

## Towards an Architecture of Ingenuity and Empowerment

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### Abstract

The submitted materials present work produced during a semester long travel studio based in Southeast Asia which was run in the Spring Semester of 2019. The travel group of fifteen students consisted of nine third year undergraduate architecture students and seven planning students, including four Chinese nationals, ranging from second year to graduate level.

The students worked in interdisciplinary teams, each team beginning their two and a half month travel study living together in separate small towns for over a month in (relatively) remote conditions at homestays in rural Thailand. Students became intimately familiar with these towns, forged strong personal relationships, and built reservoirs of knowledge one conversation at a time.

*It is our shared premise that architecture exists in these small villages and towns in the ingenuity of the people, that architecture exists in a shared language of making, modifying and reuse. It is a modest but vibrant architecture, an architecture that is alive and evolving, an architecture that is small in scale, accessible, and one that emerges from the people.*

Students were challenged learn from the people and to engage the existing conditions of place; challenged to identify, to amplify and to empower existing energies. The attached materials share a sampling of the design work produced and offer this model of immersive travel study, which leverages local University and community based partnerships, as a way of building a substantive approach for an architecture which uses social and cultural issues as a catalyst for design.



Figure 1. Proposal for rural housing prototype outside Yangon, Myanmar; Jenny Gercilus, Mark Bila



Figure 2. This project proposes to enable and empower underserved populations by leveraging existing infrastructure to benefit self builders and marginalized populations; Noah Smith, Stephen Smith, Erica Young



Figure 3. Existing billboard support as armature for informal housing, Bangkok; Luis Olguin, Ellie Morinville