents needed.

I am really amazed at how members of different NGOs chose the life of helping the communities instead of working in high-paying jobs. I am inspired by their dedication to continuously find means to improve the lives of the poor communities. In the course of my internship, there is one realization that really struck me --- that if we really want to do something to help these communities, there would always be means to do it. As young professionals, we are responsible not only to our client or employer, but also for the state and the community. The lack of support from the government should not be hinder us from reaching out to the communities but should make us persevere even more.

I got an 'incomplete' grade in GE 198 because I wasn't able to complete the minimum required number of hours on time but I don't feel any regret in choosing TAO-Pilipinas. The experience I got was more than what I expected. I did not just learn and apply the theories I learned from books and readings, but I learned one of the most important thing that I believe I would have never learned in the profit-oriented surveying companies, and that is if we really have the will to help others, there is certainly not just a single way to do it...and we are the ones who must discover and search for them.

~O~O~O~O~



Title: **A Companion to Teachers**  
 Author: **Melannie Svoboda**  
 Publisher: **St Pauls, Bandra, Mumbai (2001)**

Melannie Svoboda is a Sister of Notre Dame, and staff of the Jesuit Novitiate for Detroit and Chicago provinces. She is the author of over 200 articles that have appeared in many popular Christian publications.

*A Companion To Teachers* is a small book (only 4" x 6.5") and so like a real companion, it is easy to bring with you anywhere and can be read even while on queue or waiting. Because the author is a nun, it is full of spiritual advice and insights, encouragement, and inspiring stories for teachers based on her actual experience both from the formal classroom setting and informal setting outside - the big world. This book could help teachers deepen their understanding of their role as teachers. It has 45 sections and each is followed by questions for reflection. The author also gives out some suggested practice tips to improve their method of teaching and their interpersonal (with students, co-teachers) and intrapersonal relationships. The prayerful reflections, based on Christian values and teachings, will also remind teachers that their work is both art and ministry, as well as a grace-filled privilege.

The book presents teaching as the world's oldest profession (contrary to others pronouncing that its prostitution) and encompasses the formal school setting as well as the informal setting, like when parents teach their children skills and values. The author considers the first teacher as God; Adam and Eve as the first students; Eden as the first classroom; and Adam & Eve's offspring as their children-students. Mankind is expected to be one another's keepers and the responsibility of teaching is passed on from generation to generation. Although the book is addressed to teachers, the principles discussed will surely help everyone from all walks of life regardless of age. It serves as a useful reference on how to handle the everyday challenges that come along in accomplishing that noble role of a teacher which each of us has to play in life. (*Gertrudes Samson*)



## YP Reflections



Franz Miko Verzon is a second-year student of BS Architecture at the University of Santo Tomas. As a YP summer intern, he is currently working on two TAO projects, *SHEC Phase 3 Housing* and *Technical Assistance to Food for the Hungry*. Miko was also the youngest finalist in the 2008 YP Design Challenge - Sustainable Shelter category.

My experience in TAO-Pilipinas was a beautiful one not only because of the beautiful people that I have met but also the beautiful experiences that I have encountered, even in the most unfortunate places I have been to. It needs a certain kind of appreciation to be able to find the attractiveness in these small and low-cost houses. This experience made me appreciate architecture more. This made me realize that architecture is not a matter of how large your building is or how the structures you create impress other people but it is in your own world of designing things or structures that makes you satisfied. In your world wherein everything that exists is taken into consideration, everything evolves around architecture. You cannot sacrifice one thing for the other.

As a second year student, of course, I don't know a lot, but with my apprenticeship here, I have learned many things. I tried to explore what that "world" is, the world of architecture for the urban poor communities. Well, this world is a fun one. I had the chance to design something out of the smallest amount of money possible which gives you your sense of creativity.

Weekdays, I wake up every morning, take a bath then leave for work. 9 in the morning is my call-time in the office and 6 in the evening is my... dismissal time. The staff taught me different new things that relate to constructing low-cost houses and I might say, they also have given me knowledge of the typical household chores. In my opinion, this is one of the things that students like me needs to learn. Well at least you can apply this knowledge to designing the circulation of people in service areas.

During the weekends, I either do my homework from my boss, Architect Lusterio, or go to different sites. Well I had a more fun time in visiting the sites because it is where I go to see rare Pokemons, I mean rare structures. I love it. I love every piece of it.

Some of the things I do are a little of everything, architectural designing and drafting, structural conceptualization, bill of materials, cost estimates and many others. During site visits, I try to observe and analyze things, the environment, to be able to grasp things outside the academics.

I had already taken one step in fulfilling my dream towards becoming an architect. And it is through TAO-Pilipinas where I discovered all of this stuff. I still have one month to go and yet it feels that I have already learned more than the others. From now on, I will get serious with my work and I hope that even after my remaining one month, I would still be able to work with this organization.



*Miko documents an informal structure in Rodriguez, Rizal for the technical assistance project to FHP.*



*Miko at the exhibit of winning and notable entries of YP Design Challenge*

## YP Reflections



**Deanna Veronica Haduca** is a senior student of BS Environmental Planning and Management (Major in Urban Planning and Green Architecture) at Miriam College. Veron took up the summer internship at TAO-Pilipinas as part of her on-the-job training requirements. Her main task was to undertake a research study on the development of settlements along the Manggahan Floodway.

My internship at TAO-Pilipinas has changed my perception about the real world and about my course (environmental planning). Through their technical projects with urban poor communities, it made me learn and realize the potentials of being an environmental urban planner and at the same time understand the living conditions of different urban poor communities.

Throughout my internship at TAO-Pilipinas, I experienced having site visits with three different urban poor partner communities. I have been to Bgy. Tanza and Bgy. Tangos in Navotas, and in SHEC-Pasay. I have seen how the houses in Bgy. Tangos, Navotas were built on stilts surrounded by pool of trash underneath. As TAO-Pilipinas extend their technical assistance to these communities, they have launched the Youth Urban Gardens Project, which hopes to provide livelihood to these communities while making it a "green" community. I was impressed with the community-based solid waste management program implemented and maintained in SHEC-Pasay.

Aside from site visits, I was also given a research project about settlements along the Manggahan Floodway Project. I was really overwhelmed upon seeing the research outline that I was to follow which made me initially think of giving up. It was a different research paper for me since it was extensive and I was to do it by myself. Also, I will be doing it for work, not only because it is academically required.

Every task has its challenges and difficulties, and I experienced them as I went through my research --- communicating with government agencies and the urban community leaders especially when it's my first time to visit the government agency or community; meeting new people and personally talking to them. Another challenge I experienced was managing my time and work schedule. I was working under pressure of balancing my field research and site visits with documenting and writing my research paper.

These challenges I faced and eventually overcame, apart from the lessons and realizations I gained and learned after doing my tasks. I learned to work independently and communicate with other people. Learning how to commute is my personal achievement. I also realized and discovered my own potentials as a student taking up an urban planning course. More importantly, I gained an understanding of other peoples' lives and saw reality in a different perspective. I found it was way too different compared to what was taught to us in school.

After my internship experience, I will be looking back on the days I spent doing the tasks assigned to me. I still feel overwhelmed with the thought that I did finish my research paper alone and on time. I feel proud of myself. It would not have been possible without the help and guidance of TAO-Pilipinas whom I thank for trusting me and for giving me this wonderful experience. *(Veron Haduca)*

~o~o~o~o~



**Rowel Lucilo** is a BS Architecture graduate from Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila and participated in the YP Workshop on Water and Sanitation last October 2009. Ali was part of the YP team that assisted a community in Bicol Area, Tanza, Navotas to apply for a legal water connection. For his summer internship, Ali worked on the schematic architectural designs for an Ecology and Demonstration Farm.

My internship in TAO-Pilipinas is one life experience that I will never forget. They taught me a lot of things that cannot be learned in a conventional architectural firm and foremost is to be passionate about helping other people even without getting something in return. As an aspiring architect, the experience taught me to be independent and resourceful. The architects in TAO-Pilipinas helped me in completing my tasks and I often seek their advice on the problems I encounter in the projects. They are all hardworking women, sometimes doing things not necessarily in line with the architecture profession. Multi-tasking is something I also learned in TAO, where you have to be versatile and flexible.

I realized that knowledge is not always in paper and sometimes we have to set aside this paper and explore the world around us. And a lot of the things we experience by exploring our surroundings can be amazing. My stay in TAO helped me to grow more as a person and as an aspiring architect. Given the chance and the means, I would like to help them in their advocacies.

Thank you TAO-Pilipinas for the privilege of helping poor communities in their endeavours for a better life. And for letting me explore design innovation and for letting me express my opinion in every project assigned to me. *(Ali Lucilo)*

~o~o~o~o~



Veron with fellow interns and youth group members in Tanza, Navotas



Veron at the SHEC-Pasay socialized housing project



Ali with fellow interns during a visit to the Eco-Farm project site in Norzagaray

## YP REFLECTIONS



*Koen van Gotha is a 25 year old Interior Design graduate from Gent, Belgium. He started his 5-month internship at TAO-Pilipinas last February as part of the Postgraduate North-South Program of Katho University.*

I graduated as an Interior Designer in Belgium (2010) and started a Postgraduate about global development in the same year. The main focus point of this post-graduate is a 5 month internship in a developing country of choice. I chose TAO- Pilipinas for my internship because this NGO of professional architects endorses sustainability, eco-friendly design and use of alternative materials. Things I was eager to learn more about. Their target is helping the urban poor with technical assistance on housing, which is a lot more useful than the targets of my fellow students in college and I felt this was something I really needed to do.

Although I knew there would be quite a few differences between the things I've learned in Belgium and the things TAO-Pilipinas is already familiar with, it struck me nonetheless. Different drawing techniques, switching from metric system to English system, architectural terms in a language different than my own made it sometimes quite hard to contribute efficiently.

The biggest problem was the consideration for the limited budget of the urban poor. Especially since affordability wasn't something to keep into account during my education as a student. Creating affordable solutions for their houses proved to be quite challenging and demanding to be resourceful.

In my first month I got a chance to familiarize with the BP220 for socialized housing in the Philippines and with local building techniques and materials such as the Compressed Earth Blocks, Wood Wool Cement Board and others. This was very helpful since I was going to help out with the Resettlement Project for Masagana, a poor community in Tanza, Navotas. Masagana is located in an old fish pond which is flooded since a dike broke in 2007. Their lack of proper sanitation and access to potable water demands urgent assistance. I helped improving the housing schemes for the 80sqm and 100sqm lots and helped with lay outing when we

**Pls. turn to page 7**



*Loverina Cruz is a 26 year old graduate of BS Architecture from Mapua Institute of Technology. She returned to the Philippines after working for several years in Singapore and applied for the summer internship program of TAO-Pilipinas.*

For 4 years, I worked as a submission architect in Singapore, preparing plans and contract documents for government authority submissions. Though my work comprised architectural work, I have deep desires for working with civic organizations dedicated to provide decent housing for the poor. During my stay abroad, I've actively volunteered with Habitat for Humanity Singapore housing projects. Because of that, I came back to the Philippines to pursue further training with NGOs working on housing. Since I don't have local work experience, I chose 'TAO Pilipinas' internship program to learn the kind of technical assistance NGOs give to urban poor communities.

I worked on a project under the Human Settlements and Environment program and was given a chance to visit communities. Together with HSE Team, we went to Brgy. Tanza and Tangos in Navotas and communities along San Juan and Tullahan rivers in Quezon City. I've passed by areas like these before and thought I wouldn't be surprised to see the actual conditions but it was really different spending a day walking around and interacting with people living in those areas. I was moved to see how these people survive a day despite their living conditions but was also impressed to know that even with such difficulties, they managed to run an organized community willing to work for progress and for the benefit of their families.



**Pls. turn to page 7**

10

2011: A DECADE OF TAO

THINGS You Need to  
Know About Being a  
**COMMUNITY  
ARCHITECT**

This year TAO celebrates 10 years of involvement in community development work. To mark this milestone, we're starting this series from contributions by TAO architects. Here is our Executive Director Arlene Lusterio's take on the subject:

- 1 People have DREAMS and ASPIRATIONS. RESPECT the people and their dreams and aspirations. This is the foundation of a true blue DEVELOPMENT.
- 2 The ARCHITECT is the TOOL for the realization of the COMMUNITY's dream. He is not the DREAMER.
- 3 LISTEN. Let the people talk. They have the answers to their problems.
- 4 MAN Power is the strength of the poor. Every drop of a poor man's sweat counts as every centavo to build a house.
- 5 NOTHING is NOTHING. Nothing is free in this world. DON'T give away your services /time /knowledge /skills for nothing, even for the poor, or you will be valued as NOTHING in the end.
- 6 A COMMUNITY is a bunch of people UNITED for the common good. It is NOT the rows of houses where people live.
- 7 The language of the architect is colorful and multi-dimensional. This is the BEST LANGUAGE to communicate with people. No one else can talk this way.
- 8 POVERTY is the shield of the wicked. It is NOT AN OBSTACLE to development. Don't be thwarted.
- 9 TIME IS GOLD. The poor, who live by the day, can't lose a day to live. Put PREMIUM ON PEOPLE'S TIME.
- 10 PARTICIPATION can only be POWERFUL if people are armed with information and knowledge to make decisions.

### Reflections by Koen van Gotha

(From page 6)

entered this project for the Holcim Awards, an international competition for sustainable construction. Our proposal for the competition consisted of 10 images with detailed information about the Masagana Resettlement Project. After our submission I was finally able to visit the site and join a meeting with the community leader. Floating on improvised rafts through the flooded village will definitely be a lifetime experience.

I was also able to help out with the Housing Repair program for Tangos community in Navotas together with 3 summer interns from Manila. Observing how the urban poor live in often inhumane conditions proved to be quite shocking but instructive and eye-opening at the same time. Nothing has been more difficult than trying to imagine how these people live their lives, survive in extreme conditions and are still able to greet you with the most sincere smiles I've ever seen. It has definitely put my western worries in a whole new perspective.

Besides the Housing program and the Masagana Resettlement Project, I joined a workshop on SWM (Solid Waste Management), visited several poor communities and went on a Heritage Tour in Taal, Batangas.

I have still 2 more months to go with TAO-Pilipinas and I feel already reluctant in leaving this valuable source of life experience. Their passion and devotion is admirable and inspired me to continue in this line of work.

### Reflections by Loverina Cruz (From page 6)

As an intern, I was able to observe participatory planning activities with a community that will be resettled in Angat, Bulacan. I've also done cost estimates for house repairs in Brgy. Tangos and did research and writing for an article about self-help housing programs in the Philippines. Through these works, I was able to look closely into the situations of the urban poor particularly on land and housing and get a new perspective on my role as an architect. I was overwhelmed to know growing numbers of organizations dedicated to alleviate poor housing conditions.

Since I graduated, I've worked on large-scale buildings with big budget and high-end design. My internship work at TAO was the exact opposite. I came to realize that urban poor are the most unserved people by architects like me because of their lack of ability to pay for professional fees. With a very small amount of budget, which cycles around a monthly savings scheme, we needed to design houses and plan construction taking into consideration safety and livability. It made me look on my own contributions whether I'm doing enough to help them. Getting informed of what the real situation is made me realize that giving

donations is just one of the ways to help them, but taking part on programs to sustain efforts for sustainability is also one role architects could take.

I was really moved by the commitment of TAO staff to address such needs considering the amount of work needed to be done from planning to complying to government ordinances to launching programs for sustainability and resource management. In a time when architects choose to work as professionals in a global architecture field, these people work at the grassroots level, addressing individual families' needs. I am very thankful for this experience and now that I've seen closely the real state of housing in my own country, I feel more responsible.

~o~o~o~o~

## 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.



*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.*

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.**



*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.

## YP Reflections by Andy Sztark



*Andy Sztark is a 23-year old European master's student at Institut d'Urbanisme de Grenoble in France. He just recently finished a five-month internship at TAO-Pilipinas, Inc. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Geography and is currently finishing a Master's Degree in Urban Development and International Cooperation. His thesis focuses on the acknowledgment of the free market and the empowerment of individual initiative toward slums upgrading. He is mainly inspired by the Austrian School of Economics and its heterodox theories of the free market and the spontaneous order that object Keynesianism. He also takes part in political debates in his birth region, calling for more regional autonomy and participatory democracy. He spends his remaining free time composing electronic music and travelling.*

WHILE ALL OF MY CLASSMATES WENT TO AFRICA OR TO LATIN AMERICA, my choice to go to the Philippines could seem surprising. I had the opportunity to visit South East Asia before and my experience there pushed me to spend more time in this region. I have only got good reviews about the Philippines despite the fact that it is largely unknown for most French people. The Philippines is known to be very friendly and has the world's most splendid islands. But primarily, as an urban planner, knowing that Manila is one of the megacities and hit by a fast development, it sounded like a great place to visit and to grasp.

Having this mandatory semester abroad to graduate was a great opportunity and I wanted to use it to go to the edge of the world – this is how the Philippines look like from Europe – and to enjoy this experience completely. Unlike northern European countries, Latin European students have fewer chances to get time to travel around the world; although living abroad one semester or more is a once-in-a-lifetime-experience that makes us grow up, opening our mind. Moreover, it helps us figure out many things about ourselves like for our coming career and our personal life.

For sure I don't regret this choice, I've never regretted any second of my time spent here. The change of scenery and the disorientation I experienced being here was making every day exciting. Humanly and professionally the 5 months I spent in the Philippines gave me more than I expected. Of course, arriving here all on my own, it hasn't been easy the first weeks to get used to all the "material" and cultural differences. After all this time I can admit that, the climate, transport issue, snail-speed-internet, or the urban chaos were not big issues for me to deal with. Although cultural lag and huge social disparities are the kind of things we never get used to, and that can be frustrating. Some situations seemed to me sometimes baffling or sometimes just embarrassing.

I can probably say that I've fully enjoyed my experience here as I took every moment of my free time to discover the city, traveling around the country and making a lot of new friends. In the Philippines, it feels like on a sudden impulse, you can decide

to take a bus and go anywhere. I've (almost) never been lost as there are always unknowns to help you and to orient you. There's a feeling of freedom in the Philippines that you can't experience in Europe, maybe because developed countries are over-organized and over-regulated. I discovered many different sides of the Filipino culture, in the end maybe I only regret not to have learnt more of Tagalog.

From Europe I've heard that Manila was the most dangerous city in Asia and here, Filipinos always warned me about how dangerous the city is. Maybe I was lucky but I felt much safer than in my birth town, which is probably 100 times smaller. Being a bit too adventurous, I sometimes found myself in the middle of the night crossing marginalized neighborhoods, but nothing bad happened. In France, crossing dangerous neighborhoods in the middle of the night will for sure make you lose your phone and wallet.

My time with TAO was a great professional experience wherein I've discovered brand new professional activities and got involved into the life of an NGO. It hasn't been easy every day to be the only foreigner – only boy – and youngest staff, but in the end the professional environment is really nurturing. The demanding approach and seriousness of the executives substantially improved the quality of my work and the outputs of my research. I admit I wished to participate more in the work of TAO and less on my own, working on my master thesis. I expected to be more included in the team and the life of the NGO.

The 5 days I spent with the staff in Manicani, Guiuan was a real immersion into a rural Waray community that I really appreciated. What I felt there is a bit of a stereotype but it seems like despite poverty, people are happy, smiling so much more than any French. Kids are growing up outside with plenty of friends and without any materialistic concerns. I really felt that these Filipinos are living in some conditions that are close to what the human kind is made for, in my opinion that's probably why they look so fulfilled and untroubled.

By coming to the Philippines, I was expecting to figure out how I wanted to orient my professional life. In the end, the 5 months I spent here gave me new ideas and more confidence in my abilities and more knowledge about my defects. But it also brought new interrogations. I'll probably work as an urban planner in Europe for a while before trying to set up my own business within the next couple of years. For this purpose the Philippines is a great location, there is so much to do here.



*Andy Sztark during his community fieldwork in Manicani Island, Guiuan, Eastern Samar. **Left photo:** He is facilitating a review of one FGD about sustainable practices. **Right photo:** He also facilitated the recap of what happened during Day 1 of the workshop.*

## PMPI NCR Urban Cluster holds medical mission

THE PHILIPPINE MISERIOR Partnership Inc. (PMPI), together with its NCR Urban Quick Response Team headed by the Integrative Medicine for Alternative Healthcare System, Inc. (INAM), held a medical mission on November 9, 2015 at Northville 9, Barangay Iba O'este in Calumpit, Bulacan. Northville 9 is a designated relocation site for informal settler families. The community experienced severe flooding due to typhoon Lando (Koppu) that struck Luzon last October.

The successful medical mission serviced more than six hundred thirty (630) families with modern medical treatments, medical consultations, pharmaceutical assistance and alternative treatments such as acupuncture.

The PMPI NCR Urban Quick Response Team is composed of Community Organizers Multiversity (COM), TAO-Pilipinas, Urban Poor Associates (UPA), and John J. Carroll Institute on Church and Social Issues



Arch. Anna Estela Rosario Ulep and Engr. Ma.Lorena Hernandez as representatives of TAO-Pilipinas helped with the medical mission by manning the makeshift pharmacy area.

(JJCICSI). These partners worked together to assist evacuated families affected by the flooding. In line with this, TAO-Pilipinas distributed

reusable tarpaulins donated by Starbucks Philippines for typhoon-affected families. (AERU)

## INTERNSHIP POSTSCRIPT: THOUGHTS FROM ERICKA LLABORE

*Ericka Gabrielle Llabore is a 5th year architecture student from Technological Institute of the Philippines Quezon City (TIP-QC). She worked as a TAO intern from June to October 2015 as part of her OJT subject. During her internship, she completed 3d scaled models together with her fellow intern, Nilo Rusiana, Jr. She also wrote articles for our YP E-Newsletter and translated technical documents from English to Filipino.*

OUR JOURNEY AS AN architecture student will not always be those of sleepless nights, unending plates and meeting deadlines for submittals required by our professors in our major and minor subjects. We also need to embrace the reality that one day we will be working in a company that can help us enhance the talents we have. Preferably a company with dignity, has good reputation, and cares for people and the environment. To gain that kind of experience and knowledge as students, we have our on-the-job training that is a required subject in our curriculum at TIP. It is for the benefit of the students to showcase what they learned in school and to see the reality in the field of architecture outside the campus.

Last semester, while most of my friends went to different architectural firms, I decided to take up my on-the-job training in a non-profit NGO recommended by my good friend and where she had her on-the-job training as well. TAO-Pilipinas Inc. is not a conventional architectural firm

but they accept architecture students as interns. It was not a big company that I expected but the drive of the people behind the organization certainly makes a big difference.

Days turned into weeks and weeks into months and the ambiance inside our office since day one remained the same, the treatment of the interns by the staff is like that of family. They don't make us feel that we don't belong in the company; my co-intern and classmate, Nilo Rusiana Jr., will agree with me that our office became our home for 5 months from June up to October. The modest treatment that we received from them helped me realize that even if you are a professional, you must be humble; your feet must be planted on the same ground as the next person because it creates an effect that radiates to people that surround you. The staffs were very friendly and courteous to us and that inspired us to accomplish things and give them the same respect that they have given to us as interns.

In our office we were assigned to do scaled models of shelter unit designs and sometimes I did some writings for our newsletter. These tasks were all time bounded. We had to meet the deadlines for one scaled model, finish the next task, and so on. With the limited time that we had per day, we must finish many tasks in order for us to come up with a satisfactory output while taking into account project deadlines. In four years of studying architecture, time is indeed essential in all the things that we do. Our internship at TAO-Pilipinas made me appreciate how proper time management can help us finish not only the assigned tasks in our office but also the things we need to do in school.

Architecture for me before was just a plain program that taught you about designing and planning structures, but my internship at TAO-Pilipinas made me realize how architecture can change the lives of the people living in a particular environment. As the TAO architects considered the participation of residents in

the design process, they made sure that the people were well-oriented about the proper sizes of rooms, doors and windows, and other architectural elements. People were also provided with the opportunity to give inputs to the architectural design such as particular paint colors for their houses. They reached out to the poor and worked with them to help them improve their lives and living conditions. I am proud to say that once in my life I became a part of this organization.



Ericka writes the draft of her articles on top of making 3d scaled models.

*Shalena Mae Caasi is a 5th year architecture student from University of Santo Tomas. Sha worked as a TAO intern from June to July 2016 as part of her OJT subject. During her internship, she did construction monitoring for Masagana Angat Resettlement Project together with two of her fellow UST batchmates who also did their internship at TAO. She also assisted the TAO technical team in the documentation of the local shelter plan workshop and subdivision planning and house design workshop in Salcedo.*



*One of the tasks assigned to Sha is construction monitoring of the core house construction in Masagana Angat Resettlement Site. In this picture, she is taking measurements of the footing excavation to check if it is according to plan.*



*Part of the documentation work that Sha did for the subdivision planning and house design workshop in Salcedo, Eastern Samar is to draw the floor plan of the 3d scaled models done by the workshop participants.*

“WHY DID YOU TAKE UP architecture? Why do you want to be an architect?” Questions people bring up to an architecture student every single time. From freshmen year to senior year, the answer varies all the time. This may be affected by the love-hate relationship with architecture. Motivation goes up but sometimes goes down, because of stress and sleepless nights. We sometimes forget our motivation why we took up this profession in the first place.

In my fourth year as an architecture student, we were asked to have an internship and we were free to choose where we want to have our first job experience. For me, I wanted an experience that could make my love for architecture grow deeper. I wanted to be in a firm or organization that has deeper purpose with

their works rather than a usual business-minded one. And that’s when I found about TAO-Pilipinas Inc., a nonprofit, non-government organization which technically assist communities in need.

I was captivated by their drive to serve people who are not usually attended to by most of the other architects. Their drive to go to remote places just to educate and assist people to have better shelter and living conditions is what I have not thought of in my four years as a student. Discovering the purpose of this organization, I immediately applied, fortunately got hired and started my young professional experience, right after my fourth academic year ended.

I had my internship with them in just two months, but the learning I gained is worth more than a year I had in college. I was not

just assigned on computer aided drafting works all-day in front of the computer which was expected in typical firms. I handled tasks that taught me a lot and which widely varied, from model-making, preparation of workshop materials, documentation, site visitations and inspections, computer aided drafting, rendering, and so much more. Even the little details such as arranging miniature cut-out lots made me knowledgeable of standard sizes and of course, taught me to be patient.

It was not only the assigned tasks that taught me a lot, but also the interactions with my officemates, mentors, mothers of Masagana, project contractor and his workers, and the people whom the organization serves within the Masagana community and the Salcedo municipality. The whole experience may be

unexpectedly fully loaded with tasks and entailed all-day work, but the people I had interacted with, made it lighter and meaningful.

This experience made my love for architecture grow deeper. I suggest that this internship is a great preparation for young professionals, as they must establish genuine passion for their profession. This unforgettable experience will be carried with me until I pursue my goal to be an architect and an environmental planner someday. I hope to be able to reach out and improve peoples’ lives, and advance the notion of architecture as a significant profession in making the world better.

*Verl Arvin Dela Cruz is a 5th year architecture student from University of Santo Tomas. Verl worked as a TAO intern from June to July 2016 as part of his OJT subject. During his internship, he assisted the TAO technical team in the documentation of the local shelter plan workshop and subdivision planning and house design workshop in Salcedo. He is currently finishing his undergraduate thesis which is a community housing and development complex for an Aeta community in Tarlac. He used participatory design process, adapted from TAO's design approach, as part of his methodology in coming up with his design solution.*



*Verl assisted the TAO technical team in facilitating one of the groups during the subdivision planning workshop in Salcedo, Eastern Samar.*



*Part of the documentation work that Verl did for the subdivision planning and house design workshop in Salcedo, Eastern Samar is to draw the floor plan of the 3d scaled models done by the workshop participants.*



*Verl explains to an Aeta community the meaning of participatory design as part of his undergraduate thesis. Photo by: Jensine Filio dela Cruz*

ARCHITECTURE HAS always been stereotyped by the majority as an elite profession. Soaring skyscrapers, grand facades and complex designs have dominated the field ever since. Although these representations are valid, there is so much more that architecture can offer; something beyond what people can see. Humanitarian Architecture has lately influenced my view of the architecture profession. Ever since a visit to a rural Aeta community in Tarlac, I have decided to pursue a more socially responsive

field in architecture. This led me to pursue a social approach to my architectural undergraduate thesis. My thesis, entitled TAWO: Aeta Community Housing and Development Complex, aims to provide a decent socialized housing for the Aetas of Tarlac, as well as provide a sustainable community with social, health, and livelihood elements.

As a requirement for a degree in architecture, we are required to undergo a 200-hour apprenticeship period for our summer term. I saw this as an opportunity to gather experience

for my thesis, so I immediately searched for architectural firms/ organizations in line with the field of community and social design. As I was browsing through different humanitarian organizations, a friend of mine recommended the organization, TAO-Pilipinas, to me. I researched their profile, and I instantly fell in love with their work. Before I knew it I was an official YP intern of TAO-Pilipinas. Working for the organization has definitely broken and moulded me as a young professional. It was certainly difficult working for a small office. The heavy workload, long office hours, travel distance, and community immersions, proved to be a challenge for a struggling architecture student like me. Although as difficult as it may have been, my time working with TAO-Pilipinas has given me a new outlook about the profession that I wouldn't change for the world.

The greatest thing I picked up from TAO-Pilipinas is their participatory approach in design and planning. Although there are some parts with the method that I question, I definitely agree with the importance of community participation in planning. Because of this, I applied this design approach to my undergraduate thesis. I drafted my own participatory design outline that I think would fit with the goals and objectives of my thesis. The first leg of the participatory design workshop consists of expectations setting, house ideologies, house construction, and Aeta cultural inputs. The whole process was a culmination of all that I have learned as an intern at TAO-Pilipinas.

As cliché as it may sound, I want to change the world through my profession. I believe that as long as we have the passion, architecture can save lives.

## Crossing Boundaries

by Niña Joy T. Macaranas

*Niña Joy T. Macaranas is a 5th year architecture student at UST College of Architecture. She finished her OJT placement at TAO-Pilipinas last July 2017 wherein she was able to conduct field visits to Masagana in Angat, Bulacan among other things.*



*Niña (right) together with her fellow UST intern Erol Enriquez measures the footing excavation made for the housing project of Masagana Angat.*

ARCHITECTS DESIGN FOR THINGS TO work. In a society in chaos, maybe now is the time to utilize the architectural skill of designing and making things work in order to make peace out of the chaos. I think this is what TAO-Pilipinas, through their community development projects, had been contributing to society. Through my internship at TAO-Pilipinas, I was able to witness how the organization helps out communities, like in Masagana, Homonhon and Manicani, in order to create a better environment for them. What's also commendable is that TAO-Pilipinas helps without really encouraging the community to be dependent on the organization.

My internship at TAO-Pilipinas taught me to be more meticulous with my work. The projects assigned to me involving CAD works really helped to refresh my graphics and technical skills. A project involving scaled models also helped me to be more patient and careful in working. Every cut must be precise because of time and budget restrictions.

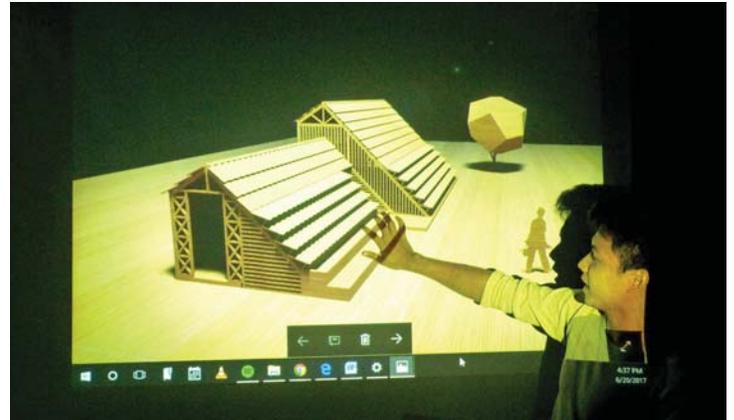
The activity that really caught my interest and made an impact was the field activity. It made me realize that maybe after college I would pursue project management. For me, there's a different feeling of excitement and fulfillment when going to the site than working in the office the whole day.

I believe that my overall experience in TAO-Pilipinas was interesting. The internship inspired me to be involved in projects about community development. I believe that as architects, we design to make society productive and empowered. I think that the tasks given to us during the internship was a balance of office and field works. This is a good thing since we were exposed to both sides of the work. I think that in the future, there can also be a balance of technical, research and design works for the interns. All in all, the internship experience was enjoyable, fulfilling and helpful for my school and future work. (NJTM)

## Serving the "tao ng Pilipinas"

by Herculhes H. Ebol

*Herculhes H. Ebol is a 5th year architecture student at UST College of Architecture. He was a participant of the 2017 YP Workshop on Social Housing which was held last May. After the workshop, he also did his OJT with TAO from June to July 2017 where he got involved in projects such as the design of the community based resource center for Masagana in Angat, Bulacan.*



*Herculhes presents to TAO staff his initial design scheme for the community-based resource center of Masagana Angat.*

GRADUATION IS FAST APPROACHING and as a requirement for our degree, we are obliged to render 240 hours for an on-job-training (OJT) program. During those searching moments for firms where I could apply, I always thought of being in an organization that would somehow guide my path as I embark on my journey in the field of architecture.

I learned about TAO-Pilipinas when our professor, Arch. Rizalito Mercado, invited TAO architects Faith and Angel to join us on the design presentation of Japanese masteral students at the UST College of Architecture. At that moment, I had no idea what TAO-Pilipinas is. Little did I know that it will be the organization where I will do my OJT. I really love social design that I promised myself it would be the topic of my thesis. Seeing an opportunity before my eyes, I didn't hesitate to try my luck to be their intern. Fortunately, I was accepted and I couldn't be more relieved.

TAO-Pilipinas was about to have a workshop about DRRM (Disaster Risk Reduction and Management) that was posted all over our building. I didn't let myself miss this chance to be part of something relevant to society, so I applied for a slot in this workshop. This was the first opportunity I had

to meet the people that composed TAO-Pilipinas. For the first few days of the workshop, we had lectures and introductions about DRRM and we were able to meet the leaders of an urban poor community. We also had some participants from different organizations that are involved in the development of this marginalized sector. The workshop became truly engaging for us, young professionals, for we had truly seen and observed the current conditions in urban poor communities that undoubtedly needed assistance. I can honestly say that with the collective effort of everyone, the workshop had been successful in gathering information that will be useful in making DRRM proposals and designs that will contribute to community resilience. With that workshop, my experience with TAO-Pilipinas began.

Fast forward to June 5, 2017, the start of our journey as interns in TAO. At first, we were assigned to different mentors and were given tasks that fit our abilities. In my case, I was supervised by Arch. Verna Sarraga and she made me do some digital visualization of TAO's current projects. This lasted for a week and a half and I was able to produce 4 rendered works. My next task was designing the community-based resource center (CBRC) of

[READ MORE: P11](#)

## A Change of Setting

by Kristine S. Culaba

*Kristine S. Culaba is a 5th year architecture student at UST College of Architecture. She was a participant of the 2017 YP Workshop on Social Housing where she experienced facilitating a community consultation workshop. She also did her OJT with TAO from June to July 2017. As an intern, she did numerous tasks including research and making 3d scaled models.*



*Kristine facilitates a session during the community consultation workshop of the 2017 YP Workshop on Social Housing*

IN OUR COLLEGE, ARCHITECTURE HAS always been presented in a corporate sense. Students are educated and trained to become part of the corporate world, to become owners of our very own firms. I find nothing wrong with this orientation. In fact, I fully support such ambitions. However, I've never been satisfied with the idea of a corporate work and life. For me, it was lacking in terms of social responsiveness and community orientation which I believe are very relevant today.

I decided to join the YP Workshop on Climate Change and Disaster Resilience to immerse myself in a different environment. The workshop was a perfect venue for exploring community-centered works which requires the application of the skills and knowledge of technical professionals, including architects.

The first two days of the workshop were filled mostly with lectures on social housing, climate change and disaster risk reduction management. The lectures helped deepen my understanding on topics related to the theme of the workshop. Although I missed some lectures during the first day, I was still able to follow through with the seminar because the presentations were included in the manual given to us. The

manual contained, aside from the lectures, guidelines on how to conduct the community workshop properly. The next day, we all went to visit Bistekville 2 and Ernestville where we were oriented about the background of the projects and the issues concerning its residents. We were also given the opportunity to explore the community.

The succeeding days were allocated for the community workshop. We were divided into three groups: kawan 1, kawan 2 and kawan 3; I was assigned to kawan 1. We were adopted by a family from the community for three days and two nights. During our first day in the community, we conducted a transect walkaround the area. On the second day, the community consultation was held and we, young professionals, facilitated the activity. The next day was dedicated to the preparation for the presentation and the mural painting. On the last day of the workshop, all groups presented the outputs of their respective community workshop and mural painting to invited panelists.

One of the highlights of the activity was the community workshop in the respective kawans. The tasks for the workshop were equally distributed among the group members, giving each member the chance to

experience working on all tasks. This was the most memorable moment for me in the whole YP workshop because it was during this activity that I started to understand what participatory planning was and what its significant impact was to the involved communities. It also made me realize the importance of providing technical assistance to the urban and rural poor communities.

On June 5, 2017, I returned to TAO-Pilipinas as an intern. I was tasked to assist in the research on Community-based Disaster Risk Reduction Management (CBDRM) for children. Another work I was given was making the scaled model of Homonhon and Manicani islands and doing the as-built layout plans of houses under Project Pagbangon. I was also involved in various field works. One of these was the Masagana of Angat Project where I was able to experience staking of lots and monitoring of construction progress. I also took part in earth bag construction where we assisted in the ongoing construction of the Climate Resiliency Field School dormitories at Gerona, Tarlac. The field works were the most memorable activities for me because these exposed me to the reality of the organization's work. I got to see firsthand how challenging yet rewarding the practice was. I was also able to see more the value of the organization's works. Another reason was because this was the first time I got to work in the actual site. We never really had fieldworks in our college.

Overall, my experience with TAO-Pilipinas sufficed my initial desire to have a change of setting. The activities and tasks given to us were immersive and practical. It has also deepened my understanding and appreciation of community-centered architecture and made me realize its importance in our society today. My experiences also made me realize just how important it is to empower people and how significant the role of professionals is in empowering people. The empowerment of people, for me, is just as significant as the final physical output of any project. (KSC)

## Serving the... *(continued)*

*from page 10)*



*Herculhes also got to experience doing construction monitoring work for the housing project of Masagana Angat.*

Masagana in Angat, Bulacan; this time I was team-upped with Erol, a fellow intern. We spent a couple of days coming up with our individual designs of the CBRC. We then presented our design with everyone in the office in order for us to improve it.

During the course of our internship, we also did some site visits and hands-on construction that introduced us to different methodologies and technologies and allowed us to better our designs. The rest of our stay in TAO was devoted to making construction drawings and manuals for the Masagana CBRC. It was actually a fun experience. There were even some moments when we needed to stay overnight to be able to finish our work and meet a project deadline. Those were the kind of experiences that I will never forget and will be proud of.

Six weeks later, our internship came to an end. I was a very lucky that I had the chance to work for this kind of office. The people in TAO were so kind and I surely did learn a lot from them. I know that by interning at TAO-Pilipinas, I had also served the "tao ng Pilipinas". (HHE)

# Fringes

by **Theresse R. Julia**

*Theresse R. Julia is the latest addition to the TAO technical staff. Prior to being the research and documentation staff, she was accepted into the YP Internship Program and interned for TAO from October 2016 to April 2017. She graduated from the University of the Philippines, Diliman in 2016 with a degree in architecture. She shares her internship experience in the following article.*



*During her internship, Theresse helped in the facilitation and documentation of several community hazards and resource mapping workshops such as in Brgy. Tandang Sora (top photo) and Damayan sa Floodway (bottom photo).*

OCTOBER 2013 - WE BOARDED a jeepney that would take us to a far-flung resettlement site in Angat, Bulacan to facilitate an art workshop for the kids of Masagana Community. We were allotting a free Sunday as members of a student organization, UP Task Force Arki, in a joint project with TAO-Pilipinas. Three years later, I saw myself as a fresh graduate TAO intern boarding a van, along with TAO staff and a younger batch of TFA members, to visit the same Masagana Community for an upcoming soil stabilization project.

When I submitted three letters of interest to two small private firms and to a non-profit NGO last year, I just wanted to get a job, acquire the required experience, and take the licensure exam—immediate concerns of a fresh architecture graduate. I didn't know if any of them had an opening, I just picked

three potential employers in close proximity from home and waited for a response. Whichever of the three I ended up with, I'd leave after six months, just like most of the architects-in-training I know, and find another one to rack up hours for the logbook. TAO-Pilipinas happened to be the one with room to spare. I expected to jump ship after the three-month internship. Before I knew it, I had extended it to six months, and I eventually found myself asking about a non-intern post. With a stroke of luck and the stars aligning, I'm still here a year later.

A couple of friends who work at similar NGOs (LinkBuild and TAMPEI) gave me a synopsis of what working in this particular field entailed. Despite having been exposed to the work of these organizations in college (albeit lacking in a profound understanding

of the 'technical assistance' role at the time), I still had no idea what I was getting into. Going outside of your comfort zone is good for the health after all, or so I heard.

For a ridiculously fragile human being, there's always a degree of excitement with working on the ground in areas away from what is familiar. During my first house construction monitoring visits to Masagana, I got my foot stuck in a muddy backfill on three separate occasions. I just flailed helplessly each time and the residents would always come to my aid. One of the best decisions I made in life was to invest on rain boots for the succeeding field visits whenever Nanay would text me that it had rained in Masagana the previous night. Then again, nothing could have prevented me from slipping at the front yard of a lovely pink house during a post-occupancy evaluation in Manicani Island. I'm not the most graceful person out there.

I do have a tendency of throwing myself in situations that are physically and socially way in over my head. Who knew your face could become such a chromatic anomaly by producing the reddest shade when speaking in public? Much like my interview before being accepted as an intern, I had repressed the memory of my YP internship presentation. I do vividly remember the gibberish I uttered before releasing a primal scream as an introduction. That was hilarious. I hope that people on the other end of the line don't notice my voice quiver whenever I answer the phone.

Much like everyone else, I was a fish out of water when I started. It took me a couple of months to find my footing (although not literally because I still trip over thin air). This was practically uncharted territory that I wanted to dive right into. I wanted to read up on the concepts and learn the jargon, basically just about everything to be on the same page as everyone here (although progress has been slow because TAO's library is filled with other alluring titles). It

doesn't get easier, but it's all worth it. I get to be part of a world that isn't particularly visible in the field of architecture. I get the chance to attend seminars, facilitate or participate in workshops, immerse in diverse communities, show off my physical strength (or lack thereof) through pumping a deep well—opportunities that I probably wouldn't have accessed had I worked elsewhere.

As a student, you daydream about changing the world, curing cancer and whatnot; and when you step out of the confines of school, you find out that reality is too harsh for your predictably idealistic dreams. Although I've always been on the cynical side of the spectrum, I expected to wear out the glimmer of idealism I had as a fresh graduate pretty soon as I got accepted for an internship with a non-profit NGO. Yet, working with this organization surprised me.

I'm perpetually fascinated by the network of technical resource and assistance NGOs of various expertise in community development. It pains me to wax lyrical on this one, but initially learning about the PHILSSA and PMPI consortiums, especially Project Pagbangan, was like discovering superheroes from childhood come to life and band together to save the world, or something like that. Of course, the analogy is a bit of a stretch considering that these groups employ the participatory approach and self-help model in community planning and development. The communities themselves are the heroes of their own stories. They aren't just numbers in an infographic about poverty and housing crisis to alleviate. These are families, individuals, just trying to navigate this plane of existence like the rest of us, except with fewer resources. This is where the NGOs come in, to provide support.

While architecture is perceived to be a profession for the elite, there is a range of preconceived notion when it comes to working in an NGO as an architecture graduate. Contrary to popular belief, working

[READ MORE: P7](#)

Fringes... *(continued from page 6)*



Part of her internship enabled her to do numerous fieldwork including site visits to *Damayan sa Floodway in Taytay, Rizal* (top photo) and *Manicani Island in Guiuan, Eastern Samar* (bottom photo).

with NGOs doesn't mean settling for less in terms of success in the field, or getting paid substantially for doing less; I haven't met a single self-righteous, pseudo-altruist in this line of work. The way I see it, it's no different than working elsewhere; we do our part as infinitesimal smidges in the universe, trying to make this world a little bit better for the rest of us, just like everybody else.

June 2010—through random draw, I was assigned to TFA during a freshmen orientation event organized by the student council. It was fun. I felt like I could get along with the members of an org that happened to be 'the service-oriented one' in college. I didn't consider applying for the other student orgs because sometimes I have tunnel vision. It's not a coincidence that TFA and TAO have been associated since the latter's establishment. Both of TAO's founders, along with several former and current staff, are TFA alumnae. Perhaps the random draw turned out to be a defining moment, as I had been instinctively led to this 'socially responsive' path. Or maybe I was just going to adapt to the first thing I associate with. Regardless, this is where I am, and it's something I want to pursue further.

Ultimately, I still have a long way to go. I'm probably too emotionally invested in the organization now, but I've only scratched the surface in terms of knowledge and skill in this line of work; and I hope to delve deeper into the field. Getting to the level of experience wherein I don't feel like a chicken with its head cut off anymore is a daunting and turbulent ride that I just want to fast-forward, but I'm excited all the same.



Therese gives a lecture about the basic concepts of disaster risk reduction and management during a community consultation workshop with Brgy. Tandang Sora.

Internship Postscript

from Herculhes Ebol

*Herculhes Ebol is a 5th year architecture student at University of Santo Tomas. He did his on-the-job training with TAO-Pilipinas from June to July 2017. This essay is a reflection piece after reading Fr. Jorge Anzorena's Housing the Poor. He also submitted a poem after completing his OJT.*

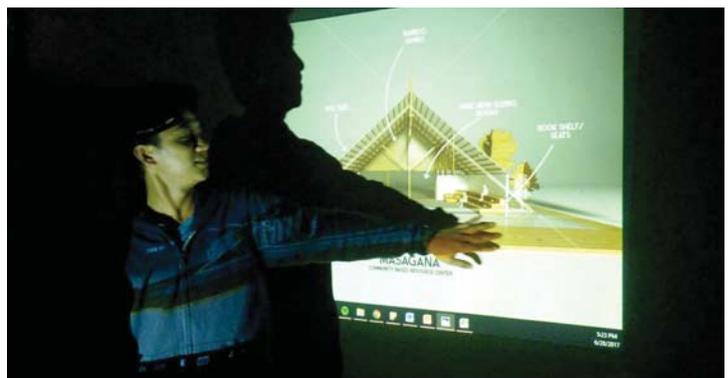
I WONDER IF THE WORLD HAS ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS --- PEOPLE of different social status living in the same dimension, except that they actually don't. Discrimination and ostracism are so evident but media and political campaigns are no longer covering this harsh truth well enough to open the eyes of citizens like me. The marginalized do often suffer injustice and unfair treatment but as I thumbed through the pages of Eduardo Jorge Anzorena S.J.'s "Housing the Poor", I have come to gradually understand the underlying strength they have within themselves.

The marginalized are the "majority" ones. They are the backbone of the economy of countries they are living in and yet they are denied of a right that all human beings deserve - to be able to have decent housing.

The only way in which the poor can be heard is when they are organized. It's the same as the saying, "a stick is no good on its own but if you bundle it with the other sticks, you can make a one good broom." It does makes sense, right? In a society which is increasingly hostile to the poor, the poor have to form organizations to be able to accomplish anything. Urban and rural poor groups located in different parts of the world have proved this effective. In a nutshell, it's a matter of taking things on their own hands and not relying on an erratic government.

However, merely having their own organizations is not enough to suffice their needs. That is when non-profit, non-government organizations come in. For me, they personify the image of an angel that assists oppressed

[READ MORE: P8](#)



Snapshots of Herculhes during his time working with TAO-Pilipinas. **Top photo:** He was able to experience facilitating a community consultation workshop during the 2017 YP Workshop on Social Housing. **Bottom photo:** He presented his initial scheme for the Masagana CBRC to TAO technical staff.

**Internship Postscript...** *(continued from page 7)*

people in any possible way they can. Earning just little to nothing, I admire how these groups converge to reach out to their destitute brothers and sisters.

Being poor is really tough; an experience one will never truly know about unless one has toiled under the sun and suffer burned flesh, all for a meal. The book elaborately describes how poor people are in dire need of aid but should not be labeled as a “burden” or “parasites” of society. Government programs, volunteer works, fundraisers, and financial support are just some ways to help the poor.

We don’t choose the type of life we want to have when we are born. A lot of people live in dreadful conditions and we cannot just hope for utopia. It is just right that we do what we can to lend a hand to those who are in need.

**We’re Alike**

We are all born naked in this world  
Nothing but air to keep us alive  
Yet somehow reality was curled  
Not everyone is meant to survive

Before us are inequalities  
Unfair weighing of the justice scale  
But who are we gonna blame for this?  
If this has become our nightly tale

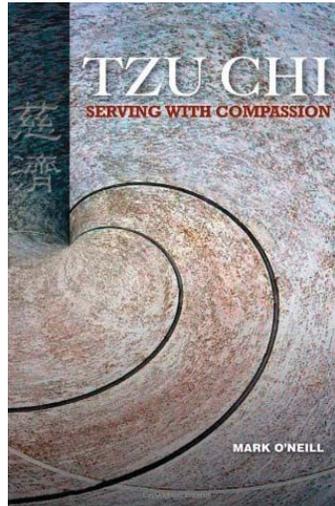
We’ve walked on the same dirt of the earth  
Felt warmth on our skin with the same sun  
Decent house they got none since their birth  
Line of differences has begun

If we know that we can do something  
Then why on earth are we sitting still?  
Our brothers are already sinking  
Would you like to experience the wheel?

As we try to strengthen their houses  
We’re building a stronger foundation  
To prove that we’re not just for business  
We are to build a better nation



*Herculhes was also able to visit Masagana in Angat, Bulacan several times to do construction monitoring and community validation workshop.*



Title: **Tzu Chi Serving with Compassion**  
Author: **Mark O’Neill**  
Publisher: **John Wiley & Sons Asia (2010)**

Tzu Chi Foundation gained local prominence in the Philippines during the immediate aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan as an international organization that provided much needed aid and relief especially in the devastated areas. Apart from extending speedy

assistance to disaster victims, little has been known about the Taiwan-based organization. In this book, author Mark O’Neill introduces us to the largest NGO in the Chinese-speaking world and offers a comprehensive chronicle of the history and global outreach of the charitable foundation.

Tzu Chi is a Buddhist philanthropy founded on principles of brotherly compassion for those who are suffering. The book gives a fascinating account of how Cheng Yen, a poor Buddhist nun, started a movement in 1966 to help the poor and the sick in a small town in East Taiwan and directed its growth into what is today a worldwide organization of volunteers capable of giving quick humanitarian response in disaster events. Aside from providing relief and medical aid, the foundation runs schools, hospitals, a television channel, a university, and the biggest bone marrow bank in Asia.

The author tells about the work of the foundation across the globe, extending help and assistance to those in need regardless of race or religion and without imposing Buddhism on its beneficiaries. There are chapters devoted to Tzu Chi’s overseas missions in China, Indonesia, South Africa, and the US, chronicling difficulties encountered in giving aid to remote areas and challenges overcome in navigating through different cultural and political landscapes. The book is definitely not short on positive affirmations and accounts of good deeds.

Readers will be impressed to discover of the foundation’s capability to mobilize massive resources through generous donors and committed volunteers inspired by the charismatic Master Cheng Yen. The story of how Tzu Chi established its first hospital in Hualien is a testament to its spiritual leader’s vision and tenacity. The book is quite an enlightening read about Buddhism that is not confined to temple worship and meditation. Relief goods and medical care are acts of giving delivered personally by Tzu Chi members and volunteers as an embodiment of “Buddhism in action”. Readers unfamiliar with the background, philosophy, and projects of Tzu Chi will find this book very informative and interesting. *(GRM)*

## Reality Bites

by Francheska Ann J. Ela

*Francheska Ann J. Ela or Cheska is a 2016 architecture graduate from the University of the Philippines, Diliman. She volunteered for TAO-Pilipinas from November 2016 - July 2017, working on various tasks such as model making and documenting workshops. She was a participant of the 2017 YP Workshop on Social Housing. She recently began her master's studies in civil engineering major in water resources in UP Diliman College of Engineering.*



*Cheska facilitates one of the sessions in the community consultation workshop of the 2017 YP Workshop on Social Housing.*

JUST AS ANY FRESH GRADUATE WILL obviously think, I too had this idealistic notion of the outside world where I could spread my wings and be very independent as I can be: to start realizing my desires of acquiring things I wanted simply because I already have the means of having them, to go wherever my feet leads me, to do whatever I long to experience, and eventually be the person I really aim to be in the first place. And just as with every fresh graduate, that last statement was an utter blur – I had various goals financially, academically, socially. Having been in the real world, I came to realize that all those goals cannot be met at a single snap of my finger. The real world is not as idealistic as I initially imagined it to be.

Being in private practice means working for your clients' visions, from space improvement to business ventures and enterprise. It means translating these goals and ventures into buildings and designed spaces; coordinating with contractors, workers and suppliers; and creating relationships with the client as well as with the

contractor to be able to have smooth sailing project cycle. Being in private practice means having your completed structure be the best recompense for all the hard work, from design phase to implementation and construction phase.

It was during one of the conferences I attended in 2016 that reminded me of the last statement of what my independence meant for me. Ms. Faith Varona, one of the founders of TAO-Pilipinas, introduced their organization and expounded on what they do. She discussed disaster resilient communities and the technical assistance that low-income communities need most especially in these times of drastic environmental changes and occurrences. This initially struck me as concepts she mentioned align with my social goal. For a person who's been eyeing to embark on a masteral course related to disaster resiliency and risk reduction, I needed to have enough experience in the said field. Volunteering in an NGO was an advice from my mentor and so I followed her suggestion. The initial plan was to volunteer

once a week, while continuing my regular work in the private practice, for two months.

I volunteered for 8 months. The organization gave me the privilege to use the knowledge I acquired from school and direct it towards social good. Though I may have barely touched the deeper goals of the organization, having seen and experienced the lives of less fortunate communities in the country, and being able to help and do something about it, made me easily decide on staying a bit longer with the organization. Being able to interact and immerse with people of different status and way of life, and hearing countless thank you's from them, is a fulfilling and memorable experience, something that I won't usually get in my private practice.

That, I guess, is what makes community development work apart from private practice. The whole process of community development may entail a whole lot of physical tolerance, patience and passion, but its recompense does not only happen once houses and evacuation centers have been completed. The greatest reward one gets in community development work actually starts right when you meet and see the people who you're working for – the community. It starts early in the process and does not end upon the workshop's or building's completion; it continues onward because for the community, it will mean a chance of living more comfortably, more humanely. It offers a privilege to create a positive social impact.

It was January 2017 when I had my first hands-on community work as an intern in TAO-Pilipinas. I was tasked to do documentation works during a hazards mapping and assessment workshop with Damayan sa Floodway community in Sitio Lumang Ilog, Barangay San Juan in Taytay, Rizal.

I still remember the person who was so amazed with the amount of organization and preparation Damayan community has done for almost all hazards in their location.

I still remember the person who got guilty because the Damayan community was even more attentive and responsive to their respective leaders than I am in my own community.

I still remember the person who got overwhelmed with the amount of people actually listening and learning from our team.

I still remember the person who had her hopes up because finally, she saw that her idealistic views about the real world are not so idealistic after all. She realized that her social goals are already moving even before her; that the real world may not be idealistic, but it is a work in progress. It is hopeful. Hopeful because there are people eager to learn and act for a better commune – these people aren't just the technical people, these people are the communities themselves.



*Cheska (right) assists community organizer She Lucas of COM (left) in drawing the boundaries of Lupang Arenda on the map.*

# Dreams, Seeds, Realities

by Elaiza Ann Taguse

*Elaiza Ann Taguse is an architecture graduate from Technological Institute of the Philippines, Quezon City. She is one of the participants of the 2017 YP Workshop on Social Housing and also became part of the 2017 batch of YP Interns. During her internship, Elai worked on doing as-built plans and construction monitoring for TAO's shelter projects. She is currently working for a construction company in Metro Manila.*

PERHAPS YOU'RE READING this as a student who dreams to someday change the world for the better. Perhaps you're an employee stuck in a daily routine and you dream to do something different and fulfilling. Or maybe you have lived long enough in this world to be hurt beyond healing, yet still dream a way to treat it. Wherever you are in your journey, we all have something in common. We dream.

One year ago, I was that student romanticizing that when I step out of campus, I will go straight to serving the underprivileged through Architecture. That's why I decided to take that step during my senior year; I met TAO-Pilipinas and joined its Young Professionals Workshop on Social Housing.

During the 6-day workshop, I met fellow students with the same heart for the underprivileged. There were also the group of young professionals in the fields of architecture, engineering, and social work, taking time off work to awaken their community spirit. And the last group were the community leaders who represent the needs of their community. Under one roof, we all learned from the series of lectures which was the first chapter of the workshop.

The second chapter of the workshop was community immersion. This involved applying what we learned from the lectures by doing a transect walk and participatory planning in the community. This was my favourite part of the workshop because the "underprivileged" in my vocabulary by then already had faces and names. I

got to interact with them during the activities as well as during our stay with the host families. It was a short while but I was beyond grateful for these experiences I took home.

After the workshop, the experience lived on as I became an intern at TAO-Pilipinas for two months. Together with some of the students from the workshop, our work mainly involved producing drawings for their projects. We also visited the construction site at Angat, Bulacan. But what I liked most from internship was when we went to Pampanga to visit a project site using earth bag construction, a low-cost building construction method.

TAO-Pilipinas holds a culminating activity at the end of the internship period to present the projects that interns were involved in and discuss what they learned. On July 21, 2017, we had our culminating activity. TAO invited technical professionals to form a panel and discuss the interns' outputs.

I was the first of the five presenters for the culminating activity. I was glad to find in the panel Ar. Rizalito Mercado who I met him earlier when he spoke at a seminar about social housing that I attended at the University of the Philippines. I was overwhelmed with his heart for the underprivileged and felt honored to speak before him. As scripted, my presentation flowed from my educational background and the reason I joined the workshop and the internship program to the projects I was involved in and finally about everything I have learned throughout the whole experience.



*Elaiza is part of YP Team 3 that facilitated the community workshop for Kawan 3 in Tandang Sora during the 2017 YP Workshop on Social Housing.*



*Elaiza learns how to properly stake a lot together with her fellow interns during their visit in Masagana Angat resettlement area.*

They gave good remarks about my presentation but one member of the panel said that maybe I was romanticizing the whole thing. As a graduating student so fired up to be socially responsible, I have decided to cross "entering the corporate world" off the list after graduation. He remarked that it is not a bad thing to enter the corporate world, just because you would like to serve the poor. You can always join volunteer works on the side and still be socially responsible even when you are in the corporate world.

So that is where I am now.

After graduation, I entered a construction firm in the private sector. I am not performing participatory planning that I learned from the workshop and I may not be visiting community-initiated projects like the site in Pampanga. Instead, I watch paid laborers

do their job. I may not be CAD detailing as-built plans for the urban poor from the Masagana resettlement project like I did during my internship but for now I am producing shop drawings for businessmen for their commercial projects. It may not seem so, but I am planting.

Harvest time may not be anytime soon but I know for sure that these seeds will grow and any labor to water them will not be in vain. My dream is like a seed that takes time to grow deep roots and build a strong foundation.

When one dreams, one is still hopeful that change can and will come. So whether you're a student, a young professional, or a community leader, we should not stop dreaming. But more importantly, we should take action to plant the seed, water them, and turn those dreams into reality.

# (un)THESIS-ing 101

by Christian Erolod Enriquez

*Christian Erolod Enriquez is a 5th year graduating architecture student from University of Santo Tomas. He did his OJT last year with TAO-Pilipinas and also participated in the 2017 YP Workshop on Social Housing. For his undergraduate thesis, he proposed “Combo-Home Building System: A Grassroots Approach to Community-based Incremental Residential Development”. He is currently busy with graduation activities and finishing the technical drawings of his thesis which he plans to present to the community he worked with.*

**“It’s easy to solve a problem that everyone sees, but it’s hard to solve a problem that almost no one sees” - Tony Fadell**

DOING AN UNDERGRADUATE thesis caps off the five-year-long journey of an architecture undergraduate student. For some people, they treat it as their last shot to give their best; for others, it is another chance of redeeming themselves through their on-point thesis topic. While some are striving for something greater, other people are also just aiming to pass, wanting to end their “architorture” experience.

At first, like any other student in my batch, I was also uncertain about the topic that I would want to pursue. Coming from a school culture where there is an unwritten rule that the level of complexity is dictated by the typology, the number of buildings or the size of the lot, choosing a topic related to community development and social architecture is a risk that I dared to take.

Coming from a humble environment in the province and growing up with a nearby informal settlement as a kid, I was exposed to bad architecture at a very young

age. This exposure has made me question the true essence of architecture and design in general. We’ve never been asked to design anything that is for the community during my undergraduate years but my exposure to a resettlement site in St. Martha Estate in Bocaue, Bulacan opened my eyes.

Joining the team of graduate students from the University of Tokyo and enduring the unfavorable environment just to document and analyze the current housing conditions of families relocated by the national government have made me question what we are doing in architecture school. I was deeply struck seeing people live in inhumane shelter but try their best to make their house a home. This has led me to a search, looking for what ‘social architecture’ really means.

In this pursuit, I came across several organizations and institutions that have been raising these causes for years now. TAO-Pilipinas, an NGO that provides technical assistance for the urban poor,



*Erolod together with his fellow intern, Herculhes Ebol, finishes the illustration for the construction manual of the CBRC.*

served in the panel during the technical consultation on the St. Martha Estate community kitchen project; Base Build Foundation, who are advocates of bamboo construction, presented alternative material and building systems; and the Vincentian Foundation, an initiative of the congregation of St. Vincent de Paul, helping different communities through their charity programs, among others.

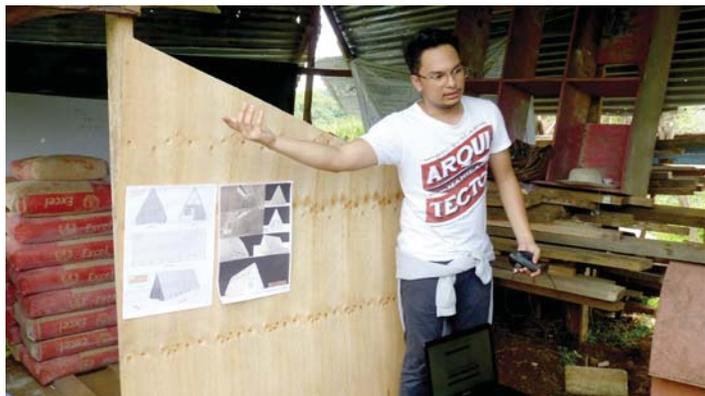
From that experience, I was hooked in understanding community architecture better and that eventually led me in joining the Young Professionals Workshop of TAO-Pilipinas and then applying as an intern for their internship program. This exposed me to another level of social architecture by directly providing technical expertise to the communities. Knowing the foundation and the organized system of doing community development work were instilled in us during the program. Experiencing community consultations, site visits and documentation, research, and data analysis, and production of final technical drawings have been a great foundation that I later applied in my undergraduate thesis.

Through the help of Ar. Rizalito Mercado, our university professor, and the Vincentian Foundation, I was able to meet a group of farmers in typhoon-hit Brgy. Awao, Compostela Valley, Mindanao who are planning to

build their new community. I have tried a different approach in determining the topic for my undergraduate thesis. Instead of doing a typology-based project and looking for a specific site, I opted to do a community-based project where the final typology is not yet determined. The Community-Based Needs Assessment later determined the final typology/scope of my thesis topic. After doing a focus group discussion with the Awao Farmers Community and Savings Association (AFaCSA), conducting a Participatory Design Workshop and Household Documentation, what was established was the need for designing a new community that is less vulnerable to disasters with provisions for incremental expansion.

Combo-Home Building System: A Grassroots Approach in Community Based Incremental Residential Development in Compostela, Valley is a planning and building methodology in addressing the needs of rural communities and aims to address the urgent need for a habitable home but still allowing provisions for future expansions based on the families’ growing needs. The project could be divided into three different approaches:

- (a) Assessment System that aims to shorten the period of site planning by incorporating digital simulations in the site and



*Erolod presents his design scheme for the community-based resource center (CBRC) of Masagana to the community.*

[READ MORE: P11](#)