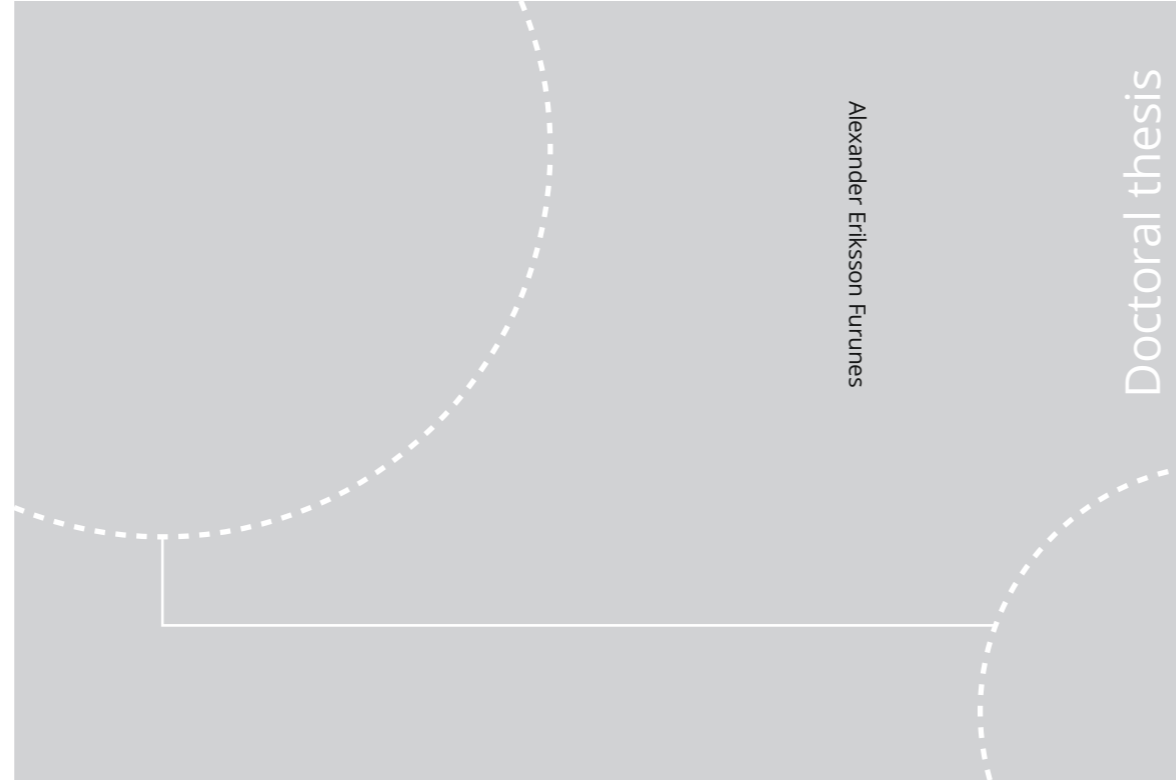


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“This was a great experience, we’ve learned how to measure the space, it’s like we were the architects.

—Brenda Noquera, resident of Angat, Philippines

Foreword

Traditions of mutual support like *bayanihan* and *dugnad* can offer us so much. From the outset of this artistic research, it has been important for me to understand how they can enrich everyday life, offering new perspectives on the resilience of community and also inspire and contribute substantially to architectural practice. I have experienced and learnt the vital importance that these traditions can play in a pre- and post-disaster scenario. Indeed, it informed the initial title of the project proposal: “Bayanihan as a model for community participation in Post Disaster Reconstruction 3 years before, 3 years after and beyond.” In a seminar that I co-hosted in Tacloban city after typhoon Haiyan, entitled ‘Learning from Tacloban’¹ (Bose and Furunes, 2016), I saw the importance of involving people in decisions that affect their lives and how they might do so on their own terms. I believed that there was a need to build on their experience of working through mutual support, before and after a disaster, thinking that this would be an important contribution to disaster reconstruction efforts, enabling us to refocus our role as architects in such a situation. Practising mutual support before the typhoon implied a change in the everyday practice of an architect in a crisis context like this; it is important that mutual support work begins, not only in a post-disaster scenario, but also in the period that precedes the disaster.

¹ A seminar/workshop held in Tacloban on 18-20 November 2015 to engage local and national government, international organisations, and local communities to reflect and share of experiences on the relocation of Tacloban after super typhoon Haiyan. Team: Erlend Johannesen, Jago Bose & Alexander Eriksson Furunes.

The broader implications were, for me, both political and architectural. It opened up questions about how we live together and who decides the way we live. *Bayanihan* and *dugnad* are a way of life, and these traditions have existed largely outside of the economic paradigm that development discourses are framed in. They point to alternative values and understandings that can give shape to architecture, both from within the local context and transnationally, by connecting the many traditions across different contexts.

In 'Learning from Las Vegas', Brown and Venturi (1972) made visible what was already there in a non-place called Las Vegas. By doing so, they contributed much to the post-modern critique of modern architecture. A paradigm like the one represented by the modern movement rendered Las Vegas a non-place (Augé, 1995). However, when Las Vegas was seen and understood on its own terms, it offered a different perspective and understanding. This offered some pointers for me, but I sensed that the approach of 'learning from' might have other potential, elsewhere.

I believe mutual support offers another way of seeing the world to that of either modernity or post-modernity. Traditions of mutual support represent values and understandings that people already have, but they have often been pushed into the background by the paradigm of economic growth that has shaped the world we live in today. Rather than learning from a place like Las Vegas or Tacloban, this research aims to learn from ways of life, traditions of mutual support, that have existed throughout history. They are something that we take for granted but that have a lot to contribute to our understandings of architecture.

Acknowledgement

The works presented in this artistic research are the results of many hands and minds. I want to thank my wife Leika Aruga who has been with me throughout the process by developing, reflecting and articulating ideas. My parents, Anne-Karin Furunes and Kalle Eriksson have been a source of inspiration for my praxis.

My main supervisor Eli Støa has been an incredible support and provided me with crucial feedback and guidance. Both my co-supervisors Hans Skotte and Maaretta Jaukkuri greatly influenced my practice as an architect since the very beginning and continues to inspire me.

Sudarshan V. Khadka is not only a partner in all of these projects but a true friend. The works and ideas presented in this research were developed through discussions we had over the years. I am also sincerely grateful for my partners and the communities I have been honoured to work with.

It is also important to recognise how my reflections were developed and deepened through dialogues and exchange with other practitioners and academics, including Greg Bankoff, Nicole Curato, Nabeel Hamdi, Pablo Helguera, Marisa Morán Jahn, Sho Konishi, Portia Ladrado, Håkon Lorentzen, Rafi Segal and Jeremy Till.

Throughout this research I had the pleasure of working with Kirstin Helgadóttir who contributed with the graphic design. I also want to thank Simon Harvey for his support in helping me articulate the ideas in this text.

This is not the end but one step in a larger process of understanding the role of mutual support in architecture. I am grateful for all the support I have received and look forward to making further explorations into the many questions and possibilities which emerged through this research.

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Community barn
raising, USA 1900
(Old Paper Studios).



Learning from *Bayanihan/Dugnad* consists of a series of collaborations with different communities in Philippines, Vietnam, Brazil and Norway that practice traditions of mutual support. This is not a research on mutual support and architecture, but, rather, research through the practice of both. The collaborations documented and reflected upon here aim at designing and building projects that belong to communities, and my reflections are aimed at generating insight into how such collaborative practice can define architecture in new ways. Through experiencing how mutual support is practised in different contexts around the world, I have come to an understanding of some of the core principles for practising architecture through mutual support. These core principles are elaborated in my reflections and have guided the design and production of the artistic/architectural work that informs and shapes an integral part of this research. They have taught me much about how to communicate and structure a process of working together.

² The modern project, or modernity, is a period characterised by a worldview that places human over nature with an understanding that they are separable. This idea that we can control nature has given shape to many aspects of our lives today, including politics, science, philosophy and the arts.

Background

The way we build reflects the way we live, so, if we are to question the way we build we also need to question the way we live. Our current way of life has proven unsustainable, both socially and environmentally. With the advent of modernity, a paradigm of economic growth spread across the globe in which productivity and efficiency of the market have been prioritised over other social and environmental values (Deriu, 2012). Architecture as a discipline is embedded within the crisis of the modern project (Till, 2021).² Under the modern project, only certain types of knowledge are deemed to be relevant, and they, typically, belong to professionals and experts such as architects. These ways of working are often intentionally exclusive, ensuring the authority and dominance of knowledge holders. At the same time, this growth paradigm is sustained through extraction and exploitation of human and environmental resources.

Traditions of mutual support, on the other hand, belong to a conceptual framework of the 'never modern' wherein a different sensibility for spatial production and ways of knowing prevails (Till, 2021). They have existed alongside the modern project, although their normative histories have been suppressed by colonial knowledge systems. The term 'mutual support', or 'mutual aid', was posited by the activist and philosopher Peter Kropotkin (2011) to stress values of cooperation over that of individual struggle and competition. Born out of necessity, traditions of mutual support have been a means for communities to organise, to come together, and to address challenges and problems through their own resources, knowledge, and values. In the absence of government support, they functioned as a form of community welfare. During calamities, such as natural disasters, they provided safety nets and means for recovery. In agriculture, they enabled farmers to secure the necessary labour for harvesting. They have allowed communities to build using locally available materials and help each other with construction. These traditions have transformed over time but remain a platform for gathering, deliberation and taking collective action. Today's environmental and social challenges need to be addressed as interconnected problems. This requires a radical shift that involves the renewal of not only social, economic, and intercultural relationships, but also the way relationships are made with nature.

Transferring a house from one location to the next is done through minga. Chiloé, Chile 2010 (Rodolfo Pace) CC BY-SA 3.0



The myriad traditions of mutual support practised throughout the world, such as *bayanihan*, *dugnad*, *đổi công* or *mutirão*, might have a potential for building transnational connections that maximise potential for co-survival. In spite of different local expressions they all share certain commonalities. For example, they are not defined by any specific task or purpose and, instead, they provide ways of organising and working together to fulfil a purpose collectively defined by those that practice them. This is in stark contrast to the way work and life is organised within the modern project in which people are alienated from each other and their surroundings. In addition, the commonalities found in the traditions of mutual support open up perspectives for understanding the global challenges of today through local contexts.

Architecture

Practising architecture through mutual support opens up the possibility of building a transnational understanding of architecture that can address the issues posed by the modern project. Till (2021) sees the potential of practising architecture through mutual support as a way of recognising multiple forms of knowledge and changing not only the hierarchal relationships between experts and non-experts but also the relationships between the built environment and the natural environment. This is because traditions of mutual support acknowledge people's dependence on nature for co-survival.

At the heart of them, these traditions manifest people's mutual commitment to each other and to nature. The mutuality found in these traditions depends on sustaining these relationships. This resonates with the idea of symbiotic modernity articulated by Sho Konishi (2021) that sees evolutionary development as a result of mutual interaction and interdependence as opposed to Western capitalist modernity which has pursued competition in which only the fittest individuals survive. Architectural practices within this ideology have romanticised the designed/built object as a 'perfected finality' independent of nature and time.

When practiced through mutual support, architecture has the potential to become a process in which architects play an interdependent role with others in the making of a mutually supporting community wherein everyone is an expert according to their own experience. In this way, the design of the building aims to take a form that reflects the values

and knowledge of the community, thereby offering unforeseen and exciting design solutions that the architect could not have come up with themselves. Rather than simply designing a static, unchanging object, time needs to be a consideration. In the situations described in this research, I have explored different ways in which the structural framework and infill allows for flexibility and transformation over time.

Artistic research

Artistic research is not research on artistic practice, but *through* artistic practice. Knowledge production happens through the integration of the act of making something and reflection that follows it. Anthropologist Tim Ingold (2013) would describe this as knowledge from *within*, as opposed to knowledge about something. The focus is on knowledge production rather than about knowledge itself. It is not about having a clear goal and knowing in advance what we want to find, but rather the exploration itself, a journey where the goal is found in the process. I find that it is not about narrowing down on a question, but rather it involves working within a dynamic, albeit ultimately focused field of inquiry. Questions are not posited in advance, so the field itself emerges, to a large extent, during the course of the research/practice. The creative process of making something becomes a dialogue with the material that one engages with. The frictions and tension created in the process makes it possible to discover something new. In my artistic research this is a collective endeavour, so I often find that my role is to be mainly about slowing down the process, finding ways for a group to stay with the process; not to predict answers but to find them in the process. The frictions and tensions that generate unexpected solutions are found in the way we communicate, in the values and knowledge available within the group.

Similarly, in contemporary artistic practices, tensions and understanding are produced to offer new insights and perspectives. The form of knowledge that art can offer does not necessarily have to be articulated in words, but is implicit in the act of doing, a form of tacit knowledge. Any art form is therefore a social process: it engages others in the inquiry that the artistic work is exploring. Through experimentation with material and mediums, communication varies, and so does the form of

Maintenance of the
thatched roof performed
through *yui*, the Japanese
tradition of mutual support.
Shirakawa-go Village
(Shirakawa Village Office)



communication it facilitates. But what it does is to create an experience, a moment whereby a situation is shared and an understanding, tacit or more explicit, is arrived at.

Ethical considerations

There were a number of ethical considerations made throughout this research as the collaborative nature of the architectural practice required people's time and commitment. The collaborations have been based on mutual understanding and efforts, and for this it was important to mitigate inequalities between myself and the communities I worked with. What is at stake is the long-term sustainability of the initiatives, and considerations have been made to avoid any over-dependence on the role that I play, particularly after I have departed the scene.

Firstly, expectations for the collaboration were clarified at the outset. This relates to how responsibilities are shared, how people participate in the process, how decisions will be made, who pays for different costs and how resources are used. Whenever there was an expectation for professional aid rather than making mutual contributions, I chose not to take part. Therefore, it has been important to enter a community with an already existing initiative that I can support, where the ownership of the initiative belongs to the community. In practice, my contributions needed to be supplementary in nature. In terms of funding, I covered some parts of the costs to run workshops, when necessary, through grants, crowd funding and my own research funds. Costs related to maintenance and operation of the buildings had to be covered by the community, and the choice of materials and design reflected what was available and accessible to them in principle. The budget needed to meet the community's economic capacity so that it would not fall apart when I left. In the appendix, financial details of each project are provided.

Having a mutual relationship also meant that the way I engage with the community should not be a form of extraction or exploitation where its participation only results in benefitting my own practice and research. Instead, the aim of the collaborations was to agree on a process of mutual learning and exchange, and whether or not this end was being met needed to be assessed at all times during the implementation of

the projects. I kept logbooks throughout my research that included my field notes where I reflected on my shifting positionality, responsibilities and roles in each project.³ Concerning my responsibility as an architect, teaming up with local architects and other creative practitioners has been one way of ensuring compliance with local regulations while also familiarising myself in context-specific discourses and expertise that were relevant for the projects.

Lastly, communities are not homogenous groups. An important ethical consideration here concerns representation and authority. The process of creating a critical understanding of the situation, as discussed in the following chapters, helped in revealing some of the existing inequalities within the community and finding ways to address them within the context of the projects. In some cases, it was about changing ways of communication and, in others, it concerned creating favourable conditions for participation. For example, when workshops had to be organised during working hours due to time constraints of the project, compensations were paid. In particular, due considerations were made to avoid putting unfair strains on community members who were already living in difficult situations. Obtaining an informed consent on an individual basis was important not only for their participation in workshops but especially for interviews, photography and filming. Project participants were informed in advance about the purposes of such forms of documentation and were asked to give either a written or an oral consent.⁴ In all cases, the voluntary nature of their participation was emphasised together with their right to withdraw their consent at any time without giving any reasons.

Situations

It is obvious that, rather than talking about works that are static and concluded, each of the projects presented in this research is a process embedded in a particular place, carried out at a particular time and by a particular group of people. Therefore, I have chosen to look at these projects as situations that we engage in and transform. The outcomes of these processes are not concluded, even if my reflection or artistic

³ The reflections on my shifting roles are summarised in the chapter on concluding reflections towards the end of this document.

⁴ In some cases, signing a paper has not been the most ethical request to make due to varying degrees of literacy.

PhD is. Rather, these are situations that will continue to evolve and change over time. The work we create is part of this transformation, but it is just one of many processes that constitutes the entire situation.

The word 'situation' is derived from the Latin word *situāre* which means to position, and *situs*, which is a site or location. A situation is 'all of the facts, conditions, and events that affect someone or something at a particular time and in a particular place' (Situation, 2021). The collaboration that each of these situations constitutes is a process of situating ourselves and our ideas in relation to a particular context so that we can understand the situation better and transform it. It implies that those involved have to position themselves in relation to the situation (Harding, 2016); this problematises dynamics of working as an insider or outsider in a given situation. The different perspectives held by myself and the people I work with offer a multiplicity of understandings of the situation, which is the point of criticality that we can begin to work with in order to engage creatively, together. The five situations that constitute "Learning form Bayanihan/Dugnad" are the following:

1. Situation 1 describes a process of working with a community in Tacloban, Philippines, before and after typhoon Haiyan. Reflection on the process explored the potential of building through *bayanihan* and formulated a six-step process which informed my later work.
2. Situation 2 takes the learnings from Tacloban and questions them through the making of a solo exhibition at Nanoco Gallery in Hanoi, Vietnam. The learnings were then implemented in a collaboration with a textile cooperative in Hà Giang through *đổi công*, the Vietnamese tradition of mutual support.
3. Situation 3 is a collaboration with migrants of CAMI Migrant Support Centre as part of the São Paulo Biennale. Through a process inspired by *mutirão*, personal stories were translated into patterns which appeared on six banners exhibited in São Paulo metro stations.

4. Situation 4 is the planning and building of a community space in the suburbs of Oslo through the Norwegian tradition of *dugnad*. The project forms part of the Oslo Architecture Triennale and a wider discussion about degrowth.
5. Situation 5 is a collaboration with a small community in Angat, Philippines, to plan, design and build a structure through *bayanihan*. The library/conflict resolution space built through this collaboration was exhibited at the Philippine Pavilion for the 2021 Venice Architecture Biennale, together with a presentation of research on other forms of mutual support.

Learning from *Bayanihan/Dugnad* comes out of a long-term collaboration with my friend and colleague Sudarshan V. Khadka Jr. The research has been a process of doing what I do, showing what I do, talking about what I do and writing about what I do. It is a process of reflection and action, wherein a particular kind of knowledge becomes important. This is a knowledge situated within the life experiences of the people I work with. Therefore, each situation needs to be defined by them, from within their situation, so that understandings linked to everyday actions inform the practice. The reflection on the 'doing' also needs to engage others in the process.

The 'showing' of the work as part of this artistic research has been embedded in the processes of working in these different situations, through exhibitions in galleries and biennale venues. This is a process of articulating the 'doing' and reflecting on this critically with the community, my peers and a wider audience.

The 'talking' consists of more than 50 different talks over the past five years, in Hong Kong, Tokyo, India, Philippines, Vietnam, Norway and elsewhere. The aim is to share my experience, but also to situate these understandings in relation to other discourses of architecture. The questions and discussions that have emerged from this process have been important to situate the work in relation to a wider discourse on architecture and our role as architects.

The 'writing' has been a continuous documentation through logbooks, with interviews and reflections from the field. I have continuously processed these materials through self-published zines⁵ to engage peers and other professionals in the reflections. These ideas have been further developed in the exhibition catalogues I have made. This has also been an opportunity to reach out to academics, researchers and practitioners that have been important for my reflection in order to bring them into this new discourse of mutual support and architecture.

Learning from Bayanihan/Dugnad aims to give a detailed account of what happened in the different situations I have engaged with, but also to articulate the ideas and reflections that have come out of the writing, talking and showing of what I do. The text that follows is structured in three sections: preparation, process and outcome. This reflects the different stages within each situation, offering a space to compare and understand the variety of situations that the collaborations have addressed.

⁵ A zine is a self-produced and self-distributed publication that does not rely on a print house or publisher for distribution. It is often made by stapling folded A4 sheets together as an A5 booklet. It has been a quick and easy way for me to compile my thoughts into something that can be shared. It is a way of distributing and exchanging knowledge outside of the market economy.

1

Streetlight Tacloban

A process of working together with a community in Tacloban, through *bayanihan*, three years before typhoon Haiyan, and in the three years that followed it. This process was my first encounter with mutual support and became the basis to reflect on how traditions like *dugnad* or *bayanihan* can inform an architectural process.

→ The study centre was built through *bayanihan* in 2010 with the community of Seawall and the NGO Streetlight. The building was destroyed by super typhon Haiyan in 2013.

↓ By 2016 the study centre, orphanage and vocational training centre were rebuilt through a process of *bayanihan*.



Introduction

My first encounter with *bayanihan* was through designing and building a study centre in Tacloban, Philippines in 2010. The process was a close collaboration with the parents of the children enrolled in the study centre programme run by the non-governmental organisation Streetlight. The children and parents we worked with identified our collaboration as a process of *bayanihan*, and it struck me how similar it was to my own experience of the Norwegian *dugnad*. In the years that followed I began to understand the implications of working together through mutual support, both in terms of what the building meant to those that had been part of the process, but also in terms of maintenance and operation of the study centre programme. However, in 2013 Tacloban city was levelled by a storm surge caused by super typhoon Haiyan and the study centre was destroyed. In the immediate aftermath, the community organised itself through *bayanihan* to build shelters, provide security, food, and care for one another. I was invited back to plan, design and rebuild what was lost, with the community.⁶ Through the collaboration founded on *bayanihan*, the study centre, orphanage, and vocational training centre were completed in 2016, half a year before I started my artistic PhD. Through these projects I began to understand how architecture can be understood as a process, and how mutual support can inform architectural practice.

⁶ The funding of the project was secured through disaster aid from Philippine Banks, as well as funds from Norway. NTNU supported the reconstruction with 200000kr.

Preparation

↓ Tacloban is a coastal city on the island of Leyte, with a population of 220 000 people (2010).

↓ Barrangay 35, also known as Seawall, is a community living in front of the sea protection barrier.

Setting up

About ten years ago, in 2010, I was invited, together with my two colleagues Ivar K. V. Tutturen and Trond Hegvold,⁷ to design and build a study centre for the community of Seawall and an NGO called Streetlight in Tacloban, Philippines. At the time, in 2010, Tacloban was the fastest growing city in the Philippines, a growth that had exacerbated inequality between the rich and the poor. Seawall was a community which had informally settled in front of the sea protection barrier. Streetlight provided support to the children of Seawall. The organisation was founded by Erlend Johannesen and Neva Homeres and located in an abandoned park on the seafront. The study centre aimed at not only providing educational support for children but also healthcare and a home for those living on the street.

Nerren Homeres, a nurse at Streetlight and sister of Neva, showed keen interest in the project and together she and I planned and facilitated the workshops, gradually also involving some of the mothers of the children in the planning process. Together with Nerren's brother Nestor, Ivar and Trond took charge of the construction site. We had support from Marciano N. Makato III, a local architect that offered technical advice and eventually signed off on our drawings. Although we were still architecture students at the time, what we lacked in expertise we compensated for with our time and appetite to learn. We were keen to involve families of the children supported by Streetlight in the process and to build on their experience and skills.



Let's work together, but where, when, and how?

An esoteric, but formative influence on the whole process was the title line from Sy Oliver & Trummy Young's old jazz song 'T'aint what you do (it's the way that you do it),' referenced by Hans Skotte (2021). If what we were about to build was a study centre for the children of the Seawall community, then the way we would do it had to include both them and their parents in the process. The aim was to develop a process that gave space and time for self-determination rooted in their ambitions, resources, and skills.

But *how* was the question. The mothers had busy schedules working in the market in addition to taking care of their children and the household. Many of the fathers were day-labourers and needed a steady job. Together, we agreed to meet once a week to discuss, plan and eventually design a building. During these gatherings we provided food, games, and entertainment for the children so that the parents could have a break from their everyday chores and have the space to discuss and reflect on the situation they were in.

In workshops, the fathers, mothers, and children were grouped separately so that there was a space to freely express opinions with those in a similar situation. The children visualised and identified their needs, ambitions, and the purpose of the study centre. The mothers then gave shape to those needs through models and drawings. The fathers tested the designs on the construction site, and eventually built the study centre.

⁷ The initiative came out of a dialogue with the founder of Streetlight after a dengue outbreak forced the organisation to relocate from their old facilities to a vacant park nearby. At the time, we were still students of architecture at NTNU, but had negotiated to set up a self-programmed course to include this project as part of our degree. It is in this context that Hans Skotte took on the role of our supervisor, providing invaluable advice and guidance.

At the end, the community called the collaboration a process of *bayanihan*, referring to the way it was organised but also executed. The process of defining where, when and how we work together had enabled the families to organise themselves on their own terms. The fact that they called it *bayanihan* made me see the potential and value of *dugnad*, and how traditions like these could be a point of departure to find ways to build collectively. The process was, in their words, as much about building a community as building a building.



↳ Ideas were developed through making prototypes and samples.

→ The children explored what they wanted for the new study center, and their parents found ways to translate this into the design.

↳ Adults also took part in games that would address some of the topics we were discussing.



Process

How we build together

The construction methods used for the study centre were based on the parents' existing experience and knowledge of local building techniques. The fathers engaged with all aspects of construction: both wet and dry trades,⁸ including plumbing and electrical installation. Prototype floors, windows, doors and walls were made in order to test and refine the design, whilst also providing useful experience for the fathers to practice and fine-tune their construction skills. The knowledge and skills acquired on-site were transferable to the adaptation and maintenance of their homes, but also played an important role for the adaptations made to the study centre later on.

The materials selected for the study centre were based on those already used by families in Seawall or in their native hometowns in Samar. For the main structure, an easily replicable truss system was developed from locally-sourced

Lauan to allow for future expansion. The timber structure was anchored to a concrete hollow block-wall at the back of the building, in a practice similar to the traditional building type '*Bahay na bato*' (translated: '*house of stone*'), where the lower half of the building is heavyweight masonry, and the upper half is lightweight timber. This provided stability and flexibility to withstand earthquakes and typhoons. The other three sides of the building and the interior were made from fast-growing woven bamboo mats (*amakan*) utilising the skill used by the mothers in the market to weave baskets for steaming rice. During typhoons, these bamboo walls were designed to blow off, allowing wind to pass through the main structure. The fathers also designed full-height operable doors, which could open the entire facade on the the seaward side, reducing resistance against strong winds and maximising natural ventilation. A 13 degree mono-pitched roof, angled against the direction of the prevailing wind, prevented uplift and reduced the likelihood of collapse.

→ Many of the families had the experience building with different kinds of bamboos. The materials were sourced from their relatives living in rural Samar.

↘ The construction technique used allowed us to make adjustments on site while we built.



⁸ Wet trades is a term used in construction to refer to trades that use materials mixed with water. Dry trades, as the name suggests, do not use water.

Outcome

What we build together

The study centre supported 75 children aged five to eighteen. The main study space had plenty of natural daylight and maintained a good indoor climate by allowing for cross-ventilation through the building.⁹ It was built within an abandoned “children’s park” that had a wide-open and safe play area for the children. This was in stark contrast to the dense living conditions of the Seawall community. The position of the study centre was decided collectively and was placed facing the seafront to make use of the fresh maritime breezes.

After its completion, the mothers and fathers took charge of its operation and maintenance. Many of them were later employed by Streetlight to carry out these responsibilities. After school the children would come to the study centre to do homework, trouble shooting, extra classes and sport and dance activities. The fathers were hired whenever maintenance or changes were needed on the building. Tutorials were held in the main space on the ground floor, which could hold up to twenty-five children. Private spaces for independent study were used in the niches of the back concrete wall. One of the most popular spaces in the study centre was the mezzanine – a low semi-enclosed space that could be accessed through a ladder. This space was designed with the children. It functioned as a ventilation shaft through the building and was the coolest space for the children to study. It was equipped with computers and provided more private study spaces for older children.¹⁰

⁹ Most of the children had tuberculosis, and could not study in a space with air-conditioning. Natural ventilation was very important to avoid stagnant air within the study centre.

¹⁰ Many of the children had dropped out of school for several years and would later find themselves much older than their classmates in the same grade. Bullying of the older children made it difficult for them to continue their education. The study centre mezzanine provided much-needed private space for the older children. Having this distance helped them build back their self-confidence and focus on learning.



↑ The study centre was built in an abandoned park facing the sea front. Photo by Nelson Petilla.

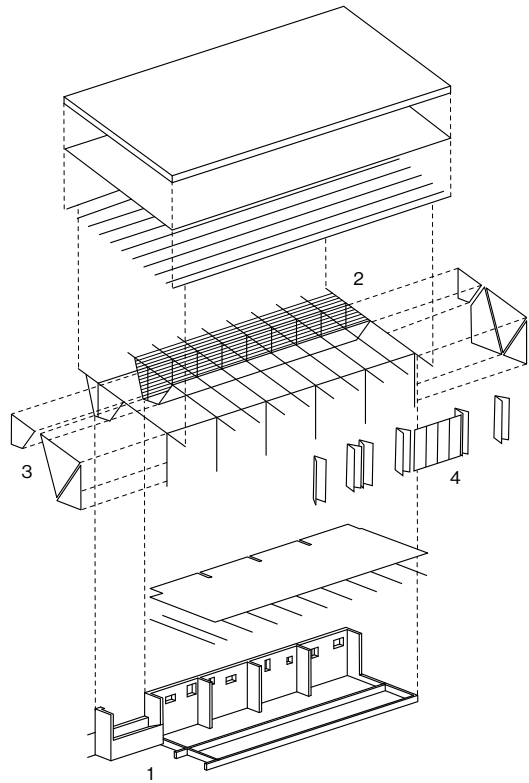
➤ The main entrance to the study centre. Photo by Ronnie Ramirez.



Not only a building

Having built something through *bayanihan* meant that the study centre was no longer just a building, it had become a symbol of the relationships built in the process and the efforts the parents had made for their children. It was observed by Streetlight that new families that had not been part of the process also adopted the narrative of mutuality and self-help.¹¹ The process of working together, learning from each other, and applying that knowledge directly to the construction was also a strategic decision. This meant that after completion of the building, the community had the resources, skills and understanding to maintain and operate the building. The materials of the building were sourced through the families and their networks, strengthening those that the study centre already sought to support, but also ensuring that the building was built from materials that they had direct access to. The study centre survived several major typhoons and in 2012 withstood an earthquake of 7.6 on the Richter scale.

¹¹ The observation is based on the inputs gathered at a workshop I conducted on the 27th of November 2015 where members of the community and Streetlight interviewed each other about their experiences before, during and after the typhoon.



← The concrete base (1) functions as a retaining wall. The timber structure (2) contains a mezzanine space for studying. The walls (3) are made of *amakan* and the doors (4) can be fully opened.

↙ The view towards the ocean from the study centre. The walls consist of doors that can be fully opened to let the breeze through. Photo by Ronnie Ramirez.

↓ The children designed the small space within the roof truss as a private study space. Photo by Nelson Petilla.

→ The children and staff of Streetlight survived the storm surge by climbing on top of the orphanage which was protected from waves. The back wall of the study centre could be seen in the photo submerged in water. Photo by Erlend Johannesen.



Disaster

Super Typhoon Haiyan

On the 8th of November 2013, super typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda in Philippines) which was the strongest typhoon to ever to hit land swept across the central region of the Philippines, displacing over four million people and taking thousands of lives (Gutro, 2013).¹² Almost 30,000 houses were destroyed in Tacloban alone, which was devastated by a six-metre-high storm surge. The study centre survived the peak of the typhoon but was eventually destroyed by the storm surge that followed. The children and staff of Streetlight escaped the waves by climbing onto the roof of the orphanage building next door.



¹² The strength of the super typhoon Haiyan was unprecedented, with gusts ranging up to 230 - 315km/h.

Relocation

In the aftermath of the typhoon, the city government decided to resettle the most 'at risk' coastal areas to Tacloban North, located 15km to the north of the existing city centre. A forty metre no-dwell zone discouraged reconstruction beside the shoreline, downtown, leaving Streetlight few other options but to relocate. The challenges in the northern relocation zone were many, and as time passed these problems materialised and became more and more evident. The relocated families lived in a constant state of limbo, waiting for permanent housing, stable supply of electricity and water, as well as restoration of safety, integrity and autonomy for the community. It was estimated to take five years for the water and sewer system to reach the relocation zone, but in reality, it took eight.



→ Permanent shelters were built in the outskirts of Tacloban, in Tagpuro.

→ Temporal solutions intended to provide quick shelter became a long-term fix. The tents were dangerous and flammable.

↓ Immediately after the disaster, the community began to rebuild the study centre with debris. The first iteration had a saddle pitch roof that they replaced with a mono pitch to replicate the old design of the building.



Mutual aid, not aid

In the chaotic moments of immediate relief after a disaster, everything is in turmoil, and the urgency of the situation fosters quick decisions that in the long term can prove to be inadequate or even damaging. Disaster relief usually comes in the form of distribution of aid, often in the form of commodities such as shelter kits, food or even cash. However, when the distributions are made unevenly, as was in the case of the aftermath of typhoon Haiyan, aid can cause conflicts among and within communities. Who makes decisions for whom and based on what information? These are important questions to ask as the people who survived the disaster are often left out of the decision-making process. In contrast, when people organise themselves through *bayanihan*, they are in charge of identifying their own needs, setting priorities and finding the means to address them.

It is important to note, however, that *bayanihan* can also be romanticised and utilised in government propaganda as a way of transferring the responsibilities of the government onto the people. In the immediate aftermath, however, several communities practiced *bayanihan* as a way to cope and support each other with health, security, food and temporary shelters.¹³ As noted by our own community in Seawall,¹⁴ having established a platform for working together through *bayanihan* before the typhoon, this enabled families to come together after the disaster to build back their own houses and their own lives.¹⁴

¹³ This was noted by several of the communities we visited as part of 'Learning from Tacloban' during the site visits on the 18th of November 2015.

¹⁴ This was discussed in the workshop on the 27th of November 2015 where the community members and Streetlight interviewed each other.

Preparations

Putting together a team

Immediately after typhoon Haiyan I was invited back to the Philippines. I travelled back there in April 2014 to lead and develop a design, strategy and framework for the reconstruction process, in collaboration with the affected families, staff and children at Streetlight, in order to collaboratively build back what had been lost. To do this I put together a team from the Philippines, Norway and the UK. Sudarshan Khadka of the renowned Filipino architectural firm Leandro V. Locsin Partners became my architectural partner, and the firm contributed invaluable pro-bono support for the project. As an engineer, Jago Bose of Ramboll UK complemented the architectural design and coordinated the engineering of the buildings with Ramboll UK and the Filipino engineering partner Pimentel & Associates.

→ While waiting for permanent shelters, temporary settlements were built for the families that had not received a home yet.

↳ To understand how best to build back the buildings lost to the typhoon, the community mapped the situation around Tagpuro.

↓ Tagpuro is a barangay located 15km from the city centre of Tacloban. Before Typhoon Haiyan, there were 200 families living there. After being designated as the relocation zone, it was expected to increase to 2000 families.



Organising

The community consisted of the families we worked with before the typhoon struck, who had now been relocated from Seawall to Tagpuro. Many of them were now employed by Streetlight. However, the group had expanded to also include the existing families of Tagpuro that had been living there before the typhoon. The community also included children in Streetlight's orphanage, as well as those originally enrolled in the study centre programme. Not all the members spoke English, so I had the assistance of teachers in the study centre programme Jovy and Vine to facilitate the workshops. Gradually Rowena and Annie, two mothers within the community, took on this role to facilitate the *bayanihan* sessions with me.

Many aid organisations used questionnaires for information-gathering and strategic planning following the devastation of typhoon Haiyan. However, it was not clear to the community what the information was for and how it would be used. Many felt that they “answered their questions, but never heard from them again afterwards.”¹⁵ Instead, we wanted our community to identify their own needs, propose how these could be met and by whom.

¹⁵ This was a quote from a mother living in Seawall. Similar comments were shared by other members in the community.



More than 100 workshops were organised to program, conceptualise, and design the new buildings, and each workshop resembled the practice of *bayanihan*—strengthening social ties and the resilience of the group. Through drawing, model making and discussions, the community had a chance to process their trauma after the typhoon.¹⁶ This process took time, as it was important for everyone to discuss and comprehend what had happened and collectively decide what needed to be done.

The following phases happened intuitively; however, on reflecting on the process I found that this sequence was important to build a shared understanding amongst everyone involved, enabling them to work together in this process. In retrospect these phases were called learning, questioning, making, concept, design and build. The learning phase tried to make sense of the situation after the typhoon, and the questioning aimed to understand how the community wanted to respond to this situation and plan for the future. The making was an attempt to actively test out how we could make this transition. The concept was articulated in response to the trauma of the typhoon, which helped guide the design and build process that followed.



¹⁶ For the most severe cases of trauma, particularly amongst the younger kids, a trauma expert was available.

↳ To plan the study centre, orphanage and vocational training centre, the community mapped the activities, qualities and the kind of space needed for these programs.

Process

Defining a programme

For the relocated families, and those that already lived in Tagpuro, there was a need to understand how this relocation would impact their lives. We asked the community to draw their daily activities and paste them collectively on a board. As the activities missing from the board were visible to everyone, it became easier to acknowledge the problems that they faced and to take action. Having the shared purpose of filling in these voids brought the group closer, and it became the beginning of a series of workshops to define and design the programme of the new study and development centre. These voids addressed issues of food-security, education and transportation.

What and why something needed to be done had been identified in the previous phase, but now the question was how. In this process the families identified issues that they could deal with and what they would need the support of Streetlight to improve. They proposed actions to address these issues and organised themselves into committees for workshops, education, food and transport. Once the programme had been approved by Streetlight, the workshops committee took responsibility for facilitating the workshops. I would meet with them before each one to discuss the content and agree on a plan that could be implemented by them.

Once approved, the food committee began work on the spatial layout and programme for the kitchen, and they also considered how to utilise the four-hectare site for food production. The education committee worked on the study centre programme and activities. The employees of Streetlight began working on the programme for the office building and the children in the orphanage on their new home. What became important in the making phase was to address all these ideas through physical interventions. One such intervention was the staking-out of all the programmes on site in order to experience the scale, as well as how the site could work.



A test structure

To address the issue of transportation, a bus stop was constructed. This was implemented by four visiting students¹⁷ under the supervision of the barangay of Tagpuro.¹⁸ In addition to the issue of transportation, the structure also addressed a lack of information about the relocation by presenting a large map of Tagpuro. While the relocation was expected to increase Tagpuro's population drastically, from 200 to 2000 families, few efforts were made to inform the local community about the relocation or its impact. Working with the community, the students collaboratively mapped the existing and future households in order to better understand the impacts of relocation to the new area. The local bus stop, adjacent to the main road and local community hall, was identified as the best place in the village to display the map for the community. As the bus stop was in poor condition, the local municipality and the students decided to build a new bus stop with a police station on top. The need for a police station was expressed by the barangay in response to increasing conflicts in the area since the relocation started. The intervention functioned as a catalyst to get to know the wider community of Tagpuro during the preparation phase for building the orphanage, study centre and office for Streetlight.

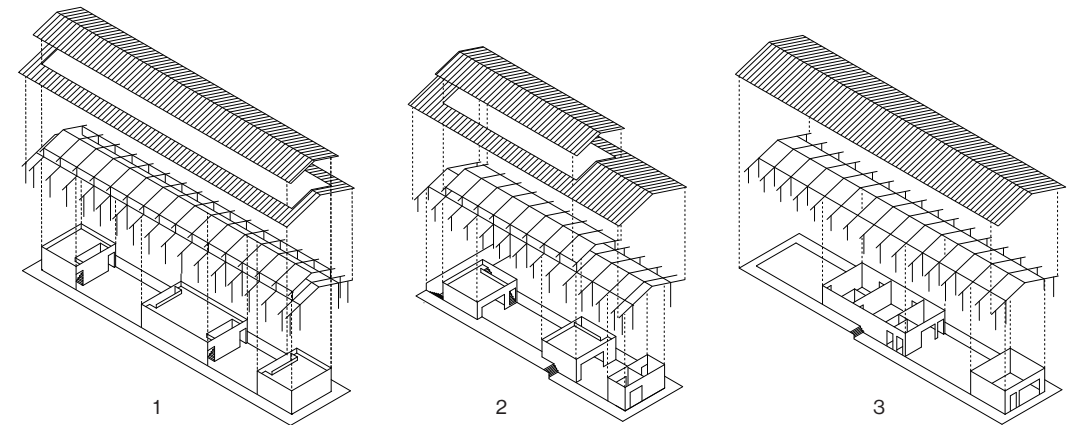
¹⁷ NTNU students: Anders Gunleiksrud, Lars Sebastian Østlie, Kristin Solhaug Næss and John Haddal Mork, under supervision of Skotte and myself

¹⁸ A barangay is the smallest political administration in the Philippines. At the scale of a neighbourhood, it often consists of 50-100 families. Tagpuro consisted of 150 families at the time (2013).

↖ The bus stop featured a map of the full relocation plan on ground level and a police outpost on top. Photo by Lars Sebastian Østlie.

↑ Model making workshop with the barangay officials.

→ The orphanage (1), office/ vocational training centre (2) and study centre (3) was designed with the concept of heavy and light. The heavy are concrete boxes that symbolise safety to the family, and the light is open and ventilated timber structures that resembled the way we had built the old study centre.



¹⁹ The old study centre was designed using low-cost solutions to increase natural ventilation informed by techniques used by families in their homes at the informal settlement. A flexible and light timber structure, placed on a heavy base was inspired by the Filipino vernacular 'bahay na bato'. The thermal mass of the base stored the cool air of the night and the permeable lightweight timber structure allowed the sea breeze to pass through. This made the study centre the most comfortable and cool place to be in the old park. The flexibility of the timber structure enabled the building to survive a major earthquake and permeability to survive several typhoons. Although, it did not survive the waves caused by the storm surge during Typhoon Haiyan.

Finding a concept

Through the workshop process, we realised that the typhoon had left a deep psychological trauma that the community was still dealing with. The focus on material reconstruction often neglects this trauma. However, there was a need to identify what had been lost to the typhoon, and what they wanted to bring back. Questions were asked such as: What is a safe place? What brings back positive memories?

Many of the family members that designed the study centre in 2010 had a very strong connection with the old building. The study centre had created a lot of good memories for the children that had witnessed how their close-family and other relatives had built a supportive environment for them and expressed a strong desire to replicate the study centre on the new site.¹⁹ In the old park there

were also several play-structures built by the former dictator, Ferdinand Marcos. Most of these monolithic concrete structures had survived the waves and became symbols of safety for the children.²⁰ They identified the ventilated and 'light' spaces in the old study centre and the safety of the 'heavy' play structures as two concepts to guide the design process.

Programme + concept = design

In the design phase, the community began to discuss how the programme would work with the concept of open and closed. The activities of each programme were analysed and assigned different spatial qualities. Through drawing and model making, the activities were assigned to an open or closed space, the sequence of which was determined by shuffling and moving these open and closed spaces until the configuration suited the use envisioned.

Simultaneous with designing the buildings, the group explored where they might be situated on the new site. To understand the site, it helped to study what was already there and to question its logic. For instance, through observing the orientation of a large old chicken shed on site and understanding how the landscape provided shade and comfort, the families could identify an advantageous positioning of the new buildings. The chicken-shed, a 100m long building destroyed by Haiyan, divided the site in two. To keep the building cool, it had been placed facing north-south thereby minimising exposure to the low morning and evening sun. It was shaded by a line of Mahogany trees to the east planted by the previous owner and a hill to the west. It enabled the new buildings to minimise direct sunlight and to catch the breeze that generally comes from the south-west (also known as *Habagat*) or from the north-east (*Amihan*).²¹

²⁰ Most of these play structures were quite large and towered over the waves when they struck land. The children could see this from the roof of the orphanage which they evacuated when the storm surge came in. The drawing workshops after the typhoon mostly featured these play structures for this reason. In particular, the castle was always drawn with a black corner as some of the children found a dead body in this area once the water receded the sea breeze to pass through.

²¹ The *Habagat* season is characterised by hot and humid weather, frequent heavy rainfalls, and a prevailing wind from the west. *Amihan* is characterised by moderate temperatures, little or no rainfall, and a prevailing wind from the east. The main indicator of the transition between the *Amihan* and *Habagat* seasonal patterns is the switch in wind directions.

↓ To understand the site, the community built mock-up rooms and moved them around the site. By staying overnight, the children experienced how the low morning sun would heat the building if it was not protected by the shade of trees.

↘ The full-scale mock-ups were also built as small models and later transcribed into plan drawings. By working between scales, the community addressed different aspects of the design, such as the location, the activities and qualities of the different spaces.

A site model was made to test the location of the buildings before staking them out around the site. The orphanage was located amongst the coconut trees, to the east of the mahogany trees. This was to avoid direct sunlight during the morning and afternoon when it would mostly be in use. The office and health clinic were located to the west of these trees to avoid the mid-day sun. This would also give the staff and children some privacy. The study centre programming was to be housed to the south of the orphanage, all of which created a safe play area between these two building clusters. To fit the different programmes on site, the buildings became quite long, with a 1:9 depth-length ratio similar to the poultry structure. Having decided on the location, we could begin the process of defining the programme, thinking in terms of volumes and massing.





Designing and making the doors

Once the general spatial organisation of the buildings and the site had been defined, the families were able to start designing the different elements of the building. The fathers were asked to walk around Tagpuro to document doors, windows and walls that they believed would work well for the building. Those designs were presented to others before making a design-proposal for the study centre. Once each of them had produced their design, they measured and quantified the material needed and took Jago and myself to source the materials. A set of prototypes were made and a final design was agreed upon by the fathers, mothers and the children. The mothers finalised the location of the windows and doors, the children exploring through drawings and poems how these could best work for them.

Having identified open-slatted windows and doors within the community of Tagpuro, some of the fathers argued that this design cooled down the breeze that flowed through the slats and that it would keep the mosquitos away when the wind increased. This was tested out on the mockup with the mothers and children as judges. Although the effect of the breeze through the door was not overly significant, the visual effect was pleasing to the community, and they decided to develop it further. They proceeded to test the slats in different shapes and with materials such as bamboo, bamboo weave and wood.

κ The fathers mapped existing doors and windows in the community to design the ones they liked. Then they made prototypes in bamboo. The final prototypes were discussed on site with the whole community present.

Outcome

The buildings

FORM: The community had observed that traditional timber buildings withstood the winds of the typhoon better than many concrete and steel structures. Wood was also a material commonly used amongst the community as well as for the old study centre. But the quantities needed for the project in Tagpuro was something that proved hard to source due to the price skyrocketing and supplies running low. After a six-month-long struggle, trees that had fallen during typhoon Haiyan were secured as construction material.

Nevertheless, the building is anchored with some concrete and steel. The concrete boxes are made of reinforced concrete and function as safe spaces during typhoons. A timber bypass structure²² joined by eight-mm thick steel plates defines the space on top and in-between the concrete volumes. Stabilised by the concrete volumes, the timber structures are flexible enough to handle earthquakes. By allowing winds to pass through the structure, the wind-load on the 50m long buildings is cut by two-thirds.²³ A concrete platform raises the concrete volumes and timber structure from the ground protecting the interior from the small flood risk in the area. The roof and porch roof have an angle of 17 degrees to prevent compression or uplift by strong winds. The ceiling is made of plywood and timber sandwich boards that stabilise the building against longitudinal overload. The buildings have a traditional Filipino standing sheet roof on top of the sandwich boards. If the winds were to lift these sheets off the building, they would crumple rather than becoming dangerous projectiles such as corrugated GI-Sheets.

²² Primary structure: 200mmx75mm for columns & 220mm x75mm for beams. The walkway columns: 200mm x 50mm.

²³ Through computational fluid dynamics our engineers computed how the winds would impact the buildings. Letting the winds through decreased the wind-loads by two-thirds.

FUNCTION: In August 2016, the orphanage, office, and study centre were completed. The scale of the buildings was one of a kind in the region and it was designed to withstand a disaster equivalent to super-typhoon Haiyan.

The orphanage has loft spaces above for bedrooms and service spaces are located inside the concrete blocks on the ground floor. The large screened doors and windows can be opened to form a naturally ventilated recreational space. The office consists of three heavy volumes containing meeting rooms and utility spaces. The shared workspaces are located in the open areas in-between. At times, this building also functions as a vocational training centre. The study centre has teachers' offices, music room, library, kitchen and bathrooms in the heavy concrete volumes and it has classrooms with areas for singing, dancing and theatre in the spaces in-between. As such, it serves as the public face of Streetlight and is the space that connects them with the larger community of Tagpuro.

→ The interior of the orphanage building. The heavy concrete space contains a bedroom on top and kitchen and bathrooms on the ground floor. The open space between the concrete rooms can be fully opened to let the wind pass through.

↘ When needed, the doors can also be closed completely. The parents had carefully designed the gaps between the wooden slats of the doors to ensure that breeze and light still pass through.



Learning while building

The community had hands-on involvement throughout the design process. Building a mock-up before construction began had helped to identify skills and knowledge and offered a space to learn from each other. It was also a space for the community to test the design at scale and reflect on its design choices. The chosen construction methods were kept deliberately simple in order to enable the community to gain ownership of the entire process from design to construction and beyond. Throughout the project, many families who had lost their livelihoods were employed on the construction site and received official training. By the end of the project, approximately 50 parents successfully passed the government certification test and became licensed carpenters and masons.



← The study centre can be fully opened if needed. On both ends there are concrete rooms containing a library on one side and a kitchen on the other.

↓ The open performance space doubles as a semi-outdoor meeting space and a classroom.

"We thought it was a job only men could do. It's amazing that mothers like us can do it too! It's something we can pass on to future generations"

— Nanay Rose Calinawan

This is what we made as a community. We never thought we would do something like this. This structure is an accomplishment, and we are proud of it. It's the result of applying what we learned from the workshops. In the future we can all say, please take care of it because we built it.

— Nanay Rowena Navigante

By virtue of working through *bayanihan*, the process and decisions made were rooted in the experience and stories of the community. The time invested together has been a platform for knowledge production and skills-training. The built outcomes, therefore, are physical representations of the mutual effort invested in the process. Similarly, the material attributes reflect the resources of the place as well as the skills and knowledge of the people.



The way the community described architecture changed drastically before and after the typhoon. Before the typhoon, architecture and its aesthetics were strongly linked to their aspirations and also an idea of progress. Within the informal settlement, bamboo and wood were seen as low status materials. Traditionally these houses are called *Bahay Kubo* (translate: bamboo houses). For those that had relatives abroad sending remittances back home, the wood would gradually be replaced by hollow block and cement. This moment of transition between wood and cement often generated interesting solutions and designs, albeit temporary. With the wooden structure on top of the cement hollow blocks, many of the family members would think of the *Bahay na Bato* (or stone houses in English). These were colonial typologies built by the Spaniards, that according to Greg Bankoff (2013), were designed to cope with the fire hazards that would often consume whole settlements. However, as the wood would be fully replaced by hollow blocks and concrete, decorative elements

would be added, such as Greek columns and ornaments, creating a cake-like aesthetics. The architecture is, as such, a direct expression of the lifestyle and aspiration of those that build. What became interesting as we started working, was the knowledge they had inherited from their relatives in rural Samar. Visiting these families together with the community revealed solutions and aspirations that were linked to the stories of family, heritage, and identity rather than values connected to income and wealth.

→ ↗ Some of the design aspirations that the community mapped within Tagpuro had a certain aesthetics that alluded to typologies found in the city.



The families had a humble but very efficient way of coping with strong winds and typhoons. By taking down the walls, allowing the strong winds to pass through a simple bamboo or wooden shed, buildings could withstand the strongest of typhoons. In the process of explaining this, the community shared a story that captures an attitude; their way of dealing with calamity. This was the story of the bamboo, banana and mango tree and an argument about which was the most resilient. Both the mango and banana tree would boast that they were the strongest, surviving both heatwaves and heavy rain. But their strength was no match for the typhoon. The bamboo on the other hand did not claim to be the strongest and did not fight against the winds of the typhoon. The bamboo survived, showing that resilience is not a question of strength, but rather the ability to bend and adapt. This story was also captured by Aaron Opdyke in his post disaster research following typhoon Haiyan (Opdyke and Will, 2015).²⁴ This eventually become the main concept for the study centre.

²⁴ The way in which the families would let the winds pass through their buildings is an expression of this flexibility.



When I returned to Tacloban in April 2014, after typhoon Haiyan, I was approached by one of the family members I had worked with for the planning, design and building of the study centre. She told me with excitement that the study centre had survived, however as we were standing in the ruins of what was left of the building after the storm surge, this statement did not make much sense. She then went on to clarify that the study centre had survived the peak of super typhoon Haiyan, the strongest winds to ever hit land, but it was destroyed by the waves caused by the storm surge that followed. The excitement in her voice was an affirmation that their concept of letting the winds pass through the building had enabled the study centre to survive winds that many of the nearby concrete and steel buildings could not.

The process of building back would have to address, reflect upon, and respond to trauma that was directly related to different materials, elements, and spaces of pre-Haiyan architecture. Corrugated steel roofs alluded to the flying knives they had become when lifted up by the winds. In addition, earthquakes experienced in the area had made several families wary of overly enclosed spaces, so openness was important. At the same time, having higher safe spaces was a testament to the storm surge and the fear of sleeping near the ground. The architecture became a process of dealing with a collective trauma, and the symbolic, material, and strategic processes that this implied.

↑ The community and Streetlight celebrating the 2016 opening of the orphanage, office and study center in Tagpuro.

Understanding architecture as a process

Architecture is often seen as a static object, a commodity to be bought and sold. Under this understanding of it, the people who will be affected by what is built remain in the background while important decisions are made by architects about planning, building method, choice of material and how the spaces will be used.

My experience of working in Tacloban, three years before super typhoon Haiyan, and in the three years that followed, left an impression on me of what architecture does when approached as a process.

To understand what architecture does over time, Skotte (2021) proposes looking at three attributes of architecture relating to its material, symbolic, and strategic qualities. Firstly, the material quality of a building reflects the capacity to sustain and transform its physical and functional features over time. Secondly, the symbolic quality of a building derives from people's relationship with it. A building can be seen as an embodiment of the stories and meanings carried by those who relate to it. Thirdly, the strategic quality is represented in how a building affects its surrounding environment in the long run. When architecture is approached as a process, it changes the role of the architect from designer of objects to one that designs a process of collaboration. However, if this process does

not belong to the place or the people, then it will not be sustained over time. *Bayanihan* was to me an already existing understanding of a way of working together. At the same time, learning about *bayanihan* enabled me to articulate something that I knew from my own experience, which was the Norwegian *dugnad*. These forms of organising were something we had in common, despite being from two very different cultures. The mutuality embedded in these traditions offers a different perspective on the role of the architect in collaborative projects.

Architects as professionals are educated to see things in particular ways that often result in over-appreciating the knowledge of the expert over that of the non-experts. When participatory projects attempt to flatten this knowledge hierarchy by leaving the design process to the

people, expertise of architects is no longer so predominant (Till, 2021). Practicing architecture through mutual support has the potential to create a process of mutualism in which everyone contributes on an equal basis via a shared effort invested through everyone's time and labour. Therefore, the role of the architect becomes one of many contributors, while making agency of people and place central to the entire process. Practicing architecture through mutual support could radically change the relationship between the architect and client; leading to a non-hierarchical collaboration in which exchange of knowledge becomes possible on equal grounds.

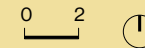
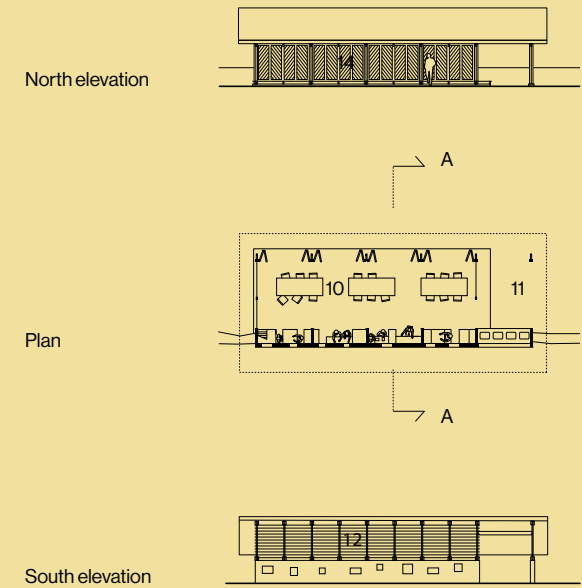
In order to realise the potential of working through mutual support, there is a need to break down the process and create a common language to facilitate a mutual exchange of knowledge, values and aspirations. In Tacloban, this happened through a six-step process where we spent substantial time in collectively articulating the situation of the community and finding ways to act on a situation:

1. Learning about the current situation; 2. By collectively questioning what we would like the situation to be in the future; 3. Making something that suggests how we can transform the current situation. These steps were aimed at creating a [4] concept that can act as a common language within the group. This common language allowed us to [5] design and [6] build something together that comes from and belongs to the community.

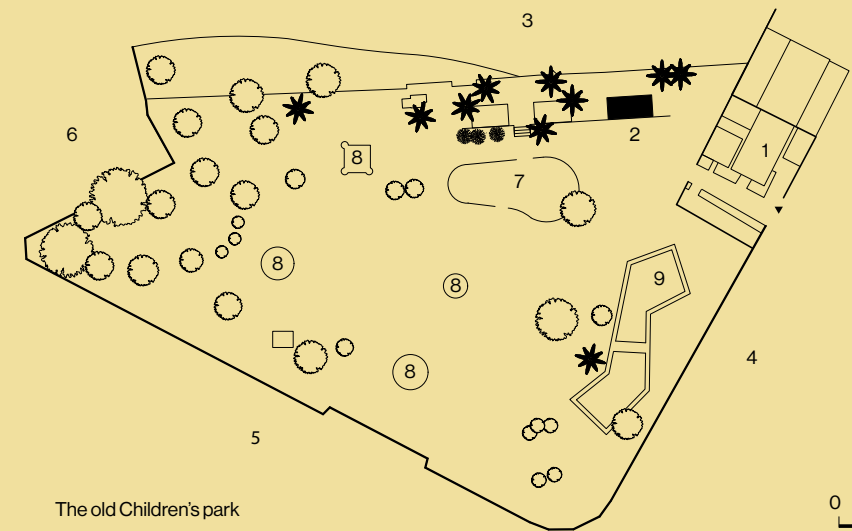
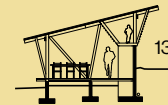
In the following situations I have tried to further understand what it means to organise through mutual support and how to create a process that is embedded in already existing practices and understandings of the people so that a building becomes a representation of something rooted in the people of a specific place.

STREETLIGHT TACLOBAN

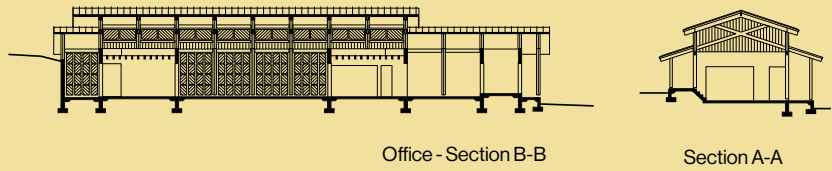
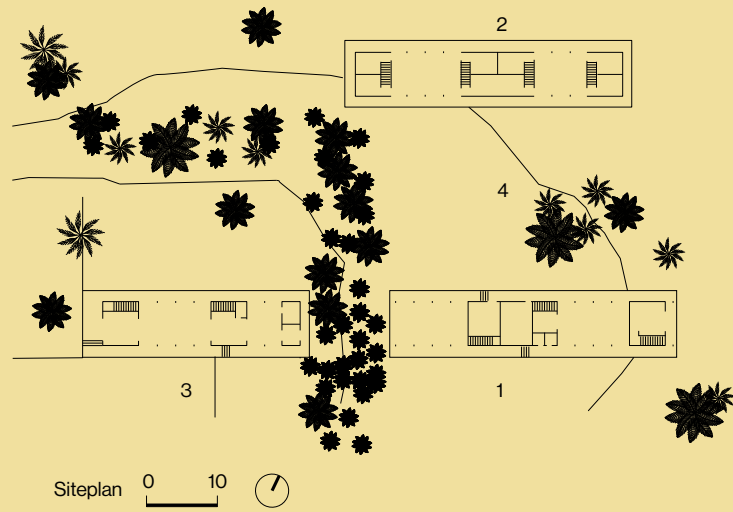
1. Streetlight orphanage & office
2. The study centre building
3. Cancabato bay
4. Eastern Visayas Medical Center
5. Plaza Libertad & Provincial Capitol
6. Tacloban City Port
7. Basketball court
8. Old concrete play structures
9. Pond
10. Study space
11. Cleaning space
12. Mezzanine space
13. Retaining wall
14. Fully openable wall



Section A-A

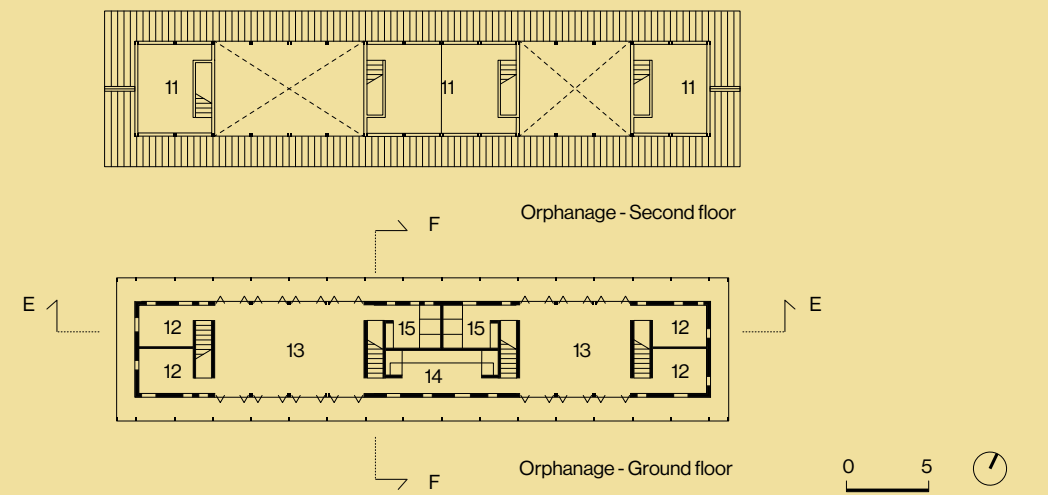
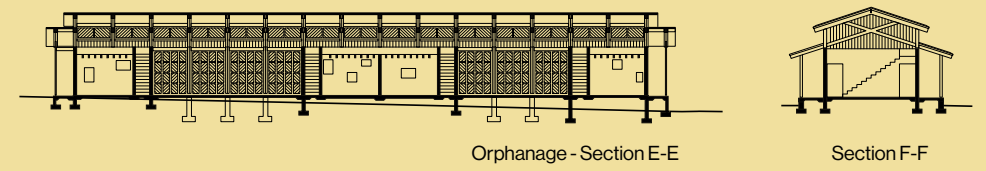
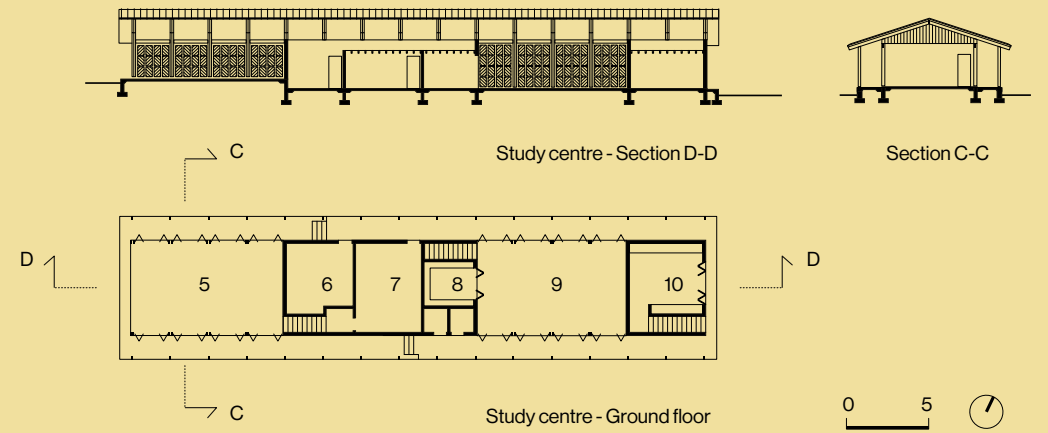
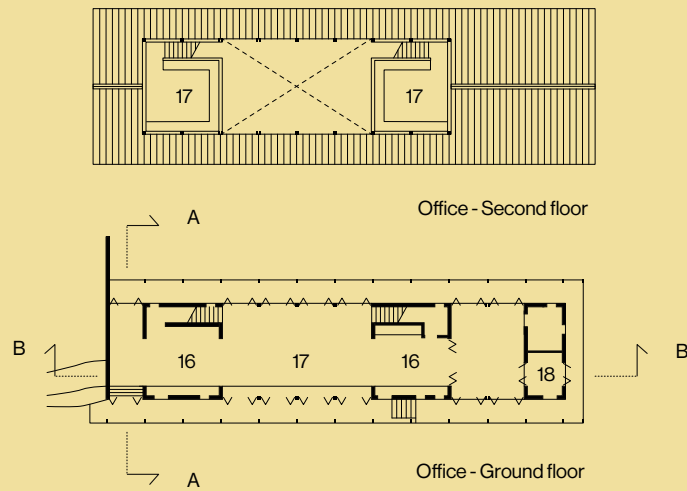


The old Children's park



STREETLIGHT TAGPURO

- 1. Study centre building
- 2. Orphanage
- 3. Office
- 4. Park
- 5. Performance space
- 6. Music room
- 7. Computer room
- 8. Library
- 9. Classroom
- 10. Kitchen
- 11. Bedroom
- 12. Staff room
- 13. Living room
- 14. Kitchen
- 15. Bathroom
- 16. Meeting room and kitchen
- 17. Workspace
- 18. Guard's room



2

Action for Lùng Tám

A collaborative design-and-build of a textile cooperative with a Hmong ethnic group in northern Vietnam through *đổi công*. The project shows the implementation of the six-step process within the context of the Vietnamese tradition of mutual support. It also is an attempt to develop a discourse about the process through an exhibition in Hanoi.



← To understand how we can best work together we collectively designed and built a small structure. The process of building was called *đôi công* by the cooperative members.

↙ The structure is now being used for drying the hemp textiles after dyeing them in colour.

Introduction

Action for Lũng Tám is a close collaboration with the Lũng Tám textile cooperative and a group of architects in Hanoi, Vietnam. The process was structured as a series of intense weeks of working together with the cooperative members in Lũng Tám to plan, design and build new facilities for the production of hemp and batik textiles. Building on my reflections from the Tacloban project, the process was structured around the six steps of learning, questioning, making, conceptualising, designing and building. Each step was intended so that the community and the architects could articulate and explore the culture, architecture, and production-line of their cooperative. The process questions the way we organise ourselves, and the tension between being an insider and an outsider of a place. It addresses the question of language and how we communicate, as well as situating the six-step process in a context other than the Philippines. The project involved a series of lectures and an exhibition which enabled my team, the community and myself to articulate a process rooted in the Vietnamese tradition of mutual support, *đôi công*.



Preparation

A village in the mountains

Lùng Tám is a small village in Vietnam's northernmost province Hà Giang, bordered by China. It is a mountainous region which used to be a self-governed area up until the Second World War. While the vast majority of Vietnamese people belong to the Kinh ethnic group, Hmong is the dominant ethnic group in the area. The village of Lùng Tám consists of 200 Hmong families and is considered to be the regional centre of the of seven surrounding villages. The families in Lùng Tám used to live on the hillside but had been forced to relocate down into the valley during what is known as the American war (1955-1975) by the locals. The houses, most of which are made of timber structures, were disassembled, and reassembled beside the river, at the bottom of the valley. However, not all buildings were rebuilt, and some remain in storage till this day.



➤ The top-right image shows the existing conditions of the textile cooperative facilities. The buildings are located between the rice fields in the village. Many of these buildings were relocated down into the valley during the war with America.

In 1993, Vàng Thị Mai attempted to start a textile co-operative run by women. At that time, the idea of women working outside of the household was unheard of. Within a patriarchal family structure, the woman was expected to stay at home to take care of the family and young girls often had to drop out of school to stay at home. Therefore, the idea of a women-led cooperative faced opposition from the men in the village. After years of negotiation, Ms. Mai and her partners started the Lùng Tám textile cooperative with ten members in 2001. Today, the cooperative has 130 members organised into nine production teams. The cooperative has been recognised by local authorities and received a lot of national attention. Therefore, the current facilities, built out of reclaimed wood from old buildings around the village, have become too small and the spaces too warm and dark for the women working there. At the same time, the current site is susceptible to flash flooding, and half of the site is under planning to be reclaimed for a pending road expansion. There was a great need to address these issues through the planning, design and construction of a new facility for the textile cooperative.

“How do you find these projects?”

This is a question that I often get when I give lectures about my work. Each project has organically emerged through a sequence of encounters, conversations, and coincidences. What has been important is to be able to listen to the interests and ambitions of others, and to discover in what ways we have something in common, a shared understanding. Eventually a project emerges when enough people join in.

As the construction in Tacloban was wrapping up, I traveled to Vietnam in 2016. There I met Ngô Thị Thu Hương at her small coffeeshop in Hanoi. She knew about my work in Tacloban and had reached out to connect me with other similar initiatives and communities in Vietnam. She introduced me to Châu Nguyễn Huyền who has been building schools in remote villages in Hà Giang.²⁵ Through her work she had come to know Ms. Mai and her textile cooperative in Lũng Tám and thought this would be a good initiative to support. Châu also introduced me to Hiệp Nguyễn Huyền, an architect based in Hanoi who became my in-country partner.

25 These schools were prefabricated and assembled in the villages where she worked, but she had found that the prefab solution was hard to maintain with the materials available, and it did not represent the people or their culture. Instead, she was interested in working through a process like the one I had initiated in Tacloban and believed the Lũng Tám Textile Cooperative would be a good group to work with.

26 This is one of many advices that Skotte shared with me over the years. Most of which has become formative of the way I understand and practice architecture.

27 One of which was Cơm Có Thịt. The project I was invited to do was a school in Puxi in Điện Biên Phủ on the Laos border.



An already moving train

In the process of finding a project, it has been important for me to engage with already-existing initiatives and to find ways in which the process of working together can strengthen their aim and purpose. Skotte would describe this with the analogy of a moving train: if I am the fuel that keeps the train moving, it will stop when I leave.²⁶ Therefore, my role should be to support an already moving train with laying the tracks in the direction they want to go.

Before meeting Châu, I was approached with different opportunities for collaborative projects in Vietnam, but many of them were about providing aid rather than supporting an already existing initiative by a community.²⁷ When I learned about the Lũng Tám textile cooperative, it was clear that this was an already moving train. The initiative had a track record of organizing and a clear agenda; however it lacked the necessary facilities to pursue its ambition. The conditions were there to step in and support them in laying their tracks in the process of building their new cooperative building. And, most importantly, both Ms. Mai and myself saw great value in enabling each member of the cooperative to engage in this process, to evaluate and develop the project.

↑ The market square in the village is used to dry the long-woven textiles after they were boiled and soaked in ash water for a week.

↖ Before Lung Tam I was invited to build a school in Điện Biên Province. As the project provided no opportunity to directly engage with the community, I decided not to be involved.

← Members of the cooperative members are self-driven and eager to improve their facilities.

I first visited Lũng Tám in November 2016 together with Châu. The purpose was to meet the cooperative members and get to know each other. It was also important for me to understand whether it would be possible to work together and if it would make sense, for their initiative, to work with us. We made a plan for how to work together and met with the local government seeking their support for the initiative.

It was on this trip that I first learned about *đổi công*, the Vietnamese tradition of mutual support. *Đổi công* is a Vietnamese word, but the Hmong have their own name for this concept. However, without a written language in the village they were unable to write this down.²⁸ The tradition is described as a non-commercial labour exchange, organised into small groups (*tổ đổi công*) of five-seven families to meet the needs of seasonal agricultural tasks that had to be completed within just a few days each year. For instance, preparation of rice fields, replanting of seedlings, irrigation and harvest (Quang and Nghi, 2016).

Some of the questions asked in the preparatory trips were: How could *đổi công* be a way to organise ourselves, and how would this fit with the existing structure of the cooperative? Where would we work together, and when? Who would be involved, and how?

We started the process of working with the community in Lũng Tám by learning about *đổi công* and how it is practiced by them. Then we questioned how this form of organising could be relevant to the process of building the new cooperative. Following the making phase we had found a way for the community to facilitate and organise workshops for the design and building phase through *đổi công*.

Seasonal agricultural work required periods of intense work by the community. In addition, unexpected events such as flash floods, landslides and funerals would require people to quickly mobilize through *đổi công*.²⁹ Therefore, it made sense to plan the workshops in between their seasonal agricultural chores. As a result, the way we organised workshops mirrored the way *đổi công* was normally implemented in intense periods. A series of week-long trips to the village were organised in the phases of learning, questioning, making, concept and design.

→ In one of the first meetings with Vàng Thị Mai and the textile cooperative members.



The final building phase is yet to be organised, due to Covid travel restrictions. On the third trip I teamed up with cooperative members Sùng Thị Đình and Hạng Lữ to formalise the structure and facilitation of the workshops. From this point on, they took responsibility for facilitating the workshops for the nine group leaders of the cooperative, and each of these leaders would facilitate workshops for their group of eight cooperative members, while the team from Hanoi, including me, were away from the village. In this way, all members of the cooperative were involved in the process. Final decisions were made in the workshops with the nine group leaders.

²⁸ The closest we got was “Yeo wo ipal pau dzo” also written as “Yeo wo ee pal puo cha gei moo” or “nhô uá yipāl fho cha gei mu”, but *đổi công* was also used as a word.

²⁹ We participated in *đổi công* in the replanting of rice seedlings, but also later the organisation of a funeral. From afar we followed the community in helping each other out after a severe landslide.

Process

Solidarity, not charity

Many of the cooperative members, as well as my team from Hanoi, wanted to start designing right away. I observed that some of my team members assumed that the Hmong families in Lũng Tám were in need of help from people from outside, and therefore that providing material aid was a good thing in itself. Such an understanding of the relationship between the people of the cooperative and the team visiting the village is highly problematic as it sets out a power dynamic on unequal terms. It perceives outsiders as experts who would extract information from the villagers to provide a service; it perceives the villagers as dependent on that service. To my surprise, some of the cooperative members also embodied the view that they were in need of expert support in order to address their own situation. This situation made the process of learning and questioning critical to create an environment of mutual learning instead of one-way aid. As Till (2021) writes, this does not mean that architects should

abandon their knowledge but rather that they be sensitive to other forms of knowing. In this process, both parties learn together, question what resources and capacity they have to make something that transforms the situation. The expert-client relationship is blurred when everyone has something to contribute on an equal basis. This makes the process an act of solidarity, not charity. There was a need to discuss this tension, and I found the platform to do so in lectures and exhibitions.

↓ Models of streetlight Tacloban were presented in Nanoco Gallery as part of the solo exhibition *Community – Co-design – Architecture*.



Building a discourse

Ms. Mai and I gave talks at different venues and universities, sharing the process from Tacloban and the story of that cooperative. It didn't take long before our initiative was on national television and in newspapers. After giving a talk at TEDx BaDinh, I was invited to have a solo exhibition at Nanoco Gallery in Hanoi. In 2017, this was a newly opened gallery designed by Võ Trọng Nghĩa Architects. Rather than presenting my own work, I proposed that we would use the space to start a discussion and form a community of architects to join us in the village.

The exhibition was titled *Community • Co-design • Architecture* and the ambition was to build a discourse around collaborative design processes and to use the gallery space as a workspace for us to prepare, process and develop the project in Lũng Tám.³⁰ The main wall of the exhibition space was used to share experiences from my previous work in the Philippines, India, UK and China. It featured photos, organised by activity, as well as outputs from different projects.³¹ I used this as a way of sharing stories about how a collaborative design process could take shape. On the opposite wall, a collage of photos from Lũng Tám was featured, which kept growing as the process developed.³² We hosted lectures and talks in-between each trip to Lũng Tám³³ and, reciprocally, the reflections made in these discussions informed our actions in the village.

30 In retrospect, I see similarities to the way in which Eva Franch I. Gillibert transformed the US pavilion during the 2014 Venice Biennale into an architecture office, titled OfficeUS.

31 The activities were planning, eating, playing, drawing, painting, model making and full-scale testing. The outputs were prototypes, exhibitions, small structures and projects.

32 This exhibition wall would eventually be developed into a new exhibition in itself, installed in the Lũng Tám Cooperative.

33 The first trip to Lũng Tám happened a month before the exhibition opened. The making of the exhibition was, therefore, an opportunity to discuss what we had experienced on the first trip, as well as our future plans. The first talk was held during the opening ceremony, at which I shared my previous experience of collaborative projects. The second trip to Lũng Tám happened halfway through the exhibition. Updates were brought back into the exhibition space and presented during a second talk. The third trip to Lũng Tám began the day after the exhibition closed and preparations for this trip were presented at the closing event.

In order to communicate the process of collaboration, which is based on mutual relationship, I organised the methodology of working with communities around the six-step process by reflecting on the experience from Situation 1. The six steps consisting of learning, questioning, making, concept, design and build. This also formed the basis and structure of the workshops that we were planning in Lũng Tám, and it was the first time the six steps were used to structure a process from the beginning. Being able to communicate the purpose of each step, it helped to create a synergy and focus to develop the project at Lũng Tám. The first three steps - learning, questioning, making - were demonstrated in the exhibition space in order to create a shared experience. One example was the making of tables and chairs as a way of finding a way to work together. In addition, a group of students from Hanoi studied drawings of my previous projects and built models to understand the connection between architectural output and the process of making.



Naming ourselves

The exhibition at Nanoco gallery helped to build a team of architects and engineers for the project.³⁴ It also contributed to forming a management team to address the financing of the workshops and the documentation of the process. Sudarshan V. Khadka Jr. and I took this opportunity to continue our collaboration, and he joined me in the planning of each trip to the village. He also took the lead in the construction of a mock-up. Châu took responsibility of the crowd-funding, as well as the management and logistics of the travel itself. Rémi Gontier supported the cooperative with a financial strategy for funding the project. Hiệp took responsibility coordinating the architects that joined us from Hanoi, as well as the research and mapping of existing buildings and structures in the village. Eric Roach and Trang Nguyễn Thung took the lead producing films together with the cooperative member Hạng Lữ. For each of the trips to Lũng Tám, I would plan the structure of the workshops in dialogue with Sudar and take responsibility for facilitating each session together with Châu. Together we named this initiative Action for Lũng Tám. The act of giving ourselves a name was about sharing ownership of the project but also giving an identity to our collective resources and capacities.



↑ The six-step process was presented in front of a wall of images showing the different ways that we can communicate through the act of making.

← A collage of images and stories from the ongoing collaboration in Lũng Tám.

³⁴ The team that had come together to help make the Nanoco exhibition, and that later joined in the village was: Nguyen Thuy Linh, Nguyen Quang Huy, Han Nguyen, Dang Khoa, Ha Minh Tuan, Hong Duc, Doan Anh Tuan, Bui Duy Thai, Thanh Duong, Nam Le & Hoang Ngoc Truc Lam, Le Thu Huyen, Le Hong Hanh, Le Dinh Trong, Quyen Nguyen, Son Tran, Thieu Nguyen, Quynh Trang, Thuy Anh, Vu Nguyen, Nga Color, Hoai Thu, Le Thu Ha, Nguyen Bui Khanh Linh, Pham Hoang Mien, Nguyen Thu Trang, Do Hong Quan, Quan Pham, Phung Bao Tran & Nguyen Phuong Hao.

Many of the cooperative members did not speak Vietnamese. This created a situation where whenever something was communicated by English to them, it needed to first be translated into Vietnamese and then into the Hmong language. This difficulty made us particularly aware of the way we communicated. In Tacloban, we had tried to communicate through the act of making rather than just through verbal discussion. This approach was shared with the project members through the Nanoco exhibition and eventually tested in different ways in the village of Lũng Tám. Activities such as drawing, model-making, full scale testing, storytelling and mapping produced different kinds of outputs that could be discussed and compared.

The way these activities were framed and implemented was particularly important. Although the cooperative members were extremely skilled in drawing patterns for batik textiles, they were not comfortable drawing on paper. A solution to

this situation was to first draw a small circle to make a frame and then filling it with their drawings. The group suddenly had no problems in producing reflections and ideas through drawings within a border layout similar to textile design process. Since this experience, much of my planning for workshops has been about negotiating what this type of border can be, and the ways in which borders can frame activities in different ways.



→ By measuring the existing cooperative buildings and mapping them on a grid, the members drew their current facilities.

← Working in model helped to understand space and scale.



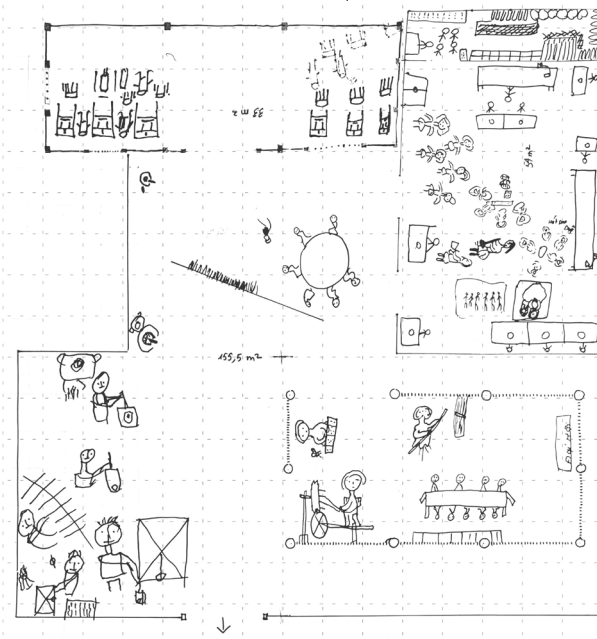
The cooperative produces batik textiles. 41 different stages are required to harvest the plants, transform them into threads, then weave, paint and dye the textiles. All materials, including colours are harvested and extracted from plants in the region. The honey used for the batik painting is made just minutes away from the cooperative. The textile designs are currently made by a remarkable woman, aged, at the time, 103. The expert batik painter was already 93 years old. In this context, there is a need to transfer knowledge to the younger generation, and the cooperative offers education and schooling for young girls in the region.

Each member of the cooperative performed specific tasks in the making of the hemp textiles. The process of mapping out the entire production process was interesting for us as outsiders, but also something that the other members of the cooperative found valuable. Measuring and drawing the existing facilities helped them to understand the scale of the spaces they worked in and how different programmes and activities overlapped with each other. In the next phase, the group questioned the quality of their workspaces: what currently works, what doesn't, and how it might be improved. In the making phase, the group acted-out the production steps within a full-scale mock-up of the



site, exploring how the sequence of work could be organised differently. It was in this process that the group identified two organising principles for the programme. This was the 'dirty and wet' work, and the 'clean and dry' work. It struck me how the programmatic concept was defined by two opposing spatial qualities, much like the concept of 'heavy and safe' and 'light and ventilated' pertained in Tagpuro.

Due to the expropriation of half of the land of the cooperative for the pending road expansion, the new building would have to be two stories high. The group decided that the wet and dirty would go on the ground floor, and the clean and dry on the second floor. This would allow the water of the occasional flash floods and rain to pass through the ground floor without damaging any of their textiles. Meanwhile, valuables would be stored on the second floor. Architecture, like in Tacloban, was understood not as working against the forces of nature, but allowing them to pass through the building while ensuring that there was a protected space. This reasoning that was articulated by the community reflects a deep understanding of the forces of nature, and their capacity to endure in the face of calamities.



↖ The activities drawn in the plan was acted out in a full-scale grid. It gave space to imagine other configurations and uses than what is limited by the existing buildings.

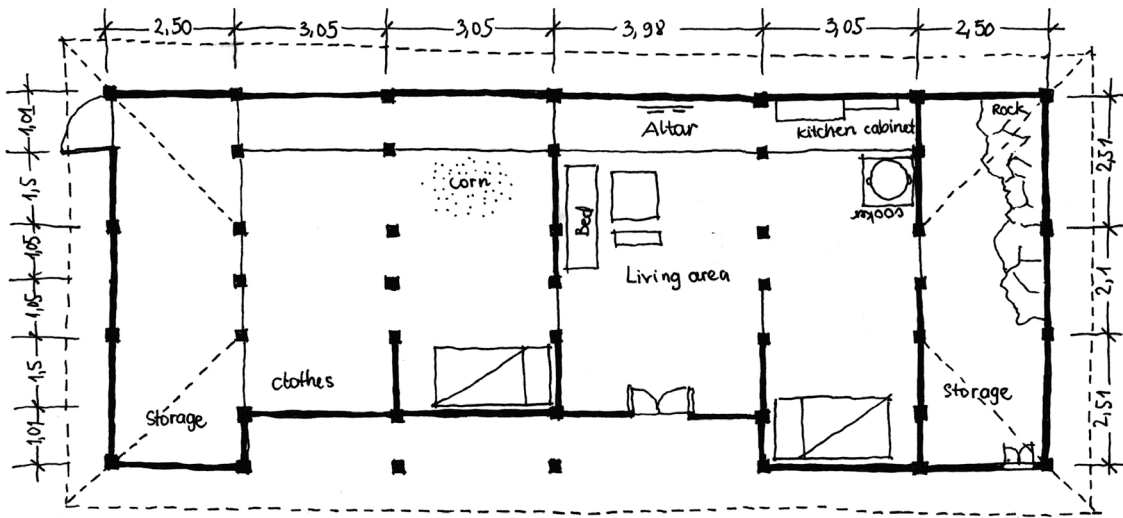
↑ Within the plan drawing they drew all the production steps. Some overlapped and sparked an interesting discussion about how the spaces are used during different times of the day.

Architecture, aspirations, and values

One of the first workshops organised during the initial, preparatory trip ended up in a discussion between different members of the community about materiality. The choice of materials was a direct representation of their aspirations and ideas for progress. Initially, buildings made with natural materials were considered backward beside the modern and progressive steel and concrete buildings. The consequence of this aspiration had economic impacts for the residents of Lũng Tám. As they were farmers and much of the weekly markets were organised through a barter system,³⁵ they did not necessarily need money. However, to build a house of concrete they needed money to purchase the rebar and concrete as well as the labour. This money had to be earned, and many had started working in large factories in southern Vietnam to gain income to build a proper house. This was not ideal and some had been tricked into trafficking and forced marriages across the Chinese border. More and more houses are being replaced by concrete houses, while the structural components of the old wooden houses are stored in the back yard. This transition has reflected a change in attitude, ambition, and way of life.

During the learning and questioning phase, we did a series of walkthroughs around the community to draw the different house typologies that we found in the village. Although concrete represented progress, these houses did not fit the ceremonies and customs that were so intertwined with the structure and spaces of the wooden buildings. Indeed, so much so that several of the families that had built a concrete house had chosen to keep their old house for this purpose. Architecture, as such, is not only a representation of ambitions and aspirations, but a very material manifestation of a certain way of life. In this case the split between aspiration and way of life was manifested in these hybrid structures.

³⁵ Barter system is a exchange of goods or services without the use of money.



- Timber Partition
- Timber Floor Beam (4x450 + 300)mm
- - - Roof line

↗ The plan and elevation of a wooden building with structural columns every 2.5m. It is from buildings like this that the community described the logic of the grid, and how every space within the grid had a cultural and spiritual significance.

➤ By laying out ropes on the ground we drew a grid to discuss scale and how the space could be used for different programmes.

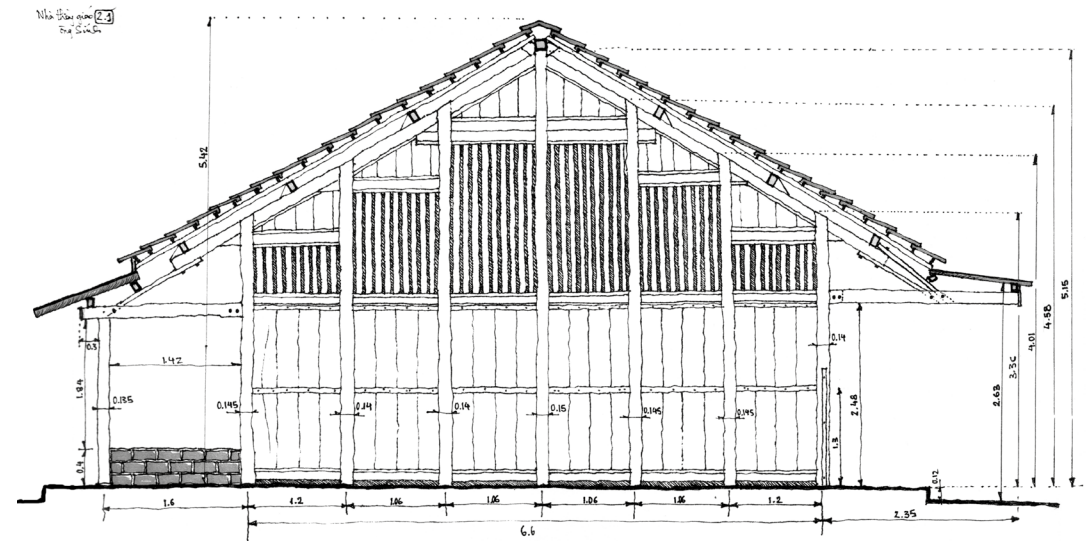
The grid as a spatial concept

The type of wood used for housing of Hmong families is called *nghiên*, but it is no longer legal to log due to deforestation that has led to landslides in the region. The load-bearing timber frame (15cm x 15cm in section) consisted of a network of interlocking wooden components, set in a grid of 2,5m x 2,5m. The depth of the building is defined by three such grids making the building 7,5m deep. The length of the building is between three to six grids, 7,5 -15m long. The way this building would be built was by assembling one row of columns and beams on the ground, then the whole village would come together in a tradition of *đổi công* to raise the structural frames and connect them. The next frame is assembled and raised, and once these two are connected, the main structure stands by itself. The building is then completed in collaboration with the whole community. Each family in the community needs to help each other so that they can also get help when they need to build their own house.

The logic of the structural grid in the vernacular wooden houses became a way to talk about space and draw new floor-plans for the cooperative. As the existing cooperative building did not follow the traditional Hmong structure, we measured the space and used the grid



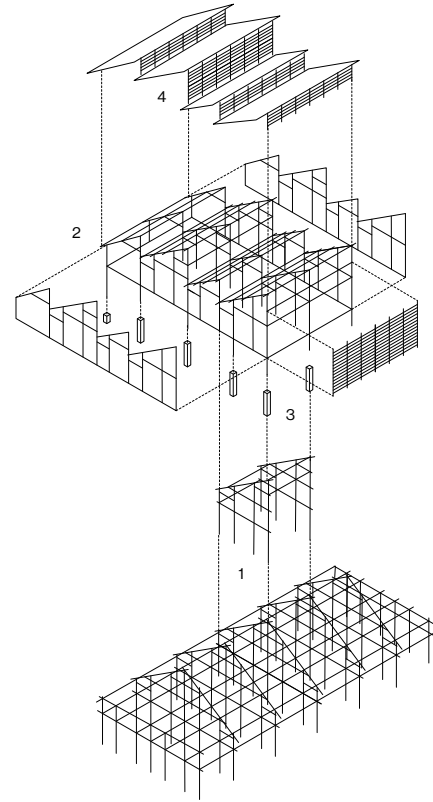
to gain a better understanding of how the space is being used and how the space could be organised in the new building. To test drawings in full scale we used rope to stake out the plan and acted out how the space would be used with the actual tools and equipment. The result of this role-play was a lively discussion about how the space could best be used.



Outcome

From a prototype to design

The vernacular timber structures studied in the learning phase raised questions about what skills and knowledges were still being practiced and available within the community today. To find out, we made a small structure next to the market in the village consisting of a stone wall with a wooden roof. Three carpenters were hired for the construction, although the whole community came together to contribute to different parts. The laying of roof tiles was a particularly strong expression of *đôi công*. Since its completion, the structure has been used for outdoor weaving, drying textiles, as well as a hangout place for the children.



← Only certain parts of the old buildings (1) can be reused. The structure of the new cooperative building (2) is raised on concrete columns (3) and re-oriented to provide natural light (4).

↓ To test how we could build the textile cooperative we built a small structure. The community called this a process of *đôi công*, as everyone contributed on different parts of the building.

The programme is organised according to a sequence of work that the cooperative members developed and also the concepts of 'clean and dry' and 'wet and dirty'. The ground floor is an open space for wet and dirty activities such as the processing of threads, as well as dry and dirty activities such as the peeling of hemp and the thread making. The second floor is for dry and clean activities such as sewing and weaving. Preventing future flash-floods is a huge infrastructural project that is unlikely to be implemented by the local government, so designing for future flood scenarios is important. The ground floor is designed to allow water to pass through during floods, while keeping a dry and safe space on the second floor. The prototype doors and windows of the cooperative that was developed by the weavers for the second floor accommodate different kinds of windows that will be used for different seasons and their variable light and temperatures.

The experience inspired the design of the building, which is an assemblage of four different vernacular houses. After documenting some of the houses that had been in storage since the war, it was clear that some of their structural components were severely damaged. By mapping the different structures that are still in storage we hope to salvage enough material to use for the new textile cooperative. The fragments collected will be reconfigured as a series of mono-pitch roofs that will permit the passage of light to brighten the sewing and weaving space and provide ample ceiling height for hanging textiles. These fragments will be raised on concrete pillars, evening-out the different heights of the columns but also ensuring that the building will be two full stories high.



When I started my research, I was looking at mutual support as an important mechanism in post-disaster reconstruction. Through my learning, however, I came to realise that it is important to strengthen these forms of collaboration before anything happens.³⁶ The value of working together through *bayanihan* before typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines had been really important for the community in the immediate aftermath of the typhoon, but also in the process to build back what was lost.

This was also the case in Lũng Tám. The day after our last trip to the village unprecedented rainfall struck the area. The cooperative and large parts of the village were flooded. Immediately after, Ms. Mai led a search and rescue for the families that had been lost in the landslide. This was a process that in itself was an expression of *đôi công*. The buildings of the cooperative survived the flood, but all the textiles and paperwork were lost. Amongst them was the red paper which certified their land-use right for the cooperative.³⁷ A neighbour who normally did not reside in the village took this opportunity to claim the land of the cooperative, and a year-long struggle to save the land of the cooperative ensued. Luckily, the cooperative was allowed to keep the site, but by the time this was resolved, Covid happened. The construction is still pending as of now in 2021, but the mapping-out of wooden components for the reassembly is continuing. The final stage, building (although on-going use is, of course, another phase), will be organised once Covid travel restrictions are lifted.

→ Heavy rain caused floods and landslides in the village, severely flooding the cooperative buildings.



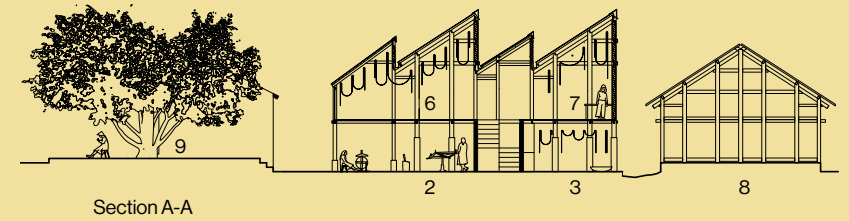
³⁶ The title of my Artistic PhD has been changed from "Bayanihan as a model for community participation in Post Disaster Reconstruction" to "Learning From Bayanihan/ Dugnad" for this reason.

³⁷ People cannot own land in Vietnam, but a red paper gives people a right to use the site.

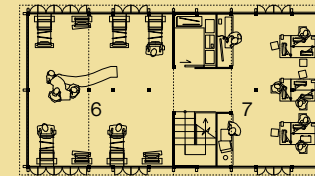
An important observation in this project revolves around the idea of language and how we express architecture beyond the visualisation of a built object. What other ways are there of expressing architecture if architecture is understood as process? Architects often talk about what architecture is, but when you ask people, they talk about what architecture does or the ways it is used. While space can be expressed through the tools of an architect, other forms of communication are needed to understand the ways it will be used, maintained or transformed. One language that both we as architects and the cooperative members shared was that of the grid, for the latter, often found in the description of vernacular houses, expressed by the number of grids it contained. Although open-plan, each grid within a building had its own significance and usage situated within the life of the people.

Informed by this common language, we measured out the site of the existing cooperative. By overlaying a grid over the whole site, we were able to question how the sequence of production was organised. We also questioned the current size of each space as well the quality of the interior space. To bring the proposed drawings to full scale, we laid out a grid on the market square and acted out the actual production process by bringing in tools and equipment that were used. In this way, the grid functioned at different scales. It also became a way to budget and relocate programmes that would be lost to the road reclamation. As stated above, working in two layers the space was categorised by the qualities identified, 'dirty and wet' on the ground floor and 'clean and dry' on the second floor.

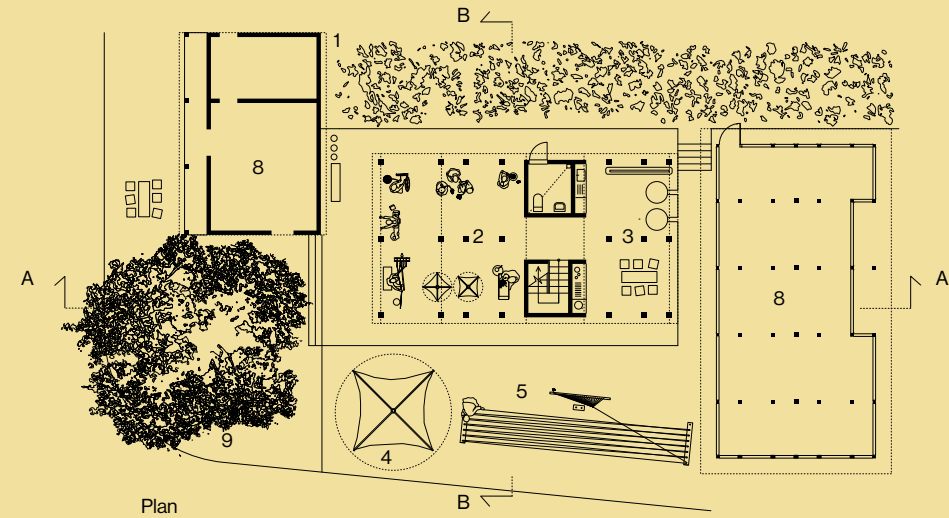
If we understand architecture as a reflection of our way of life, then planning and design needs to be built on this understanding. A key role of the architect is to create a process wherein people can build on their own experiences and understandings. Through learning about a current situation, questioning how it should be and then making something to suggest how to transform this situation, we build a common language to express architecture as process.



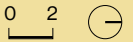
Section A-A



Second floor

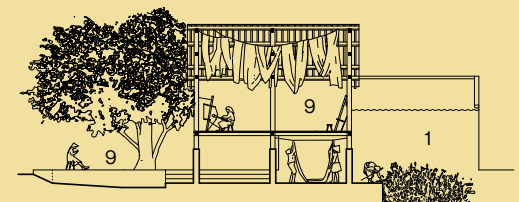


Plan



ACTION FOR LÙNG TÁM

1. Hemp field
2. Thread making
3. Dyeing and boiling
4. Thread straightening
5. Spooling the thread
6. Weaving textiles
7. Processing & sewing of textiles
8. House of cooperative member



Section B-B

3

Fronteira Livre

A close collaboration with migrants of CAMI Migrants Support Centre to design six banners in the São Paulo Metro through a process inspired by *mutirão*. Each banner contained a pattern and message that the group wanted to communicate to the city. The translation of personal stories to patterns exemplifies the power of abstraction in a creative collaborative process.

Fronteira livre is an intervention for the 11th Biennale of Architecture of São Paulo (2017). It consists of six banners installed within six of the main stations of the São Paulo Metro and the São Paulo Metropolitan Train Company from October to November 2017. The process was carried out through a collaboration with the artist collective Goma Oficina, migrants from CAMI migrant support centre and myself. Through exchanging stories about personal experience of borders, six collective narratives were developed and made into six statements and geometric patterns printed on banners.

Fronteira Livre is an intervention that required a lot of planning but was implemented in a relatively short period of time. This project exemplifies what could happen in the planning stage of a larger project to mobilise people towards a shared goal. But it also shows how we can give shape to a common language through the act of making and translating our own experiences into a physical intervention.

The act of translating the migrants' collective stories to symbols and patterns allowed the group to abstract their experiences into concepts. These concepts helped articulate and mobilise the group towards further action, giving the project a life beyond the biennale itself as part of a demonstration for migrants rights, marching down Paulista Avenue (2018).

→ The banner "Create Courage To Walk" was made for Barra Funda station. It carried the message: "It is easy to get scared when you first arrive, but you have to create courage for the new life that you will start here in São Paulo." Photo by Lauro Rocha.

↘ Each pattern tells a story. This is José sharing his pattern, representing hope and dream for the future.



Preparation

A biennale dispersed within the city

After Venice, the Biennale of São Paulo is the second oldest biennale in the world. The first architecture biennale started in 1973 and has been held every second year alternating with the art biennale. This Biennale was the eleventh architecture one, and the title was “*Em Pojecto*” (In project), curated by Dr. Marcos L. Rosa. The topic of the Biennale aimed to highlight the processes involved in creating a project and to disperse these projects within the city as a trigger for discussion amongst the different actors of a city.



↑ Photos of the banners at Bara Funda and Republica. Photo by Fernando Banzi.

↑ Biennale exhibition at Sesc Parque Dom Pedro II. Photo by Fernando Banzi.

← View from Oscar Niemeyers Edifício Copan where the São Paulo biennale housed me for the duration of the workshop.

Setting up the project

I was introduced to Marcos L. Rosa after Lucy Bullivant³⁸ had shown him our work for the Shenzhen Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism (UABB) in 2016. Together with Lucy, I was invited to write a proposal for how we could do something similar for the São Paulo Biennale. In my proposal to Marcos, I asked to be teamed up with a group of creative practitioners within São Paulo and a community that we could work with. I suggested that a community could be defined by a shared interest, livelihood, or locality of household. If the community was defined by their livelihood, the factory/workplace can be an ideal contact point. If the community was defined by locality, the local municipality could have been a point of contact to organise the workshops. If the community was defined by a shared interest, their space of gathering would be the point of reference. Working with the local group of creative practitioners I would come to Brazil and help identify a possible community we could work with.

If we could identify such a community, an agenda could then be discussed. Are there certain challenges, issues that are important to them? To address this question, we would facilitate a series of workshops with the community. My role was to design and structure this process, so that the community could identify the needs and aspirations, skills and knowledge that will form the basis from which we can define the strategy, design, and output of the workshop.

Through my work in the Philippines and Vietnam I found that a typical process could be broken down into stages of learning, questioning, and making. The first phase is a workshop where we, together with the community, aim to understand the current situation of the place, to ‘make visible’ what’s already there. The second phase questions how we can address this current situation and how we would like it to be in the future. The third phase is the making of a physical output, to suggest how we can make this transition together.

³⁸ Lucy Bullivant is a cultural historian and award-winning author. She has featured my work in *Recorded City: Co-Creating Urban Futures* (Ermacora, and Bullivant, 2016) This sparked several collaborations between the two of us, for the Shenzhen Biennale, the São Paulo Biennale and also the Oslo Triennale.

Through Marcos Rosa I was put in touch with Goma Oficina. Goma is a small artist collective that made everything from small structures to graphic design and photography. The two people I would be working with mostly were Maria Claudia Levy and Gabriela Forjaz, or Cau and Gaby for short. They were also teaching at a local university, DAFAM FAU-Mackenzie School of Architecture and had, in that context, facilitated a one-week workshop of stencil-printing at CAMI migrant's support centre. CAMI supports migrants in São Paulo to build awareness of their rights and provide support in the case of abuse. Soledad Requena and Carla Aguilar were two community organisers at CAMI, who we would be working closely with for the duration of the project. Through CAMI a group of migrants was invited to join: Claudine Shindany Kumbi (Congo), Aracely Tatiana Mérida Urena (Bolivia), Tomasa Nancy Salva Guarachi (Bolivia), Nila Jackeline Salva Guarachi (Bolivia), Jose Mpela Bolayenge (Congo), Nataly Puente de la Vega Unda (Peru) and Gredy Canaquiri Yume (Peru). Some had been in Brazil for two years, others for as much as eight. They were leaders of their communities and saw this as an opportunity to represent their group. In advance of the workshops in October 2017, I made a preliminary trip to São Paulo in July 2017. Goma and I visited the migrant support centre to discuss the collaboration and the possible theme that we could address.



→ This particular banner states "we are here, listen to us!" It consists of two patterns: inequality and voice. Installed at Sé Station, the political center of São Paulo. Here the group wanted to tell the politicians to stop looking away and listen to the needs of migrants.

↳ Cau, Gaby and myself preparing a banner for the workshop.

↓ The backyard of CAMI migrant support centre was an open shed structure that we used to facilitate the workshops.



Due to an increase in violence against migrants within the CPTM and São Paulo Metro, CAMI had been approached to do an intervention for the red line of the Metro. CAMI was interested in following up on this offer and suggested that this could be a possible venue for *Fronteira Livre* (translated: *Free borders*). This opportunity would give the migrants a chance to voice their experiences within an urban infrastructure that carries more than 4,7 million people a day. Many of the metro stations have dedicated zones for exhibitions, often located in the far corners of the station, outside of the everyday traffic of people moving in and out. Rather than to use these exhibition spaces we pitched the idea to make a series of banners that we could install in central locations, such as entrances, exits or above escalators in different stations.³⁹ After some negotiation on the length and height of the banners, this idea was approved by the metro and train authorities, along with the content of each banner before installation. The size of the banners (0.75m x 8m & 0.75m x 6m) mirrored the size of the permanent signage within the stations. These central locations within the metro were often quite windy, and an internal structure was necessary to keep the banners hanging straight. Goma had specialised in making furniture from broomsticks and Chinese steel-scaffolding connections, so we decided to use these joints and the broomsticks to build an inner skeleton that would stiffen the banners and allow us to mount them in the ceiling of the station. The banners would be threaded-on like a sock, giving us two surfaces to work on, one for the pattern and one for a written statement.

³⁹ During this time, São Paulo was run by a conservative politician, Michel Temer, and the city was full of political banners stating 'Fora Temer' or Get out Temer.

Process

What's the question that needs to be asked?

According to Soledad from CAMI, Brazil had about 1 million informal immigrants in 2017, the majority of whom were women and children. Most of these migrants were in a vulnerable situation. While Brazil has an inclusive migration law, she explained that it has been challenging to put it into practice due to subjective and symbolic boundaries. Although migrants are guaranteed access to public services, they experience discrimination accessing education, health, social assistance, accommodation etc. Other boundaries that migrants faced were caused by language-related challenges and because they do not know what rights they have. Also, in the workshops, we facilitated with the group of migrants, they raised issues about trafficking, intimidation and police violence, and lack of access to housing, work and healthcare. CAMI was a space for the group of migrants to share and discuss these boundaries and borders that they faced in their everyday lives. It became clear that the theme of invisible borders seemed to be appropriate to explore further in the workshops. As one of the migrants Claudine noted in one of our early meetings, they could use the biennale as a platform to reach out to other migrants and also build an understanding and awareness amongst the general population of São Paulo about their situations. The title that CAMI and the group of migrants gave to the project was the slogan: *Frenteira Livre*.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Between Goma and myself the working title had up to this point been "textile conscientização" (translated: textile critical consciousness). The idea I wanted to embed was that we could build a criticality through the making of textiles. The name was derived from my reading of Paulo Freire in the preparation for the Nanoco exhibition. Goma had at the time not much knowledge of the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire, but his work has since then become important also to their practice. While writing this text it is now 100 years since his birth, and a major celebration is being facilitated by Goma in São Paulo.

↓ Demonstration down Paulista Avenue, 03.12.2017. Photo by Lauro Rocha.

Changing the narrative

Early in the process I had begun reading a book by community organiser Eric Liu, "You are more powerful than you think!" (Liu, 2017) as well as Saul Alinsky's classic "Rules for Radicals" (Alinsky, 1989). Alinsky was one of the founding fathers of community organising as it is understood today, and he was particularly known for using agitation to mobilise people. Whether it was against the landlord or the factory owners, the means to organise people was through being in opposition. Liu on the other hand, offered a much more positive and productive approach for me to understand how we can organise people through our own stories and experiences, whether they are aspirational or in opposition to something. He describes how power justifies itself through narratives that we are told and retold. To change the conduits of power we should tell different stories. The stories that we share enable us to come together, which in itself gives power. Much like Paulo Freire describing how people need to give name to the world to transform it, stories are ways in which we can claim a place for ourselves in the larger picture of things (Freire, 2000). Personal experiences and stories can be a starting point to organise and to make a change.



Between Goma, CAMI, the group of migrants that had signed up to the project and myself, we found that we had ten days to spend on the project. A criterion for joining was the commitment to follow the project from start to finish, and ten days seemed to be doable. The workshops would be organised within the shared spaces of CAMI, for two hours at the end of the workday.

I had in advance prepared a workshop schedule but would throughout the process revise and amend the plan every morning before the afternoon workshops. Cau and Gaby oversaw two sub-groups, and I would brief them before each session. If we needed to split into three groups, Soledad or Carla would step in as the third group leader. Throughout the workshop I would try not to engage too deeply in the work of each sub-group but allow myself to move between the different groups and activities. At the end of the day, I would have an overall picture of what had happened within the workshop, while Cau and Gaby knew the specifics.

The workshops were conducted in Portuguese. Although most of the migrants spoke English, they were more fluent in Portuguese. The pre-workshop briefing was important for me to structure the activity of the session that followed, but the actual communication within the workshop itself had to be conducted by Cau, Gaby, Soledad and Carla due to the language choice. My role within the session would be to move between the different groups and to get a sense if the actual workshop structure itself was working or not, and whether adjustments needed to be made in the following days. Beyond the spoken language, each workshop was also about making something physical, whether it were a written text, a drawing, or a painting in this case. These objects gave me more direct access to the content of what was discussed, as well as a means to question or comment on what was made.

The process was phased into the stages of learning, questioning, and making. The aim of this process was to form a common language that could give shape to the banners. The first three workshops were focused on storytelling, in order to understand the situation and our different experiences of invisible borders. The first day was about the



↑ Working in groups to tell the personal and collective stories of invisible borders.

personal stories and experiences of invisible borders and the following two days would question what experiences they had in common and what messages they wanted to communicate to the city. This offered the space to explore, discuss, and articulate the invisible borders that they faced in their everyday lives, individually and collectively, as well as the messages that they believed the city needed to hear. In the making phase, they would translate these stories into symbols that they would compose onto the banners that were to be mounted in the stations.

In the planning that took place between my visit in July and the workshops in October a concern was raised by Goma about time and quality. After facilitating the stencil workshop with CAMI, they were concerned about the time required to make the banners if we also wanted to 'define the content' within the ten days we had allocated for the project. Instead, they suggested that the migrant group might tell their stories and someone else could produce the banners. This would ensure that the quality would be up to a higher standard, since the cutting of stencils and the painting required some skills that not all members of the group had.

However, this contradicted the core idea of the project in which we were to 'act' and 'reflect' together. Two important compromises were made to make this possible. Firstly, we would reduce the learning and questioning phase to only two days, so that we had three days for the making and translation of these experiences into symbols. The remaining four days was needed to paint, sew, and mount the banners. But for this schedule to work we could no longer do stencils. It would require too much time to both draw and make stencils for each symbol that was developed. Instead, we decided to use masking tape as a tool to draw on the cotton canvas. This later proved to be both quick and quite intuitive, whilst still maintaining accuracy. For the text we helped to stencil-cut the alphabet.



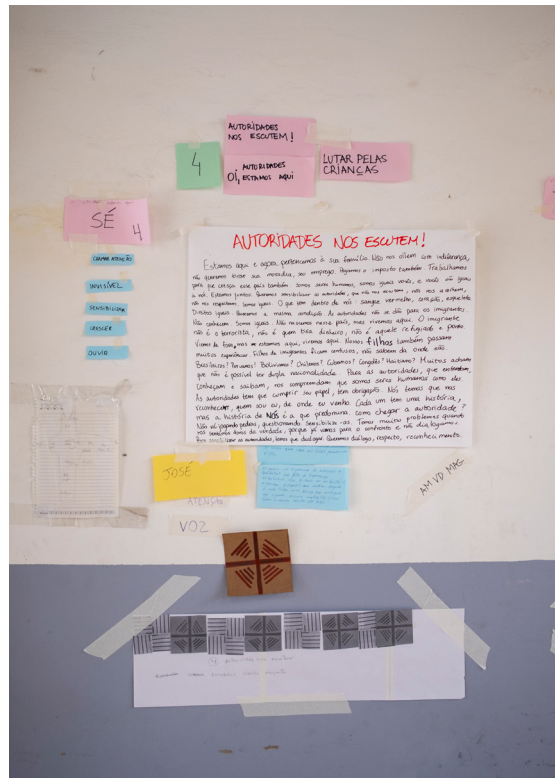
↑ Personal stories and patterns were developed into collective messages painted with tape and stencils on the banners.

➤ José removing the tape of the sample for "Dream: Hope for tomorrow"

↙ Not just designing but taking part in the making was an important part of the process.

I can hear you, but am I really listening?

For the learning phase, I split the group into three smaller groups of four people each. Cau and Gaby took one group each, and Carla the third group. The task for the day was to share personal stories and experiences of invisible borders in São Paulo. As each member of the group shared their story, other members would take on the role of listening or writing. The person writing would try to capture the story in its entirety to make a physical document that the group could revisit later. The role of listening would be either passive or active; the active listener not only receives the story that is shared but responds, asking questions if needed. A passive listener would neither talk nor engage otherwise in the conversation. By listening silently and attentively, they would have a different perspective on what had been said. These different roles made the exercise more performative and helped generate important discussions about what was said and what was heard. On the side, I had asked Soledad, who has a background in community organising, to not join any of the groups, but rather to walk around the room and take notes from what she heard in the different groups. At the end of the day, she would write a story about what invisible borders consist of in São Paulo, based on her own experience and what she had heard. The following day she presented this story to the whole group. This helped to situate the personal experiences within a larger context, which in itself was the topic of the questioning phase: what stories of invisible borders do we share?



← Stories and drawings were pasted on the wall, compiling the ideas and designs for each banner. This was part of documenting the thoughts that were developed in each group, but also to make each step of the process visible. These stories were translated into symbols that they printed on cotton canvas. The banners were sewn together at the cultural centre of Casa do Povo by Nancy and Albertina.

What do we have in common?

Learning from each other's personal experience we moved on to questioning what we had in common. To build a collective story can be challenging: in some cases people are very aware of their own story, but not how that situation relates to others in their community. Using the text written during the previous day's exercise, each group composed two shared stories on two A2 sheets of paper. At the end of the day, these shared stories were presented and mounted on the wall of the space we were working in. I had asked each group to make a collage on the wall with all the material that was produced. It has been important for me that we make visible the work people do so that there is a sense of progress, but also recognition of the efforts invested at each stage of the process.

It was important that groups that had voiced opinions were involved in the actual making of their own banners. Their messages transformed once we engaged in the making phase, and through creating something together we developed a language to communicate ideas and concepts, ones that might not have arisen just through talking. By translating these stories into symbols and patterns, the stories became not only an account of a situation as it was but also a call for change. The creative act of drawing helped each member of a group discover and conceptualise their experiences in ways that made them relatable to other members of the group. Simultaneously, differences and frictions that were hard to reconcile in text were allowed to co-exist within the ambiguity of a drawing. One important reflection was Nancy's understanding of 'knowledge' and 'community' as defined by 'exclusion or inclusion', something she had experienced herself. Through her painting, she explained that having something in common means that you are on the inside of a group and, if you don't, you are on the outside. This is one of the invisible borders that we draw around ourselves.

The agreement that I had made with Goma due to time constraints - to use tape instead of cutting stencils - proved to be very productive. The pasting and composing with the tape was intuitive, and we had encouraging results as the paint dried and the tape was removed. For the sake of simplicity, we had limited the choice of colours to the



we are separated from those who know

ready-mixed colours we already had available to us. Once the group had defined their symbols, I asked them to photocopy the drawings and start recomposing them on a small drawing of the banner. The question arose: can we treat these drawings as words and, also, how does the composition of these different symbols create a statement? This was a quick exercise that resulted in a series of compositions that they scanned and pasted onto the wall together with their story. They now had six banners with six messages, and I asked them to choose stations that would be the most strategic locations to deliver these messages. This had already been on their minds as they had composed the banners, and quickly we had an intricate description of what the banners were saying, where they would go and why they would go there.

↑ "When we don't know our rights, the laws here in Brazil, we are separated from those who know. We are like a small dot, far away. But when we know, then we are able to integrate" Nancy presenting the symbols she drew.

→ The demonstration down Paulista Avenue called for legislative change for equal rights of all migrants in Brazil. Photo by Fernando Banzi.

Beyond the biennale

The outcome of this process generated a strong unity and ownership amongst those involved in the process. So much so that the banners became an important part of the migrant march down Paulista Avenue (2018), calling for legislative change for the rights of migrants in São Paulo. The curator of the São Paulo Biennale, Marcos L. Rosa, decided to include the work as part of the main exhibition at Sesc Parque Dom Pedro II. The project was also awarded a special mention and included in the main exhibition of the 6th Ibero-American Design Biennial held in 2018 in Madrid. Later when asked if they would like to share their experiences in the Philippine Pavilion for the Venice Biennale 2021, one of the migrants that had been active during the workshop, Claudine, worked with the film team to reflect on the process. The result was a ten-minute film clip presented in the pavilion. When asked what symbol she might want to draw for the world today, she answered: `Fronteira Livre`.



Outcome

The banners

The text that follows in this section was co-authored by the group of migrants (Claudine, Aracely, Nancy, Jackeline, Jose, Nataly and Gredy). The 'us/we' in this text is the group referring to themselves. The original text was written in Portuguese and then translated with the help of Goma Oficina, but verified through other contacts that speak the language. It is written in the present tense and is a compilation of the shared stories, patterns and statements that were presented on a mount next to each banner in the São Paulo Metro. Each banner was hanging for the duration of the biennale, apart from the one at Tatuapé which was taken down by the station manager.

↓ 'Create courage to walk' was made for Barra Funda Station. Photo by Lauro Rocha.



Create courage to walk

'Criar coragem para caminhar/Create courage to walk' was made for Barra Funda Station. This is where most Latin migrants arrive by bus. It is easy to get scared when you first arrive, but you have to create courage for the new life that you will start here in São Paulo.

We always have to have courage. Courage to start life alone, with no family, no one. We came from far away. Living with new people we do not know. We need a lot of courage. Creating a new life can be hard, very difficult. It's as if we are born again. We left everything that was back there, and here everything is different. We have to have the courage to deal with longing and detachment and to break with our cultures and religions. We have to break apart from everything so we can leave. We had our jobs and we had to leave our academic preparation and professional titles. There we were doctors, graduates, experts, here we are only ourselves. We seek to be someone. As human beings we should have the right to be anywhere in the world. But when you get here, you feel insignificant. We have to have courage to overcome this insignificance. Every day is the same, we need to look for courage. We have no other option but to be brave at every second. We are alive, we are strong. The struggle for survival is part of the human being, fighting for life, for justice. Where do we find the courage we need to take care of our children? If we have no community, if we have no one. We don't have a fixed salary, but our children have to eat. We need courage, especially women. Who is there here to support us migrants?

The symbol of 'Rapture' by Aracely (Bolivia) is illustrated by a square that has been broken and in the middle is a passage. It expresses the rapture of breaking barriers, boundaries and borders. 'Growth' by Claudine (Congo) is symbolised by a ladder. The ladder represents our day-to-day lives where you have to take one step at a time in order to grow.



CRIAR CORAGEM PARA CAMINHAR



Leave your fear aside

'Deixar medo de lado / Leave fear aside' was made for República station. This is one of the most central stations in São Paulo, but is also a place with a lot of crime. It is important not to be scared, to leave your fear aside so that you can report if something happens.

It's like the fear that we feel when you first arrive by bus and a police officer enters. We have the feeling that we are doing something wrong. It is scary because we do not speak the same language. Even in the market or in the butcher shop we do not know how to ask. When we make mistakes everyone in the establishment laughs at us. We are afraid to express ourselves. We are afraid to expose ourselves. Fear makes



DEIXAR MEDO DE LADO

← 'Leave fear aside' was made for República station.

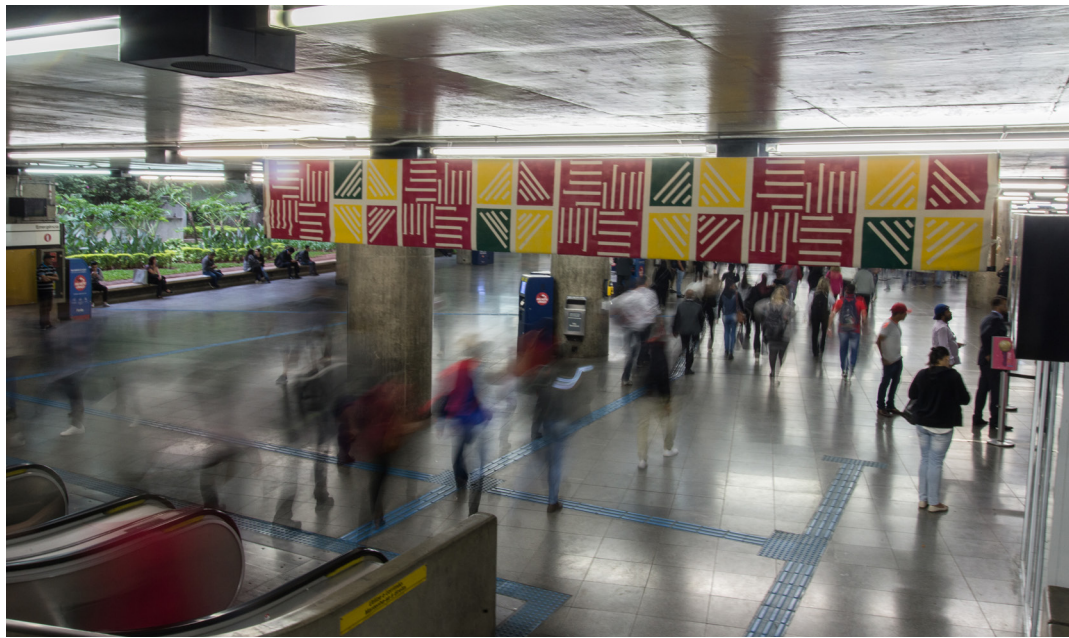
you closed. We are afraid that we will not have all the documents that the authorities ask for. We are afraid of getting lost without being able to get where we want to go. Our hands, our gestures, help us to communicate beyond language. But when you don't know, you get scared. Employees are not trained to deal with us. When we have information and know our rights, we can make an argument, we can overcome our fear. There are many paths you can take and there are many challenges. You have to be polite, but don't be afraid of asking questions. Only after you leave your fear aside you see that there are many doors open.

'Limits' by Aracely (Bolivia) is symbolised by a set of lines. On our paths we always look for limits and barriers. The triangle represents a person, the horizontal lines that leave it are the paths, and the vertical line is the barrier. This barrier is the limit that we find in our paths, and that we must cross. The dot, inside or outside of the circle is Nancy's (Bolivia) symbol of 'Not knowing'. When you do not know your rights, you turn away and isolate yourself from society. But when you know, you can integrate.

We are here, listen to us!

'Estamos aqui, nos escutem! / We are here, listen to us!' was made for Sé station. This is where most of the political and administrative institutions are located. We ask to be heard, we want the authorities to look at us. Often it seems they don't even know that we are trying to get their attention.

We are here, and now we are part of your family. Do not look at us with indifference, we do not want to take away your house, your job. We pay tax and work for the growth of this country too. We are human beings. We are equal to you, and you are equal to us. We are together. We want the authorities, who do not listen to us, do not welcome us, do not respect us, to understand we are equal. We are the same inside. Our blood is red, we have a heart and skeleton. Equal rights; we want the same rights as others. The authorities do not acknowledge we're the same. We were not born in this country, but we live here. The immigrant is not a terrorist or a thief. Although we came from outside, we are here, we live here. Our children are confused and don't know where they are from. Brazilians? Peruvians? Bolivians? Chileans? Cubans? Congolese? Haitian? The authorities should understand that we are



human beings like them. They have to fulfill their role and obligation. We have to accept ourselves, who we are and where we come from. Each of us has our own stories, but our collective story is the one that dominates: How to get the authority to understand? We want dialogue, respect and recognition.

The symbol of 'Voice' by Gredy (Peru) was inspired by a megaphone that can amplify the voice and the ability to reach out. 'Invisible' by Claudine (Congo) is represented by a set of lines of different lengths, facing different directions. The first line to the left is the shortest and represents the migrant, always isolated and alone. The tallest line, the authorities, looks away from the migrants towards the Brazilians (the lines to the right).



ESTAMOS AQUI, NOS ESCUTEM!



PRECISAMOS CONHECER NOSSOS DIREITOS

We need to know our rights

We made the banner 'Precisamos conhecer nossos direitos/ We need to know our rights' for Brás station. Many migrants work in this area. Many do not know their rights and are exploited by their workplace, so we thought it was important to share this message.

We need to know our rights, or else we face embarrassing situations and are disregarded. We allow others to take advantage of us and our situation. We have already lost our children because we don't know our rights to health support, or because we did not understand what was said. If we do not know our rights, anyone can force us to do what we do not want to because we do not have the information to argue against what we know is wrong, especially when we talk to the authorities that we believe we can trust. Afterwards, we go through a situation where we are not given the correct information; we learn that we must question what we do not



↶ 'We are here, listen to us!' in Sé station. Photo by Lauro Rocha.

→ "We need to know our rights' in Brás station. Photo by Lauro Rocha.

know, or do not understand. Immigrant support centres can be places to gain information. It is up to us to seek this information, to inform ourselves about our rights, for knowledge gives us strength. When we know our rights we can set boundaries. This information gives us argument and courage, and so we have the tools to deal with our own situation.

The symbol of 'Organisation' by Aracely (Bolivia) is represented by alternating squares, communicating that as an immigrant one must organise. 'Justice' by Albertina (Angola) is a symbol that represents balance. Equality lies in symmetry, and inequality in different sizes of triangles.

↓ 'Have the strength to continue' in Tatuapé station.



TER FORÇA PARA CONTINUAR

Have strength to continue

We made the banner 'Ter força para continuar/ Have the strength to continue' for Tatuapé station as an encouragement for those that make their way to the city centre for work every day.

There are moments when we lose all hope, we feel that we have no alternatives. But we can find strength in our family, in our dignified home and work. Dreaming and persisting can give us strength to move forward. There are times when we think everything is lost and everywhere there are problems. Everything you face puts you down, and you cry. You cry so much thinking there is no way out. Once you are tired of crying you look for an exit. We have hands, we have feet and we look for work. We can find a way out with our inner strength. We have to pay our debts and rent, but we keep seeking for a way out. You have to look, you have to go out and see how things are. If people can't come to you, you go out on your own. We have to have the strength to continue looking for a way out.

We have to accept our reality for now, as dressmakers, as cleaners. If you just look back, remembering, you become sad and tomorrow you will get sick. We need to have the strength to continue, despite all the things we have to go through.

The symbol of 'Strength', by Nataly (Peru) represents a snowball (square shaped) that starts small but gains strength and grows. This communicates the necessity of taking a first step, to gain momentum and gain strength. 'Fight' by Albertina (Angola) is represented by the symbol of a sword. The struggle for the freedom of Angola was made with these swords. Although the Portuguese had guns, the Angolans had their sword and broke free.



SONHAR: ESPERANÇA AMANHÃ

Dream: Hope for tomorrow

In Itaquera we chose the message ‘*Sonhar: esperança amanhã/ Dream: Hope for tomorrow*’ because most people that live there live in a vulnerable situation and those people (residents of nearby Itaquera), like us immigrants, have to have a dream.

Despite all the difficulties, we live here, and we are here. Do we have dreams? What is this dream? There are times when we are clearer about what we want. We dream of our country, we dream of opening a restaurant, getting a job, family, a better life for our children. We know we'll never go back. Dreams can have a domino effect if you start working towards that dream. We do not want our children to go through what we have been through; we want the best for our children. We all have dreams, no one doesn't. We came in search of a better life or fleeing from a bad life. We want to see our children smile, we want to see each other smile and we want to smile. We want comfort, satisfaction, peace. Our ambition keeps us alive every day. Looking to the horizon we can be happier: hoping for a better life, a house, a home. This dream is human. To achieve the dream is an effort and sacrifice, to organise and to fight. We want to see our children's faces happy and cry with joy.

The symbol of ‘*Dream*’, by José (Congo), is a story about hope. About reaching for something. We have two pictures here. We all came through a border and found, arriving, an eye without vision, uncertainty (red drawing). In this centre we got together and began to see some things, and thus we were able to walk together. They then found a very strong barrier, joined, fought, and broke through this barrier. On the other side they found a road. They all followed this road and joined in an eye that sees and that helps to realise what they found (blue drawing). The red drawing is a symbol of the difficulty they found, and in the blue one they found what was already made for them, a stand.

7 'Dream: Hope for tomorrow' in Itaquera station. Photo by Lauro Rocha.



My expertise is not knowing

I found Jacques Rancière book, ‘*the ignorant schoolmaster*’ (Rancière, 1987), helpful for understanding my own role in this process. In this book he tells the story of Joseph Jacotot, a French teacher during the late 19th century. Jacotot became known for teaching a language he did not himself know to students that did not speak the same language as he did. In effect he was ignorant, but still able to teach French to Belgian students without any knowledge of Flemish. Through a rigorous process of comparing the French edition of *Télémaque* with the same Flemish edition, the students taught themselves French. Jacotot himself used this book as a mediator to analyse and structure an exchange of meaning. This is “the gradual, step-by-step acquisition of understanding through explication” (Rancière, 1987, pxxi) where the educator breaks down a complicated process into a series of steps that the student can use to build their own understanding of the subject that is being taught. A fundamental belief that is highlighted

in this book is the idea that knowledge is born and can be nurtured by everyone. We all have the capacity to understand and to create, but the framework that is introduced can help bring this out.

In São Paulo I did not speak the same language as the migrants in the group. Although they spoke English, Portuguese was a language they knew better. Nor did I know the situation or the experiences they had with invisible borders in São Paulo. However, I could still design the process of explication, or in other words, the process in which the group of migrants would make sense of their own situation and the theme that they had chosen, as well as how they could deliberate on these experiences and together develop a physical manifestation of this understanding. Just as Jacotot asked his students to compare the two editions of the French and Flemish *Télémaque*, the workshops were structured for each participant to rigorously compare and discuss each other's point of view. Where commonalities are found a next step can be made, and when differences are revealed, friction can trigger creative and unexpected solutions. A language that I did know, which I knew GOMA and also the migrants from CAMI knew, was that of stencil printing. This shared skill would be the means in which we truly began to articulate something that we all shared.

The relevance to architecture

As architects our role is to articulate and give shape to buildings. The concepts we develop are rooted in our own architectural discourse and expertise. However, we cannot assume that these concepts will be understood by people outside of our situation, people that do not share this particular experience and knowledge. A concept is one of our most important tools as architects, it can translate a rough idea into something more formal. On the basis of a project like *Fronteira Livre* I will argue for the power of defining these concepts and understandings together with others. The ideas and experiences that define the abstraction can be truly transformative if they are rooted in something we have in common. As Saul Alinsky so aptly put it:

"Communication with others happens when they understand what you're trying to get across to them. If they don't understand then you are not communicating regardless of words, pictures or anything else. People only understand things in terms of

⁴¹ This is similar to how art as a practice articulates and touches upon understandings without making it explicit through words.

their experience, which means you must get within their experience. Further communication is a two way process. If you try to get your idea across to others without paying attention to what they have to say, you can forget about the whole thing." (Alinsky, 1989, p.89)

My ambition in this project was for the group of migrants to use their experiences as a resource to transform their understanding of their situation; in this regard, personal and collective storytelling was useful. But the real transformation happened in the abstraction of these stories into symbols, in the act of making and giving shape to these ideas through means other than words.⁴¹ Each abstraction allowed for interpretation, and the combination of symbols triggered discussion. These symbols were concepts that embodied the different stories and meanings that the groups had shared with each other. But in the process of combining these symbols, new meanings and understandings emerged.

So how does this relate to architecture? Or, how is this relevant to the role of an architect? If we believe that there is an inherent understanding of architecture in everyone, then the role of the architect becomes to explicate an architectural process, and to share this framework with people. With this framework, people can build an understanding of architecture that is rooted in their experiences and understandings. This way, an architect that is ignorant, or in other words, does not understand or know the situation in which people live their lives can still build architecture embedded within these understandings, as long as there is a process in which people can do this for themselves, much like Jacotot taught French to Belgian students without speaking Flemish.

4

Dugnad Days

The renovation of a community house for Sletteløkka, a residential area in the suburbs of Oslo, facilitated and implemented with residents and the local municipality through idea, design & construction *dugnads*. The reflections made in the process were developed simultaneously and presented as part of the Oslo Triennale 2019.



↑ Maria Årthun and Mattias Josefsson presenting the drawings of the shelves that Sudar had prepared for the workshop. The full scale mock-up was built within the space itself.

← The facade of the grendehus will be painted in collaboration with Cau and Gaby (from Fronteira Livre). In this workshop we tested stencil printing on tote bags.

Introduction

Dugnad Days was initially a proposal for the open call of the 2019 Oslo Architecture Triennale to implement and reflect on how *dugnad* could shape an architecture of degrowth. The `degrowth` movement aims to address the root causes of the paradigm of endless economic growth which has led to environmental degradation and widening inequalities. Our proposal brings light to the Norwegian tradition of mutual support - *dugnad*, which predates the market economy. It offers an insight into values and processes that are rooted in place and the people that practice it in places where they belong.

This idea was demonstrated through the planning, designing, and building of a *grendehus* (community centre) in Sletteløkka, Oslo. The project engaged the local government of Bjerke District and the residents of the area to explore the process of building through *dugnad*.

At the same time, the Triennale platform offered a space for discussion to reflect on how *dugnad* has been practiced in the past, but also what it can be in the future, through engaging sociologist Håkon Lorenzen regarding his research on *dugnad* and Nicole Curato who has worked on deliberative democracy.

While the projects in Tacloban and Lung Tam were affected by disasters, this project was interrupted by a global pandemic. As a consequence, physical meetings could not be held during critical stages of the project implementation and the completion of the *grendehus* was postponed until November 2021.

Preparation

Degrowth and dugnad

The theme of the 2019 Oslo Architecture Triennale (titled *Enough: The Architecture of Degrowth*) was rooted in the degrowth movement and its critique of the unsustainable paradigm of economic growth that has resulted in the degradation of the environment, depletion of resources and increasing social inequality. The growth paradigm has made political institutions dependent on the free market and its logic of progress, growth, and development. Increase in the production and exchange of goods and services has become prioritised over the wellbeing of the people and the environment (Deriu, 2012). The degrowth movement is looking for alternatives to the growth paradigm, and with Dugnad Days I argue that one such alternative already exists in the tradition of *dugnad*.

As part of the opening of the Oslo Triennale I was invited to take part in a round-table discussion organised by the Architecture Review together with the curators of the Triennale Maria Smith and Phineas Harper. The discussion touched upon the term degrowth, proposing that such a word can only be understood in relation to the term it is challenging - growth. The growth paradigm is very much situated within the modern project and a Eurocentric worldview. Thus, any narrative of degrowth would have to understand this Eurocentric worldview in order to be able to counter it.

By contrast, the values promoted by degrowth can be found in people's understandings, across the world, of their own place and situation. I argued that these ideas are embedded in the concept of *dugnad*, a tradition that relies on social and environmental resources that are sustained for generations. Within its very fabric are the actions that balance collective work and labour with food and pleasure, extraction

of resources and considerations of regrowth. Rather than judging how people can live their lives ethically, there are ways of engaging people to deliberate and address issues from their own situation and point of view.

Finding a project back home

The open call to participate in the Oslo Architecture Triennale 2019 was an opportunity for me to implement a project back home in Norway.⁴² Together with Lucy Bullivant, I had proposed to initiate a project through *dugnad* somewhere within Oslo but had yet to determine where exactly. We needed a local partner and I reached out to my cousin Mattias Josefsson who teaches at the Oslo School of Architecture. His mother, and also my mother as well as our uncle, grew up in the suburbs of Oslo, in an area called Sletteløkka. Our uncle still lives there, and my mother, the artist Anne-Karin Furunes, did an art project in the highway underpass some 12 years ago. She suggested I reach out to Lars Eivind Bjørnstad, who has been her contact person in the district of Bjerke. I called him up and he was still working with the district as the leader of the local environment programme. He was about to organise a meeting with some residents to question what actions could be taken to improve Sletteløkka and suggested that I join.

At the meeting, issues such as noise from the nearby highway, a lack of spaces to meet and overcrowded parking along the street were shared by the residents. I presented myself and the kind of work I do through mutual support in different cultures. Both the residents and the municipality saw this as an interesting approach. We agreed to team up to address the lack of places to meet by creating a community space, or what they called a *grendehus*. What would happen there was not yet clear, nor was the location yet fixed. However, we agreed to make the *grendehus* through *dugnad*.

⁴² A question that had come up quite a lot in my various talks and discussions about my work was whether these processes of mutual support would also be applicable where I came from.



From within rather than outside

Since 2007, a government initiative called *områdeløft* (translated: area uplift) has been implemented in Sletteløkka by the District of Bjerke in Oslo.⁴⁴ Sletteløkka is a residential area built during the post-war years and where now approximately 2500 people live, mostly families from different cultural backgrounds. As implied by the name of the programme, *områdeløft* is aimed at lifting up or improving a specific neighbourhood that lags behind in terms of socio-economic development (KMD, 2019). In Sletteløkka, a lower degree of participation and engagement in associations, activities and other initiatives, compared to other areas of Oslo, was identified as a problem by the municipality. A way of addressing these issues in the area uplift programme was to strengthen local initiatives and build relations with and amongst residents.

However, a critique of the area uplift programme in general is that the interventions are often based on what the municipality perceives as a problem, and their understanding of the problem, and its solution, does not necessarily match the actual experience and needs of the residents.

By implementing the programme, it reinforces a negative image of an area even when the situation is not considered to be problematic by the residents.

The area uplift programme exemplifies a gap between the perception of a place from the outside and how people belonging to that place perceive their own situation. Sletteløkka has been described as a 'non-place' by those that do not live there. A non-place is a term used by anthropologist Marc Augé (1995), and one of his definitions of it refers to a place of transience where human beings remain anonymous and disconnected from one another. However, as Ifrah Mohammed, one of the residents, explained, a positive identity and a strong sense of belonging do exist in Sletteløkka:

⁴⁴ The first phase of the area lift program in Sletteløkka was initiated in 2007 and lasted to 2016. From 2017, the second phase is being implemented, lasting till 2026.

Around this time, Mattias suggested involving his former architect student Maria Årthun⁴³ who lived nearby. Sudarshan V. Khadka Jr. was also part of the team, albeit joining from afar. Together, Lucy, Mattias, Maria, Sudar and I formed Dugnad Days.

↑ A view of Sletteløkka in Oslo. Still image from film by Aurora Brekke.

While setting up Dugnad Days, I managed to secure 190,000 NOK from Public Art Norway (*Lokalsamfunnsordningen* - KORO) to fund a series of workshops. Considering this as seed money, the municipality further invested four million NOK to cover the land lease and construction costs for the *grendehus*. The funds came from the local environment programme that is part of the area uplift programme.

⁴³ Her master thesis had been a participatory intervention, planning and implementing a festival of lights within the area.

"if you feel like people look down on you, you might just hide away and think they already think of me this way, why would I change? And that makes the situation worse, also long term.... I grew up in Grorudalen [Sletteløkka is a part of the area, Groruddalen], ever since I was nine years old. The image that is often portrayed in the media is of poverty, crime and a lot of negativity. We want to change that image, and I know many people, not only me, want to do something about it, and there are many people that do things and stay active. Groruddalen is a very nice place to grow up. You always have a feeling of a community" (A quote by Ifrah Mohammed, resident and member of the *grendehus* committee)

Working through *dugnad*, we aimed to build a process rooted in the understanding of the people in the situation. However, one needs to be critically aware of how *dugnad* is used as a term in these contexts. Unless it is something people organise from within, it can easily be misused by corporations or governments to manipulate or delegate responsibility to the people. A concern I had throughout the process was whether the initiative was based on a mutual commitment by the people of Sletteløkka or simply an efficient tool to implement the area uplift program. Ironically, *dugnad* is often explained as a mutual or shared uplift (*et felles løft*). What needs to be emphasised is the word mutual or shared and question if everyone is carrying the same load. If not, it is not so mutual and one should question whether or not this is *dugnad* at all.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ When mutual support is not mutual, it's just support. But as is most often the case with aid, those that really benefit are those better off. This would be the case when the pandemic struck, and the conservative prime minister at the time, Erna Solberg, quickly evoked the Norwegian *dugnad* as a means for people to come together to cope in the face of the pandemic. However, this was not by any means a mutual commitment, resulting in substantial economic support to the wealthiest while ordinary people had to make do through the lockdown.



↑ The *grendehus* is located in the vacant space of the old kindergarten. The second floor is currently used as a grocery store. The building is visible from the train station on the other side of the highway.

Finding the venue

Throughout Norway '*områdeløft*' was often used amongst people to build shared meeting places. A *grendehus* is traditionally an assembly room for the community, used for everything from festivities and meeting activities to funerals and elections. Such premises were often built through *dugnad* by the community, which often also gathered the money that was needed to erect the building. To identify a venue for the *grendehus* in Sletteløkka, different options were explored, such as spaces between the housing blocks, rooms in the basements or even a vacant greenhouse. Eventually we settled on a vacant kindergarten located in the very centre of Sletteløkka. After a couple of months of negotiation between Lars and the owner of the building, a ten-year lease was agreed for the space. However, the condition of the 300sqm of the ground floor was not good and it required substantial renovation. The question was, what did the residents want the *grendehus* to be?

Process

Dugnad of Ideas

Dugnad Days delves into two particular strands of *dugnads*, the *dugnad* of ideas (*idédugnad*) and the *dugnad* of construction (*byggedugnad*). Historically the *idédugnad* played a central role in bringing people together to discuss and act on pressing issues and challenges of the time, giving shape to the Norwegian welfare state.

The *idédugnads* started in April 2019 and lasted for about two months. In dialogue with the residents and the municipality we agreed to host these sessions every other week. Through a process of making, acting, drawing, and testing out ideas at full scale, the residents developed a programme for the space. Lars represented the municipality and helped prepare each session, disseminating information to the residents.

Mattias purchased materials and prepared models and tools when needed. Sudar joined the first *dugnads* in Sletteløkka and supported from afar with drawings and renderings as the project progressed. I structured the *idédugnads* along the steps of learning, questioning and making, together with Sudar involving both Maria and Mattias in developing the activities for each session.

Through a mind-mapping exercise, the first *dugnad* focused on understanding how the residents relate to Sletteløkka as a place, and what matters most to them. In the second *dugnad* the needs identified in the previous session were prioritised according to their relative importance. Once an agreement was reached, we carried out an exercise to fit the desired programmes into a plan-drawing and a physical model of the vacant space. Learning about the ambitions, needs and priorities of the community helped to build an understanding of what the *grendehus* could be for Sletteløkka. Once the programmes for the *grendehus* were identified, the operation of the programmes was discussed in the third *dugnad*. A critical task was to identify which community members would be

↘ A series of drawing exercises were conducted to understand what activities and programmes were needed for the *grendehus*. With a physical model we organised these key-programmes into the different spaces of the vacant building.

responsible for realising each programme. On a large placard, symbolically shaped like a large key, the group listed key community activities that would shape different programmes in the new *grendehus*, along with key people interested in and responsible for these programmes. This was an act of critically questioning how the activities proposed in the two first *dugnads* could become real programmes within the *grendehus*.

In the fourth *dugnad*, the discussion moved for the first time away from the activities and responsibilities outlined on the placard and out into the actual space for the community centre. Through a collaboration with the performance artist Tuomas Laitinen, participants explored the space to gain a better understanding of what was possible there. The fifth *dugnad* marked the end of the *idédugnad* with this ideation of programmes and use of the space.





One of the ideas proposed in the *dugnads* was to build a long shelf. Since each room would support many different programs and activities, this shelf would be an easy and quick way to store away equipment and furniture used by different activities. Prior to the *dugnad*, we had built a full-size prototype of this shelf that spanned the length of the building so that the participants could experience how this structure worked within the different spaces. In addition to making shelf prototypes, we had invited the residents to use black tape to outline where we needed to cut the concrete walls to widen doors or transform windows into large doors connecting the outside with the inside spaces of the *grendehus*. Summaries of previous work, drawings and illustrations were exhibited for people to draw on, comment and adjust. The *dugnad* was concluded with a social gathering with food prepared by the families and brought to the event. It was a shared meal accompanied by live music performed by the residents.

In each *dugnad* we were about 20 people, most of the time, apart from one when we held a celebration which was attended by 200 people. Many would join on an impulse or as they passed by, while others did their best to join each *dugnad* and follow the process. Some actively participated and even helped organise and facilitate the *dugnads*. It was a challenge to accommodate these different levels of engagement and to ensure a continuous process of deliberation across a series of *dugnads*.

- ← Using black markers and tape, the areas that we wanted to open up was indicated on the interior walls, but also towards the exterior.
- ↓ Food is an important ingredient of *dugnad*. At each workshop we had food made by different members of the community.
- ↘ The workshops were facilitated outside when the weather allowed and people passing by were invited into the discourse.

It's not about the numbers

We had debates about whether or not to close the doors for those that had not been part of previous sessions or instead to allow people to enter and leave as they liked. My position was that we needed to focus on a group that could commit to following the whole process. However, the consensus was that this was too much to ask of people. Instead, a proposal was made to focus on each session thereby reaching out to more and more people. My hesitation was that this could become a process of outreach, rather than deliberation, and that the substance of the exchange within each *dugnad* could be compromised at the expense of involving as many people as possible. Consequently, we risked being the only ones that would have been there from beginning to end. In other words, we would be the ones to make interpretations of people's contributions and own the experience of the entire process.

Ultimately, a core group was formed amongst the residents who actively participated in the *dugnad* and established the *grendehus* committee. This group was later involved in making all decisions related to the construction and operation of the *grendehus*. The most committed residents that signed up to this were Ifrah Mohammed, Dusan Dislioski, Anne Berit Indreberg, Lene Karin Wilberg, Inger Lise Høst and Tron Hummelvold. The representatives from the municipality were Lars Eivind Bjørnstad, Kari Hilde Norengen and Arild Sørum.





Participating on our own terms

Prioritising people's continuous commitment over attracting a large crowd does not mean that outreach is not at all necessary. Although the area has a high ratio of residents with multi-cultural backgrounds, the initial *dugnads* lacked their participation. Therefore, it was important to understand who was attending and who wasn't, as well as why.

Dugnad has been used as a means for integration by the government under the assumption that the concept of *dugnad* is foreign to immigrants. This is a misunderstanding as traditions of mutual support exist around the world. What is important is to create the conditions for people to participate on their own terms. We made different attempts to include people, reaching out through friends and networks to facilitate a *dugnad* process in which people could take the material and format home so that they could invite people from their own community and hold their own *dugnad*.

↑ Testing stencil painting on tote bags was a way to start the discussion about painting the facade of the *grendehus*.

→ All the outputs were exhibited in the space so that people who had not been part of the process could follow the discussions and work already produced.

→ The program proposal developed on big keys were organized into different empty spaces of the *grendehus* and formed the basis to start designing the rooms.

Jumping a step

Continuity between the process of developing ideas and implementing them had been a critical part in all the previous projects. The early stages of the process acted as a platform to build trust, relations and a shared understanding, in order to work together. However, the continuity of the process cannot be taken for granted and its importance needs to be recognised among the group. In Brazil, it took some effort to build this shared understanding.

In Sletteløkka, there was a disconnect between what was proposed and how it was resolved precisely because the people that came up with the idea were not confronted with the question of how. This necessary problematic entails productive frictions that deepen the reasoning behind the idea and transforms it into a physical intervention.

I was planning to continue the *idédugnads* into the design *dugnads*, however, due to the urgency of the construction it became hard to organise. The workshops were organised during summer 2019 and the application for use-permits took most of the autumn. By the time we could proceed, it was already the end of the year, and the *idédugnads* had become a thing of the past. The covid pandemic then broke out, putting a limit on how many people could meet at the same time. Still, weekly zoom meetings with the *grendehus* committee ensured that they were involved in the decisions that were being made on site.



In the midst of the lockdown during the pandemic, we made a series of four digital-design *dugnad*s to support the ongoing construction process. However, the digital format reduced each session to conversation without the act of making something together. Handing out drawing equipment and printed plans produced individual outputs, but shared reflections were lacking. As a result, the digital *dugnad*s left little or no impact on the overall process.

A space for reflection

The Oslo Triennale offered a space to step out of the situation in Sletteløkka, to reflect and discuss the process with a community of peers, academics, and practitioners.

The work-in-progress of the *grendehus* was presented at the main exhibition of the Oslo Triennale. The exhibition space was titled 'the library', and consisted of a large structure filled with objects and installations by different contributing exhibitors. I was chosen as one of the exhibitors and my contribution was the Dugnad Days catalogue. It was designed by Kirstin Helgadóttir and was presented in its entirety on a large wooden flipchart that we made for the exhibition. In addition, a film documenting the making of the *grendehus* was made by Aurora Brekke. It was screened inside the structure of the shelf.

The catalogue was an opportunity to show our ongoing work in Sletteløkka, but also to reflect on *dugnad* in relation to the topic of the Triennale. In this reflection I engaged Håkon Lorentzen and Nicole Curato in the discourse. Håkon is a sociologist that has done extensive research on the concept of *dugnad* in Norway. Nicole is a political theorist exploring the idea of deliberative democracy. I was interested in how the making that happens within a *dugnad* can be a form of deliberation rooted in the experiences of the people involved. She noted that the approach of deliberation-through-making was a contribution to the discourse that had not yet been addressed within the field of deliberative democracy.

Many of the community members joined for the opening of the Oslo Triennale at the national museum. Seeing themselves presented on the screen reflecting on the process we had been through was an affirmation



↑ Maria Årthun and Aurora Brekke watching the film about Sletteløkka in the main exhibition of the Oslo Triennale.

↑ Ifrah Mohammed and Aurora Brekke reading the exhibition catalogues. The catalogues were exhibited in the National Museum of Architecture.

of our shared effort. The exhibition opened in October 2019, and cemented *dugnad* as a method to explore further throughout the project.

Dugnad of construction

Although the design *dugnad*s did not go as planned, the construction *dugnad*s⁴⁶ were much more of a success. Matias, Lucy, Sudar and myself were unable to attend due to the covid situation, but Maria and Lars held these *dugnad*s almost every weekend over a period of one year. Inger Lise Høst arranged food, much like she had done during the *idédugnad*s. Tron Hummelvol took the responsibility of recruiting residents for the weekly *dugnad*s. Even at the age of 80, he had been running around knocking on people's doors to invite them for the *idédugnad*s. Now he had a growing list of 80 phone numbers, people that he would regularly contact. Lars, in advance of each workshop, would prepare a list of tasks for people to sign up to and carry out at the weekend. Maria met with carpenters and construction workers every Friday, not only to guide the process but also to develop the design. She and I would meet through zoom to resolve design challenges, and also with the *grendehus* committee to involve them in these decisions. Reflections by the residents that had been through this process were many. Some had never painted before, but by showing up they learned something new in the process. Others were able to build new relationships and bonds with their neighbours.

As Håkon Lorentzen (2021) notes, within a *dugnad*, you invest your time, not your money. This implies that one's influence is proportional to the work effort, not to power or social status (Lorentzen, 2021). The final outcome was a result of 800 working-hours of construction *dugnad*, performed by more than 80 people within the community.

⁴⁶ The construction *dugnad*s were facilitated over several weekends throughout 2020 and 2021.

Outcome

The grendehus

The renovation was completed in autumn 2021, after the lockdown restrictions were lifted in Norway. The building is a renovation of a 300sqm ground floor space. In the early *idédugnads* we discussed the possibility of opening the space to the outside while providing storage at the back. All the windows on the façade were cut open and replaced by double glass doors. To the right of the entrance is a large kitchen with a walk-in fridge, designed and developed with the group that had focused on the kitchen program. At the back of the building is a dark room with no windows, this has become a meeting space for teenagers, used for gaming, and cinema screenings. To the left of the main entrance is a large meeting room. At the back of the space, facing the outside, a shelf was built to function as a ventilation shaft as

well as seating and storage space for the programs and activities in the different rooms. For instance, a hidden door in this shelf leads to an old evacuation room that is now used for the storage of musical instruments and other larger items for use in the meeting room. The toilets have been renovated and cleaned up. Next to the entrance is a small room for a music studio that a group of youth developed during our digital *dugnads*.



→ Heavy duty construction needed to cut through the concrete walls. Photo by Lars Eivind Bjørnstad.

↙ The construction *dugnads* involved more than 80 people for a total of 800 working hours. All age groups were part of the construction *dugnads*. Photo by Lars Eivind Bjørnstad.

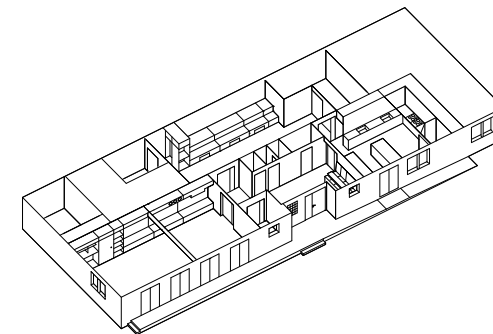


This process has led to many other projects and initiatives in collaboration with the municipality. This includes the painting of the *grendehus* façade, for which I will involve my team from *Fronteira Livre*; an outdoor furniture project with artist Maria Jonsson and furniture designer Phillipp Von Haase; and, eventually, the reconstruction of a Japanese house as an outdoor activity space. Materials for the latter come from exhibits in the Japanese Pavilion presented at the 2021 Venice Architecture Biennale.

Dugnad was explored as a way to respond to the degrowth movement. There are a number of values identified in degrowth that can be found in *dugnad* such as the use of what is already there, sharing resources and sustaining them over time. The process of making the *grendehus* in Sletteløkka aimed at demonstrating those values by reusing materials and, importantly, creating a process in which people might contribute in their own ways.

As *grendehus* is a vernacular architecture that, historically, has been associated with *dugnad*, one challenge was how to create a critical understanding of a tradition to accommodate the needs and aspiration of the group that came together. While the program and the activities of the *grendehus* were identified by deliberating through the act of making, the critical process in which ideas were transformed into design lacked the same level of engagement of local people. Instead, they were presented, often as *fait accompli*, different design ideas to choose from. This was a consequence of not being able to follow through on plans to hold design *dugnads* due to a number of reasons, including of course the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the change in plan did provide an opportunity to reflect on the importance of ensuring a process wherein people take part in transforming ideas and stories into physical solutions. In that process, spatial, economic and technical constraints need to be negotiated. When architects take charge of this process, it takes away creative processes from the people who will ultimately use the building, and it fails to nurture a shared experience and the sense that the building, even the architecture, belongs to them.

- The multipurpose room with new doors.
- ↓ The new kitchen is actively used by a dedicated kitchen group making diners in the space.
- ↘ The multimedia and youth room is located in the back of the vacant building.



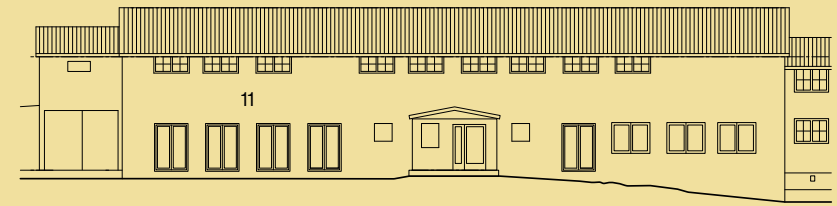


↑ Artist Maria Jonsson and furniture designer Philipp Von Hase has joined us in the process.

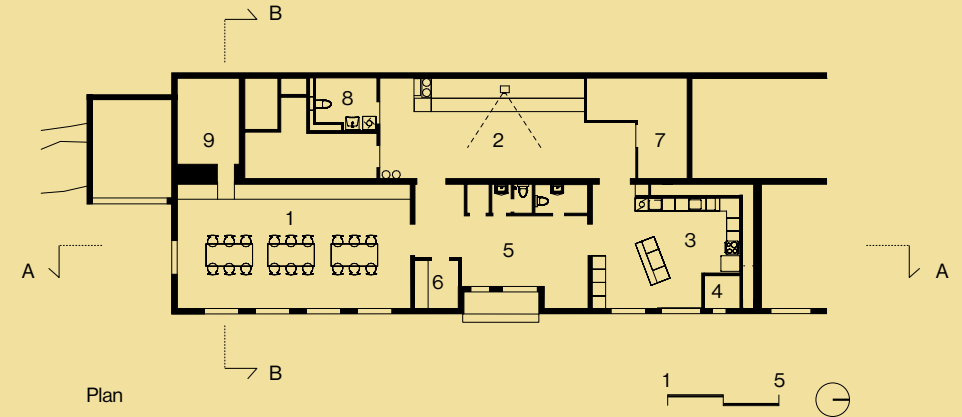
← Five doors were cut out of the existing facade to open up the space of the grendehus.

DUGNADDAYS

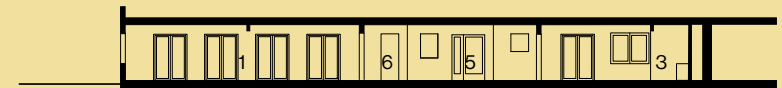
1. Meeting/Event room
2. Youth room with cinema
3. Kitchen
4. Walk-in freezer
5. Hallway & toilets
6. Sound studio
7. Technical room
8. Large bathroom
9. Storage room
10. Local grocery store
11. Facade (to be painted)



East elevation



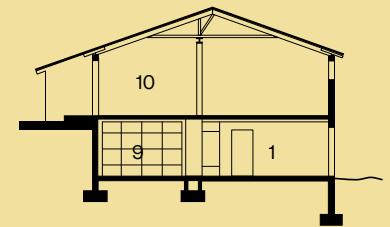
Plan



Section A-A



South elevation



Section B-B

5

Structures of Mutual Support

The Philippine Pavilion for the 17th Venice Architecture Biennale housed an expanded research exhibit based on traditions of mutual support around the world, including an implementation of *bayanihan* in the design and building of a library and conflict-resolution space with the community of Angat, Philippines.

“Structures of Mutual Support” was the precise title for the work which Suarshan V. Khadka Jr. and I had developed for the Philippine Pavilion at the biennale. In response to the question “How Will We Live Together?” by the curator Harshim Sarkis, our project explores how traditions of mutual support have been, and still are, a way to live together, and how these traditions can inform the way we build together. The project is a collaboration between the community in Angat, Philippines, Sudar and myself.

Through a close collaboration with a community in the Philippines that actively practices *bayanihan*, we planned, designed and built a library and conflict-resolution space aiming at expressing how architecture can manifest these traditions and ways of life. Much as *bayanihan* was used, traditionally, to move a house from one village to another, the building itself travelled to Venice. It stayed in the space of the Philippine Pavilion for the duration of the biennale before returning to the community in the Philippines.

Each element of the building reflects a concept identified as important to the community. This was the idea of *Maaliwalas*, which is a Filipino concept of space that addresses questions of light, ventilation and comfort. From the angle of the roof to the slatted doors and elevated floors, each element of the building was determined through this concept based on a platform of mutual support. The outcome is a building that will be operated, used and maintained through the same tradition, rooted in the life and understandings of the community that will use it. The library was designed as a quiet space for studying, alternative adult education and conflict mediation in response to a lack of private space in the community. On the one hand, the values and meanings embedded in the architectural process reflect a situated understanding of *bayanihan*. On the other, the journey to Venice manifests a particular traditional expression of *bayanihan* when a community moves a house from one place to another.



↑ Aerial view of GK Enchanted Farm. Each house is shared by two families. The row of houses was built collaboratively by the whole village through *bayanihan*.

Beyond re-siting the building from Angat, we also wanted to construct a broad discourse on the topic of mutual support. The exhibition presents experiences of working through mutual support in Vietnam, Norway, Brazil and Philippines. Each community involved in previous projects was invited to reflect on the process through a series of films presented in the space. Within the library, people were encouraged to share their stories of mutual support. Since the pandemic had just broken out, many related moments of mutual support in times of Covid-19. The exhibition, in this modality, revolved around an extended enquiry into the forms of mutual support that I had identified throughout my research. With the support of the organising committee of the Philippine Pavilion, we were able to invite museums, ethnographers, historians and many others to explain their tradition of mutual support (see appendix at end of the text). Hence, through exhibition catalogues and a series of seminars, we were able to build a discourse around mutual support with thinkers and practitioners who have worked in the field. Contributions were made by Leika Aruga, Greg Bankoff, Nicole Curato, Nabeel Hamdi, Pablo Helguera, Marisa Morán Jahn, Maaretta Jaukkuri, Sho Konishi, Portia Ladrido, Håkon Lorentzen, Rafi Segal, Hans Skotte and Jeremy Till.

Preparation

Setting up the project

The Philippine Pavilion is a collaborative undertaking of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), and the Office of Deputy Speaker and Congresswoman Loren Legarda. The Commissioner of the Philippine Pavilion is Arsenio “Nick” J. Lizaso, Chairman of the NCCA. Through the Philippine Arts in Venice Biennale (PAVB) they coordinate the operation and overall implementation of the pavilion. The curators of the Philippine Pavilion are chosen through an open call.

Sudar and I decided to send a proposal rooted in this Artistic PhD and our experience of working together over the years. We teamed up with a community in the Philippines that actively practice *bayanihan* as a way of life in order to develop the application. Together, we proposed to explore *bayanihan* through the planning, design and construction of a building for the village. At that stage, we did not know what we would build, but we knew that

we wanted to do it through *bayanihan*. The jury⁴⁷ found the process interesting but expressed concerns about not knowing what the physical object would look like in the exhibition space. Nevertheless, our proposal was selected and within two months we had already started the workshops with the community in Angat. The project was financed through funds from the NCCA.

⁴⁷ Brian Lee from Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP (SOM), Ms. Gridthiya Gaweewong, Artistic Director of Jim Thompson Art Centre in Bangkok and past curator of Gwangju Biennale; Jose Mari Yupangco, design principal JY+A and Professor Emeritus of De La Salle College of St. Benilde; Congresswoman and Deputy Speaker Loren Legarda,

↳ One of the first meetings with the community, discussing the structure of the biennale and the proposal that we would develop together.

The village built through *bayanihan*

The community we teamed up with was called Gawad Kalinga Enchanted Farm (GKEF), in Angat, Bulacan, consisting of 60 households. It was established 12 years ago on a vacant quarry which was left barren after it was excavated for land reclamation in Manila Bay. The village had been built by the community members themselves with the support of Gawad Kalinga. This is a non-governmental organisation that offers social housing for low-income families provided they build houses themselves, through *bayanihan*. The community was given land for small scale farming as a long-term livelihood strategy to ease the economic burden of building each other's houses. The community has actively used *bayanihan* as a term to describe the process of building their homes, maintaining the surrounding areas, as well as tending the land for cultivation. They had many stories to share about extraordinary times when they came together to put out fires or cope in the face of floods or typhoons. The elected *kapitbahayan* (neighborhood committee) could easily mobilize families for projects or interventions within the community. Although this was described as a voluntary act, it did feel like there was a sense of social obligation to participate.



A group of 31 community members joined the workshops for what they called the Biennale project. Some were engaged on the construction site while others attended daily two-hour workshops during the project. When commitments clashed with their regular work hours, compensation was provided.

Those who did not join at the time of the initial invitation from the neighbourhood association either did not fully understand what the project was about, changed their minds later, or were not interested at the time. Some of those who did not sign up expressed later that they felt left out. In response, efforts were made to include them through interviews and presentations by the members of the community participating in the workshops. At the same time, adjustments were made so that workshops were organised in the afternoons when people could more easily join outside of everyday work and household chores.

Traditions like *bayanihan* emerge where there is a clearly defined need and a sense of belonging. There was a variety of motivation regarding identifying with a place, an idea or a practice. Most people belong to more than one group or community. The workshops aimed at developing a coherent but diverse community around the project in which everyone could speak and act freely and be valued equally.

Platforms for deliberation are never entirely free of existing inequalities. In each of the four main working groups there were one or two strong voices that would unintentionally overshadow the rest. This was either due to differences of age, gender, social status or personality. Two measures were taken to mitigate this: firstly, by simply asking those who had strong voices to give more space to, or even help lift others' opinions. Secondly, by splitting up groups so that people with stronger voices were grouped together, while less vocal ones were also grouped together. After these measures, it was observed that those who had a hard time speaking in the beginning became more comfortable, vocal and even those most reticent able to engage in the discussions towards the end of the project.⁴⁸

48 This was expressed by Brenda T. Noquera in an interviewed conducted by Sudar and I on 22nd of January 2020.

→ The community members took the initiative to interview those that were unable to take part in the workshops.

↘ Presenting was a way to reflect on the work we done, but also to get feedback from other members in the community.



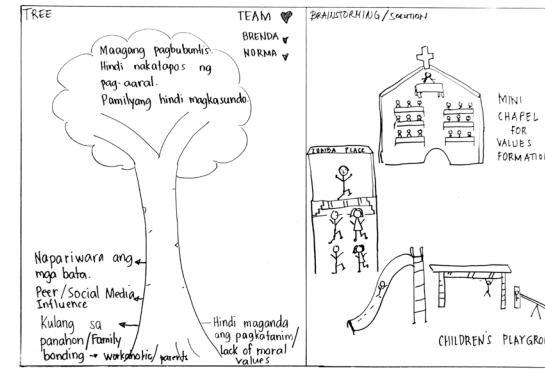
Measures to mitigate strong voices can also be sought by changing the form of communication from verbal deliberation to the act of making. Deliberation through action can take different forms: drawings, mapping, model-making, theatre, full-scale testing, etc. Making the popsicle models, for example, was popular among the groups. In order to reflect on what *bayanihan* meant to them, all had to work together to glue, cut and paste different elements of their model. Apart from being a different means of communication, the act of making something engaged a whole different set of knowledge than that of spoken words. For example, a young member in one of the groups was mute but incredibly skilled in drawing. He became the key-voice within his team for translating and expressing their ideas through drawing.

Process

The six-step process

The project was structured through the six steps of learning, questioning, making, concept, design and build. Through acting, drawing, model-making and prototyping, the group explored new and creative ways of deliberating together. Phasing the process was important in order to give everyone an experience of what it means to communicate in different ways.

Values and worldviews important to the group were explored for guidance beyond the discussions. Learning focused on themes of life, work and place grounded in people's experiences. Firstly, learning about each other's ambitions and values by drawing a *heart* that was filled with what matters to each one of us. Secondly, learning about their place by drawing maps of the village and the surrounding area. And thirdly, learning about ways of working together through personal and shared stories of *bayanihan*.



↪ Working in smaller groups is a way to make space so that everyone can contribute. One of the first exercises was a reflection on *bayanihan*: what it meant to them and how they practiced it in their everyday lives. Photo by Ron Stephen Reyes.

↪ Norma, Sheila and Ariel mapping doors and windows in the village. Photo by Antonette A. Aguilar.

↑ The problem trees were drawn to understand the causes (roots) and effects (branches) of an identified problem (stem). Photo by Chris Yuhico.

↗ After showing a great interest in construction techniques, Mamerto took the lead in building the scoreboard and later the library building itself. Photo by Ron Stephen Reyes.

The aim of the questioning phase was to reflect on the challenges we face in living together. The situation identified in the learning phase was critically examined for its strengths and weaknesses by imagining the village as a person with good and bad traits, and how this person encounters a given situation. Imagining weaknesses as tree trunks, the groups identified root causes and how the problems branched out and impacted on their lives. These reflections formed a basis for proposing interventions that could address the root causes.

The making phase was about exploring ways to work together and do something about our ambitions and problems. The mock-up, actually a scoreboard located adjacent to the basketball court, was designed and built to test construction skills within the community and the availability of materials. Beyond its intended purpose, it was used as a small restaurant and an event space. Sharing tasks between the community members, the space was cleaned and maintained regularly.

The aim of the concept phase was to develop a common language for everyone to communicate, evaluate, and transform ideas into a design. A common language emerged from the Filipino concept of *maaliwalas*. Through workshops, a shared understanding of *maaliwalas* was developed by identifying local references. This is a word that describes spaces that are bright, open, well ventilated, and light. The grid was introduced by Sudar and myself, inspired by Lung Tam. It was used to move between different scales, budget the size of each programme, draw the space needed for different activities and locate them on a site-plan.



← The scoreboard was designed as a space not only to keep the score but also to hang out and watch the game. Photo by Ron Stephen Reyes.

↙ The full-scale grid on the floor allowed the groups to test the structural configuration of the design in relation to lighting, ventilation, and the concept of *maaliwalas*. Photo by Chris Yuhico.

↘ The building was built on site before it was disassembled and sent to Venice. Photo by Chris Yuhico.

The aim of the design phase was to use the concept to design the space, structure, location, interiors and exteriors of the buildings. The community decided upon the grid for the buildings and quickly the programme locations were adjusted. The structures and roofing of the building were explored through models and full-scale testing on the ground. By defining some core parameters (i.e. access, appearance, security, privacy and ventilation), final decisions on the location and plan of the building were collectively made on site. The concept of *maaliwalas* became the common language which allowed everyone to design the doors and windows, as well as the roof shape, and also how the building would meet the ground.

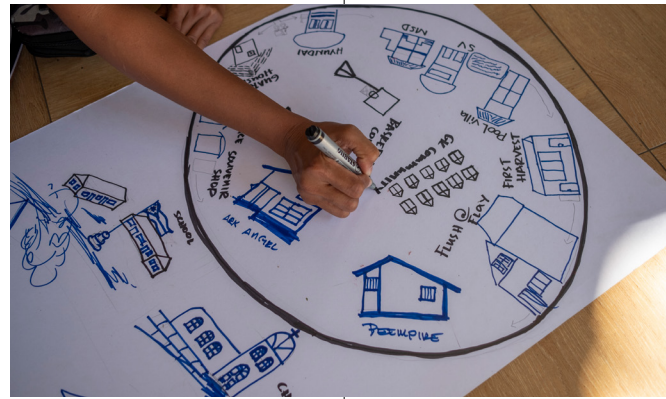
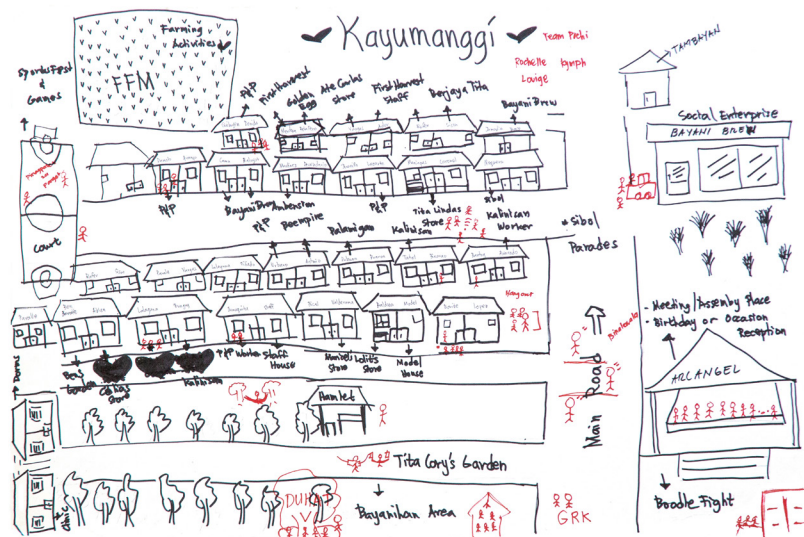
The build phase focused on developing the design in detail and translating prototype solutions to full scale. These workshops were used as a platform to test and develop different building elements for the library, such as doors, windows and integrated shelves. Carpenters from the village took the lead and developed a process to measure, cut and mount the elements with the accuracy required for the structure to be disassembled and reassembled in Venice.



Conceptualising space

Mapping is in large part an act of organising, categorising, and establishing relations between different elements. As such it is a conceptualisation of space and relations. A community map would highlight spaces and buildings that are important to the group while a stakeholder map gives an account of the people involved. During the mapping exercises in the learning phase several groups drew very detailed maps of their community. But after scrutinising the drawings, the children found that their parents had not drawn the places the children use for hanging-out or playing. Such observations would be added to the drawings of the parents in a different colour. When the parents discussed the drawings revised by the children it became clear how they had mainly focused on roads and buildings, while the children, on the other hand, observed the in-

between spaces that they appropriated for themselves. Comparing different maps, a major vacant area emerged in all drawings, and was identified by the group as a potential site for the future building. As such, the drawings were scrutinised from different perspectives by the children and adults and cross-referenced to identify a site that works for everyone. The drawings, acting as third objects, became the interlocutor for deliberation that helped define the general area for the building.



← The map of the village shows the households and important functions. The red drawings were added by children, showing the spaces that mattered to them. Photo by Chris Yuhico.

↑ The group drew what they had in the village in the inside a circle. Outside the circle, the group drew what was missing from the village, such as schools, hospitals etc.

↑ After all groups have presented what they made, we gathered once again to look at all the work together to make further analysis.

I have been interested in the act of drawing as a process of reflection. In *Fronteira Livre*, Nancy drew a circle to describe what it means to be inside or outside of this circle. I used this idea to discuss what is inside and outside of the village in Angat. What is the border that separates the inside from the outside and how does this border affect their life? By comparing the drawings and interpretations made with the different groups, we had a lively discussion about what is missing in the village, including access to different kinds of public services.

An archive of our interaction

Keeping a physical record of each activity was important to generate a continuity for the reasoning of, and deliberation by, the group over time. As such, drawing often used in workshops as a means of communication was kept as live, in-the-moment archive material, as well as leaving a record for the future. The ambition was to vary the 'languages' we used. Other methods of documentation were sound-recording and film. However, sound-recording required too much transcription work and film documentation was inaccessible to the group as a whole. Eventually filming was also tested out as a form of language but was not actively used due to limited access to equipment.

Within the workshops, each group produced outputs and presented them for comparison with other groups; here they discussed similarities and differences. Such a process resulted in the making of a new object based on the observations made. The outputs from each workshop were collected on an information board as a point of reference. Whenever there was a need, the information boards were revisited so that the groups could connect the dots, discuss, and reflect on the overall output of the work done up to that point. As one of our anthropologists on site noted, there was a lot of information from the process that was not captured in what was eventually built. However, it was important for Sudar and I that it was not just us collecting their information. Instead, it was important that the community itself processed and filtered the information that they believed was most valuable. As such, it was not about Sudar and I extracting information, rather about them processing it amongst themselves.

Through engaging in the making of an object, the process, thoughts and ideas of a person who made it become embedded, and cluster, in the narrative of that object. This object could be a model, full-scale test or other things that we make, each of these objects carry meanings and values embedded in the process of exploring what the final building will be. And if the making of the object is a collective endeavour, then it will contain a multitude of ideas and reflections. This multiplicity is still unified in one object, so that, even if the ideas may diverge, they have something in common, a shared reference point. As opposed to a refined and edited written text, the idea itself is represented as genuinely as possible. Objects can sometimes be scrutinised, cross-referenced and analysed more easily and accessibly than texts. As such, they act as proof of the decisions made and provide collective memory of what has happened, an informal agreement for the group, allowing them to move on to the next step.

By making objects at different phases of the project, we aimed to embed some of the experiences that we had together, and gradually built a shared understanding. In this process, the values, meanings and knowledge embedded in the things we make are eventually transferred into the building itself.

↓ It is not about *what* we want, but *why* we want what we want. The topics listed were the parameters the community chose to judge the two options for location A and B. Photo by Chris Yuhico.

DATE: NOV. 11, 2019

Topic	A	B	WHY
1 Access	3 5	5 5	*A → slight(yung) lang, kase malapit sa Community *B → ok naman, daanan, kase matatanaw mo yung lahat ng nasa paligid niya.
2 Ambience / Appearance	3 5	5 5	*A → position ng building *B → mas maaliwalas ang view
3 Natural Light / Ventilation	3 5	5 5	*A → hindi makapasok ang hangin kase nakatayo sa isat-isa ang building *B → mas pasok galing sa likod ang hangin at malitim dun
4 Quiet Place / Privacy	5 5	3 5	*A → mas hindi mas yadong kita *B → bulaga, harap-likod
5 Security Monitoring	3 5	5 5	*A → in one-side, hindi mo makikita ang dapat makita *B → bulaga, both side ng building

Team "PAG-ASA"

(17th) Ben, Divine, Coring, Jocelyn, Mamerto

Decision making, making decisions

Within each workshop, making objects allowing for time to present them to other groups helped us to reach decisions without being side-tracked too much. While decisions made under limited time frames might not have been perfect, following through with what was agreed upon in the presence of the group recognised the efforts made by those investing their time. Decisions were made within workshops and not outside of them. This contributed to results that each and every participant could relate to.

For major decisions, the groups determined the parameters for appraising different solutions. With these parameters they graded different options and argued for their own choices. After each group shared their own evaluation, the collected groups discussed and compared a range of arguments with all present. Eventually one solution received the highest grade. In case of a disagreement, the arguments were at-hand to help if an amendment was necessary. For the final siting of the building this exercise was used to choose between different options. Security, privacy, ventilation, appearance, and oversight were the parameters identified by the group to grade the siting locations. The final location chosen maximised privacy and silence while maintaining security and oversight. Some members from the community who did not get their preferred choice expressed an understanding of the final decision and some even stated that they would now have made that decision themselves.



The abstract and the specific

Creative solutions were found by moving between the specific and the abstract. Inviting the community into an exercise moving between the specific and the abstract produced an awareness resembling that of an architect moving between site and drawings.

"This was a great experience, we've learned how to measure the space, it's like we were the architects. If we didn't experience that, and also didn't do the grid, how will we know if the space is just right for us?"

– Brenda Noquera

Understanding of size and context changed drastically by being on site as compared to looking at a plan drawing. Testing a space immersively, at full-scale, translates an idea into an experience of space, while the top-down look on a drawing gives an understanding of the order and concept.

Many of the participants expressed initially that the building was too small in the drawing, but on site it felt too big. Using a grid to move between different scales helped us to decide the size of the building. To identify the location on site, the groups produced drawings for different options. With tracing-paper we could overlay the drawings, identifying a series of zones that were preferred by different groups. These areas were tested, at full-scale, on site and then updated in the drawings. In this way the groups were able to narrow down the options. The friction between the idea and reality drove the process in unexpected directions.

↳ Norma and her group brought chairs into the space so they could get a better feeling of the new building. Photo by Ron Stephen Reyes.

↳ By staking out the design on site, we evaluated the maximum dimensions of the building and its relation to the basketball court and the village.

Outcome

The building in Angat

The community library/conflict-resolution space is located along the edge of the eastern perimeter of the site, adjacent to the basketball court. Between them is an existing tree which we framed using the structure so that we could create a small protected outdoor space in its shade. This configuration maintains both privacy and security as it would be farthest from the community houses, but at the same time close enough for people to watch over it.

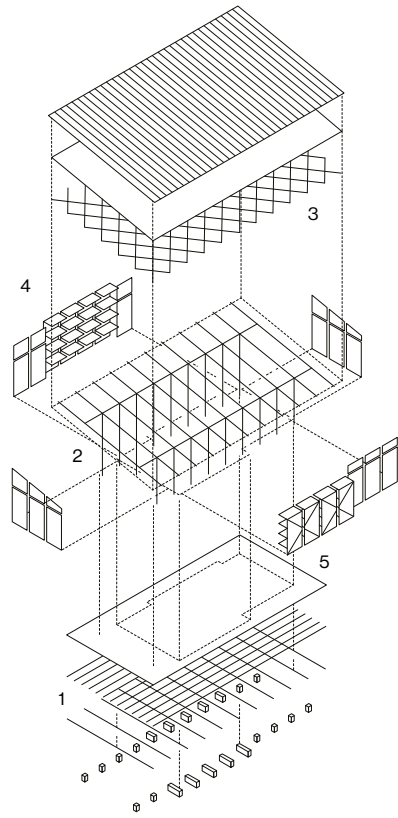
The plan is structured on a 1,2 x 1,2m grid. With the available budget we could afford 24 of these grids, and the community configured these in the plan as 3 by 8 grids. The use of this grid allowed us a low-resolution framework to enable us to communicate with the community more fluidly. Four bays of 600mm-deep shelves allow for storage of library materials, teaching materials, chairs, water cooler and trash cans. It also provides space for writing desks and reading nooks. Similarly, four bays of 300mm-shallow shelves are used for storage of books and also audio and video equipment. The shelves act as storage and also serve as additional stabilising elements against earthquake and typhoon loads. The extended ledge around the perimeter of the library serves to provide casual seating spaces to engage with either the sports area in front, the quiet garden at the rear, or the space under the tree.

The form of the mono-pitch, gently sloping shed roof was determined, through the workshop process, as offering optimal benefit regarding shade from the sun, while allowing prevailing winds to pass through. It also helps to soften the scale of the building when viewed from afar as the slope relates to the slope of the perimeter of the site behind it. The floor of the library is raised 550mm from the natural grade level so that air may circulate beneath it and also allow for protection from rainwater hitting the ground. Finally, the screened slatted windows that were

designed in the workshops allow for light and ventilation, while maintaining security for the building. All in all, the feeling of *maaliwalas*, that the community desired, was achieved.

One primary concern expressed by several of the community members was the question of how the building would be maintained and operated, both in terms of practicality and costs. Yet, over time, everyone agreed to contribute what they could. The management team of GK Enchanted Farm agreed to cover expenses relating to maintenance and electricity used in the building. In exchange, the neighborhood association would maintain the building through *bayanihan*. As Mamerto Antonio, one of the carpenters of the community explained:

“The strength of a building is not measured by the strength of the material, but by the care that we show as a community.”



← The floor (1) is raised 50 cm from the ground. The windows and doors (2) are permeable and the roof (3) is angled to capture the breeze. Inside is a 30cm deep bookshelf (4) and a 60cm workdesk/storage (5).

↙ The grid was used in full scale to translate the models and drawings back into real life.

→ The building was reassembled in Venice in Arsenale. Photo by Andrea D'Altoe.



The building in Venice

After setting it up in Angat, we shipped the building to Venice in order to install it for the opening of the 2021 Biennale. We saw the mounting of the pavilion as an opportunity to engage an entirely different community, including the contractors in Venice and the Filipino community there. In a way, the transportation of the building from Angat to Venice mirrors the original concept of *bayanihan* in that people transfer a building from one place to another through the help of the communities around them.

The library is configured to fit both contexts of the site, both in Angat and at the Arsenale in Venice. We thought it was important to represent the voices and effort of the community from the Philippines by bringing the actual product of their work to Venice and also for the building itself to carry the story of the journey back home. In the Philippines, when you return home you bring a *pasalubong*, a gift. In Venice, the building became a living space where people shared their own stories of mutual support that were then displayed as an exhibition inside this re-sited place of dwelling. The building was awarded a special mention by the golden lion jury “for this exemplary community project that creates a rich archive and experience of collaborative construction practices.”

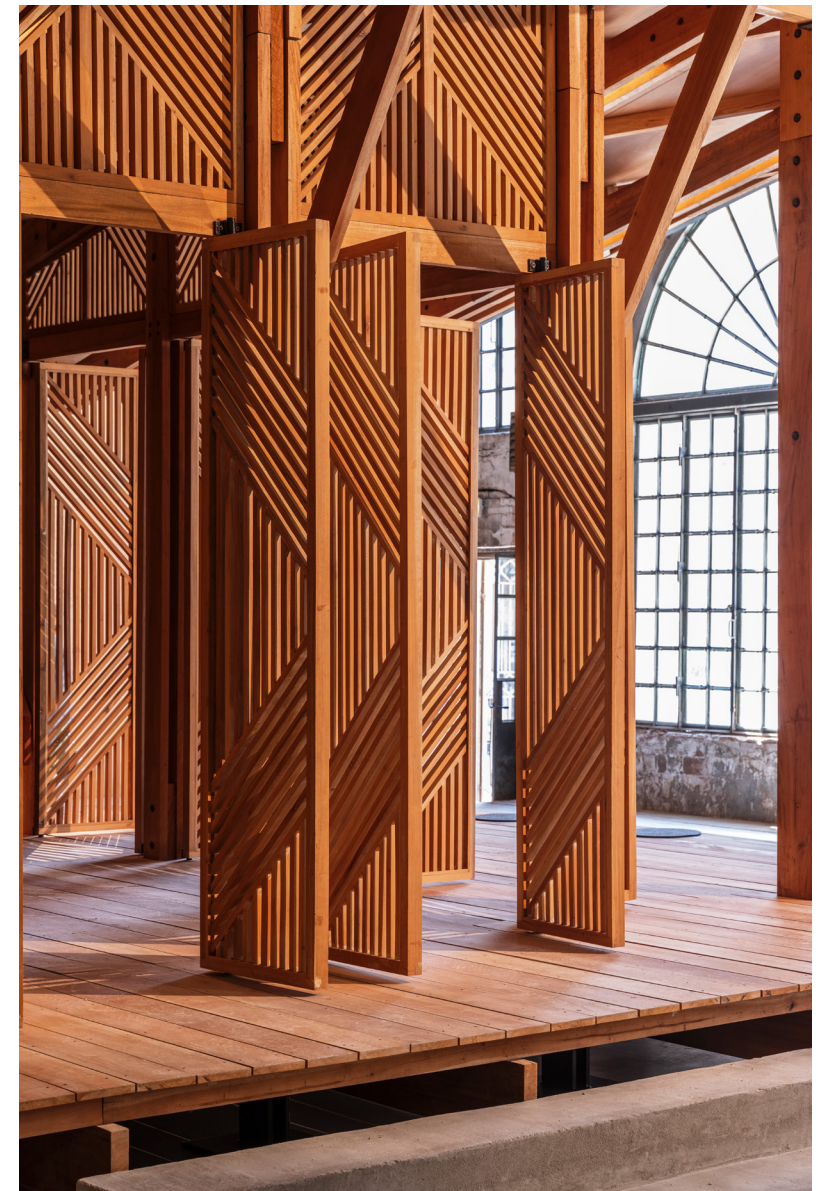




← The interior of the building functioned as a space to collect stories of mutual support from visitors and participants of seminars and workshops. They included cultural concepts such as *gadugi* (Cherokee), *naffir* (Sudan), *imece* (Turkey), *yui & moyai* (Japan), *zadruga* (Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina), *kazi ya kujitolea* (Tanzania), *polderen* (Netherlands), *asar & zhylu* (Kazakhstan) and *nhimbe* (Shona).

→ Every part of the building had to be *maaliwalas*. The floor is raised, the roof is angled, and the doors are perforated. By defining a concept that mattered to the community, each step of the design process needed to respond to it. Photo by Jacopo Salvi.

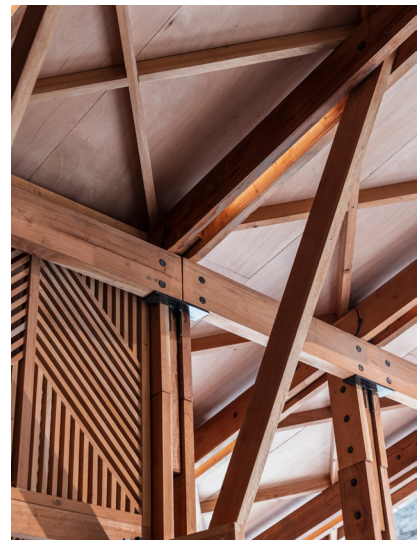
← The room of the Philippine Pavilion was 18m by 18m, with a height of 12m up to the bottom of the trusses. When designing the library/conflict mediation space in Angat, these dimensions were taken into consideration. Photo by Jacopo Salvi.



Mutual support has often been about the collective effort of moving buildings. *Bayanihan* has been used to move a building from one location to the other by lifting the whole structure together. *Dugnad* has been used to disassemble, lift and move buildings piece by piece. *Minga* has been used to pull and float houses from one village to the other.

Within the art world, I have learned about similar references that are worth noting. Since completing the Philippine Pavilion, I came across other artists that have engaged in moving a house from its original location to a gallery space. The Norwegian Artist Marianne Heske moved a 400 year old cabin to the Pompidou centre in Paris (Project Gjerdeløa, 1980), and later a rather ordinary house in front of the Parliament in Norway (The house of commons, 2015). The buildings were disassembled and reconfigured as they had been found, emphasising the story and historical association that people might attach to these structures.

The British artist Simon Starling on the other hand reconfigured a old boatshed into a boat that was floated to the gallery in Basel, where it was reconfigured as a boathouse. With the scars of its transformation it was displayed for the duration of the exhibition, then reconfigured as a boat and floated up-stream back to its original location where it was rebuilt as



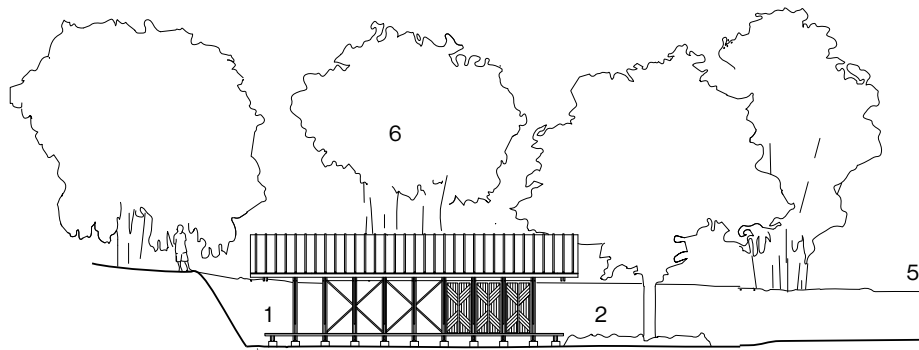
a boathouse (Shedboatshed, 2005). The project illustrates how transportation in itself is a creative act. Amongst my peers at the Venice Biennale, Kozo Kadowaki from the Japanese Pavilion had disassembled his neighbours' wooden house, transported it to the Japanese Pavilion where it was displayed and remade into different furniture and smaller structures. After the biennale I will bring the material to Oslo where we will use it as part of Dugnad Days.

↙ Detail of the meeting between columns, rafter and ceiling. Each element contributes to the overall structural integrity, similar to the way mutual support requires every member of the community to help each other. Photo by Jacopo Salvi.

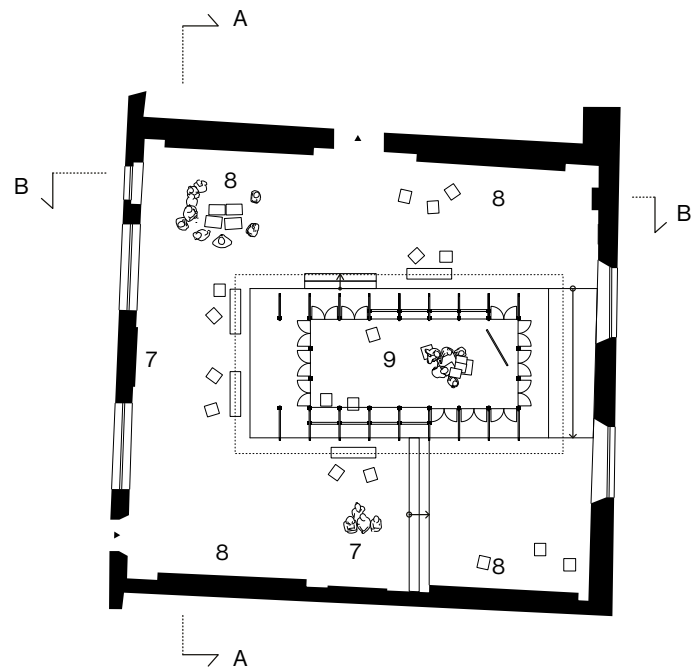
→ The analogy of lifting something together is often used to describe the traditions of both *dugnad* and *bayanihan*. This image is from Tagpuro where the community members are lifting the roof truss form the workshop to the site.

↘ Like *bayanihan* has been used to move a building from one village to another, the library and conflict resolution centre travelled across the globe and back. It arrived in Venice before the pandemic broke out in March 2020 and was sent back in December 2021. Photo by Andrea D'Altoe.

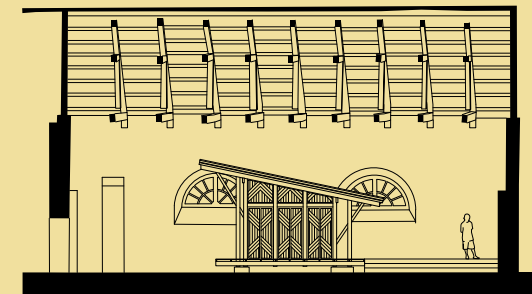
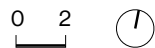




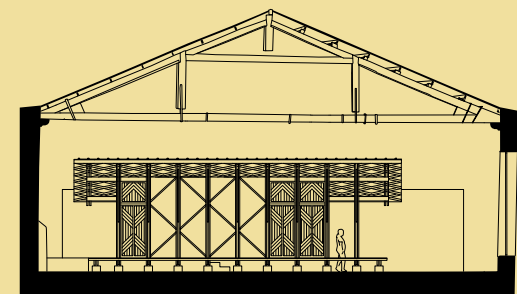
Angat, Philippines - Site section



Arsenale, Venice - Plan



Arsenale, Venice - Section B-B



Arsenale, Venice - A-A

STRUCTURES OF MUTUAL SUPPORT

1. Library & conflict mediation space
2. Quarry for land reclamation in Manila Bay
3. Basketball court
4. Community houses
5. Agriculture
6. Bamboo trees
7. Exhibition walls
8. Video monitors
9. Collection of 'stories of mutual support'

Concluding reflections

This research has aimed at designing and building projects that belong to communities. In the following reflections, I discuss how mutual support can shape collaborative processes that define architecture in new ways.

Architecture as process

The research began with an encounter between *dugnad* and *bayanihan* in the making of a study centre in Tacloban, Philippines. The story of the study centre, being used for 3 years before it was destroyed and then rebuilt, could only be told through an understanding of architecture as a process that extended beyond the design phase. In the work that followed, it was important to question what a process is, and how architecture changes when it is embedded in a process of mutual support.

An immediate reference could be made to vernacular buildings that are particular to a certain time, place and culture.⁵⁰ They are built as part of ways of life that consist of a series of overlapping processes that are historical, social, political and environmental. A process is a unity of distinct structural stages or phases that develop over time (Rescher, 2000). Each process consists of many smaller processes that agglomerate and become the situation

as we know and experience it. Therefore, replicating vernacular structures in a situation independent of the place they developed in, over time, is not possible when architecture is conceptualised as

⁵⁰ One grandmother that I worked with in Tacloban understood that her house had a limited lifespan. She lived in a bahay bato, a bamboo hut. Every day she would put a coin through a slit in the main column of her house, so that one day, when the building might be destroyed by a typhoon, she could use the money to buy materials for a new house. These understandings acknowledge the reality of living in a particularly precarious place with its unique complexities.

a process (as opposed, for instance, to more static objects that exist largely independent of time, place and people). The fact that traditions of mutual support have been practiced in different places as a way of constructing and maintaining vernacular structures demonstrates how they embody complex understandings of what it means to live and work together in a specific context.

The idea of architecture as a process was at the heart of the Japanese Metabolist movement that emerged in the post-war reconstruction of Japan (Koolhaas et al., 2011). They conceptualised buildings not as static objects but as impermanent expressions of life, much like how the body maintains and replaces its cells through metabolism. They designed the service core of a building, such as staircases and elevators, as long-term structures, while residential areas were 'plugged in' to allow for frequent replacement. This resonates with the way the study centre in Tagpuro was designed with a different lifespan: a heavy concrete base with a light timber structure on top, as well as replaceable doors and wall-infills that could be blown away by the recurring typhoons. Both communities in Tacloban and Lũng Tâm shared an understanding of designing *with* nature rather than against it. The Metabolist movement was also fond of the symbiotic relations between nature and the built environment wherein humans exist within nature (Kurokawa, 1998). However, many of the Metabolist structures were built as megastructures which required resources and efforts that exceeded those of the residents and therefore did not actually transform over time.

Not all architecture reflects the ways of life of the people who live with it. Often, it becomes a representation of architects who do not belong to the situation where the building stands. Instead, this research explored how architecture might embody the knowledge, values and understandings of the people who will live with, or in, the building, transforming it over time in response to their, and its, changing needs and circumstances.

⁵¹ While I was studying at the AA School of Architecture, I attended the book launch of "Project Japan: Metabolism Talks..." by Rem Koolhaas and Hans Ulrich Obrist (2011). At the time, I had just completed the study centre in Tacloban, and the concept of metabolism resonated with the experience of building the study centre.

For architecture to be embedded in the life of the people and the place it belongs to, the knowledge of the architect alone is not enough, and it becomes necessary to involve the people who understand ways the building must be cared for, used and maintained over time. Therefore, local people's participation is required from the earliest planning and design phases.

Nevertheless, their participation in architectural processes does not automatically result in architecture that reflects their ways of life. As I experienced, in various situations, as discussed earlier, there are a number of challenges that relate to the terms of participation and how processes are organised, as well as the forms of knowledge that are recognised. It is often a question of ways that communication takes place, or how to reflect the multiple knowledges and values of a community in a given situation with specific design and building needs and understandings of architecture. The following sections provide my reflections in response to these challenges.

Different forms of knowing

Whose knowledge is used in architectural practices, by whom and for whom? This question directly relates to whether or not architecture represents the people who live with it. While architects are regarded as experts in architecture, we might still lack knowledge of what it is like to live in the situation to which the architecture belongs.

In Tacloban, the community knew how to deal with strong winds and typhoons. By letting wind pass through the building, it was possible to bring down lateral loads by two thirds. This knowledge has been developed over generations in order to address the particularities of life in a specific place. It is a form of informal knowledge that has been tested and practiced over time. It embodies ideas and skills that are rooted in life experiences that are hard to articulate in words. The Hungarian scientist and philosopher Michael Polanyi (2009) has called this 'tacit knowledge'. Since this is a form of knowledge that is hard to put into words, the exchange of this knowledge requires trust and face-to-face interaction over time, just as mutual support has been practiced.

At the same time, recognising the importance of tacit knowledge requires consideration of who controls the means of knowledge production and who gets to ask the questions that define what knowledge is produced (Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991 ; Harding, 2016). These are important questions to ask since the act of foregrounding certain knowledge (like the 'expert knowledge' of architects) necessarily implies that other forms of knowledge (such as the tacit knowledge of non-architects) should remain in the background (Ansari, 2020).

In the relationship between architects and non-architects there is all too often a hierarchy of knowledge whereby knowledge is conveyed from the expert to the lay person. Alternatively, by referring to a teacher-student relationship, Freire (2000) defined knowledge as something that can emerge out of a dialogic interaction between students and a teacher, rather than being deposited in the minds of the students by the teacher. Augusto Boal (1993) had a similar idea in the context of theatre and turned it into a platform for deliberation, instead of pacifying audiences with prescribed moral and ethical understandings of other people's lives. For Orlando Fals Borda (1991), the extractive nature of interviews and data collection in research was challenged by people's participation.⁵² What is common to the three is the way asymmetrical relationships were transformed into relationships of mutual dependency.

In the situations that I described, my expertise as an architect and the knowledge of the people I collaborated with were both necessary, and, from time to time, one of these equally valid forms of knowledge became more important than the other. Therefore, recognising other forms of knowledge to that which architects are taught in formal education contexts does not mean devaluing conventional expertise of architects. Instead, it requires finding ways to exchange different forms of knowledges in architectural practices so that everyone can contribute with their own knowledge.

⁵² However, rather than seeing this participation as something facilitated by the researcher, he hints at an authentic form of participation which is instead rooted in the cultural traditions of the common people. This form of participation emerges out of old social practices of mutual aid, which vary from region to region.

In Angat we had a long discussion about the orientation of the building. Following a textbook solution, my colleague Sudar and I wanted to orient it facing south in order to minimise direct sunlight in the interiors and to capture the breeze. However, the community was adamant that the orientation should be different. By turning it 90 degrees, the building would still have the shade of both bamboo trees and the hillside in the afternoon. Exposure to morning sunlight could be minimised by aligning, accordingly, the low end of the mono pitch roof. In this way, they found a solution that maximised the privacy of the space, something that was important to them. This shows how value judgements of the community might recontextualise our expertise as architects.

Organising through mutual support

By structuring a process based on principles of mutual support, a space could be created for collaborations based on people's experience. Mutual support is a form of self-organising that is rooted in the life of the people, in a specific place. Therefore, learning about mutual support that is practiced locally opens up the possibility of creating architectural processes that people organise on their own terms.

Participatory processes are often organised by facilitators who could be considered outsiders, leaving out local participants from becoming engaged in the complexities of organising. On the other hand, people who practice mutual support have a very complex understanding of their tradition and are critically aware of both positive and negative aspects of it.⁵³ For example, some people I worked with expressed how mutual support is a time-consuming activity and a hassle, but they have to do it because it is necessary. Those who have experience in practicing mutual support can also set the terms for collaborations in architectural projects. Instead of being the guests of experts, they can be the hosts. This has implications for the power dynamics of the collaboration.

⁵³ I have previously mentioned that mutual support can be romanticised and idealised. This is particularly the case when mutual support is talked about by people that don't really practice it themselves or those that intend to use it for manipulative purposes.

Through my experience of *dugnad* and *bayanihan*, as well as additional research into another twenty similar traditions around the world (Furunes and Khadka, 2021), the commonalities across different traditions of mutual support can be summarised into the following five key principles:

1. These traditions are rooted in a shared understanding among those that practice them, often organised in response to clearly defined needs in everyday life, but also in response to social calamities or natural disasters.
2. There is a collective work effort, wherein people work face-to-face, performing tasks in line with their ability, skills, knowledge, and experience. One's influence is proportionate to work effort, not to wealth or social status.
3. There is a mutual responsibility that is regulated by reciprocity and strict social norms. This extends to taking care of the environment so that there are enough resources for future generations.
4. Work is accompanied by social activities, food, and drinks. This maintains relationships, reinforces solidarity, community cohesion and a sense of belonging to a community and place.
5. Work is organised within a clearly defined time-frame, outside of everyday chores. It can happen either on an ad hoc basis or regularly, in line with seasonal changes. All age-groups participate and responsibilities are passed down through the family to future generations.

What these five principles have instilled in this research, and my architectural practice, is a sense of mutuality. Each workshop and activity has been shaped with the intention of incorporating these five principles while taking note of the context-specific practices of the respective tradition. They have helped to maintain focus on people's collective efforts, made possible by spending time together and recognising that everyone has a contribution to make.

Even if communication is made in mutually agreed directions, there will be different perspectives, values and understandings that make it hard to really communicate with people having different opinions and mindsets (Jaukkuri, 2021). This applies not only to communications between architects and non-architects but also among people in the same situation. Often conversations reaffirm what you already believe in and make you disregard ideas in conflict with your own belief system. There are several barriers to a dialogue, whether it is one's own assumptions getting in the way of really listening to what the other is saying or the lack of capacity to articulate one's own thoughts so that others can understand what you are trying to get across (Buber, 1971; Bohm, 2004). This is because people usually understand others through their own experience (Alinsky, 1989). Therefore, in order to get an idea across, one needs to communicate by trying to understand what others have experienced. Getting inside the experience of others, in other words, and listening carefully to what they are telling you.

Through the research I have found that it helps to externalise our understandings so that they can be observed, scrutinised, and articulated. In an architectural process, this externalisation of ideas can be done through a process of making, whether it is through drawing, mapping, model making, storytelling or full-scale testing.

By testing ideas in action, common values and purposes for coming together can be identified. At the same time, by using a third object as a point of reference to communicate something, the object might be interpreted differently by each person. Therefore, the process of expressing ideas and interpreting them can lead to productive friction—a departure from the original intention—and this opens up possibilities for forming something new. This is an act of creativity.

The act of making is also a way to communicate different forms of knowledge, such as tacit knowledge that cannot be verbalised (Jaukkuri, 2021). In most of the projects presented in this research, the technical drawings of architects have only been useful to communicate

with engineers. On the construction site, rough drawings, models and mock-ups offered space to have a mutual discussion with the workers on site. In Angat, we drew each structural section in full scale, on the ground, to set the angles and determine the connection details. By nailing brackets into the ground, we could maintain angle and length so that we could measure each piece against the drawing before cutting and connecting them together. In this way, skills and knowledge that are embodied through practice were best expressed by working together physically. It allowed space for intuition and knowledge that would otherwise be hard to articulate.

The act of making can take different forms and serve different purposes. The six activities briefly described below have been tested out in different situations I have worked in and proven to be meaningful ways to communicate in collaborative architectural practices. Varying activities is also important in exploring group dynamics and for finding ways that suit individuals, providing them with space to express themselves.

STORYTELLING AND ROLE-PLAY

Storytelling can generate new narratives, goals and collective action. In Brazil, storytelling was a way of sharing one's personal experiences in order to find something in common with others. A story does not just have to be told in words: in Vietnam a cooperative member sang the different production steps while also acting them out.

Role-play, on the other hand, can communicate an embodied expression of an idea, issue or a lived experience. By acting something out, one becomes immersed in the moment. It can be an expression of an experience from the past or the present, or it can be an exploration of something that hasn't happened yet. By holding a critical distance, spectators will be able to question what is presented. Through rotating the roles between acting and observing one gets both an inside and outside view on a given topic. Stories told through role-play can also situate the body in space, giving a sense of scale. This can be a good way to understand the size of a room or a space.

DRAWING AND MAPPING

While storytelling and role-play are ways to articulate and observe a situation in different ways, drawings offer a way to analyse these experiences so that

they can be abstracted. Drawing helps to identify and transform these stories or ideas into physical, visual and tactile representations that can be documented, discussed and developed collectively. Mapping, on the other hand, is largely an act of organising, categorising and establishing relations between different elements; it might be a series of drawings, a community map discerning spaces and buildings important to the group, or a stakeholder map giving an account of the people involved. It's a process of reflection that also questions why these relations are the way they are. Furthermore, maps can be overlaid or compared to reveal similarities and differences.

MAKING MODELS AND MOCKING UP

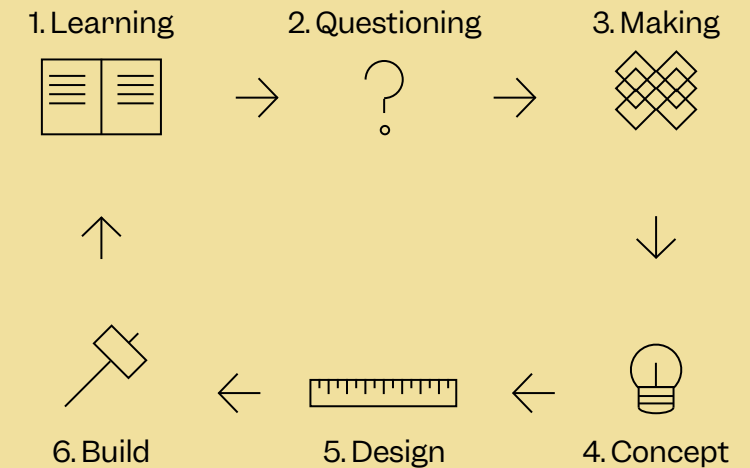
Model-making enables the translation of ideas, programme intentions and concepts into spatial understandings. While role-play and mock-ups are very concrete experiences in space, a model offers a more abstract understanding of the space. Mocking-up parts of a building in full scale helps to translate abstract ideas, drawings and models into concrete examples. A plan staked out in full-scale gives a physical experience of the space while a connection detail or design sample offers insights into materiality and scale. These objects also help as means to communicate between workshops and the construction site.

Designing a process

In order to transform multiple knowledges, values and understandings into one physical form, a process of inquiry and understanding of people's needs and interests is needed to make collective decisions about how to respond to them. This may sound simple, but the transformation does not take place by merely asking what people want. Firstly, there is a need to create a shared understanding of the situation. Even if we think we know our own situation, questioning it can deepen our understanding of *why* things are the way they are. In Vietnam, Oslo, Brazil and the Philippines, it has been important to challenge the perceptions of our own situations before starting to discuss any solutions to the situation.

After reflecting on my project in Tacloban, I found many parallels with the work of Paulo Freire (2000). I have been working to build a shared understanding of a given situation, and this resonates with his idea of 'critical consciousness'. This is, according to Freire, the ability to perceive

social, political and economic contradictions within one's own situation and, by doing so, be able to take action to transform it. Without being able to connect one's experience with the larger social, political and economic context, the reality can only be perceived in fragments rather than as an interconnected whole. Therefore, a critical understanding of the situation is needed in order to find out the needs and interests of the people who will live with the built form.



LEARNING

In the learning phase, I specifically focus on three different understandings held by the community. First is the question of how community members perceive their built environment; second is the way they perceive their life situation; and third is about their way of organising, particularly through mutual support. These three aspects eventually translate into the design of the building, the program of the building and the terms of working together. The way of exploring their perceptions is by communicating through the act of making, as discussed above, and different activities are used at different stages of the process.

↑ The numbers in the diagram illustrate the stages of working together: (1) Learning about the current situation; (2) Questioning how the situation should be; (3) Testing through making something that suggests how we can transform the situation. These steps are aimed at creating a (4) concept that can act as a common language of the group, so that the (5) design and (6) building we make together belong to their understanding of the world.

QUESTIONING

Once the perceptions of the current situation are articulated it is possible to question them. What has become particularly important in this phase is to pay attention to the many different perspectives held by the community. We tend to assume that people within a community have a similar understanding of a situation, but this is hardly the case in reality. Reflecting on differences could facilitate an understanding of broader social, economic and political conditions and existing inequalities. While reflection needs to be made by those who are in the situation, outsiders like myself can contribute by questioning taken-for-granted perceptions, helping to deepen the reflection.

The phases of learning and questioning are also a process of deliberation, and when deliberation is done through the act of making, the objects we make become a point of reference to ensure the continuity of different activities that take place over time. This method resembles how artifacts and objects act as proof for verifying a story in traditional oral societies. They function as mnemonic devices to archive and preserve the accuracy of the story across generations (Ong, 2013). In Vietnam, for example, workshops were organised between times of seasonal agricultural work, leaving huge gaps after periods of intensive workshops. Without continuous physical outputs it was difficult to build on the insights produced by each activity to create a common understanding.

MAKING

Once there is a critical understanding of the situation, what to do with it is the next question. Participation becomes symbolic in participatory processes when people are only engaged in providing inputs and not being part of the implementation. In such cases, the idea and the action can become disconnected. Moreover, the transition from criticality to creativity happens when an idea is turned into action because the transition is often met with unforeseen challenges which require new ideas to solve them. Therefore, the making phase experiments with local materials and techniques to build simple structures in order to understand the potential and challenges of building something more complex. It can also involve testing of the programmes of the building. In this phase, the organisation of workshops are also fully transferred to the community. This is a test of ownership to see how the community might carry on the process when architects take a step back.

CONCEPT

The fourth step is to clarify what we have learnt, questioned and tested in order to define a set of shared principles, a common language, a concept that guides the future design-and-build process. The concept is an abstraction of the shared experiences of the earlier phases.

The different perspectives that emerge in a process of abstracting an experience is important. Concepts that allow for multiple interpretations do not simplify but rather maintain some of the wealth and richness of the experience. One example here is the way that the community in Angat described the buildings that they preferred in their hometown with the word *maaliwalas*. This is a Filipino concept of space, that implies that something is open, ventilated, comfortable, bright - a place you want to stay in, and so on. But everyone would describe it differently because people already have tacit understandings of what the word means. Such a concept allows for a wealth of responses and creativity in the design process. If a concept is identified by an architect alone it can only represent the architect's understanding.

DESIGN

Using the concept, and based on the collectively identified programmes of the building, the design phase determines the zoning of programs, composition of rooms and choice of material and construction techniques. Making these decisions together is important not only to build on the previous phases but also for each member of the community to take ownership of the process and the outcome.

Making design decisions collectively is a challenge given the diversity in opinions and preferences. One way of going about this was not to focus on *what* but *why* certain designs were preferred over others. Defining a set of parameters to evaluate different design ideas, for example, enabled making a decision in a transparent way while collectively evaluating and arguing for the reasoning behind it.

The design also has implications for the budget as well as the work on the construction site. In Lùng Tám and in Angat we developed a cost estimation specific to the grid that the community had defined. With this, it was possible to determine the size of the buildings that would match available budget. When the community is fully engaged in the process

of making these decisions it is less likely to have misunderstandings or unrealistic expectations.

BUILD

The construction phase is a final opportunity to ensure that the capacities and knowledge to maintain and transform the building is available within the community. This is done through further testing and developing details and designs in full scale on the construction site and within the building that is starting to take shape. Therefore, the construction site can be used as a platform for exchanging the knowledge and experience of the people that will build, maintain and later perhaps transform the building.

Shifting roles

When asked what my role is in these projects, I have found it hard to give one clear answer. Rather, there seem to be different tasks and roles that I take on throughout the process. The shift of focus from what architecture is to what it does over time also changes the way we can contribute as architects. If architecture is a process, then our role and expertise as architects also have the possibility to change and transform during different phases of the process.

At the outset of a project, during the preparation phase, I take on the role of an organiser, bringing people together to build a team and mutually define what the project is about. If necessary, I would also source funds to cover the workshop process, although with the condition that those funds are matched with funding of collaborating partners. This has been important to ensure a long-term strategy for the maintenance and operation of the building.

In the learning, questioning and making phases, my role has been to provide a pedagogic framework for the community and myself to learn from each other to create a critical understanding of the situation. The roles that the community and I have in this process are well-illustrated by Borda's (1991) depiction of the insider and outsider in different situations or experiences. The outsider relies on an abstract idea of what this situation is about, whilst the insider has a very concrete and practical understanding of the experience. It allows for a dialectical tension,

developed because insider and outsider perspectives can work together to critically engage with the situation. What matters is that the encounter triggers a discussion that can shed new light on understandings that do not appear so clear at the outset.

By the time the three first phases of learning, questioning and making are completed, the community would have gained enough experience and understanding of the pedagogical process so that they can take the lead in running workshops. At this point, the group is split into a construction team and a workshop team with their own elected leaders from the community.⁵⁴ Therefore, my role as a facilitator is transferred to the community.

While I continue to engage in preparing workshops to shape different activities with the elected leaders, I participate more as an architect in the concept, design and build phases. However, I try to do so with a sense of humility and awareness that my knowledge is incomplete without the community. So, my architectural expertise, that has to do with space, materials, structures, and so on, needs to be communicated in a way whereby we can explore these things together.

Between each workshop, I will process the outputs and situate them in relation to the logistics of the building site. The architectural drawings that I produce are not always directly shared with the community. They act more as a reference for myself while I find better ways of communicating, such as by using thick marker-pens on large scale drawings so that proposed solutions can be discussed together. Translating architectural drawings into full-scale structures is another way to open the discussion to others while learning how their expertise can be reflected in architectural solutions.

⁵⁴ The process of electing these workshops leaders differ between the projects. In Lũng Tầm the already existing leaders of the textile production process took on the roles. In Angat, there was an ongoing change of leadership in the village. To avoid creating more elections and discussions those that showed up for the meetings were allowed to facilitate the workshops.

Ultimately, I will leave the project, and the community I work with will have to live with what we made together. In Tacloban, the construction wasn't finished by the time I left. Therefore, we prototyped each part so that they could complete the construction themselves. Retrospectively, this proved to be an important approach to minimise the dependency on architects to later reconfigure, alter or change different aspects of the building.

Ethics and Aesthetics

Throughout this research I have experienced how the process of working together shapes the way we collectively perceive what we make. This became very clear in Tacloban where the process of building the study centre became an integral part of how the families perceived the building after its completion. The building was a manifestation of the process, but also a symbol of the values that the community shared. The community called the building *bahay na bato*, referring to a vernacular typology. This informed the way they operated and maintained the building over time.

The process of defining the values that guide our ideas, actions and ultimately what we make together is a process of defining our shared ethics and aesthetics. Ethics become about human action, while aesthetics relate more to contemplation. In the former we act towards an end, but in the latter we experience it for its own sake (Collinson, 1985). More than this, though, although an object has aesthetic qualities in and of itself, our perceptions of an object are shaped by our knowledge of how it was made. Therefore, ethics and aesthetics are often seen to interconnect. (Collinson, 1985).

A building built through mutual support is an expression of a certain kind of ethics rooted in work that contributes to the collective rather than the individual. The word *dugnad* is derived from *duge*, which means skill or to be useful, and *dygd*, which means virtue. Hence, *dugnad* determines how ethical we are as people by virtue of the work we contribute to the common cause. Similarly, *bayanihan* is rooted in the word *bayani* which describes a heroic act that a person does for others, while the word *bayan* signifies a place or people or both. Hence *bayanihan* implies a person who selflessly serves his/her community.

I am often confronted with the question of aesthetic quality of architecture when created through collaborations with communities. The implied assumption of such a question is that involvement of non-architects dilutes architectural expertise and results in bad architecture. Yet, vernacular structures that are built through mutual support are so often beautiful, and they have existed independent of the profession of architects for centuries. This underscores the innate sense of beauty and quality people have.

However, a tradition of good ethics alone does not necessarily make for good architecture because aesthetic quality is also influenced by the ability to have ongoing critical understandings about our own values. Often, ideas about beauty become shallow and kitsch because the values that determine the quality of what we perceive are not clearly defined, articulated or constantly re-evaluated, leading to uncritical imitation.

Walks around the village in Angat with the community, mapping buildings, doors and windows, became an opportunity to discuss the values that determined its preferences. The reasons for its choices were, of course, very complex, but there were also recurring findings. Some buildings that they liked did not necessarily fit the local climate but rather represented 'progress' associated with the idea of economic growth. Hence, value judgments were determined by what the wealthier people had instead of what they liked based on their spatial experience. On the other hand, the concept *maaliwalas* that was identified as the project's guiding principle was situated in their own lives, stories, experience and knowledge.

The process of learning, questioning and making influences the aesthetics of what we make. It facilitates a critical reflection on the values that we have, which in turn enables us to create architecture that is based on values derived from our own stories and experiences as opposed to idealised concepts that others hold. The aesthetic beauty that we find in vernacular structures arguably reflects its genuineness to the place and the people that they belong to. Likewise, the goal of collaborative architectural process based on mutual support is to create architecture that reflects the identities of the place and the people it belongs to.

When we consider architecture as a process it becomes political because it opens up questions about how we organise, whose voices are heard, how decisions are made and who has the power to implement them. While there are parallels to draw between the pedagogical process of learning and questioning, described above, and the process of deliberation practiced in deliberative democracy, one critical difference is how deliberation takes place through action.

According to Zygmunt Bauman (2012) power is the ability to get things done, and politics is the ability to decide which things need to be done. When power is separated from politics—as in deliberative forums that only engage people in decision-making but not in implementation—people are not in control. The same could be said about participatory practices that don't engage people in the transformation of ideas into actions. On the other hand, mutual support provides platforms for people to decide and act on their own decisions. Therefore, practising architecture through mutual support introduces democratic control as it places people's agency at the heart of things throughout the processes of planning, designing, building and transformation that ensue.

Mutual sharing of knowledge, skills, time and resources that underpin mutual support renders architects as only one amongst many experts that govern the way we build. It also challenges the way we are trained to perceive things in a fragmented way. The profession and practice of architecture under the influence of the modern project exists hand-in-hand with the market economy that reduces architectures and resources into commodities for selling and buying. By contrast, practising architecture through mutual support triggers questions about the fundamental premises embedded in architecture. To build is to make decisions and to act on those decisions. Thus, it is always political and must be a place to reimagine how societies can be in the future.

The way work and life are organised within the modern project can make people alienated from each other, their surroundings and nature. As Rescher (2000) argues, *"nature's processes stand connected with one another as integrated wholes - it is we who, for our own convenience, separate them into physical, chemical, biological, and psychological aspects"* (p.23).

Practicing architecture through mutual support has the potential to reshape it in new ways by fundamentally changing the relationships embedded in its practices. It makes architecture a process wherein everyone contributes, beginning with the creation of a critical understanding of our own situations, then deciding how to change them and take part in their actual implementation.

Practising mutual support in contemporary times makes it possible to imagine a future through the forgotten history of people's everyday practices of cooperation rooted in a different set of values and understandings than that of the modern project. In addition, the commonalities found in traditions of mutual support offer transnational perspectives for understanding the global challenges of today through local contexts. Realising this transnational potential does not necessarily rely on scaling up the size of projects, because traditions of mutual support already exist, specific to their local context, as 'integrated wholes'. However, great potentiality lies in creating horizontal connections among myriad traditions to form new ways of practicing architecture. This artistic research is a small step towards this end.

Appendix: Mutual Support Traditions

Throughout the research I have been collecting words and concepts of mutual support from around the world. Each word is a door to an understanding of it that is still alive today, and this compilation aims to give a general overview of 21 such words and traditions. For the Venice biennale Sudar and I had an opportunity to reach out to different cultural institutions, archives and universities around the world to elaborate on and describe diverse traditions of mutual support. It has been written in collaboration with diplomats, government workers, cultural workers, scholars, journalists, photographers, curators, artists and architects who have generously shared stories and images from their own countries. This appendix was presented in the Philippine Pavilion and in the exhibition catalogue (Furunes and Khadka, 2021).

Bayanihan – Philippines

From the Filipino word *bayan* which means nation, town, or community, *bayanihan* literally translates as 'being in a bayan'. At its core is the spirit of community and mutual cooperation in order to achieve a common goal. *Bayanihan* has been practiced since pre-colonial times, specifically in the rural areas where townsfolk assist families moving into new places -- in the literal sense, carrying the entire *bahay kubo* (*nipa* hut) to a new location. It is still evident in modern Filipino culture, found in volunteering in disaster-stricken areas, or collectively protesting against human rights violations (Bankoff, 2021; Ang, 1979; Ladrado, 2021; Curato, 2021). Written with support by Greg Bankoff, Portia Ladrado and Nicole Curato.

Barn-raising – USA

Barn-raising is a tradition of cooperative work observed by agrarian groups in 19th-century America. As barns grew in size and importance on the farm, constructing them became a festive community event. Men worked together to raise 'bents' or large wooden frames of the barn using ropes and pikes. Women, meanwhile, gathered to prepare dinner for a feast to be enjoyed after the barn's skeleton was erected. The advent of mechanical construction equipment and the price increase in land in the 20th century led to a decline in celebrating barn-raising (Bronner, 2015).

Dugnad – Norway

Dugnad is a tradition of communal work dating back to pre-modern Nordic societies. The term derives from the Old-Norwegian word *duge* 'to be useful'. It also relates to the word *dygd*, or virtue. These ideas bear the essence of *dugnad*, which is to contribute labour to achieve what is necessary for the good of all, such as helping at harvest time, maintaining roads, construction, or pulling ships ashore. *Dugnad* possesses an



Bayanihan is often used to move a house from one village to the other. At least 30 people were needed to transfer this wooden house in Nasugbu, Batangas, 1972 (Ayala Museum Research Team, Filipinas Heritage Library).



element of mutual obligation based on egalitarian principles that are not measured by money or power but through the effort exerted (Lorentzen and Dugstad, 2011). Written with support by Håkon Lorentzen.

Gadugi – Cherokee Nation

In Cherokee language, *gadugi* means "cooperative labor" or "working together" in a community. Derived from the Cherokee word, "gadu," which translates to "bread," *gadugi* used to refer to a group of men or women who gather to do heavy tasks like harvesting crops, cutting firewood, and tending to the elderly or sick tribal members. The Snowbird Cherokee of today still practice *gadugi* through building schools, playgrounds, and other communal facilities. Helping neighbors in house repairs, organising a rescue squad in times of need, and raising funds to pay for funerals are other forms of *gadugi* done in modern times. (Wall, 2015; Mckie, 2019; Smith, 2011). Written with Dr. Kathryn Sampeck (Associate Professor, Illinois State University).

Gotong-royong – Indonesia

The Indonesian phrase *gotong-royong* can be roughly translated as mutual help and sharing of burdens. The tradition and the term are shared by Indonesia's neighbouring countries Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei. This concept is rooted in the *kampung* (community) spirit and people's adherence to traditional Javanese culture that places emphasis on the village's overall welfare more than on an individual's material wealth. *Gotong-royong* is a central tenet of Indonesian life, from simply cleaning of the village's surroundings to resolving conflicts to rendering aid and counsel in times of need (Bahrin, 2013; Slikkerveer et al., 2019). Written with support by Dr. Agus Suwignyo (Professor, Gadjah Mada University) and John Bowen (Professor, Washington University in St. Louis).

Harambee – Kenya

Literally meaning 'all pull together' in Swahili, *harambee* is a Kenyan tradition of collective work meant to build and maintain a community. It often relates to assisting in heavy tasks that are difficult to do alone, from building schools to cultivating farms. *Harambee* is the official motto of Kenya, adorning its coat of arms. While the concept has drawn criticism for being misused for political grains, *harambee* is, nevertheless, an invitation to solidarity and collective performance of acts of kindness in order to bring people together in the service of others (Harambi, 2016; Ferraro and Kiehl, 2020). Written with support by Dr. Layli Maparyan (Executive Director, Wellesley Centers for Women & Professor, Wellesley College), Geofred Osoro (Lecturer, Wellesley College) and Dr. Leonard Wilson (Professor, University of Alberta).

Junta – Panama

Junta de Cortar Arroz (rice cutting), *Junta de Embarra* (building a house), and *Junta de Socuela* (clearing the ground before planting seeds) all share the word *junta* (togetherness, gathering or meeting), indicating traditional communal work events in Panama. One common custom that celebrates this community spirit is *Junta de Cortar Arroz*. Rice field owners receive assistance from neighbours or the whole town during harvest time. Men cut rice by hand while women cook for workers. Children carry rice clusters and bring water to rice cutters (Wayo, 2005). Written with support by Marino Jaén Espinosa.

Kaláka – Hungary

In Hungary, *kaláka* denotes 'working together for a common goal' and has been observed throughout the centuries through cooperative house building, harvesting, and taking care of



Dugnad for preparatory groundworks to build a cooperative in Høvik, Norway 1915. (Photo by unknown person, Oslo Museum) CC BY-SA

neighbour's children. These arrangements are reciprocal in nature, often between blood relatives. During the Soviet era, *kaláka* in the villages helped cushion the pressure of the state's failing economy. While industrialisation in the 1950-60s somewhat diminished the meaning of 'community', some villages managed to retain the practice and build new houses together or share fruits among villagers (Gunda and Sebeok; 1947, North, 2004). Written with support by Dániel Kovács (Curator of the Hungarian Pavilion, Venice biennale 2021) and Peter North (Professor, University of Liverpool).

Meitheal – Ireland

Meitheal (work team, gang, or party) describes the cooperative labour system in Ireland whereby neighbours reciprocally help each other with harvesting crops and other heavy seasonal tasks. It is a crucial feature in Irish society and still practiced in rural areas. In modern times, *meitheal* could be about helping neighbours to decorate a home or farmers working together to harvest and bring in silage in exchange for food and drinks. *Meitheal* espouses inclusive and diverse friendship and respect among community members that goes beyond differences in age, gender or creed (McMahon, 2019; Doyle, 2019; Kelly, 2019). Written with support by Rosa Meehan (Curator, National Museum of Ireland) and the National Folklore Collection at the University College, Dublin.

Minga – Chile

Observed mainly in Chiloé, an island in Chilean Patagonia, *minga* (exchange of help for benefit) is practiced to help one's neighbour or community by planting and harvesting crops or shearing sheep. *Minga* also serves as the basis of the Chilotes' tradition of *la minga de tiradura de casas* or the tugging of houses. When a family wants to move, the community builds a sled underneath the house using parallel beams running from front to back. Then they line up oxen and harness

them to pull the house to its new location even across the sea (Pierce, 2017; Baillargeon, 2017). Written with support by Emilio Marin (Curator, Chilean Pavilion, Venice biennale 2021), Zoe Baillargeon (Journalist, Freelance) and Lucy Pierce (Writer and Editor, Freelance).

Minka – Ecuador

Minka is a communal form of labour practiced among the Quechua indigenous people of the Cañari tribe in Ecuador. This tradition of collaborative effort ensures that the intended works are for the common good of the community, such as construction of public buildings and infrastructure, and harvesting potatoes or other agricultural products. It has also been practiced in the Andean highlands of Peru, Colombia and Bolivia for hundreds of years, derived from the Inca system of *mit'a*, although then it was a mandatory practice imposed upon conquered people. Today, *minka* is still the preferred strategy for completing construction works in rural communities (Calvo et al., 2017; Izurieta-Varea, 2017).

Moba – Serbia

Until mid-20th century in rural Serbia, villagers practiced *moba* to help each other finish large works in a short time, such as wheat harvesting, processing of wool or building roads and irrigation systems. *Moba* was always ended up with a ritual feast for all. Parallel to *moba*, *pozajmica* required strict reciprocity in exchange for human (and animal) labour for different works in agriculture and the household. These traditional cultural institutions highlighted collectivism in the community, contributing to the integrity and identity of members, facilitating efficient functioning of the village by fostering equality and respect among its members (Berend and Berend, 2013). Written with support by Maša Peruničić (Curator, Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade), Dr. Miloš Matić (Senior Curator, Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade) and MOBA Housing SCE.



Villagers cut turf using the communal work system of *meitheal*. Farranlateeve, Co. Kerry, 1947 (Caoimhín Ó Dana- chair, National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin)

Mutirão – Brazil

In Brazil, *mutirão* translates as a group of people that work in solidarity towards a common goal. This has been evident in past decades, particularly in favelas where members of a community pull together for common well-being. Through collective action, neighbours pool their resources to build houses, roads, and access to off-the-grid services like water and electricity. *Mutirão* is still present through collective initiatives like reforestation, home renovation, road construction, and taking care of each other's children. It builds a strong sense of unanimity that benefits each member of the community (Pilote, 2011; Imparato and Ruster, 2003). Written with support by Nadia Pontes (Correspondent, Deutsche Welle) and Ludmila Amaral (Vice-Consul, Cultural Sector, Embassy of Brazil, Philippines).

Naffir – Sudan

The Arabic *naffir* نيفير describes specific practices of communal work in the northern and western parts of Sudan. It may refer to the formation of a group to do tasks that would benefit an individual, such as house building, and expect the return of the favor in the future. Or it may also allude to labor activities that benefit one's community like helping during crop harvesting. Regardless, *naffir* is meant to bring the neighborhood together to fulfill a particular task or goal. Once work is completed, celebratory food and drinks are served especially to those who did the heavy lifting. (Kevlihan, 2005). Written with Dr. Rob Kevlihan (Consultative Director, Shanahan Research Group, Managing Director, Gumfoot Consultancy Ltd).

Pumasi / Dure – Korea

Pumasi, a combination of *pum* (working) and *asi* (repayment or recompense) is the traditional custom of communal labour in Korea's agricultural society. Practiced mostly by families

in small rural villages, this 'exchange of work' is done for the benefit of the community as a whole, such as in rice harvesting or kimchi making. It is a voluntary practice in which everyone's efforts are valued equally. *Pumasi* is still evident in neighbours' helping each other during local gatherings, weddings, and funerals. *Dure* is another form of communal work used for agriculture and other collective activities like weaving and music (Yun, 2013; Yi et al., 2006). Written with support by Hae-Won Shin (Curator, Korean Pavilion, Venice Biennale 2021) and Kim Hyung-Jun (Professor, Kangwon National University).

Shramdaan – India

In India, *shramdaan* means a voluntary contribution involving physical effort. *Shramdaan* is made up of two words. *Shram* means labour and *daan* means contribution. Examples of *shramdaan* include cleaning of village lanes and alleys, beach clean-ups, and construction of temples and small village utilities. The tradition has been criticised as a way of mobilising cheap labour in the construction of social housing by non-governmental organisations and local governments (Watershed Organisation Trust India, 2016; Sivaswamy, 2016).

Sogo-fujo/ Yui – Japan

Sogo-fujo is a traditional practice of mutual trust and aid in the close-knit Japanese community. During the Edo period, neighbours relied on *sogo-fujo* to sustain themselves during times of great hardship. The concept is still preserved today. After the 1995 Kobe earthquake, *sogo-fujo* was used to carry out emergency-care operations inspired by mutual assistance traditions. It is based on an idea of equality and symbiosis that goes beyond inter-human relationships, paying more attention to the natural environment. *Yui* was used in pre-modern agricultural society and is still practiced in Shirakawa-go to maintain thatched roof houses (Nakano,

Laying the roof through *talkoot* in Vörå, Finland 1916. (Photo by Valter W. Forsblom, The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland) CC BY 4.0



2004; Najita, 2009; Hur, 2000; Phillips, 2002). Written with support by Kozo Kadowaki (Curator, Japanese Pavilion, Venice Biennale 2021), Riichi Miyake (Chairman, Japanese Pavilion Committee under the Japan Foundation) and Sho Konishi (Professor, University of Oxford).

Talkoot – Finland

Talkoot is a cultural expression of communal work in Finland. While it is voluntary and unpaid, reward in forms of meals and festivity with music and dance are provided to those who participate. In rural Finland, *talkoot* is mutual help given among farms for cutting hay or picking berries. It has been adapted in the country's urban setting for doing environmental work for the neighbourhood, cleaning up common areas in housing complexes, or helping friends or family moving into new homes (This is Finland, 2016; Jaukkuri, 2021). Written with support by Miina Jutila (Acting Commissioner, Finland Pavilion, Venice Biennale 2021).

Tequio – Mexico

Tequio from the Nahuatl or Aztec language means work or tribute. It is a tradition of communal work in Mexico. Practiced since before colonisation, it is still observed especially by the Oaxacan and Mixtec-Zapotec peoples. This act of obligatory service is a fundamental aspect of solidarity within the community. Village life is based on mutual exchange and community members are required to lend their resources for community work, such as building roads, schools, or irrigation systems. If one is unable to do physical work, payment for a worker is made as a contribution (Redish and Lewis, 2015; Colín, 2014; Vital, 2016). Written with support by Ursula Hartig (Professor, Munich University of Applied Sciences) and Institute of Bibliographic Research of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).

Toloka / pomochi – Russia

Russia's mutual assistance system is called *toloka*, from the old Baltic-Slavic tradition of voluntary village work such as harvesting crops, reforestation, and house construction. While the word bears the same meaning as 'help', it is thought that its first syllable came from the Old Prussian 'talk' or labour repaid with a feast. *Tloka* is a similar concept in former folk cultures of Poland and Eastern and Central Europe meaning neighbour's voluntary help in the field, rewarded with a feast. *Pomochi*, the equivalent of *toloka*, is common in the northern and eastern parts of Russia (Davydova, 2019; Likhachev, 2019). Written with support by Geoffrey Hosking (Emeritus Professor, University College London) and Lewis Siegelbaum (Jack & Margaret Sweet Professor Emeritus, Michigan State University) and Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow.

Umuganda – Rwanda

Umuganda, in Kinyarwanda meaning coming together for a common purpose to achieve an outcome, is a national holiday in Rwanda that takes place every month. Long practiced as an act of communal assistance and solidarity, it has become a mandatory event since 2009. During *Umuganda*, able-bodied citizens are required to participate in civic duties from 8 to 11 am for public clean-ups, environmental protection and, sometimes, infrastructure development and repair. While the practice is promoted by the government, some see it as forced labour because non-participation results in steep fines or arrest by the police (Bresler, 2019; Obera, 2017).



Appendix: Project Description



Streetlight Tacloban

The following pages give a brief description of the duration, funding and stakeholders of each project. *'Who is we?'*⁵⁵ is a particularly important question in these projects. *We* are architects, community members, consultants and organisations that work together towards a common goal. Beyond the names listed here, a wider community is engaged in each project. *How are the projects funded?* Generally, the workshop process, the construction and long-term operation are funded separately. The workshops are funded through different sources including donations, grants and crowdsourcing. The construction and operation are covered by the community or the supporting organisations/institution. *How long was the process?* The duration of the workshop process and construction overlaps. The duration of workshops varies from a few weeks to several years in different projects. All names are listed in alphabetic order under community or collaborators:

⁵⁵ This question was posed by the Pavilion of Netherlands at the Venice Biennale 2021, to address a question that is often taken for granted. Although we imply inclusion, it is often a singular and oversimplified representation.

Streetlight Tacloban

Building:

Study Center (100sqm)

Location:

Old children's park, Tacloban, Philippines

Period:

2010-11 (workshops ~ 6 months,
construction ~ 7 months)

Collaborators:

Apolinario Davoco (engineer), Renerio C. Dedios (engineer), Alexander Eriksson Furunes (architect), Trond Hegvold (architect), Marciano Macato III (architecture consultant) and Ivar K. V. Tutturen (architect).

Community:

Banjo Arpon, Erlend Johannesen, Eddie Lito Homeres, Neva Homeres, Nerren Homeres, and Marvin Sabitan (Streetlight Philippines). Merlita Bagunas, Maria Balasbas, Ana Bagunas, Linda Belgira, Nestor Cajepe, Irene Cajepe, Lorira Cinco, Yunil Cinco, Ana Collardo, Maria Dianito, Romeo Dianito, Maricar Eguillos, Tessie Esplanada, Christian Ver Esplanada, Arturo Giray, Melva Lopez, Ricky Lopez, Ariel Lacdao, Paz Lacdao, Rafael Leguillos, Rebeca Manucay, Erlinda Mercado, Regan Mercado, Bernards Miranda, Tessie Miranda, Lourdes Montes, Ryan Montes, Anacorita Norte, Maria Norte, Felipe Norte, Estela Purawan and Mila Delos Reyes (Seawall community).

Funding:

3,400,000PHP donated by Asplan Viak, Eidsberg Sparebank, Gjensidige Brannkasse Rakkestad, Gjensidige Brannkasse Eidsberg, Per Knudsen Arkitekter, Rojo Arkitekter, SpareBank 1 SMN and Øystein Thommesen.

Award:

Winner of Architecture + Collaboration Category, Architizer A+ Awards 2013

Streetlight Tagpuro

Buildings:

Orphanage (512sqm), Study Centre (360sqm), Office (400sqm) and Park (2ha)

Location:

Tagpuro, Tacloban, Philippines

Period:

2013-16 (workshops - 18 months, construction - 1 year)

Collaborators:

Jago Bose (design engineer), Alexander Eriksson Furunes (architect) and Sudarshan V. Khadka Jr (architects, Leandro V. Locsin Partners), Gianfranco Morciano

(documentation), Pimentel & Associates (structural engineer) and Zoe Watson (workshop coordinator, architecture assistant).

Community:

Jovmar Dianoto, Devina C. Dalagan, Erlend Johannesen, Neva Homeres and Nerren Homeres (Streetlight Philippines). Margarita Allunam, Heidi Argota, Elena Cabales, Gina Caidoy, Rosie Calinawan, Annie Colete, Eftysha Gariando, Franito Navigante, Rowena Navigante, Benita Miranda, Marilou Palermo, Juanita Nerja, Jennelyn Rosos, Rodolfo A. Viñas and Lilibeth Yongzon (Tagpuro community).

Funding:

21,000,000 PHP sourced through various donations given for the reconstruction.

Awards:

NCCA Haligi ng Dangal Award 2018, Winner of Small Project of the Year Award in the World Architecture Festival 2017, Winner of Civic and Community Built Project Category in the World Architecture Festival 2017, Grohe Zeitgeist Award 2017, Special Mention Architizer A+ Award 2017



Streetlight Tagpuro



Action for Lũng Tám

Action for Lũng Tám

Building:

Textile cooperative (300sqm)

Location:

Lũng Tám, Ha Giang, Vietnam

Period:

2017 – ongoing (workshops ~ 2 months over 2 years)

Collaborators:

Alexander Eriksson Furunes (architect), Rémi Gontier (economy), Châu Nguyễn Huyền (coordination), Lê Huyền (architect), Sudarshan V. Khadka Jr. (architect), Trọng Lê (architect), Hiệp Nguyễn (architect), Thiều Nguyễn (architects), Nga Phan (communications), Eric Roache (documentation) and Phùng Bảo Trân (communications).

Community:

Sùng Thị Bé, Sùng Thị Chợ, Sùng Thị Dính, Vừ Thị Giàng, Ma Thị Lầu, Hang Mí Lử, Sùng Thị Ly, Sùng Thị Mai, Vàng Thị Mai, Thào Thị Mai, Giàng Tả Mẩy, Sùng Thị Mỹ, Sùng Thị Pà, Hạng Thị Pà, Giàng Thị Sợ, Hạng Thị Thào, Hạng Thị Tà and Lỗ Thị Vàng (Lũng Tám textile cooperative).

Funding:

The process was crowd funded with 272,000,000 VND. The estimated construction cost of 1,300,000,000 VND is being collected through the savings of the textile cooperative.

Awards:

Peter Davey Price, Architectural Review Emerging Architecture Awards 2021 (Awarded to a portfolio of work, including Lũng Tám, Tacloban and Venice projects).

Fronteira Livre

Exhibition:

Stencil printed banners installed in the CPTM and São Paulo metro for the 11th Architecture Biennale of São Paulo.

Location:

São Paulo, Brazil

Period:

2017 (workshops ~ 2 weeks)

Collaborators:

Fernando Banzi (documentation, Goma Oficina), Lucy Bullivant

(project lead), Gabriela Forjaz (project lead), Alexander Eriksson Furunes (project lead), Maria Cau Levy (project lead, Goma Oficina) and Lauro Rocha (documentation, Goma Oficina).

Community:

Carla Aguilar, Jose Mpela Bolayenge, Albertina Afonso Glosser, Tomasa Nancy Salva Guarachi, Nila Jackeline Salva Guarachi, Claudine Shindany Kumbi, Soledad Requena, Nataly Puente de la Vega Unda, Aracely Tatiana Mérida Urena and Gredy Canaquiri Yume (CAMI Center for Migrant Support).

Funding:

35,000 BRL through financial support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Norwegian Design and Architecture (DOGA) and research funds from the Norwegian Artistic Research Program (PKU).

Award:

Special Mention in the Design and Participation Category, 6th Ibero-American Design Biennial 2018 (bid18).



Fronteira Livre



Dugnad Days

Dugnad Days

Exhibition:

Dugnad Days Action and Reflection Catalogues for the Oslo Architecture Triennale 2019.

Building:

Grendehus/ Community center (230sqm)

Location:

Sletteløkka, Oslo, Norway

Period:

2019-21 (workshops ~ 1 month, construction ~ 1 year)

Collaborators:

Lucy Bullivant (place vision strategist), Alexander Eriksson Furunes (architect), Sudarshan V. Khadka Jr. (architect), Mattias Josefsson (architect, documentation) and Maria Årthun (architect).

Community:

Dusan Dislioski, Anne Berit Indreberg, Ifrah Mohammed, Tron Hummelvold, Inger Lise Høst and Lene Karin Wilberg (Grendehus Committee). Lars Eivind Bjørnstad, Kari Hilde Norengen and Arild Sørum (Bydel Bjerke).

Funding:

Through applications, I secured the following grants to start the workshop process, and to produce the catalogues for the Oslo Triennale exhibition. In addition, the District of Bjerke financed the renovation of the building, the lease and the operations of the space for the next ten years through the area development programme.

Grants:

190 000kr from Public Art Norway (KORO – LOK 2019), 300 000kr from Kulturtanken (DKS 2020), 600 000kr from Public Art Norway (KORO – LOK 2021) and 500 000kr from Nærmiljømidler (Groruddalssatsingen).

Building and exhibition:

Library/ Conflict Resolution
Space (100sqm) for the 17th Venice
Architecture Biennale 2021

Locations:

Angat, Bulacan, Philippines and
Arsenale, Venice, Italy

Period:

2019-21 (workshops - 1 month,
construction ~ 2 months)

Collaborators:

Toni A. Aguilar (documentation),
Arianne Delight Alforque
(architecture assistant), Don
Patrick Claudio (documentation),
Paula Francisco (architecture
assistant), Alexander Eriksson
Furunes (architect, curator),
Sudarshan V. Khadka Jr.
(architect, curator), Jessica

Mae Pineda (architecture assistant), Ron
Stephen Reyes (documentation), Jason A.
Toralde (structural engineer) and Chris Yujico
(documentation).

Community:

Norma Acosta, John-John Ador, Mila Aguilar,
Peter D. Alvarado, Divina Peji-Alvarado, Aliza
Mae Antonio, Mamerto Antonio, Lilibeth
Bantog, Louiegi Bantog, Maynardo Bantog,
Antonio Barcenas, Rochelle Barite, Ben Bilinan,
Boyet Binarao, Conrado Binarao, Cheny
Kymph G. Binarao, Angelo Bolo, Prince Bonjoe
Cariño, John Paul Donida, Angelica Dumaquita,
Ronald R. Erez, Cloriana Lalaguna, Jocelyn
Liwanag, Joseph Lopez, Mary Jane Lopez,
Jomel Lopez, Fe Martinez, Brenda T. Noquera,
Janah Noquera, Butch Parale, Gilbert Parale,
Ariel Roque, Sheila Roque, Clark Russel,
Martin Santos, Adelina Vargas, Christy Vargas,



Structures of Mutual Support

Gian Vargas, Rowena Vargas and Xander C. Vargas
(GKEF community). Shanonraj V. Khadka, Artemio Bolo,
Juliamae Ellice Fungo, Roman M. Estabillo, Austin Rabelas,
Daniel Mariano, Avegail Reyes and Mia Navarro (GKEF
management team).

Commissioner:

National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA),
Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the Office of
Deputy Speaker and Antique Congresswoman Loren
Legarda.

Funding:

The project was funded by the National Commission for
Culture and the Arts (NCCA). Construction and building
materials amounted to roughly 1,700,000 PHP.

Award:

Special Mention, 17th International Architecture Exhibition
- La Biennale di Venezia "for this exemplary community
project that creates a rich archive and experience of
collaborative construction practices."

List of References

A big part of this research has not only been about situating myself within the physical contexts of the places I work, but also within the discourses that inform and shape my practice. Through the production of exhibition catalogues I have been able to invite some of my core references and inspirations into the discourse of mutual support. This includes Leika Aruga, Greg Bankoff, Nicole Curato, Nabeel Hamdi, Pablo Helguera, Marisa Morán Jahn, Maaretta Jaukkuri, Sho Konishi, Portia Ladrido, Håkon Lorentzen, Rafi Segal, Hans Skotte & Jeremy Till. The exhibition catalogues have also been a way for me to articulate my ideas and thoughts, and to situate them in relation to the work of each contributing writer. The texts in the *Structures of Mutual Support* catalogue were modified extracts from the writings and reflections in this the reflections text.

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The way we build reflects the way we live. Mutual support is a way of life that predates the market economy, offering a different set of values, understandings and knowledge that can shape the way we build. Learning from Bayanihan/Dugnad consists of a series of collaborations with different communities in Philippines, Vietnam, Brazil and Norway that practice traditions of mutual support. This is not a research on mutual support and architecture, but, rather, research through the practice of both. The collaborations documented and reflected upon here aim at generating insight into how such collaborative practice can define architecture in new ways.