Reconceptualising Architecture & Landscape

Exploring Architecture and Community Development in Asian Cities

Asialink
2008 Weary Dunlop Asia Fellowship
Report

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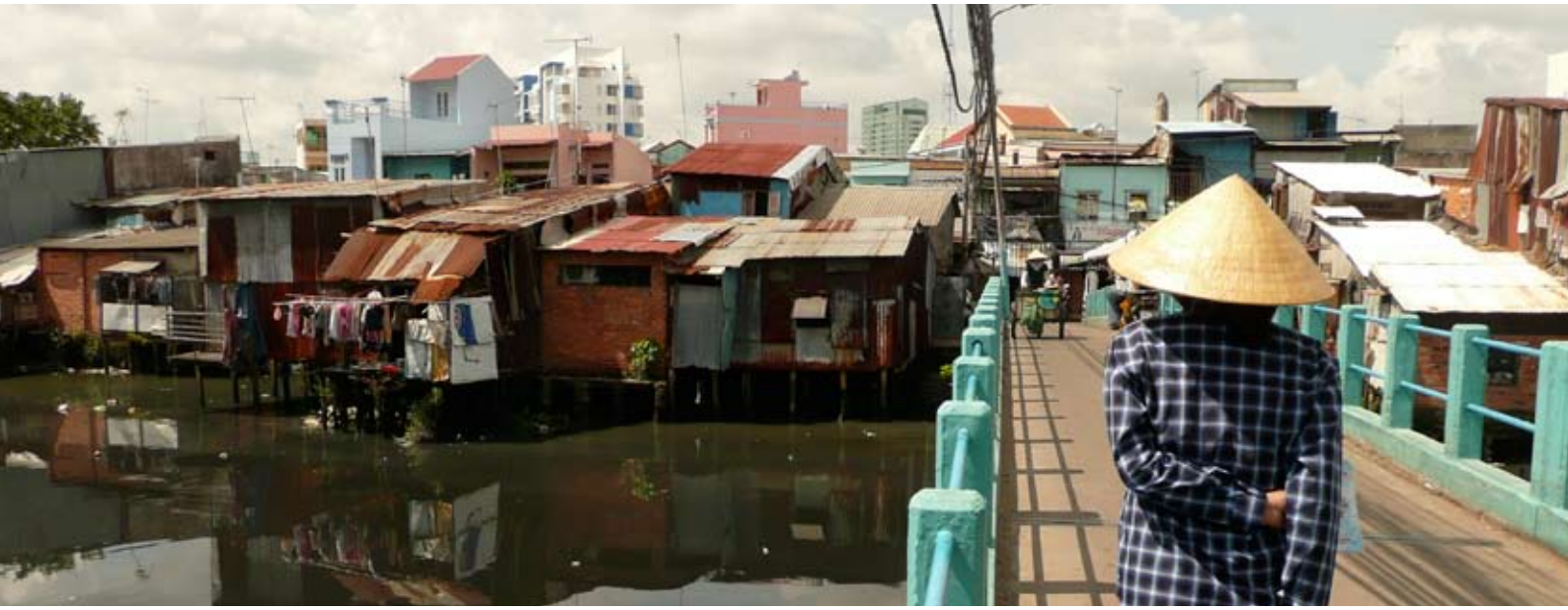
contents

abbreviations

ACHR:	Asian Coalition of Housing Rights
ASF-UK:	Architects sans Frontiers - UK
AWF:	Architects without Frontiers Australia
CASE:	Community Architects for Shelter and xEnvironment (Osaka, Japan)
HFHV:	Habitat for Humanity Vietnam
RMIT:	RMIT University Australia
RIUV:	RMIT International University Vietnam
RUFA:	Royal University of Fine Arts, (Phnom Penh, Cambodia)
STT:	Sahmakum Teang Tnaut
UPDF:	Urban Poor Development Fund
WUF:	World Urban Forum
WUYF:	World Urban Youth Forum



introduction

With the generous support of the Asialink Foundation in 2008 together with an Endeavour Executive Award in 2009, I was able to spend the past year meeting and working with NGOs and grass roots organisations in South East Asia and Japan who are demonstrating leadership and innovation in affordable housing, appropriate building technology and slum upgrading. I predominantly worked with organisations associated with the Asian Coalition of Housing Rights (ACHR) as a focal point. ACHR has its secretariat in Bangkok and is a regional network of grassroots community organisations, NGO's and professionals actively involved with urban poor development processes in Asian cities. The aim of this research was to investigate how professionals, particularly young professionals in architecture, landscape architecture, urban design and planning can be effectively engaged in socially responsible design and respond appropriately to the needs of rapidly expanding cities and slums. This project came about as a direct response to the absence of any formal training in development architecture currently available in Australia and a need for practical experience. As a landscape architect I am particularly interested in how design can be used to forge collaborative approaches for urban renewal and poverty alleviation. The intended outcome of past year was to generate a network of young professionals or "Future Leaders" from south east Asia and Japan together with grass roots organisations in Australia and Asia that could work together to provide capacity building, knowledge sharing and design outcomes based on a regional and sustainable approach to development.

I focused on two main areas: firstly meeting with numerous NGOs and community groups to share experiences and learn about different approaches. Secondly, consolidating my own experience as a landscape architect through work experience - working for 10 months in Ho Chi Minh City on field projects with Habitat for Humanity Vietnam. I also worked as the Vietnam Programs Coordinator for Architects without Frontiers Australia at the same time. This combination of research and practical experience has provided the necessary background to effectively build links between Australia and Asia, professionals and NGOs.

This report is intended to provide an overview of development architecture practice as observed from the organisations I met with in Asia. It is divided into two sections, the first providing profiles of key organisations and institutions and the second a summary of key projects and workshops.

> *Map of general travel route*

background

why development architecture

Rapid urbanisation, climate change and the growth of informal settlements are some of the key issues facing the built environment professions (including architecture, landscape architecture, planning, construction and engineering) in Australia and Asia. With half the worlds population living in cities, and 60% of world's slums in Asia , questions of affordable housing, participatory planning and slum improvement become more urgent. A number of community groups and NGOs in Asia are demonstrating real and effective solutions to urban shelter but the built environment professions, by comparison, have been slow to respond. By mobilising architectural and built environment professions towards greater social responsibility will be imperative if we are aiming to significantly improve the lives of 100 Million slum dwellers . There is much that both the professional bodies and grass roots organisations have to learn from each other in order to improve cities and space. Reassuringly this dialogue is beginning to become a part of design discourse, but we still have a long way to go. As a profession we are familiar with – even well-adapted to - global challenges, but if faced with the task of designing for an urban population of 5 billion (by 2030) or addressing the needs of the one million people who arrive in African and Asian cities each week, I ask the question: are we ready?

schedule

During the 13 months abroad I focused my time in South East Asia, spending the majority of time working on grassroots projects in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam while visiting other projects in the region. A schedule is outlined in the table below.

Date	City/Country	Organisations	ACHR	Objectives
February 08	Bangkok Thailand	Asian Coalition of Housing Rights (ACHR)	Yes	Gain a general understanding of regional networks associated with ACHR.
		Urban Neighbours of Hope (UNOH)		
February – March 08	Phnom Penh, Cambodia	Urban Poor Development Fund (UPDF)	Yes	Undertake a one month internship on urban slum upgrading in Phnom Penh. Work with local and international university students on a 10 day design workshop hosted by STT and RUFA in Phnom Penh.
		Royal University of Fine Arts (RUFA), Phnom Penh		
		Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT)	Yes	
April 2008	Osaka, Japan	Community Architects for Shelter and Environment (CASE Japan)	Yes	Attend an international design workshop run jointly by ASF-UK and CASE Japan on post-slum development in Osaka
		Architects sans Frontiers UK (ASF-UK)		
May 2008 – March 2009	Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam	Habitat for Humanity Vietnam		Gain professional and grass roots experience working on capacity building projects in Ho Chi Minh City and Mekong Delta related to land management and urban design.
		RMIT International University Vietnam		
		University of Social Sciences and Humanities of Ho Chi Minh City, Department of Urban Studies		
		Environment Development Action (ENDA) Vietnam	Yes	
		Vietnam Green Building Council		
July 2009	Hoi An, Vietnam	Architects without Frontiers (AWF) Australia		Facilitate a 2 week international design workshop on housing for youth at risk in Hoi An with students from RMIT Vietnam and Australia.
		RMIT University (Australia and Vietnam)		
		Lifestart Foundation		
November 2009*	Nanjing, China*	UN-HABITAT*		Attend the UN-HABITAT World Urban Forum (WUF) and World Urban Youth Forum (WUYF) as a youth delegate.*

* Note: Attendance at WUF and WUYF was self-funded

1.

The following sections provides profiles from key organisations from South East Asia and Japan who are demonstrating leadership and innovation in affordable housing, appropriate building technology and slum upgrading.

Asian Coalition of Housing Rights (ACHR)

Bangkok, Thailand

www.achr.com.au/

Overview:
The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights is a regional network of grassroots community organisations, NGO's and professionals actively involved with urban poor development processes in Asian cities. While affiliated organisations vary in specific mandates, they all focus on one or more of the various aspects of land rights, housing evictions, slum upgrading, savings and credit groups, urban poor microfinance, affordable housing and appropriate technology. Their secretariat office in based in Bangkok, Thailand and there are affiliate organisations in over 10 Asian countries.

Projects:
ACHR's activities can be divided into the following categories:

- Training and Advisory Program (TAP) an exchange program between Asian grassroots community organisations, NGOs and urban poor development professionals in different Asian Countries
- Eviction Watch and Housing Rights This programme aims to document and reduce the number of forced evictions throughout Asian cities as well as introduce alternative methods for solving housing related problems in Asian cities.
- Community Environment Improvement Program A program for community action to influence governments and policy to promote sustainable communities
- Young Professionals programme to influence the decision makers of the future by providing opportunities for young graduates to work with and for urban poor communities. Its also aims at change in learning institutions concerned with city development and planning.
- Advocacy Senior ACHR members in Asia attempt to act as advocates on behalf of the regions urban poor, at the local, national, regional and international levels
- Country Projects Strengthening or establishing local grassroots organisations of the urban poor and country level programs In countries in Asia where community based development is either non existent or weaker than in other Asian cities

Findings:
What is particularly interesting about ACHR is their ability to engage a wide range of stakeholder groups including community, professionals, governments and industry. Their collaborative and participatory approach to design and housing has been their strength and success in many projects. They create a dialogue between international teams of professionals who are struggling to find ways to support community-driven upgrading, and a group of community people who are actually doing it. Their unconventional approach is grass roots, community led and bottom-up always, where community lead the design and implementation of their projects, often with minimal external support. The Australian context can learn a lot from these organisations about listening to community and shifting our notion of "consultation" to "participation".

One of the main areas of ACHR's operations which drew my attention to the network in the first instance is their program with young professionals. Where universities fail to provide training on development and affordable housing, ACHR can support skills training through internships, workshops and volunteer programs. As yet in Australia we do not have an organisation such as ACHR which can provide parallel training for professionals and young professionals.

>
Khlong Toey Slum, Bangkok

Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT)

Cambodia

http://www.teangtnaut.org

Overview

Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT) is a Cambodian NGO working with marginalised urban communities in infrastructure upgrading, housing rights and research. STT is based in Cambodia's regional centre of Kampot but has operations in Phnom Penh and regional urban centres around the country. STT's three main programmes include;

- *Community infrastructure:* providing technical assistance and support for small scale, community based upgrading of housing, water and sanitation
- *Housing Rights & Advocacy Unit*: supporting community initiatives to prevent evictions advocating on behalf of communities to Government and International bodies.
- *Research & Training Unit*: researching and documenting informal settlements, their issues and conditions and encouraging and training a new generation of Cambodians to volunteer and get involved in these issues.

Informal communities in Cambodia, as in most of South East Asia, face a constant threat of eviction and are considered 'an eyesore on the city'. Teang Tnaut is one of various organisations trying to create a space for negotiation with Government and developers in order to provide these communities with a chance to secure at least a basic form of compensation in terms of either land and/or cash.

Teang Tnaut' means 'Sugar Palm frond' in Khmer. The frond is a combination of simple charm and utility - Some of the most appealing Cambodian characteristics.

Projects

Boeung Kak Lake

One of the major contentious proposed development sites in Phnom Penh is the Boeung Kak Lake. This central waterbody is proposed to be leased for private development which would involve filling the lake and establishing high rise development in its place. At present the lake is home to over 4000 families living in informal settlements who rely on the lake for sustainable livelihood. They would be evicted as part of the proposal. Flooding and drainage issues for the cite are also heavily in question should the lake be filled.

STT together with the Urban Poor Development Fund (see next) and other NGOs undertook a mapping study of the lake and its communities in 2007 to be used as a tool to advocate for decent compensation and land rights for the lake's occupants. Prior to this study there was no documentation of numbers of families or living condition on and around the lake. STT have subsequently done significant research into the lake's hydrology to try to gain concrete evidence as to the impact of the development.

STT ran a workshop with students from the Royal University of Fine Arts (RUFA) and Helsinki University of Technology (HUT) to develop alternative design proposals for the lake which included community and public open space, areas to be developed and an alternative housing proposal in February 2008. I was fortunate enough participate in this workshop and work collaboratively with students from HUT and RUFA.

Findings:

STT embraces the participatory, community led orientation of ACHR. They also work with students and young professionals to provide training. Their involvement with local and international universities is also very beneficial in teaching practical skills and exposure for students. There is certainly scope for involvement for Australian participants and Australian Universities in similar programs with STT in future.

>

Boeung Kak Lake, Phnom Penh

Urban Poor Development Fund (UPDF)

Phnom Penh, Camboda

http://www.updfkh.net/

Overview

The urban poor account for one- quarter to even half of the 1.5 million population in Cambodia's capital city. The growth of informal settlements has exploded in the 1980s and 1990s as families tip toed back to the capital following the end of Pol Pot's regime in 1979. Now pressure from informal settlements continues as migrants flock to the city from rural areas. The Urban Poor Development Fund UPDF was seeded from ACHR in 1998 as a response to a need for housing and land security. UPDF have a holistic approach, recognising that housing is only one symptom of urban poverty and is strongly linked to job security, employment, health, infrastructure and social service.

UPDF provide housing finance to urban poor communities. They work closely with community to form savings groups and support community-led infrastructure upgrading initiatives such as water and sanitation, drainage and small scale housing loans.

Projects

I was fortunate enough to visit over 10 of UPDF's project sites in Phnom Penh over a one month internship in February 2008. The following images show an example of how UPDF supports communities with microfinance loans for infrastructure upgrading. These concrete walkways are built by community members themselves. The walkways provide drainage and easy access, reducing dirt and mosquito breeding grounds and allowing adequate access all year round even in the monsoon.

Lessons Learned

UPDF work with community, local and international groups to produce broad scale but low-technology outcomes. I was challenged by the fact that a relatively small intervention can have such a dramatic impact on a community's vitality and function, and that often only small changes, not large infrastructure are needed.

>
Building models of An Doung Resettlement project, UPDF office Phnom Penh

>
An Doung Resettlement (left) and with UPDF assisted housing (right)

>
Community without walkway (above) and upgraded slum communities with walkways (above right and right)

Community Architects for Shelter and Environment (CASE) Japan

Osaka, Japan

http://www.npocasejapan.com/

Overview

CASE Japan have the challenging mandate of creating community through architecture and housing in a developed country. CASE are closely affiliated with CASE Thailand and ACHR and as such have a participatory, people-led approach to housing and community development. CASE Japan are based in Minoh, a suburb on the outskirts of Osaka where up to 70% of the population lives in public housing. In the 1950s and 60s the region was sprawling informal settlements which were translated into social high rise buildings in the 1970s and 80s. However, many of the social and environmental disadvantages remain and while there is no appearance of informal settlements, there are “virtual slums”. CASE’s work includes working to provide community centres, public open space, libraries and a community cafe to re-imagine community in what is essentially a post-slum development.

Projects

I attended a workshop with CASE Japan in April 2008 which is documented in the following section of this report.

Findings

Meeting with CASE was a fascinating experience as the context in which they work shows many similarities to the Australian situation, where social housing, high-rise and community dislocation are more pressing issues than basic shelter, water and sanitation. CASE demonstrated clearly that participatory and integrated approaches can work as well in a developed context as they can in informal settlements.

>
CASE community housing in Osaka (top) and community cafe in Minoh, (bottom)

Architects without Frontiers Australia (AWF)

Hoi An, Vietnam

www.architectswithoutfrontiers.com.au

Overview

Architects Without Frontiers (Australia) is a not-for-profit volunteer organisation. Its mission is to provide Australian design expertise to communities, both within Australia and overseas, afflicted by social, environmental or natural disasters. Architects Without Frontiers philosophy is to work together with communities in the sustainable building or rebuilding of cities and communities.

AWF are working on a number of projects in Vietnam in partnership with local organisations. One of these projects is a housing complex for youth at risk in Hoi An, on Vietnam's central coast. This project has been run as a collaborative design studio with students from Vietnam and Australia and members of the local community over the past two years.

Projects

I facilitated a workshop for the 2008 Building the Community studio, Housing for Youth at Risk in Hoi An, Vietnam with Vietnamese and Australian students. This is documented in the following section of this report.

Findings

AWF bring a wealth of knowledge to a project as the experience of the organisation spans Asia Pacific and Africa. Working with AWF gave me the opportunity to implement many of the participatory techniques that I had gleaned form the workshop with CASE Japan, internship with UPDF and ACHR and other Vietnamese organisations. AWF is an established organisation that will provide an ongoing platform for collaboration between Australian professionals and grass roots community organisations in Asia.

>
Old town of Hoi An with Students from the Lifestart Foundation

Habitat for Humanity Vietnam (HFHV)

Vietnam

http://www.habitatvietnam.org

Overview

Habitat for Humanity Vietnam (HFHV) is a branch of Habitat for Humanity International and are working to meet pressing needs for simple, decent housing, water and sanitation for Vietnam's poor. Established in 2001, HFHV aims to serve 18,000 families by 2011. HFHV is one of the largest NGOs working in housing improvement and housing microfinance in Vietnam. HFHV provides housing but also vocational and technical training, technical support in shelter, water and sanitation, improvement and transformational community development.

Since 1976 Habitat for Humanity International have built, renovated and repaired nearly 300,000 homes around the world, providing more than one-and-a-half million people in thousands of communities in countries and territories across six continents with safe, decent, affordable shelter.

HFHV are known for their volunteer building programs where teams of local and international volunteers can assist local communities in building homes.

Projects

HFHV's program is dedicated to housing, water and sanitation solutions for Vietnam's poor. These programs are supported by microfinance, technical services and volunteer management staff. I was fortunate to work with the technical services team for a period of 10 months in 2008/9 on three major projects:

- Ho Chi Minh City Slum Mapping Project
- Vietnam Land Rights Guidebook
- Appropriate Technology Feasibility Study
- Landscape Concept Plan, Hai Duong Resettlement Village

These projects are discussed further in the following section.

Findings

I was able to gain in depth insight into HFHV as an organisation, and to be actively engaged in projects as I was there for 10 months. It was great to be a part of such a large NGO, as the previous NGOs and organisations I had met and/or interned with were much smaller. HFHV is successful in providing a large scale housing program but is perhaps less participatory as a result of its size.

HFHV is part of a large international network and it is therefore easy to form other international relationships. Already HFHV is supported by AWF, Engineers without Borders, local Universities and Businesses and other international groups. There are a number of ongoing opportunities for collaboration with HFHV.

>
Habitat for Humanity Community Centre and Housing Project, under construction in Rach Gia, Kien Giang Province

Environment Development Action (ENDA)

Vietnam

www.endavn.org.vn/

Overview

Environment Development Action (ENDA) Vietnam is part of the ACHR and global ENDA networks. They work to actively develop environmental, social and economic strategies to enhance the standard of living of poor disadvantaged Vietnamese. ENDA focus on both housing and environmental projects. In Ho Chi Ming City their focus is on Urban Development and Environmental Education, which focuses on an urban waste management scheme in Districts 4 and 6.

In addition to its own projects, ENDA Vietnam provides consulting in community development and environment improvement for other projects and organisations. In 2002 they undertook a Analysis of Low Income Housing in Ho Chi Minh City with partner organisation Villes en Transition.

Findings

ENDA incorporate low technology environmental strategies into their programs which are simple and scaleable. While the focus on the organisation in Vietnam is less on housing at present, there are strong links between environmental improvement and housing improvement and much can be learned from ENDA's approach.

>
Private waste collectors in Ho Chi Minh CIty

2.

This section outlines four projects undertaken through Habitat for Humanity Vietnam as part of the Asialink Weary Dunlop Fellowship and the Endeavour Executive Award. I coordinated or played a lead role in each of these projects, in close collaboration with local counterparts. A full copy of all reports are available on request.

1.
ho chi minh city slum mapping project

Project Summary
Urban poverty in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, is an issue of increasing concern. To meet growing housing and development needs in Ho Chi Minh City, Habitat for Humanity Vietnam (HFHV) is planning to expand its program into urban areas, as at present its housing, water and sanitation program is focused in the Mekong Delta region. To better understand the context in which poverty housing exists in Ho Chi Minh City, I coordinated a broad scale urban slum mapping study undertaken from June-October 2008. The aim of the mapping study was to document trends and patterns in urban slums and slum settlements as well as identify areas of the city which have the greatest housing, water and sanitation needs. Drawing conclusions from this information, recommendations were appropriate locations within Ho Chi Minh City for HFHV to establish an urban program.

Methodology
The mapping project was undertaken in two phases: the first a desktop spatial analysis study using Remote Sensing (RS) imagery and aerial photography followed secondly by a visual and qualitative analysis based on field surveys.

In the first instance, spatial analysis was used to identify slum settlements from aerial photography. This showed notable trends in settlement patterns in Ho Chi Minh City. In urban and semi-urban areas, slums were typically located along canals and waterways or adjacent to public infrastructure. In rural districts the pattern was more fragmented rather than concentrated, and therefore difficult to distinguish from spatial analysis alone.

Following this, field surveys were undertaken using a set of defined visual parameters to identify slums and squatter settlements. This visual analysis confirmed the pattern of slum settlements that were identified through spatial analysis but allowed for further analysis of urban housing typologies and the context in which urban slums exist. As for phase one, slums in urban areas were concentrated along canals and waterways, while in rural areas there were individual slum houses scattered throughout. In semi-urban and rural areas there was also a high incidence of transitional boarding houses for urban migrants, many of which exhibited signs of cramped living conditions and inadequate sanitation.

Urban Districts **Semi - Urban Districts** **Rural Districts**

>
Photos from Visual Surveys (top) and Spatial Analysis (below)

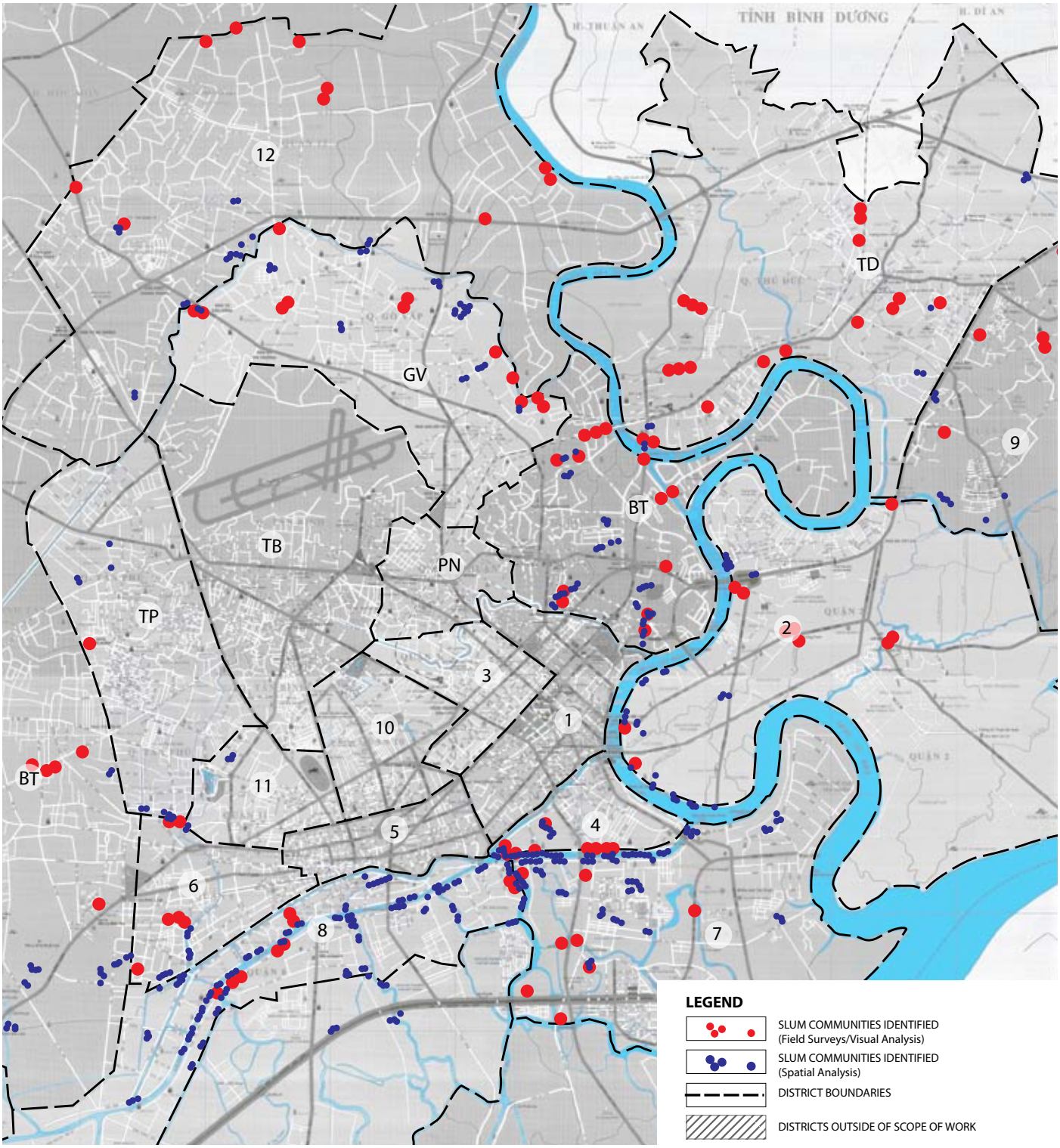
Outcomes

Through both the spatial and visual analysis, it was concluded that the major issues affecting poverty housing, water and sanitation in Ho Chi Minh City were:

- Durability of building construction
- Hazardous housing locations
- Inadequate living space
- Inadequate access to water and sanitation
- A need for adequate transitional rental housing for migrants
- A need for adequate housing for communities that have been resettled

Seven out of the 24 districts of the city were recommended as priority areas for HFHV, which were then narrowed to 2 following discussions with local partner organisations and authorities. A second, more detailed phase of the mapping study is planned for these two districts in 2009/10.

>
Map of Ho Chi Minh City slums



2.
a guidebook to land rights in vietnam

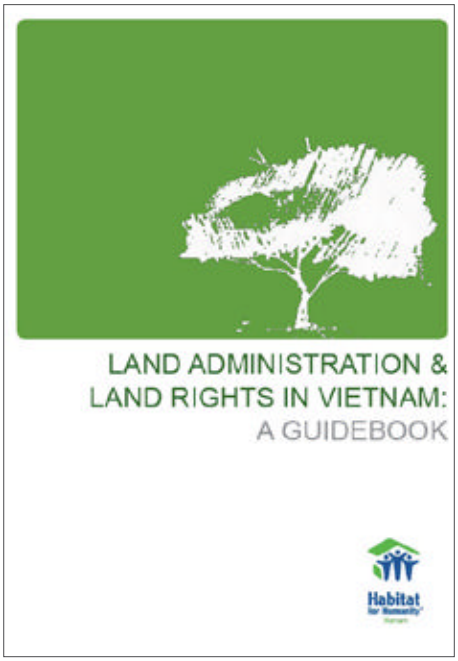
Project Summary
Both land management and land use rights play a central part in a homeowner's participation in Habitat for Humanity Vietnam's (HFHV) program. With the exception of a few cases, homeowners are required to posses a Land Use Rights Certificate (LURC) in order to be eligible for housing or microfinance loans. The Land Law and Land Use Rights in Vietnam are complicated and there is a lack of thorough understanding about the process of land administration by HFHV staff and volunteers. I compiled the document Land Administration and Land Rights in Vietnam: A Guidebook in 2008/9 to serve as reference material for HFHV staff by providing an overview of laws/legislation relevant to residential land use in Vietnam, based on the 2003 revisions to the Law on Land (13/2003/QH11) , as well as identifying a number of issues and sensitivities which create barriers to effective delivery of land use rights.

Background
Land management and Land rights are an issue of critical importance in Vietnam where land is often a means of sustainable livelihood. The connection between land tenure and poverty reduction is well understood on a global level and land reform has been recognized as one of the major drivers of Vietnam's economic growth and poverty reduction since the doi moi 'Renovation' process after 1986 [1]. The introduction of the 2003 Land Law was particularly central in enhancing land users' rights and laid out a comprehensive legal framework for developing a modern land administration and management system. However, a number of poor households face barriers in gaining access to LURCs. The existing system of land registration in Vietnam is still incomplete. As much as half of Vietnam is yet to be officially mapped and documented, and in 2000 it was estimated that as many as 30 million LURCs were yet to be issued or approved [2]. This is a particular problem for housing, as agricultural and productive land has historically been given priority over residential land for land registration.

As HFHVs programs are generally limited to homeowners already in possession of a LURC, it is important that as an organisation there is a solid understanding of land use rights in Vietnam and the challenges and sensitivities faced in gaining access to LURCs.

Outcomes
The document Land Administration and Land Rights in Vietnam: A Guidebook was produced in March 2009 to providing an overview of land rights and their application for HFHV staff.

1 World Bank (2008) 'Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Credit to the Socialist Republic Of Vietnam for a Land Administration Project' Report No: 39867-VN
2 AusAid working paper 4 (2000) Vietnam: Land Administration



> *Land Administration and Land Rights in Vietnam: A guidebook, sample pages*

3. appropriate technology feasibility study

Project Summary
Vietnam is predicted to be one of the worst hit countries by climate change, particularly sea level rise. As a response to this and a need to improve the sustainability and review the cost effectiveness of housing technology in Vietnam, I coordinated a research team to investigate appropriate technology for Vietnam which culminated in an Appropriate Technology Feasibility Report. This report is intended to be reference document for HFHV's technical services staff. It aims to review HFHV's current building materials and construction practices, as well as evaluate alternative tools and techniques that are appropriate to Vietnam's cultural and climatic context.

This report describes and reviews various building materials and systems and then compares their appropriateness using a set of Appropriate Technology Assessment Criteria (ATAC) that have been developed by HFHV.

The objective of this assessment is to review HFHV's existing construction materials and to make recommendations for building materials and systems that:

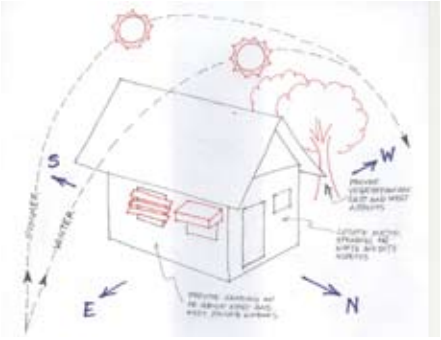
- Improve Environmental impact including energy, water, waster and resource efficiency.
- Reduce Cost effectiveness
- Are Cultural relevant
- Improve ease of construction and/or maintenance.

Background
Climate change and increasing energy and resource costs are demanding a more sensitive and appropriate use of the planet's finite resources. Energy, materials, water and land are just some of the resources consumed in the construction and operation of buildings and infrastructure. In recent decades, the concept of 'Appropriate technology' (AT) has evolved as a means of improving resource efficiency. AT encompasses building materials, systems and methods that concern the environmental sustainability of resource use, but also addresses the ethical, cultural, social and economical aspects of the community it is intended for. With these goals in mind, AT typically requires fewer resources, is easier to maintain, has a lower overall cost and less of an impact on the environment compared to conventional practices

Outcomes
The report assesses specific building technologies that are relevant to HFHV's programs, and rate them based on their appropriateness to Vietnam. Building technology is divided into two sections – Building Materials and Building Systems. Building Materials refers to the static elements of the buildings: walls, roof, floors etc while Building Systems refers to the active components – water, sanitation, energy etc.

To comprehensively evaluate the environmental impact and overall appropriateness of building materials and systems, HFHV has developed an Appropriate Technology Assessment Criteria (ATAC) form. This form is based on key criteria for green building technology: energy use, water use, resource efficiency and waste production, air quality and overall environmental impact. To more accurately compare one technology to another these criteria are applied to each of the design, production, construction and use.

The outcome of the report is a series of recommendations for appropriate technologies for each building component as well as recommendations for modifications to the design of housing to better address climate, cost, human comfort and environmental impact.

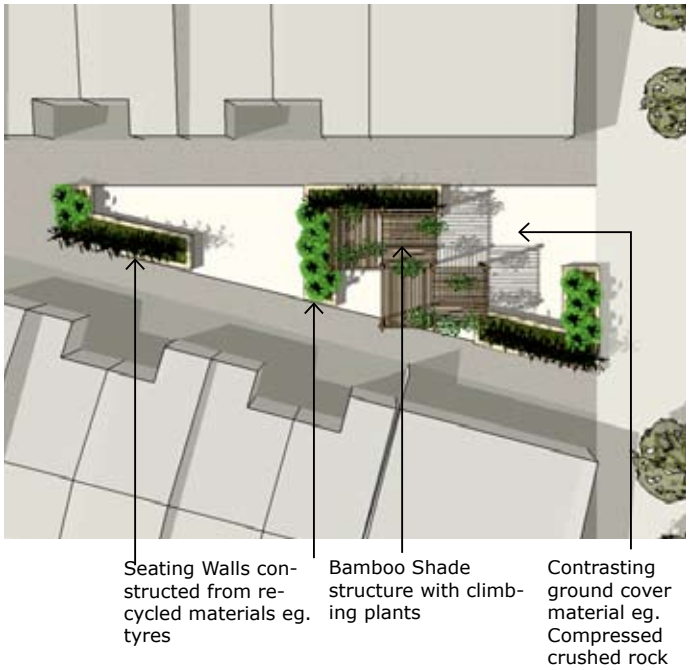



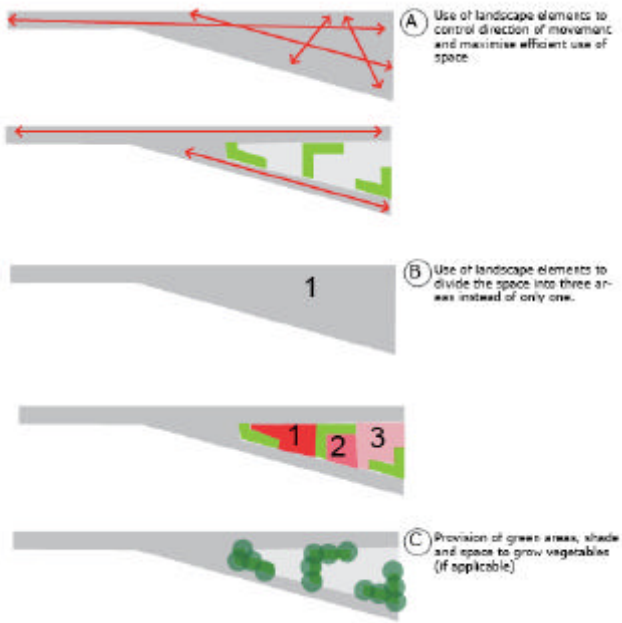
>
House made from compressed straw board (left), plan for solar orientation (centre), compressed earth blocks (right)

4.
hai duong landscape concept plan

Project Summary
Hai Duong is a fishing village just outside of Hanoi. A community of 350 people currently living in informal settlements along the canal are being resettled as parts of the governments housing improvement strategy. The government has donated land for the community, adjacent to the canal, and HFHV's role is to provide housing and basic infrastructure through a microfinance program to the families. I had the opportunity to work on a Landscape Concept Plan for some of the awkward public spaces in the masterplan. This was an opportunity to use my skills as a Landscape Architect and apply them directly to a community development context. The scheme was generated as part of a community focus group workshop.

Outcomes
The images below outline part of the scheme for the public open space.





>
Design concept for Hai Duong public open space areas

3.

I was fortunate to participate in two workshops during the year - the first a training workshop on development architecture in relation to post-slum development in Osaka Japan, with CASE Japan and ASF-UK. The second, as a facilitator for 'building the communities' participatory design studio to design accommodation for youth at risk in Hoi An, Vietnam - a workshop run by AWF, RMIT and the Lifestart foundation.

As a self-funded initiative, I also attended the UN-HABITAT World Urban Forum in Nanjing, China in November 2008 to further share knowledge on affordable housing, development architecture and land management in Asia.

1.
creating community in post-slum development osaka, japan

CASE Japan/ASF-UK

Project Summary
In 2008, ASF-UK with their Japan partner CASE (Community Architects for Shelter and Environment) facilitated a workshop in Osaka, Japan. This workshop was the third of a part of a four part international education program titled 'Building Communities' which consists of workshops in England (2005), Thailand (2007), Japan (2008), and Laos (2009). Building Communities is targeted towards architecture students and professionals and aims to advance educational opportunities through raising awareness of the professional's role when working in international development.

In Easter 2008, 20 International and national participants worked alongside each other to develop an understanding of the issues resulting from slum eradication after the housing in Osaka was formalised. We worked with one of Japan's social minority communities who once lived in the informal settlements of Osaka. The workshop explored the housing solutions provided by the Minoh government and solutions the communities have developed themselves in order to cope with their change in social status and physical living conditions

The workshop comprised 4 modules, each 2-3 days each:

- Public Housing: for a better quality of life
- Public Spaces: demand and supply
- Homeless in the land of Housing
- Social Interactions: community-built community

Outcomes
The focus of the workshop was much more on process than it was on outcome, it was about living with and understanding a community, and developing techniques for community consultation and participation. We lived, ate and worked in the community for 16 days and were invited to engage with the community – to question, to describe, to challenge and observe.

For a group of 20 international young design professionals, new to the Japanese context, the question was how do we attempt to build community in only 2 weeks? In answer to this, the workshop taught a number of tools and techniques based on CASE Japan and ASF-UK's approach. This was a two phase process of analysis.



Public housing in Minoh (top left), workshop activities (right)

Firstly, seeing and documenting: “I see what I see clearly”. Techniques included mapping, working with children, elderly groups, questioning, observing and learning. The second phase was to challenging those observations, to ask “what am I looking at?” This involved working with the community on a new level, not just question-and-answer, but an interactive process. In order to do this some participants created small changes in the community and observed the results, others invited the community to work together on design schemes for parks and housing.

The group I worked with, for example was questioning the use of public open space in the community, particularly two small parks (aptly named Green Space 2 and Green Space 3) which were poorly maintained and little utilised. In Japan where open space is at a premium, the derelict state of these spaces was intriguing. Our first phase of analysis involved traditional mapping of the park, its connection to other open spaces, circulation etc. We also asked children and elderly groups to draw the garden, to understand how they perceived the space.

The second phase of analysis involved challenging what we had learned about the use of Green Space 2 (See attachment). Our aim was not re-design the park as such, but to challenge ideas about how the park could be used so as to spark long term change.

Please also refer to the following documents and articles written about the workshop:
Annex 2 – Studio Greenspace 2 report for LA online magazine

>
Park ‘rennovation’ at Green Space 2

2.
building the community housing for youth at risk hoi an, vietnam

AWF/RMIT/Lifestart Foundation

Project Summary
Building the Community is about generating sustainable design solutions to meet real and pressing housing needs for youth at risk in Hoi An, in the Quang Nam Province of Vietnam. The project is a partnership between Hoi An-based, Australian charity the Lifestart Foundation, RMIT University and not-for-profit organisation Architects Without Frontiers (AWF). I was involved in facilitating this workshop involving 8 Australian and 10 Vietnamese students.

Student participation is based on the great personal, professional and educational benefits of working with a range of design and construction disciplines to develop a sustainable design solution for transitional housing. It is also an opportunity for students to broaden their skills in the areas of community development and rebuilding through the application of problem-solving skills 'on the ground' in the Hoi An area. Building the Community encourages a participatory approach to design based on the real needs and aspirations of the young adults who will be using the project, rather than a predetermined or 'imported' design outcome

Background
The brief of the project came about as a response to a need for improved housing for youth at risk in Hoi An. The aim for the students was to design a building that will provide dormitory style accommodation for 8-12 youth at risk (aged between12 and 22 years old) who are currently being given educational and vocational training opportunities by the Lifestart Foundation in Hoi An. Young people entering the Lifestart program are given accommodation for 12 months while they undertake their training. As many of Lifestart students come from difficult backgrounds, or live far from their families, a building is preferred so that they may live in community and share kitchens, living and open spaces. The house should offer flexibility of space, as the occupants will be transitional. The house should also provide classroom spaces that could be used by both the inhabitants and the wider community

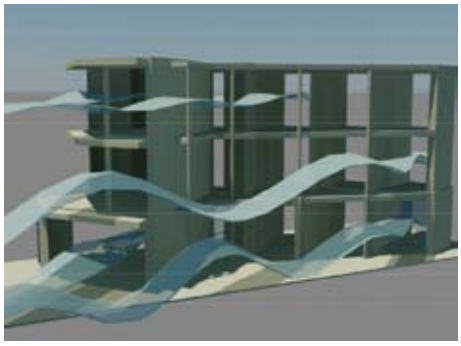
Outcomes
The students working in two groups produced two design concepts for the accommodation centre. One group focused on systems and environmental technology, the other on site dynamics, using wind as a key theme to define the form.

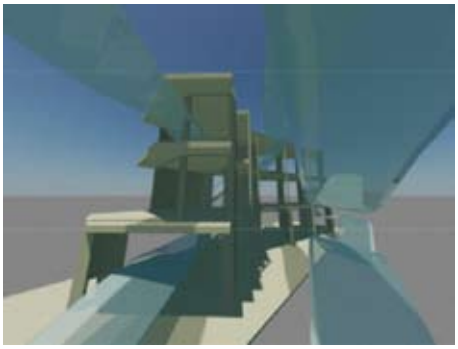
I was pleased to facilitate participatory design workshops with the students and to implemented knowledge and techniques earned from earlier experience with CASE, ACHR and UPDF. A publication was produced from the workshop which is attached to this report.

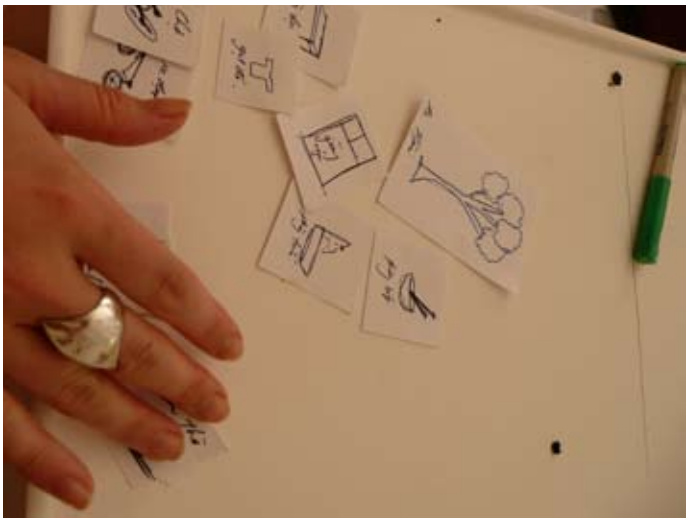
Please refer to the publication produced on the workshop, attached:
Annex 3 - Building the Community Publication

>
Hoi An RIver (left) and site surveys (right)

>
Design concept for the “Mo” house, meaning open spaces (below)







>
Design concept for the “Living” house (below)

3.
world urban forum nanjing, china
UN-HABITAT

Overview
In November 2008 I attended the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT) fourth, bi-annual World Urban Forum in Nanjing, China as a youth delegate and panellist in the session "Creative Cities". I also attended the World Urban Youth Forum, held immediately prior. Although this conference was self-funded I believe it is of relevance to include it in this report as its aims and objectives are very similar to other organisations and programs discussed here.

The forum attracted over 8,000 delegates from around the world to discuss the crisis of human urban settlements and make appropriate policy recommendations. The forum discourse centred around the theme of "Harmonious Urbanisation" as a theoretical framework in order to understand today's urbanised world. Responses came from architects, landscape architects, planners and other built environment professionals along with a host of social, economic and international development workers from the NGO, government and private sectors.

The conference theme focused on both tangible and intangible aspects of the city with the aim of working towards targets for the UN Millennium Development Goals, particularly Goal 7, Target 11: "To improve the lives of over 100 million Slum Dwellers" by 2015. As a youth delegate to the Forum, I was particularly engaged in the topic of "generational harmony", a pertinent topic in our present context where half the world's urban population is now under 25[1] . As a panellist for the session titled "Creative Cities", we examined the role of the arts, architecture, landscape and public art in community development, particularly youth-led development.

Outcomes
Apart from meeting with numerous organisations and networks, the major personal outcome of the WUYF was being elected to the UN-HABITAT Youth Advisory Board as the Asia-Pacific representative. I look forward very much to this role in promoting a youth agenda in the UN-HABITAT's activities.

See attached review published in Landscape Architecture Australia, 2008.
- Annex 4

1 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) State of the Worlds Population 2007 Report http://www.unfpa.org/

4.

conclusion

conclusion

Throughout the organisations I met with in south east Asia and Japan, my overall aim was to investigate how professionals, particularly young professionals in architecture, landscape architecture, urban design and planning can be effectively engaged in socially responsible design and respond appropriately to the needs of rapidly expanding cities and slums. I found each of the organisations to operate differently, and engaged design and built environment professions to varying levels. However, there are a number of best-practice principles that were common to the best examples, these included:

- **Participation.** Moving beyond conventional interview-style "consultation" methodologies and adopting a participatory, community-led approach. Listening and working with the community for an extended period (sometimes up to 6 months) before beginning any intervention.
- **Architect as Facilitator.** Shifting the role of architect from consultant/designer to facilitator where the design mechanism becomes a tool for community engagement and participation. Community participants often assisted in the physical design and construction process and the architect facilitated this involvement.
- **Appropriate technology**. Working with local materials and techniques to reduce energy demand, improve cost efficiency and cultural appropriateness.
- **Engaging Students**. Many organisations involved interns and volunteers from local institutions. In the absence of any formal design training such opportunities provided the only method of training.
- **A long term view**. Community-led approaches are difficult to achieve through short-term consultants who come to the site for short periods. Architects and designers must consider working in communities with a long term view
- **Housing and Poverty.** Housing is only one symptom of poverty and a holistic approach addressing social, economic and environmental needs to be clearly incorporated into any project.
- **A regional approach**. Organisations like ACHR are already facilitating knowledge sharing between grassroots organisations, NGOs, professionals and communities. This should be supported and strengthened, and international information sharing should also be increased.
- **Workshops and integrated learning**. International and cross-cultural workshops are a useful tool for engaging young people in development and supplementing formal education with live projects and exposure to poverty and informal settlements.

On a person level, in my 5 years of professional experience I have not learned so much as in the past year. Key outcomes of the year could be summarised as follows

- Improved understanding of participatory and community-led development and how this applies to architecture and design professions;
- Established networks with development architecture organisations in Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Japan;
- Professional experience in development architecture gained from internship in Phnom Penh and work experience in Vietnam;
- Capacity building and knowledge exchange with Habitat for Humanity Vietnam on projects relating to land management, landscape architecture and planning;
- Practical experience gained from facilitating a student community design workshop in Hoi An with Architects without Frontiers Australia and partner organisations;
- An opportunity to present at the UN-HABITAT World Urban Forum and being elected to the UN-HABITAT Youth Advisory Board

Concluding Statement

There is a great need to scale up initiatives being successfully implemented by a number of organisations working in housing improvement, slum upgrading and climate change adaption in Asian Cities, particularly if we are to meet the goal of significantly improving the lives of 100 Million slum dwellers (UN Millennium Development Goal 7:11). There is much that Australian designers can learn from the Asian context. I hope to begin a network of designers in Australia who are interested to explore and expand participatory design techniques, and continue to improve links with Asia. None of this could have been achieved without the Asialink Fellowship and Endeavour Executive Award and I am grateful for the generous support.

annex 1

FuturArc
Architecture, Design and Sustainability Magazine for Asia Pacific
March 2009: People Issue

YOUNG CRUSADER
LUCINDA HARTLEY

URBAN DESIGNER & ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNER,
HABITAT FOR HUMANITY VIETNAM | **VIETNAM**

At age 26, when most young people are still busy figuring out their lives, landscape architect Lucinda Hartley has already been shaping other people's lives—namely the poor—through her professional and volunteer work.

For the past five years, she has split her time between private practice in Australia and Asia-Pacific and grassroots initiatives, pursuing an active interest in socially and environmentally responsible design.

Coming from an environmental science background, green efforts have always been a priority for Hartley. She aims "to foster a design culture that is innovative and inclusive, demonstrating initiative in social responsibility and climate change resilience and leadership in sustainable urbanisation".

So what drives this young crusader in her quest to make this world a better place, besides "coffee and running"? She says two quotes have been keeping her motivated.

The first is her favourite quote by Dr Paul Polak from International Development Enterprises: "The majority of the world's designers focus all their efforts on developing products and services exclusively for the richest 10 percent of the world's customers. Nothing less than a revolution in design is needed to reach the other 90 percent."

And the second is the UN Millennium Development Goal "to improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020" (Target 11, Millennium Development Goal No. 7).

Hence, it is with these realisations that Hartley wants to lead the change in helping the underdog.

"It's the communities which least contribute to climate change which will be the most affected. We're facing an urbanised future where the majority of the world's urban population will live in slums and informal settlements so perhaps the greatest impact we can have in terms of sustainable development is to focus on the low income."

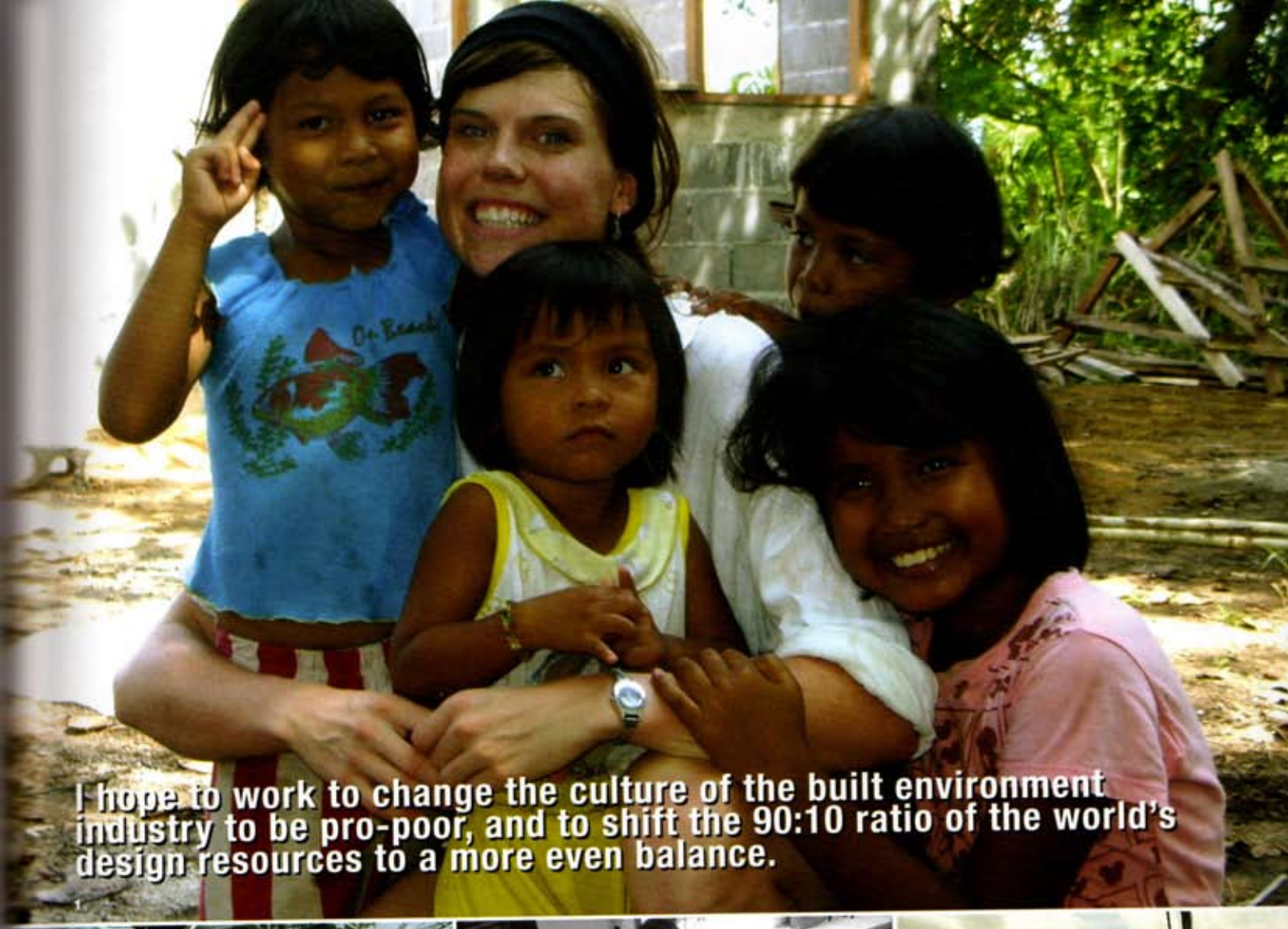
"I hope to work to change the culture of the built environment industry to be pro-poor, and to shift the 90:10 ratio of the world's design resources to a more even balance."

Currently employed as an urban designer and environmental planner with Habitat for Humanity Vietnam under the Australian Youth Ambassador for Development (AYAD) scheme, Hartley is working on improving low income housing conditions and alleviating slum problems in Ho Chi Minh City through sustainable solutions. She is also involved in the masterplanning and community greening strategy for a slum resettlement project in Hanoi which looks at establishing low cost housing and sustainable livelihood initiatives.

We have all the technology and expertise we need to dramatically change the built environment but sometimes lack the motivation or understanding. We have seen significant steps in awareness and promotion of green buildings, now we need to translate that technology to where the majority of the world is living: in low income settlements.

The active volunteer also has her hands full with community-based development programmes, having participated in post-tsunami reconstruction efforts in Chiang Mai, Thailand; served as the chair of the pro-bono panel for Architects for Peace Australia, a not-for-profit organisation; and is currently the Vietnam Programme Coordinator for Architects Without Frontiers Australia in which she has organised workshops on social and sustainable design for architecture students in Vietnam. Hartley has also been a panellist at the 4th UN-HABITAT World Urban Forum in China in 2008 where she conducted a session on "Creative Cities" looking at the role of art and architecture in sustainable urban development.

For her involvement and efforts, this feisty activist has received both state and international recognition. She is one of the recipients of the 2009 Endeavour Executive Award, a scholarship programme offered by the Australian government, and was awarded the Dunlop Asia Awards fellowship in 2008. In addition, she was highly commended by Professions Australia in the 2007 Young Professional of the Year Award category. More notably, Hartley has also been recently elected to the UN-HABITAT Youth Advisory Council, which she sees as "a great opportunity to develop youth-led policy recommendations for sustainable urban development, and to set mandate focusing on issues surrounding climate change, youth and cities".



I hope to work to change the culture of the built environment industry to be pro-poor, and to shift the 90:10 ratio of the world's design resources to a more even balance.

To deal with the massive task of improving the lives of the urban poor globally using sustainable solutions, Hartley believes advocacy and concerted effort are key.

"We have all the technology and expertise we need to dramatically change the built environment but sometimes lack the motivation or understanding. We have seen significant steps in awareness and promotion of green buildings, now we need to translate that technology to where the majority of the world is living: in low income settlements."

Looking ahead, Hartley foresees a dramatic increase in the demand for high-profile green buildings which will lead to a rise in green offices and institutional buildings. This, she feels, will contribute significantly to reducing emissions and increasing public awareness. "The Asia-Pacific region could well become the global leader in this area." However, her concern is that such technology and awareness may take too long to filter down to the low income residential development, and as such, she sees this area as the one that requires urgent attention.

"As a profession, architects and planners are familiar with global challenges, but if faced with the task of designing for an urban population of 5 billion (by 2030) or addressing the needs of the 1 million people who arrive in African and Asian cities each week, I ask the question: Are we ready?"

1 Hartley in Khao Lac, participating in Habitat for Humanity Thailand's post-tsunami reconstruction programme **2** Participatory design workshop in Osaka, Japan **3** Working with local Hoi An residents on shelter solutions in Building the Community workshop, Vietnam **4** Canal slum settlements in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

annex 2

CASE Japan ‘Building Communities’ Review
LA online publication

Building Communities in Japan

A summary of a recent workshop on Post-Slum development

Lucinda Hartley AILA

"I see what I see clearly; but what am I looking at"[1] was a phrase quoted frequently at a 'building communities' workshop I recently attended on post-slum development in Osaka, Japan. Run jointly by Architects sans Frontiers UK (ASF) and Community Architects for Shelter and Environment Japan (CASE), the workshop was attended by young design professionals from all over the world. The aim of the workshop was to teach tools and techniques for built environment professionals working in community development and working with community-as-client. In this instance, the workshop was centred around a northern suburb of Osaka named Kitashiba, which contains a high percentage of public housing. Unlike other workshops and community building projects I have attended where the project aim is to construct a building or create a design outcome, the aim of the 'building communities' workshop was to do just that: build communities. Workshop participants lived, ate and worked in the community for 16 days and were invited to engage with the community — to question, to describe, to challenge and observe. This article outlines some of the processes and outcomes of the workshop.

Public Housing Blocks in Kitashiba, Osaka Japan

1 Nabeel Hamdi (2004) *Small Change*, Earthscan UK

Japan may seem an unlikely context in which to study community architecture, being one of the most developed nations in the world today. But we see in Japan, as in Australia, that the transformation of 'slums' from informal housing to public housing does not necessarily abate the social problems or change community structures. Kitashiba is an example of this: only 30 years ago it was an urban slum; today it is characterised by concrete tower blocks. Historically, the people living in this area were discriminated against, and they remain to be today, despite the change in their physical environment. In this context, engaging with the Kitashiba community can be difficult.

For a group of 20-odd international young design professionals, new to the Japanese context, the question was how do we attempt to build community in only 2 weeks? In answer to this, the workshop taught a number of tools and techniques based on CASE Japan and ASF–UK's approach. This was a two phase process of analysis. Firstly, seeing and documenting: "I see what I see clearly". Techniques included mapping, working with children, elderly groups, questioning, observing and learning. The second phase was to challenging those observations, to ask "what am I looking at?" This involved working with the community on a new level, not just question-and-answer, but an interactive process. In order to do this some participants created small changes in the community and observed the results, others invited the community to work together on design schemes for parks and housing.

Mapping Kitashiba

Green Space 2

The group I worked with, for example was questioning the use of public open space in the community, particularly two small parks (aptly named Green Space 2 and Green Space 3) which were poorly maintained and little utilised. In Japan where open space is at a premium, the derelict state of these spaces was intriguing. Our first phase of analysis involved traditional mapping of the park, its connection to other open spaces, circulation etc. We also asked children and elderly groups to draw the garden, to understand how they perceived the space.

Setting up Studio Green Space 2

The second phase of analysis involved challenging what we had learned about the use of Green Space 2. Our aim was not re-design the park as such, but to challenge ideas about how the park could be used so as to spark long term change. Our somewhat corny catch phrase was to plant ideas, not flowers. To do this we adopted several approaches, the most obvious of which was setting up our studio in Green Space 2. In addition to inhabiting the space, we moved the large rubbish bin which previously occupied the only sitting are in the park, painted it and hung flower pots on the side to create a feature. We also started to weed the park, which sparked much attention. Children and neighbours spontaneously came to help clean up the park, others started to plant empty flower pots. Finally, as part of an installation we planted signs throughout the park in order to challenge the use of space: walk here? Plant me? Sit here? Tea?

Children from the community come to help weed Green Space 2 and painting signs with children from the community.

The outcome for Green Space 2 was that, in the short term, we saw a number of people of all ages actively using the park, a sharp contrast from before. In the long term, time will tell. We hope that we may have sparked imagination about what the space could be if it were maintained, and if the space were reprogrammed slightly — such as moving the bin. You can watch its progress on the blog

Small changes were made to the park such as moving and painting the bin, and adding signage.

Green Space 2 is just one example. Other groups created small installations throughout the community including photographic exhibitions, changing the pictures on vending machines, creating a movie about the community and showing it in a local park.

The outcomes of the workshop are difficult to define as they have no physical appearance — there was no new house or community centre. For the participants the outcome has been to learn a different way of analysing and working with community. For Kitashiba, the workshop provided a platform for discussions about the community, and an opportunity to be involved in various activities, and to see themselves differently — from an outsiders point of view. This is only a small step in the process of building communities, but it is a catalyst for change.

After efforts from the local community, Green Space 2 was weeded and cleaned up.

Sit here?
Signage was added to the park challenge the use of the space

An advertisement created to ask local residents to help weed the park

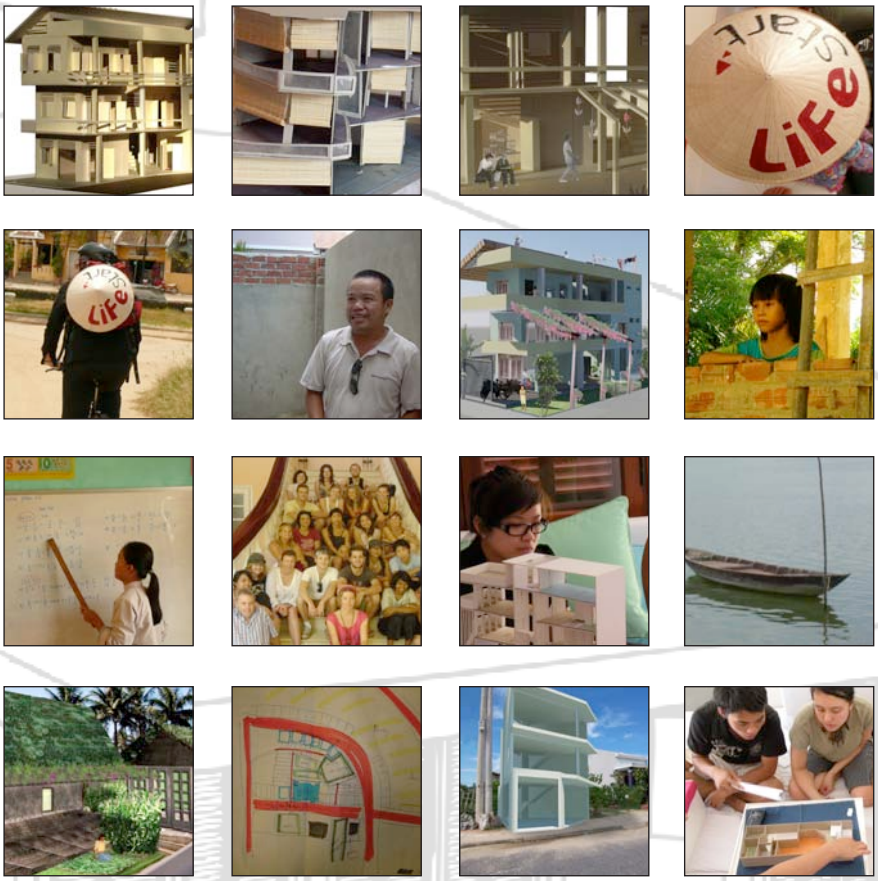
Lucinda Hartley is the currently undertaking an internship with the Asian Coalition of Housing Rights (ACHR) in Cambodia and Vietnam as part of the 2008 Asialink Weary Dunlop Fellowship. CASE – Japan are part of ACHR.

Further information:
www.studiogreenspace2.blogspot.com/
www.asf-uk.org/

print this article

annex 3

AWF/RMIT/Lifestart Foundation Building the Community workshop,
Hoi An, Vietnam
Publication



BUILDING THE COMMUNITY

Designs for Housing for Kids at Risk | Hoi An, Vietnam

2007–2008

RMIT UNIVERSITY

Global Cities

architectswithout frontiers australia

lifestart foundation

“ Give a man a fish and feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime. ”

— *Proverb*

“ Today’s students will have the opportunity to work anywhere in the world and universities must provide education and work experiences that prepare graduates for the future.”

RMIT Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Margaret Gardner AO

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

Building the Community is about generating sustainable design solutions to meet real and pressing housing needs for youth at risk in Hoi An, in the Quang Nam Province of Vietnam. The project is a partnership between Hoi An-based, Australian charity the Lifestart Foundation, RMIT University and not-for-profit organisation Architects Without Frontiers (AWF).

The purpose of this document is to, firstly disseminate design proposals that have been developed by RMIT students and Architects Without Frontiers over the past two years, and secondly, to generate support and funding for the Lifestart Foundation which will implement the project in 2009.

The Building the Community Project 2008 was supported by a generous grant from the RMIT Learning and Teaching Investment Fund.

01 *Waterfront housing, Hoi An.*

CONTENTS

01

“The brief is to deal specifically with the problems caused by annual typhoons. I am hopeful that the final designs will set an innovative and environmental benchmark for future buildings in this flood prone area.”

Karen Leonard, founder of the Lifestart Foundation

“The initiative is a brave one and needs to be applauded at every level: for its determination, organisation, collaboration, coordination and making a really good idea tangible. A lot of ideas for projects like this unfortunately remain on paper.”

Debra Kunda, Architecture student, RMIT

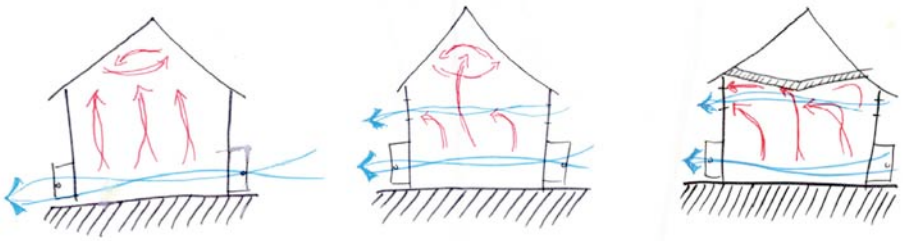
PROJECT BRIEF

The aim of the project is to design a building that will provide dormitory style accommodation for 8-12 youth at risk (aged between12 and 22 years old) who are currently being given educational and vocational training opportunities by the Lifestart Foundation in Hoi An. Young people entering the Lifestart program are given accommodation for 12 months while they undertake their training. As many of Lifestart students come from difficult backgrounds, or live far from their families, a building is preferred so that they may live in community and share kitchens, living and open spaces. The house should offer flexibility of space, as the occupants will be transitional. The house should also provide classroom spaces that could be used by both the inhabitants and the wider community.

02

03

01 *Many young people in the Hoi An area come from disadvantaged families.* ***02*** *Lifestart works with disadvantaged families in Hoi An, many who are living in adequate shelter such as on boats and on the banks of the Hoi An River.* ***03*** *The young people Lifestart is working with are currently living in unsuitable temporary accommodation, such as this room pictured.* ***04*** *Thinking about climate and airflow—sketch design options from the 2007 workshop.* ***05*** *Models prepared by RMIT students during the 2007 workshop.* ***06*** *RMIT students discussing design proposals with students from Lifestart's program during the 2008 workshop.*



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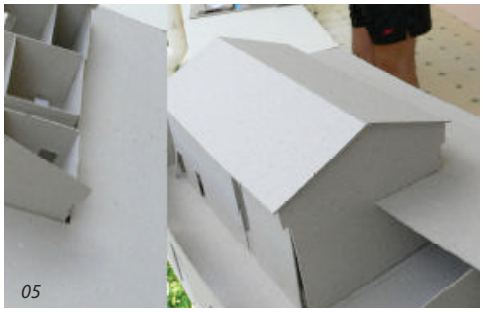


05

06

PART 1: BUILDING THE COMMUNITY IN CONTEXT: PROJECT BACKGROUND

The brief of the project came about as a response to a need for improved housing for youth at risk in Hoi An. The Lifestart Foundation invited RMIT University and Architects Without Frontiers to Vietnam to prepare design proposals for a transitional housing unit based on participatory, multi-disciplinary and community based approaches.

Two workshops with students from RMIT's School of Architecture and Design and the School of Property and Construction were run on-site in Hoi An in 2007 and 2008 as a design generative process. In 2007, a team of 20 multi-disciplinary design students developed five concepts in consultation with the clients, local professionals and the general community. In 2008, nine students returned to Vietnam to refine the project, building on the experience of the previous year and developing two design outcomes. The multi-disciplinary workshops included students from architecture, landscape architecture, industrial design, interior design, property and construction management in their final or penultimate year. The workshops were led by Dr Esther Charlesworth, Research Fellow in Sustainability, Architecture and Urban Design at RMIT.

Student participation is based on the great personal, professional and educational benefits of working with a range of design and construction disciplines to develop a sustainable design solution for transitional housing. It is also an opportunity for students to broaden their skills in the areas of community development and rebuilding through the application of problem-solving skills 'on the ground' in the Hoi An area. Building the Community encourages a participatory approach to design based on the real needs and aspirations of the young adults who will be using the project, rather than a predetermined or 'imported' design outcome. Moreover, extensive site investigation has contributed to final design solutions that are

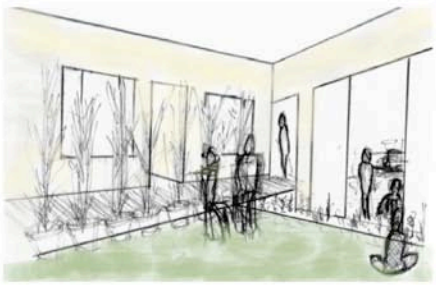
"It's hard for young professionals (in architecture), if they're interested in working in international development or in the humanitarian field, to even know where to start . . . Part of what Building the Community is about is providing students with the insight of working with poor communities."

Dr Esther Charlesworth, Research Fellow in Sustainability, Architecture & Urban Design, RMIT

"I think this is an incredible project because it's working with a realistic aim of providing a design solution in a developing context."

Phillipa Abbott, Industrial Design student, RMIT

04



PROJECT BACKGROUND *cont'd*

> "If there is a chance we can even make a small difference through architecture, then it's worth it."
>
> *Prue Miller, Architecture student, RMIT*

based on solid research on user needs, site constraints and construction possibilities in Hoi An. The project's buildability is key to any successful design solution and also the huge issue of any design proposal being able to deal with the flood and typhoon condition of the Hoi An environment.

Students designs for transitional housing will be used to develop architectural blueprints. These will in turn be used by Lifestart and Architects Without Frontiers to construct a building in 2009, following the purchase of land.

YOUTH AT RISK IN HOI AN

> "The most impressive thing about the children is they really want to learn, if they could study 24 hours a day they would, just to better themselves."
>
> *Michael Hubbard, Architecture student, RMIT*

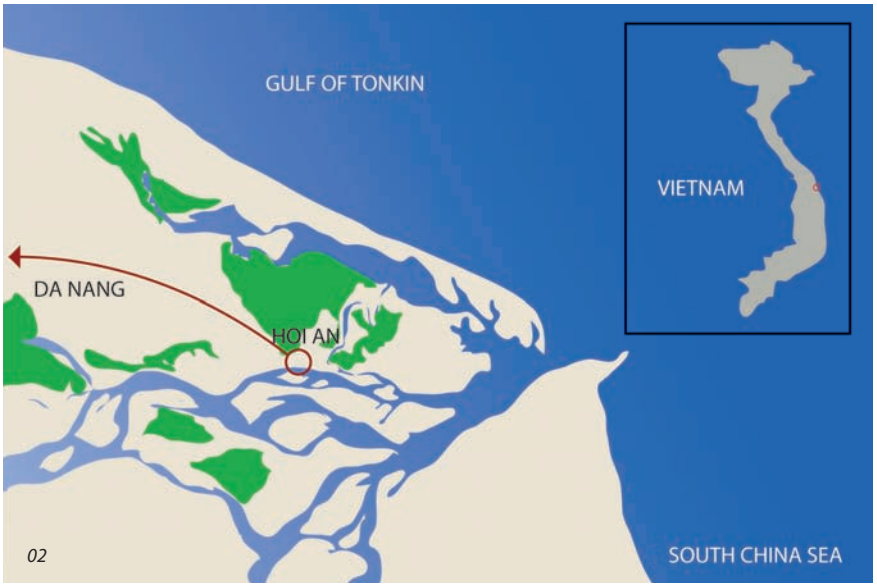
One of the great challenges and growing needs in Hoi An is to meet the needs of its young population. As a major tourist destination, young people from the town and surrounding areas are drawn to Hoi An in search of employment opportunities. Sadly, many are without adequate vocational training or education such that they end up in exploitative workplaces, earning a wage as low as $30 US/month; well below Vietnam's poverty index (adjusted July 2008). The Lifestart Foundation helps to identify these youth at risk and to equip them with the necessary vocational and educational opportunities so that they can find better jobs with satisfactory working conditions and be self-sufficient. The Lifestart Foundation also assists youth at risk to find accommodation. At present, many are living in unsuitable temporary accommodation such as rented spare rooms in the town, which limits their capacity for effective education and employment possibilities. In partnership with RMIT and Architects with Frontiers, the Lifestart Foundation plans to design and construct a transitional house so that the youth at risk may be housed together in a suitable location in Hoi An. This, in turn, will become the foundation for these young people to sustain themselves for the rest of their lives.

01 *Former youth at risk now studying at the Lifestart school in Hoi An.* ***02*** *Temporary accommodation.* ***03*** *Many young people in the Hoi An area come from disadvantaged families.*

01

HOI AN: SITE CONSIDERATIONS

Hoi An is a small river port in central Vietnam. It is a UNESCO heritage listed town, close to the beach and thus has a well developed tourist industry. In tandem to this is a tailoring industry that has made the town famous. It has a tropical climate, with little variation in daily diurnal temperatures and also minimal change through out the year. Hoi An is prone to typhoons and flooding, and areas along the Hoi An river flood annually.



02

While the exact site for the transitional housing project is yet to be purchased, potential sites in question are located in non-flood prone areas on the outskirts of the town, in a newly developed area. The Lifestart Foundation has already purchased land in this area, so the house would be in proximity to existing Lifestart facilities.

03

04

01 *Hoi An River and UNESCO listed Heritage Buildings.* ***02*** *Hoi An.* ***03*** *Working the rice fields, Hoi An.* ***04*** *UNESCO Heritage listed Japanese Bridge, Hoi An.*

PART 2: GENERATE, PARTICIPATE
DESIGN FEASIBILITY STUDIES: 2007 & 2008

The focus of both the 2007 and 2008 workshops was on community engagement and environmental sustainability. This required the RMIT students to work with the community on a number of levels—socially, culturally and physically. They undertook extensive community consultation to better understand the social structures and patterns of daily life as well as environmental constraints, including flooding. During the field visits students participated in the lives of the young people of Hoi An—eating with them, visiting their homes and workplaces.

The design generative process in both workshops was participatory and multi-disciplinary. Students from architecture, landscape architecture, industrial design, property construction and construction management worked together on design proposals. The result is innovative solutions to grass-roots needs.

> “When you work only with architecture students you can assume things that you can’t necessarily assume working with inter-disciplinary groups, the languages we use are different. I’ve leant a lot from this process.”
>
> *Oliver Hutchinson, Architecture student, RMIT*

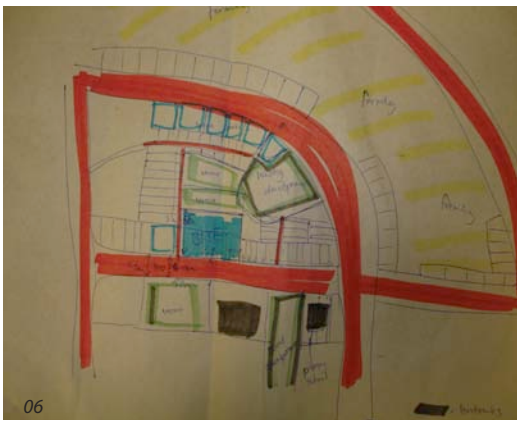
> “It’s really important to see how people are living and how they feel about their living spaces and what are some of the issues…it’s the human knowledge of this project that makes it unique.”
>
> *Dr Esther Charlesworth*

01 *The workshop encouraged active participation in the local community. Students undertook site surveys and community consultation.* ***02*** *Community consultation.*

2007 WORKSHOP

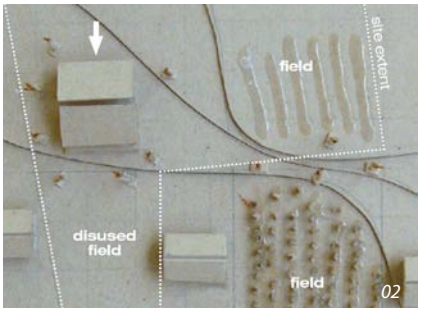
8 Days | 20 Students | 5 Proposals

The workshop involved 20 RMIT students from multi-disciplinary backgrounds including architecture, landscape architecture, interior and industrial design and property construction. They formed five multidisciplinary groups, who worked together to each produce a concept design for housing for kids at risk. The groups developed five unique concepts for the project. The students also worked with RMIT Vietnam multi-media design students for the final two days to consolidate ideas and develop the concepts as media packages.



01 *Typical bricks used for wall construction.* ***02*** *Community participation was a major driver in the design outcomes.* ***03*** *Learning about local construction techniques on a building site in Hoi An.* ***04*** *Using interactive methods such as drawing as a tool for cross-cultural communication.* ***05*** *Visiting a local construction site as part of the 2007 workshop.* ***06*** *Sketch design of site layout opportunities.*

01



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2007 | #1. THE RIVER HOUSE

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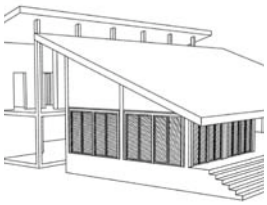

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> “The River House integrates Vietnamese everyday life and culture with innovative design to create a home.”
>
> *Phillipa Abbott, Industrial Design student, RMIT*

Summary: The River House synthesises the traditional modes of Hoi An living with innovative space planning, allowing clearer definition of private and public zones. The scheme embraces use of sustainable technologies including solar panels, self-subsistence farming, grey water recycling and worm farms. The three level house allows for public/private definition and plays a major role in flood mediation, where, during a flood event, the upper levels remain operable. River House integrates Vietnamese everyday life and culture with innovative design to create a home. Key features of the design outcome were:

A Home: Creating a home according to the wants and needs of those who will occupy the house. Through community consultation we clarified various elements of every day living which have been translated spatially.

Social sustainability: Spatially the layout involved a clear definition of public communal space and private space to address the condition of not only those living there using the space, but also the local community. The site was chosen to allow for subsistence farming which could feed inhabitants, the community and sell excess at the market.

Climate: The design is a split three level house that would accommodate for floods up to two and a half metres.

Local Methods & Conditions: Local construction methods and labour are to be used as much as possible.

Environmental Sustainability: Various elements are integrated that allow for ecological benefit including solar panels, water tanks, double brick walls with a cavity etc. An embedded design objective is that sustainable technology would be taught to local builders to improve the local skill base and allow for maintenance.

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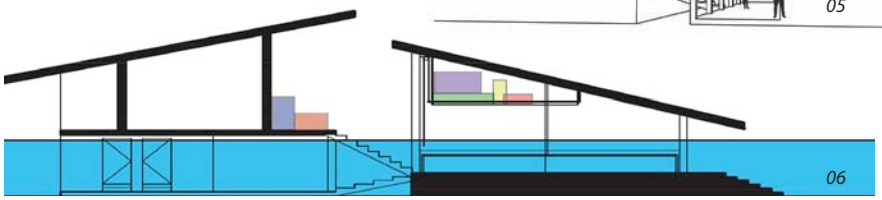


06

01 *3D model of the River House on a proposed site.* ***02*** *Proposed site for the housing development, on the outskirts of Hoi An.* ***03*** *Internal layout highlighting communical and private spaces.* ***04*** *Perspective of the River House highlighting the open central core.* ***05*** *Building section.* ***06*** *The River House is designed to withstand seasonal flooding and peak flood events.*

2007 | #2. ONE LEVEL HOUSE

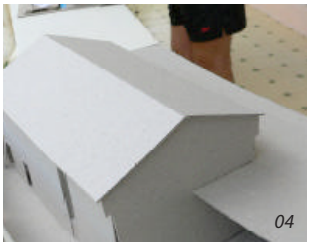
Summary: The One Level House is designed as a prototype for community housing in Hoi An. The design outcome presents a cost effective scheme with use of appropriate and sustainable technologies.

Drawing on extensive consultation with local community members and key stakeholders, the resultant design sought to ensure sustainability in all aspects, through synergy with aspects of the local culture, extremities in seasonal weather conditions, the landscape, and the utilisation of local skills and labour.

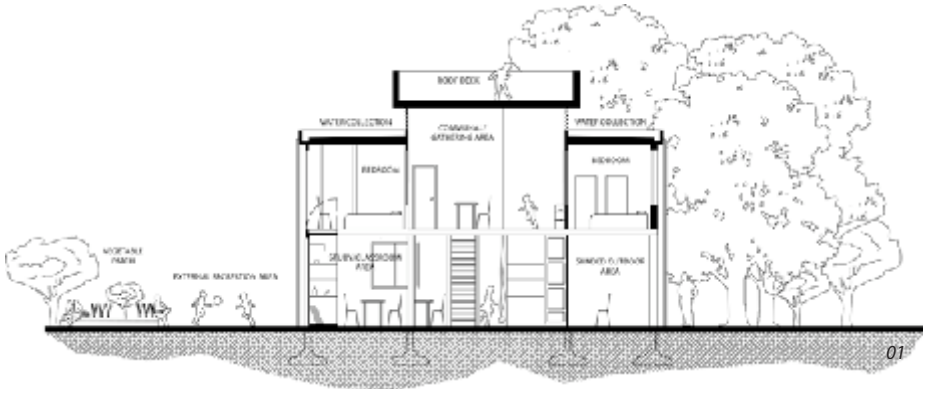
As the site was yet to be specified, the group chose an area of town that was prone to a 'worse case scenario', to allow for maximum flexibility. As such, the chosen site on the peninsula is susceptible to flooding, high humidity levels and strong winds during the typhoon season. The site's close proximity to areas of general employment, services and amenities also satisfied the client's brief.

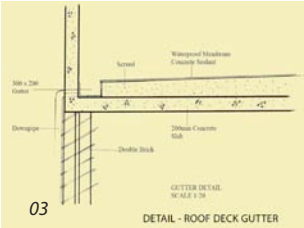
Particular attention was given to vernacular architecture and methods of construction as they are observed today in Hoi An. Clear definitions of public and private space also ensures that the dwelling is adaptable to the personal needs of future residents while remaining true to its program of providing transitional housing for kids at risk.

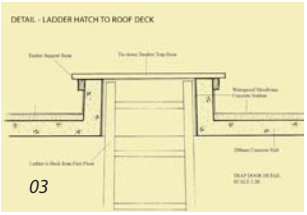
> "We are interested in using vernacular construction techniques . . . Vietnam's construction techniques often seem to effectively deal with issues such as heat, humidity, etc."
>
> *Jock Gilbert, Landscape Architecture student, RMIT*



01 *3D perspective sketch of the One Level House on the proposed site.* ***02*** *Site plan. The proposed site is prone to flooding but the building is specifically designed to tolerate periodic inundation.* ***03*** *Sketch of interior communcal spaces.* ***04*** *Preliminary house models showing interior layout (top) and roof (bottom). Models were used as a means of inviting participation and feedback from the community.* ***05*** *Front elevation.*







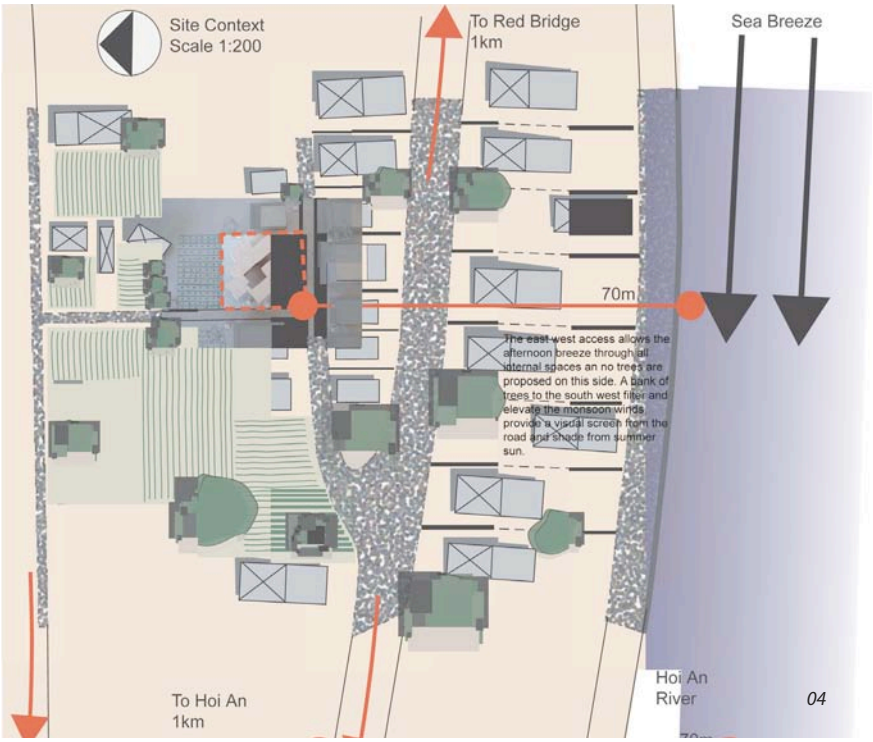
2007 | #3. UP AND DOWN HOUSE

Summary: The Up and Down House is based on the social rhythm of Hoi An combined with the physical rhythms observed during the workshop. The design is a bold, modular system showing sensitivity to its immediate neighbourhood and user group.

The project was predicated on three main themes: firstly an observed lateral and vertical daily rhythm dependent on temperature variations and which guided social activities; secondly an obvious horizontal and vertical response to flood events; and thirdly a recognition of the change in outlook in the clients as they matured through their year of Lifestart tutelage (at first desiring company in accommodation arrangements and progressing to a more independent minded outlook requiring private sleeping spaces).

The design provided a modular response over three levels (including a roof terrace) based on a contemporary, vernacular housing typology. This allowed the architecture to deal with issues of flood as well as provide provision for future incorporation of retail space. This last feature was not well received at the final critique but now has become part of the brief which is great as it helps to incorporate an economically viable Infrastructure to the building.

> “The most important thing I've leant is that you're designing for a group that doesn't have the luxuries that we have and they use the whole space differently, and the meaning of the spaces changes. We call a bedroom: a bedroom, but their bedroom is also a living room, a kitchen and a dining room.”
>
> *Mimi Westhorpe, Architecture student, RMIT*



***01** Building section. **02** Front elevation. The modular overhang on the second floor creates a semi-public space on the ground floor. **03** Construction sections. **04** Proposed site plan.*

01

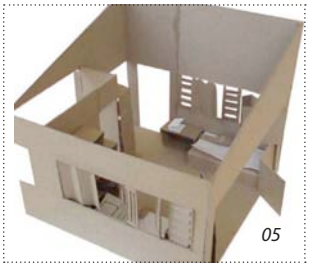
2007 | #4. CORRIDOR HOUSE

Summary: The Corridor House is a bold, sensitive and exciting proposal for housing for kids at risk. Based on the concept of 'breathe the same air, stand on the same dirt, live as they live', the house has been designed as a space that fosters community, a sense of belonging, and inspires living and growth.

The concept was developed as a result of insights gained from observing and speaking with the local community and their needs. As such it is designed to reflect society's needs and values.

> "The project was my first introduction to the perils, challenges and opportunities inherent in multi-disciplinary work."
>
> *Jock Gilbert, Landscape Architecture student, RMIT*

02



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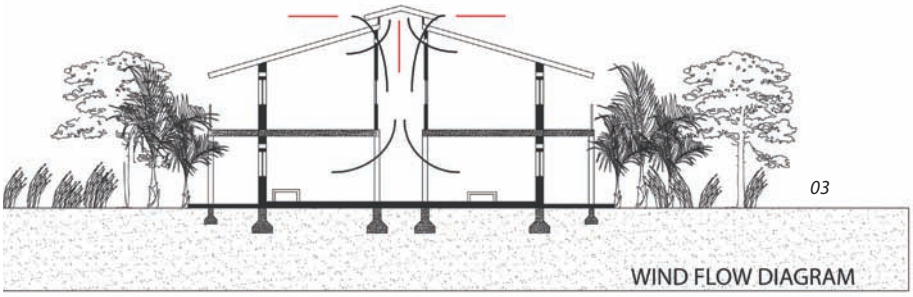

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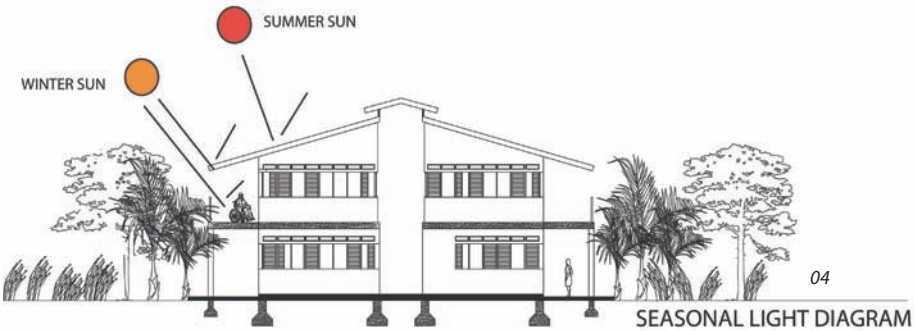
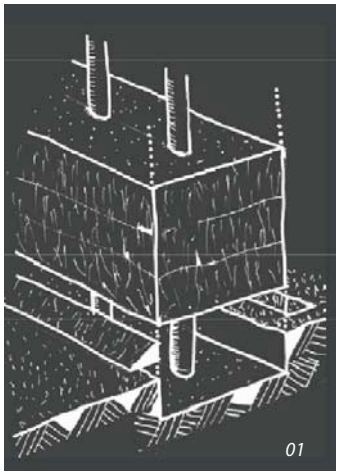
WIND FLOW DIAGRAM

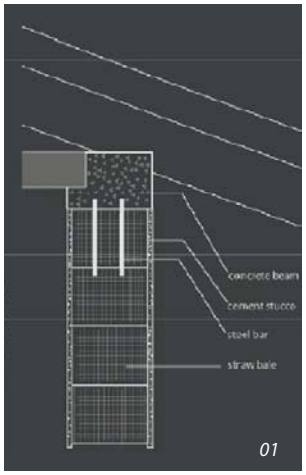


04

SEASONAL LIGHT DIAGRAM

01 *Building section.* ***02*** *Floor plans.* ***03*** *Wind flow.* ***04*** *Seasonal light.* ***05*** *3D model of a prototype interior program.* ***06*** *3D model highlighting the budding's open corridor, around which the house is orientated.*





2007 | #5. COURTYARD HOUSE

Summary

The courtyard scheme demonstrates a design outcome that is both culturally sensitive as well as innovative in its clear definition of private/public/outdoor spaces.

This proposition looked at enhancing the existing community conditions on a smaller scale. The bedrooms, study and kitchen were linked to one another through a central community indoor/outdoor area. The concept was to encourage a great amount of circulation throughout the site to ensure that a community feel was captured within the student housing development.

New technology would be implemented; these included a green roof as a natural cooling system and hay bale construction for the house walling. These materials and skills already existed within the village; therefore local trades people would be able to implement all works and pass on their knowledge to others within the town.

> “Building the Community gave me an insight into what I can do as a Landscape Architect in developing countries. The experience highlighted just how important a sense of community is in a village environment such as Hoi An and the overall endeavour went above and beyond my original expectations.”
>
> *Simone Bliss, Landscape Architecture student, RMIT*

01 *Sketch designs of proposed sustainable construction methods.* ***02*** *The design draws on vernacular technology such as palm fronds and organic materials.* ***03*** *3D model highlighting the Green Roof, community garden and open spaces. Sustainable technology is key to this design outcome.*

2008 PROJECTS

8 Days | 9 Students | 2 Proposals

The 2008 workshop was Phase 2 of the Building The Community Project in Hoi An where RMIT design and construction students refined concepts and ideas developed in 2007. The students spent eight days in Hoi An, consulting with 'kids at risk' as well as meeting with local not-for-profit organisations, architects and developers. The students also worked with RMIT Vietnam multimedia design students for the final two days to consolidate ideas and develop a 'pitch' for their designs to a simulated funding panel.

"I have gained an enormous insight into the complex parameters of a seemingly simple project, and therefore, have gained meaningful and concrete experience in an area of design, which is quite often overlooked, underestimated or simply ignored.

I would think that this experience would inform my design practice from here on in, be it consciously or not."

Debra Kunda, Architecture student, RMIT

01 *RMIT students on Hoi An housing site visit.*

01

02

2008 | #1. THE LIVING HOUSE — OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIVING

> “The multi-disciplinary environment in which we worked in Vietnam was vital for my professional development. I now further understand how and why professionals from other fields operate the way they do!”
>
> *Adam McFarlane, Construction Management student, RMIT*

03

The Living House is about creating a structure that provides stability for young people in the Lifestart educational program. It is a benchmark eco-design that will serve as a precedent on ways to integrate sustainable building and ‘zero waste’ buildings into a developing context.

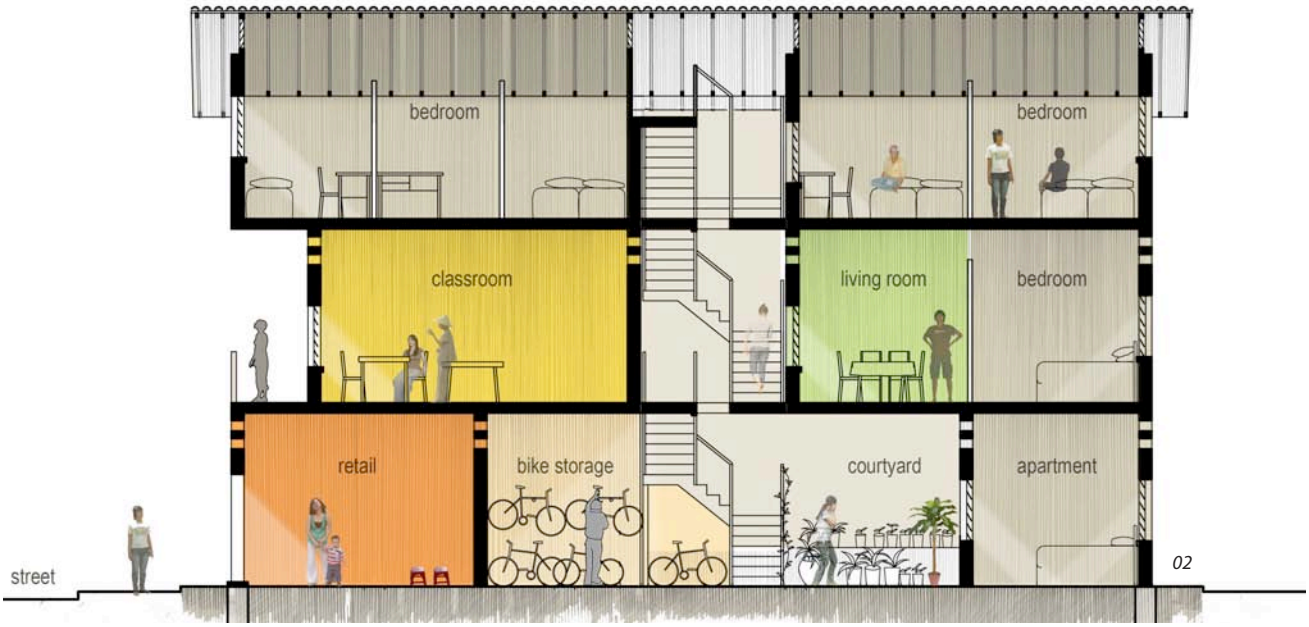
Integrating Spaces and Systems: The physical structure is a three storey house with a roof top terrace, surrounded by a narrow garden area for growing vegetables and plants. The aim of the design is to seamlessly integrate indoor and outdoor space. This is achieved through balcony and decking areas that provides an outdoor area to be used for laundry, planting and socialising, a central open core, a green wall and outdoor spaces.

Beyond the indoor-outdoor space connection, the strength of the design rests on the conceptual framework for a set of ‘living’ systems that define the program for the house. The merit of a systems based approach to design is that the conceptual framework can still be applied, even if the physical form of the house changes due to site constraints.

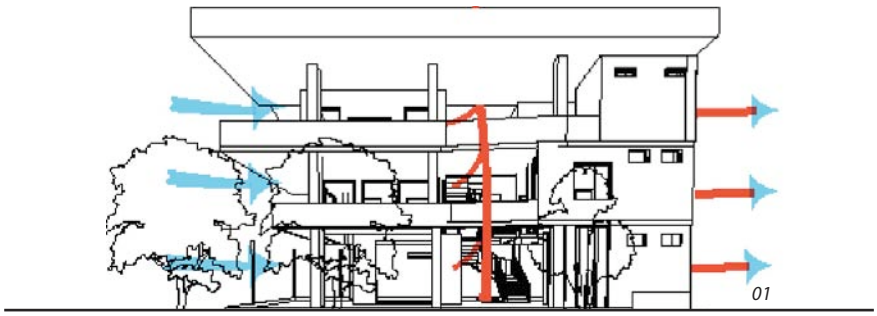
The systems include • Flexibility of space • Water filtration systems • Composting systems • Organic systems (including garden areas and a green wall) • Thermal management systems that use prevailing winds and natural light for natural climate control and minimal energy use.

01

01 *The Living House encompasses sustainable building technology and a ‘zero waste’ principle.* ***02*** *Typical streetscape in Hoi An, most ideal for the Living House.* ***03*** *Community consultation was used to inform the design outcome.*



01 *Montage: The Living House in context.* ***02*** *Section.* ***03*** *(L - R) Ground floor plan, First floor plan, Second floor plan.*

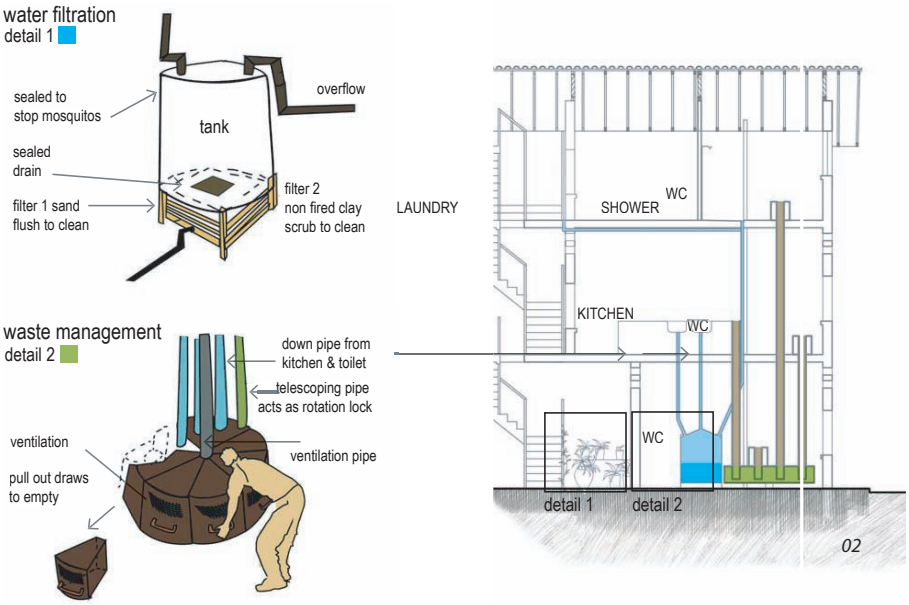


2008 | #1. THE LIVING HOUSE — OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIVING *cont'd*

The Living House gives the inhabitants the opportunity to grow through social, educational, environmental and economic opportunities:

- Socially, by providing flexibility and multifunctional living areas allowing spaces for initiating communication;
- Educationally, the housing program is inclusive of communal areas for teaching and learning requirements, as well as gardens to grow food, kitchens and workshop spaces;
- Environmentally, through a zero waste design methodology; and
- Economically, the eco-facilities will reduce overall running costs as well as create economic opportunities such as selling organic food produce. The outputs from composting systems for example may also be sold as fertilizers.

Construction Principles and Materials: In the construction phase we intend to use local labor, building methods and materials to build the house thus supporting the local community and ensuring the capacity to maintain the house through local systems. The design involves two main principles of construction, derived from the vernacular architecture and conditions. These are multi-level concrete structure and masonry infill walls with opening for natural ventilation.

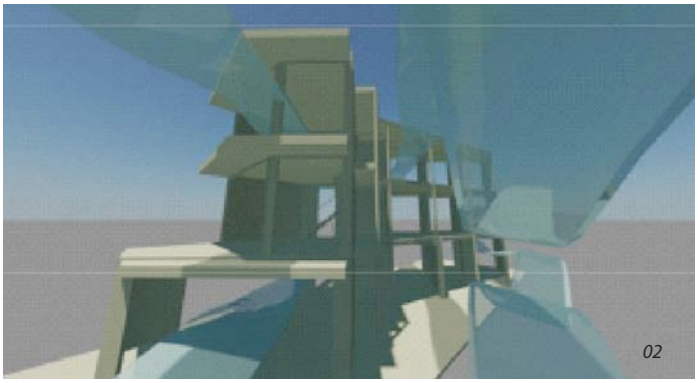


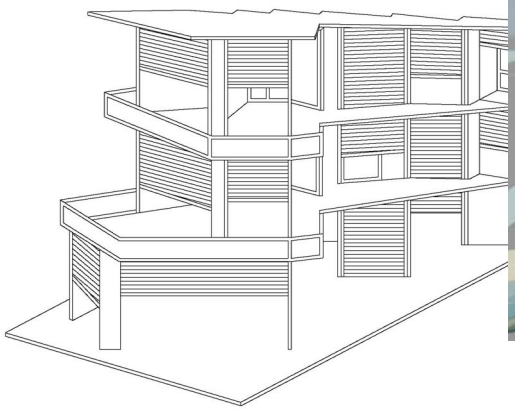
01 *The building is well adapted to Hoi An's climate, using prevailing winds for natural cooling.* ***02*** *Composting systems for household waste and rainwater treatment systems are integral to this design outcome.*

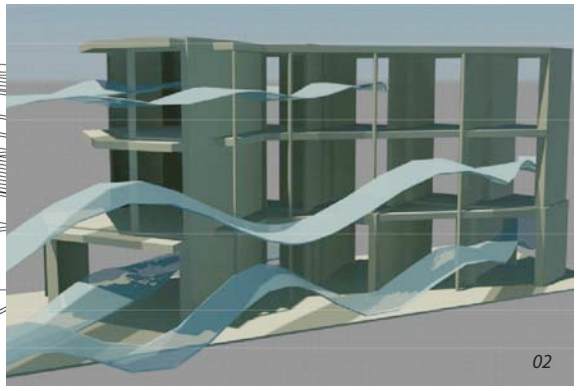
2008 | #2. THE MO HOUSE — OPEN UP OPPORTUNITIES

'Mo' is the Vietnamese word for 'open spaces' and has been adopted as a key principle for this design. By implementing the underlying theme of 'Mo' into the design, we were able to address the climatic imperatives of Hoi An's tropical condition. The physical orientation of the building is unfurled around the 'breeze axis' of the prevailing wind. The openness of this system also welcomes indirect light into the spaces without the inadvertent heating of direct sunlight.

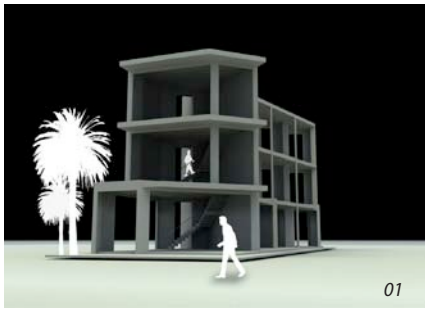
Consultation with members of Lifestart's youth program and Disabled Women's Group about the rhythms of daily life in Hoi An, living conditions and community interaction which informed the program for the Mo House's spaces. From these discussions, two design themes were identified: a need for flexibility and social interaction.







01 *Inspired by the opening/closing function of local lanterns, the "Mo" house seeks to create flexibility of space.*
02 *The building is unfurled around a "breeze axis" of the prevailing wind.*



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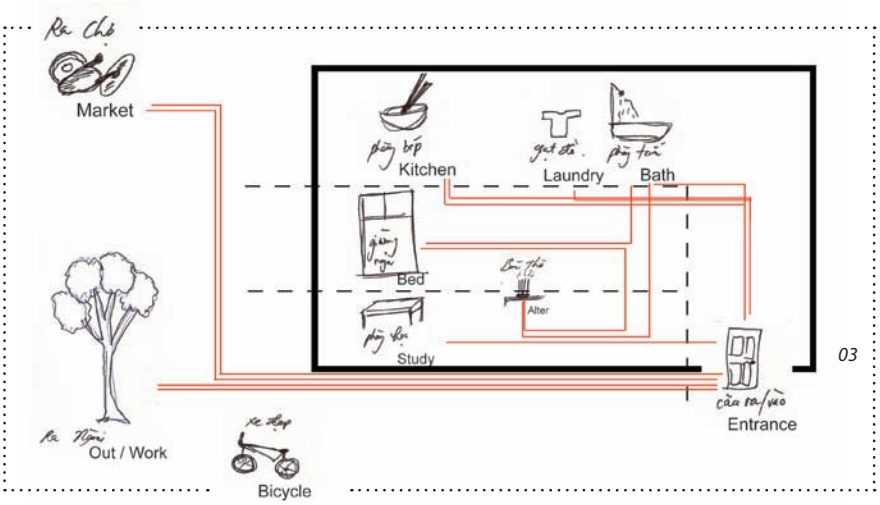
2008 | #2. THE MO HOUSE — OPEN UP OPPORTUNITIES *cont'd*

Dao's daily routine > > >

• Pray in the morning • Heads to the market • Does laundry • Cooks a meal • Goes to work on the farm • Has lunch at home • Relax/watch TV/ reading • Does some study • Heads back to work • Arrives home late in the afternoon • Reads/relaxes • Cooks dinner • Shower • Reads/relaxes • Sleep.

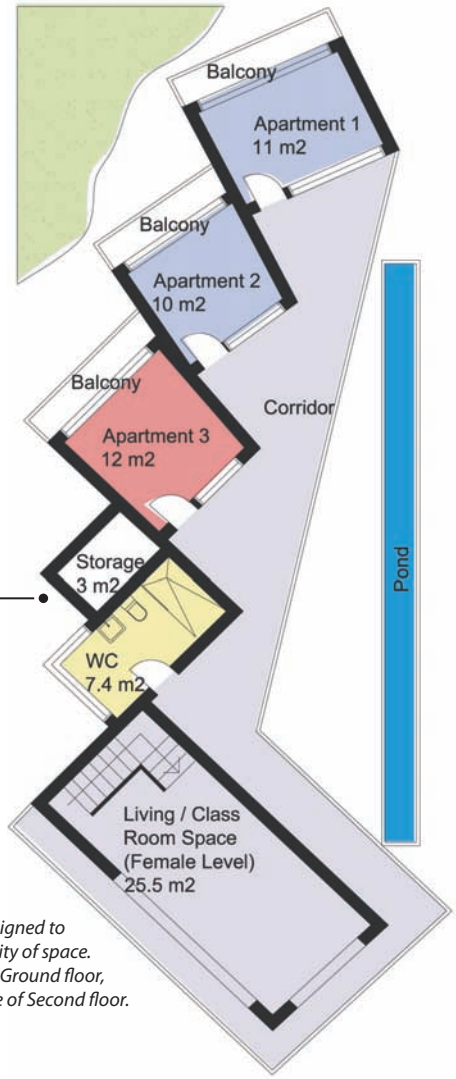
Typical daily routines such as this were used to inform the program for the space.



03

Flexible Spaces: The house has the ability to open and close dictating the type of activity the kids wish to use in specific areas. For example the dining room transforms into a classroom to keep the space constantly activated. There is also a circulation veranda that wraps around the front of the building, with small balconies on the rear side. This acts as shading as well as small break out private spaces, or alternatively allows the rooms to open up to become larger spaces.

04



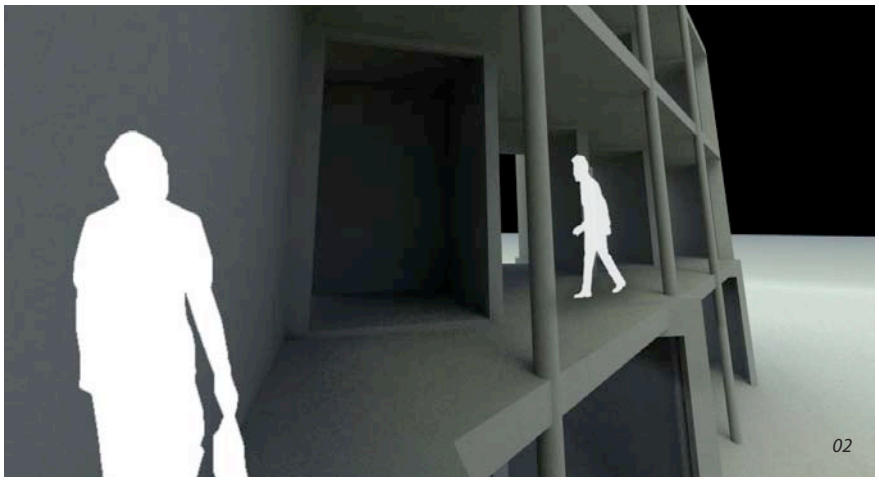
01 *Building section.* ***02*** *The interior spaces have been designed to transform in both shape and function, to allow for flexibility of space.* ***03*** *Graphic interpretation of Dao's daily routine.* ***04*** *(L-R) Ground floor, First floor, Second floor, Roof plan— with enlarged image of Second floor.*

Social Spaces: It is important not to forget that this is not just somewhere to sleep and study, but a place for social interaction, an important part of the educational process and the kid's development.

We have addressed the need to open up social barriers by providing communal spaces; and a 'privacy axis' system so kids can control the level of privacy and social interaction they require. Level one and two are divided into female and male floors, both repeating the same floor plan, minimising cost, but allowing a separation to help the kids gain confidence in a more supportive context. This home provides a social network that helps to open the kids up to a comfortable social support network they otherwise would not have.

Construction Principles and Materials: The design embraces traditional and local building techniques which as well as minimising cost, helps instill a sense of familiarity and ease within the kids. Key materials identified for use in the:

Footing system:	Slab on ground, piers as required;
External walls:	Double skin masonry with render;
Internal walls:	Single skin masonry;
Roofing:	Tile;
Structural:	Concrete block work with steel reinforcement where required;
Window/doors:	Timber/ louvres.



01 *Montage: The 'Mo' House in context.* ***02*** *Open, social spaces.*

PROJECT BUDGET

The following cost estimate is based on the average cost of building either of the two design concepts from the 2008 workshop.

Site and Land Acquisition
Current land acquisition costs in the proposed non-flood prone area of Hoi An are $US 665 / sqm. For the purposes of the Building the Community project a typical 300 sqm site was selected.

Land Acquisition Estimate: $US 200,000.00

Cost Estimate
A current schedule of rates was not available for the Hoi An area at the time of estimation as construction commencement date is unknown, and inflation and CPI indexes are currently in the vicinity of 28% per annum therefore cost forecasting would prove volatile. In this context, cost estimates have been prepared on square metre rates for Gross Floor Area (GFA).

A basic square metre rate has been determined based on average costs for a vernacular 2-4 storey house, modified to allow for structure, applied finishes, doors / windows, services (electrical, plumbing, fire, fire detection and data), civil works and preliminaries. This equates to approximately US 350.00 / sqm of Gross Floor Area (GFA). This figure allows for all materials and labour to complete the project. The total floor area is estimated to be approximately 300 sqm over three floors. Additional costs would be required for a site supervisor, consultants and a local architect.

Item	Description	Est. $ USD[1]
Land Acquisition	Allow	200,000.00
Construction	$350.00/m2 - GFA x 300.00 sqm	105,000.00
Site Manager	Allow	3,000.00
Consultant Fees	Allow	3,000.00
Architect	Allow	2,000.00
Subtotal		313,000.00
Contingency	5%	15,650.00
Total funds required		**328,650.00**

1 As at Jul'08, subject to market changes. All costs are indicative only and subject to change. The rate of inflation in Hoi An is just under 30% pa.

2007 workshop group

STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

We would like to thank the multidisciplinary team of students from Architecture, Interior Design, Landscape Architecture, Property Construction and Industrial Design who volunteered for the Building the Community Workshop.

2007 Student Participants

Andrew Jia Chau	Jessica Noakes
Mimi Westhorpe	Simone Bliss
Nick McCarthy	Joanne Morris
Debra Kunda	Stacey Robinson
Oliver Hutchison	Jock Gilbert
Blanche De Guzman	Tao Oudomvilay
Elif Fazlioglu	Ti Hoang
Phillipa Abbott	Michael Hubbard
Helen Duong	Maheshinee Suraweera
Robin Read	Temmety Jacob

2007–2008: Building the Community Project Team

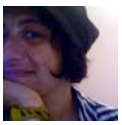
Dr Esther Charlesworth, Project Leader 2007–2008
Mel Dodd, Studio Project Leader, Hoi An 2008
Prof John Fien, Studio Project Leader, RIUV 2008
Lucinda Hartley, Project Coordinator, Vietnam 2008
Beck Adams, Project Coordinator, Melbourne 2008
Don Gordon, Project Coordinator, RIUV 2007–2008
Richard Streitmatter-Tran, Project Lecturer, RIUV 2008

. . . with thanks to Prof Michael Mann, RIUV
Prof Andrew Scown, RIUV
Prof Jim Barber, RMIT
Prof Richard Blythe, RMIT
Prof Paul James, RMIT
Deb Kunda, Exhibition Coordinator
Jenine Davidson, Graphic Designer

STUDENT PARTICIPANTS 2008

Adam McFarlane 32. Third year Construction Management student; Adam is currently working as a contract administrator for a building contractor in Melbourne. His interest in the Building the Community project stems from an aspiration to assist people with fewer opportunities than he has had.

Anna Nguyen 21. Third year Architecture student; currently completing masters degree. Anna is interested in using architecture as a tool for making a difference in other countries.



Debra Kunda Fifth year Architecture student. For Debra, the Hoi An project was an opportunity to further her knowledge/experience in community based projects.

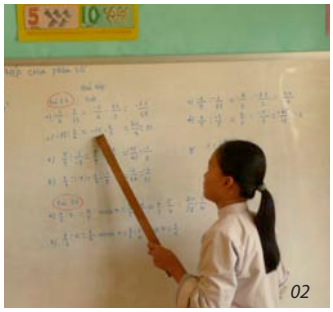
Lily Lim 23. Fifth year Architecture student. Lily is interested in the contribution of architecture to sustainable community development, and this was an amazing opportunity to test those interests outside of the classroom.

Phillipa Abbott 27. Third year Industrial Design student. Phillipa is interested in creating social and environmental sustainable development through working with and understanding people and place as part of contextual frameworks.

Prue Miller 26. Fourth year Architecture student. Prue is currently working for Goodman (Melbourne), in the Architectural and Planning Team. She is interested in working across disciplines to promote culturally sensitive design.

Simone Bliss 27. Final year Landscape Architecture student. Simone believes that a project such as Building the Community should encourage social interaction among users and should take into consideration the existing context. Sensitivity is of the highest priority when implementing design systems within a foreign community.

Tim Sullivan 33. Final year Architecture student. Tim is currently completing his masters degree at CUHK in Hong Kong. Tim is interested in the opportunities in respectful cultural exchange and the possibilities of architecture to break down social barriers.



PROJECT PARTNERS

The Lifestart Foundation is a non-profit charity registered in Victoria, Australia. Founded by Karen Leonard, it has been created to help orphans, street kids and families in Vietnam to become self-sufficient. Lifestart Foundation is currently sponsoring 'kids at risk' into apprenticeship programs, sponsoring entire families through the Support a Family program and assisting orphans and orphanages in Quang Nam Province, Vietnam.

Lifestart Foundation is a grass-roots organisation run by a dedicated team of volunteers. Run entirely on good-will, the foundation guarantees that 100% of all donations go directly towards assisting and providing for children and families in need. The Foundation raises funds independent of donations to cover travel and administrative costs.

Further information: www.lifestartfoundation.org.au

RMIT University is one of Australia's original and leading educational institutions, producing some of Australia's most employable graduates. As an innovative, global university of technology, with its heart in the city of Melbourne, RMIT has an international reputation for excellence in work-relevant education, high quality research and engagement with the needs of industry and community. It is one of the largest universities in Australia, operating across eight locations in Melbourne, Victoria, with 62,000 students in total. Since 1992, RMIT has developed a strong association with Vietnam through education, business and research links in engineering, information technology, communication, finance and telecommunications. The University commenced offering programs in 2001 in Ho Chi Minh City and in 2004 in Hanoi.

The School of Architecture and Design aims to address compelling, contemporary issues in ways that facilitate cultural change through design. The school invites critical engagement with design and community within an ethical framework of social justice and human rights.

01 *Lifestart's programs include a craft group for the local disabled community.* ***02*** *Learning at the Lifestart school.*

PROJECT PARTNERS *cont'd*

The international perspective adopted by the School of Property, Construction and Project Management has helped to consolidate its position as the premier provider of Construction Management, Project Management and Property programs in the Asia Pacific region. The School provides leading edge, innovative and applicable research solutions and consulting services to the construction and property industries.

Further information: www.rmit.edu.au (Australia) www.rmit.edu.vn (Vietnam)

architectswithout frontiers australia

Architects Without Frontiers (AWF) is a not-for-profit organisation based in Australia. Its mission is to provide Australian design expertise to communities both within Australia and overseas, afflicted by social, environmental or natural disasters. AWF assists in the long-term rebuilding of cities and communities in need, irrespective of race, religion, creed or political affiliation.

Using Australian design expertise in the fields of architecture, urban design and landscape architecture, AWF members currently provide unpaid design and construction services in Nepal, Australia, Malawi, Tanzania, Papua New Guinea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Vietnam, Fiji, India and Afghanistan.

The aim of AWF is to work with communities in the reconstruction of their physical and social infrastructure. As an integral part of a project AWF trains members of a community in the services being provided; to help foster self-reliance of a community rather than dependence on outside organisations.

Further information: www.architectswithoutfrontiers.com.au

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www.architectswithoutfrontiers.com.au

The Age Newspaper, Melbourne. 3 September 2007

A design class in helping others

RMIT students pay to give aid in Vietnam, writes **Adam Morton.**

IT TAKES a rare type of project to entice a group of university students into paying $3000 to spend five long days toiling on a charity trip to a small South-East Asian city.

It perhaps helps when, all being well, the project will make a tangible difference to the lives of poor street kids looking for work. And when those street kids live in scenic, welcoming regional Vietnam.

Under the guidance of architect and senior research fellow Esther Charlesworth, 20 RMIT students visited coastal Hoi An over winter to design a shelter for teenagers and young men who had moved from country areas without support to look for work.

According to Dr Charlesworth, the trip was the antithesis of "design tourism" — the phenomenon of people coming, asking questions but not leaving anything behind.

Instead, the students socialised and ate with the local community, hunted for suitable sites for environmentally sound development and drew up blueprints for a building where young men could eat, sleep and receive some basic training.

The project is supported by non-profit organisations OzQuest, Life-start Foundation and Architects Without Frontiers. Trip organisers will use the best aspects from each design in coming up with a plan for a shelter to be built next year.

Many of the students found the trip overwhelming. Drawn from third and fourth-year architecture, interior and industrial design, and construction management classes, they barely knew each other before forming five groups and starting what, for many, was the most demanding project of their lives.

For some, it was the first time they had been overseas.

"I guess it's the choice — do I spend summer running around Europe looking at monuments or working on a project that has a chance to be built," Dr Charlesworth says. "I think the students commitment and willingness to engage on the ground in the dirt and in real communities has been very powerful to watch. It's been the most rewarding academic project I've ever been involved with."

The Hoi An venture is one of several Vietnam trips this year to tie in with RMIT's 120th anniversary celebrations. All up, 120 students will visit the country, home of two RMIT international campuses.

RMIT academic recruits are also set to undergo compulsory training at its Ho Chi Minh City campus as part of a new program introduced this year.

The Hoi An shelter, the most hands-on of the student projects, will house between eight and 10 youths considered "at risk". The emphasis in the designs was on cultural exchange with the local community and environmental sustainability..

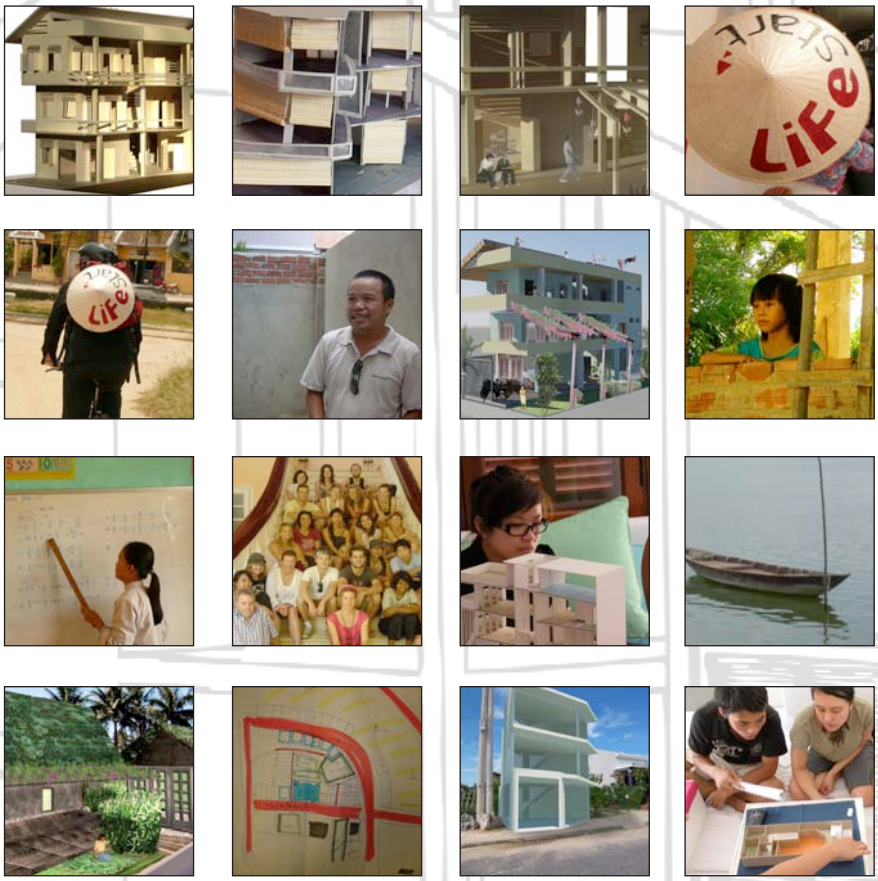
One of the more ambitious proposals put forward by students called for a "green roof", made of vegetation, despite the architects present not being aware of any others in use in Vietnam. Others proposed cavity walls, which have an empty internal space for better insulation, to deal with the heat.

Dr Charlesworth says all the plans had merit: "It's not a competition — there is something good coming out of each of the schemes."

With the Vietnam project having received more than twice as many applications from students as spots available on the trip, Dr Charlesworth hopes it will be followed by similar projects in regional Australia.

The reporter travelled to Vietnam with RMIT.

Design and construction students from RMIT devised plans to build a shelter for men in the Vietnamese coastal town of Hoi An.



BUILDING THE COMMUNITY

Designs for Housing for Kids at Risk | Hoi An, Vietnam
2007–2008

RMIT UNIVERSITY

lifestart foundation

architectswithout frontiers australia

Global Cities

annex 4

Conference Review Landscape Architecture Australia
World Urban Forum, Nanjing China

World Urban Forum 4

THE IMPORTANT ROLE LANDSCAPE AND DESIGN CAN PLAY IN THE CRISIS OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS.

WORDS LUCINDA HARTLEY

1
THE OPENING OF THE OPPORTUNITIES FUND FOR URBAN YOUTH-LED DEVELOPMENT.

2
UN-HABITAT'S FOURTH BIENNIAL WORLD URBAN FORUM WAS HELD IN NANJING, CHINA.

In 2007, for the first time in human history, half the world's population lived in cities. This urbanization of humanity has been described by Anna Tibaijuka, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, as the greatest "social, cultural, economic and environmental transformation in history." With the urban population set to swell to five billion people by 2030, this creates an unprecedented challenge for the urban landscape and those who design it - especially because much of this growth is predicted to occur among the urban poor in developing countries.[1]

In November 2008, UN-HABITAT (the United Nations Human Settlements Programme) held its fourth biennial World Urban Forum in Nanjing, China. The forum attracted over 8,000 delegates from around the world to discuss the crisis of human urban settlements and to make appropriate policy recommendations. The forum discourse was centred on the theme of "Harmonious Urbanization" as a theoretical framework in order to understand today's urbanized world. Responses came from architects, landscape architects, planners and other built environment professionals along with a host of social, economic and international development workers from the NGO, government and private sectors.

The conference theme focused on both tangible and intangible aspects of the city, with the aim of working towards targets for the UN Millennium Development Goals, particularly Goal 7, Target 11: "To improve the lives of over 100 million slum dwellers" by 2015. As a youth delegate to the forum, I was particularly engaged in the topic of "generational harmony," pertinent in our present context where half the world's urban population is now aged under twenty-five years.[2] As a panellist for the session Creative Cities, I examined the role of the arts, architecture, landscape and public art in community development, particularly in youth-led development.

Among a multitude of topics presented, which ranged from peak oil to urban issues of HIV and AIDs, there were a surprising number of sessions that focused on the role of design in development. These challenged the traditional role of built environment professionals and encouraged new models, which have poverty alleviation and sustainable cities as their central priorities. This is a necessary paradigm shift as we are facing a future where slums and informal settlements will house the majority of humanity.

At the forefront of this discussion was the UNESCO Chair of Landscape and Environment from the University of Montreal, which positioned landscape as a concept for "the cultural and social appreciation of the environment and inhabited natural spaces."[3] The Chair was established in response to the sense of global crisis that had arisen in land management and the need for international collaboration to address the global nature of contemporary issues in landscape planning, design and management. The Chair seeks to internationalize knowledge on landscape and development with partner organizations around the world.

Another prominent design pioneer was Global Studio, coordinated by Anna Rubbo from the University of Sydney, which works with multi-disciplinary teams of design students towards participatory outcomes for slum upgrading. ▸

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In addition, the International Centre for Sustainable Cities, based in Vancover, Canada has adopted an innovative approach to "City Imagining" and city-wide urban design strategies in developing countries. The World Bank has also been proactive in engaging urban designers in urban upgrading projects. One of the most inspiring discussions was with a Palestinian youth worker who was trying to establish safe youth spaces and children's playgrounds in an area where safety issues include gunfire rather than fencing height or soft fall.

The conference dialogue demonstrated that landscape architects have the existing technology and expertise to forge collaborative approaches for poverty alleviation and development. However, I feel that landscape architects lack an effective means of upscaling these approaches to effect real and sustainable change in the global crisis of human settlements. As a profession we are familiar with global challenges, but when faced with the task of designing for an urban population of five billion, or addressing the needs of the one million people who arrive in African and Asian cities each week, I ask the question: are we ready? Of course, this is not a reality that landscape and built environment professionals should deal with alone, but there is a case to be made for making design more applicable and accessible to developing communities. Design can translate engineering solutions into participatory community outcomes, which is an important process in successfully alleviating poverty.

It is important that we are not apathetic about the role landscape and design can play in the crisis of human settlements. If we are to meet the goal of improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers everyone has a part to play.

1 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) State of the Worlds Population 2007 Report www.unfpa.org
2 UNFPA, as above.
3 La Chaire UNESCO en paysage et environnement de l'Université de Montréal (CUPEUM), "Mission et Objectifs 2008." www.unesco-paysage.umontreal.ca

Lucinda Hartley is a landscape architect currently working in Vietnam on slum upgrading and low-cost housing development through the Australian Youth Ambassador for Development (AYAD) Program. She is also the 2008 Asialink Weary Dunlop Fellow and sits on the Youth Advisory Board for UN-HABITAT.

3
INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS ALONG A CANAL SYSTEM IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM.

4
A CRISIS OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS? BOENG KAK LAKE, PHNOM PENH IS HOME TO OVER 4000 FAMILIES.