Building for the Other 90%: Design Agency + Cultural Housing

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"The word 'design' usually elicits images of modern architecture in the pages of Dwell, Bryant Park runways during Fashion Week, the font face Helvetica, or the latest Apple product. While the aesthetics and utility of modern design are debatable, the following is true: new designs are made for consumers with disposable income – the top 10 percent of people in the world."

Economic drivers draws people towards cities, but overpopulation and rapid urbanization has forced people to migrate to the suburbs surrounding the city. This shift leads to the formation of informal settlements, or slums, where residents live in inhumane conditions without basic food, water, or shelter. This poster entry explores design agency by harnessing cultural influences in the natural disaster zone of the Philippines. The studio project participated in the Spring 2015 'DenCity' Design Competition as hosted by Shelter Global. Student teams were established to develop understandings of real world issues and posing problems to address the question: what is architecture for the other 90%?

Students began the project by gathering data and creating graphic representations / diagrams to visualize alarming relationships. Research in their infancy began to develop into more complex diagrammatic understandings of site dynamics – social, cultural, and geographical. This poster displays the graphics that define the current population conditions of The Philippines, the existing typology and materiality of the city of Manila, and also the country's geographical susceptibility to the reoccurring devastation of tropical typhoons. This project not only acknowledges the slum condition of the country, but also addresses the urgent need for a process that tackles immediate post storm issues, and one that follows through to the construction of permanent cultural housing. Therefore, 'design as policy' became an integral topic of the proposal, and therefore, evolved a solution that is both procedural and architectural.

This project uses the hypothetical occurrence of a typhoon making landfall near the city of Manila and, more specifically, the impoverished Tondo District to explain a recovery process that begins post storm. These steps can be seen in the 'Construction Phasing' timeline graphic. To increase community resilience, the concept of "core" and "infill" are incorporated heavily into the progression of this process.
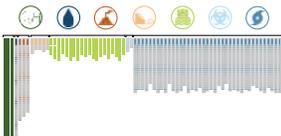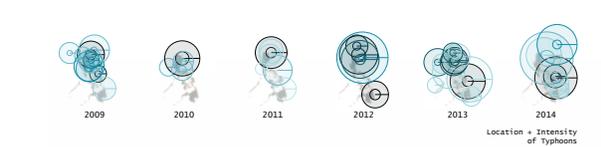
There are three main stages to this project's design implementation: Emergency settlement, Transitional settlement, and Permanent settlements. The designed process of building, specific to the culture of the Philippines, will improve living conditions within impoverished areas as well as increase the resilience of communities so they can respond more effectively to the reoccurring typhoons. The intention is for government entities to regulate the transition of these three phases, as well as provide material that will act as framework for residents to install infill materiality of their choosing. Therefore, the new building typology is extracted from existing Philippine building knowledge, without losing the strong sense of community that is evident in the area. This will in turn give the residents of the region their own design agency, while building community and mitigating the impact of the country's natural disasters.

June | July | August | September | October | November | December | January | February | March | April | May

TYPHOON OCCURS

Emergency Shelter

Transitional Settlement

BAMBOO
NIPA PALM
TARP
BURLAP

Permanent Core Construction Begins

Residents Begin Infill Process

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2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014
Location + Intensity of Typhoons

old door | tarp | wood | cardboard
signage | tires | sheet | corrugated metal

BUILDING ...... for the other 90%
SHELTER GLOBAL 'DenCITY' Project

Cycle of Site Usage

3rd Floor

2nd Floor

1st Floor

scale: 1" = 20'-0"