

ACHR "Seniors" gathering

December 9-11, 2013

Venue: Ibis Riverside Hotel, Bangkok

Tom's rough notes from the meeting

Who joined the meeting?

1. Mr. Kirtee Shah, India
2. Mr. Arif Hasan, Pakistan
3. Mr. Mitsuhiro Hosaka, Japan
4. Fr. Jorge Anzorena, Japan
5. Mr. Lalith Lankatilleke, Sri Lanka
6. Mr. Gregor Meerpohl, Germany
7. Ms. Lajana Manandar, Nepal
8. Fr. Norberto Carcellar, Philippines
9. Ms. May Domingo Price, Philippines
10. Mr. Chawanad Luansang ("Nad"), Thailand
11. Mr. Supawut Boonmahatanakorn ("Tee"), Thailand
12. Mr. Maurice Leonhardt, ACHR Secretariat Bangkok
13. Ms. Somsook Boonyabancha, ACHR Secretariat Bangkok
14. Mr. Thomas Kerr, ACHR Secretariat Bangkok
15. Mr. Pisut Simouk ("Sut"), film-maker from Openspace Group

Meeting schedule:

- **Dec. 9:** The first session will be on the 9th afternoon, to reflect on Perween, and what she meant to all of us in the Asia region. Maurice and Sut will film our discussion and send the footage to Aquila, Perween's sister in Karachi, who is making a film about Perween. We tacked this session onto the agenda because of Aquila's film making, and she was hoping to get interviews with many of you for the film anyway. So we decided to take advantage of your all being here to make it more of a casual discussion, instead of formal, head-on interviews, which can sometimes squash anything lively! This session is optional, so if you arrive too late, no big deal.
- **Dec. 10:** Looking back and reflecting on the progress, changes and achievements the ACHR coalition has gone through over the last 25 years. At some point, Somsook will give her own 40-minute recap on how she sees the ACHR's work and learning over the past quarter century.
- **Dec. 11:** This will be our day to look forward, and discuss the possible future directions for ACHR and the coalition's work.



Monday December 9

Somsook : Welcomes everyone to the meeting.

- **Explains a little about the big anti-government street protests** going on in Bangkok, which have come to a climax today, with people coming from all directions into the city to join the protests, blow their whistles and register their displeasure with the corruption, centralization and anti-democratic policies of the Yingluck Shinawatra administration, which is actually being run by the prime minister's brother (a convicted criminal living in exile outside Thailand) and they feel has lost all legitimacy to run the country.
- **Explains the agend of this meeting:** The seniors here in this meeting have seen so many things - they know their countries very well, they know the history of ACHR very well, and they know most of the key groups in the coalition. Se we need to use this meeting to get some clearer ideas where we are now and where to go next.



Maurice : Introduces this session on remembering Perween Rahman.

- **Shows parts of a recently-made film on mapping**, by the Community Architects Network (CAN), which has been dedicated to Perween. The film contains footage from the presentation on mapping which Perween made at the ACHR regional meeting in Bangkok, in January 2013, just two months before she was killed in Karachi.
- Shows some photos of Perween
- Describes the big resurgence of interest in mapping around the Asia region after Perween's inspiring presentaton

Arif : Describes the situation around Perween's murder in March 2013:

- **We are at war.** 40,000 Pakistanis have been killed since 9-11, in bombs and targeted assassinations. But we have not treated it as a war. The origins of this war go back to the jihad against the Soviets, in which an Islamic fighting machine was created to fight the Soviets, and that fighting machine then became part of the Pakistani political process, developed close links with conflicts in the middle east, and became part of a much bigger picture.
- **Karachi is an important node for this war**, as the country's main port city. All the ammunition and food for the troops in Afghanistan goes through Karachi. And all the heroin (opium) that financed the war goes through Karachi. Ideological changes that have taken place in Karachi, which used to be an open, tolerant, secular and multi-cultural city. Exodus of people from the Northwest of Pakistan (Pathans, Pashtuns and others?) who are being driven out of their villages and towns by this war - many are coming to Karachi and settling in the city's informal settlements, and bringing with them extremism, heroin trading, and a new kind of informal economic activities in which the real estate sector, jihad and heroin are all linked. A lot of the city's land market is now being financed by money from heroin. They buy over the local administrations, shoot judges and journalists and prominent citizens who don't go along or expose all this stuff.
- **We believe Perween was killed because of her investigations into water theft:** Karachi has a fairly decent water supply system. OPP had identified water stealing points (hydrants) where this new mafia was stealing water meant for poor settlements and then selling it to them from tankers. This is a multi-trillion Rupee business, and Perween had developed a passion for documenting and exposing it, taking photos of these water hydrants where water is stolen and making presentations of her team's findings. We believe she was killed for exposing this water stealing business.
- **The police blame Perween's death on the Taliban**, say she was shot dead by a Taliban guy who was tracked down and killed a few days later. But we don't trust the police, and have filed a petition with the Supreme Court asking for an investigation into her death (which many ACHR friends signed the petition). The hearing is coming up soon, and hopefully, we'll find out what really happened and who did it - not just the men who actually shot her, but the higher-ups who ordered the killing.

Arif : More on Perween :

- **The 2010 floods all over Sindh and Punjab really changed Perween.** The OPP did a big expansion of its work after that catastrophe, and began linking with new partner groups in remote areas where the OPP had not previously had contact with. Perween saw poverty there like she had never seen before - villages without no schools, no clinics, no electricity. After that, the OPP decided not to attend any more seminars or workshops organized by international agencies, and distanced themselves from the government also, except in the goths and sewer system projects.
- **After she was killed, we all panicked.** Who will be shot dead next? Perween's right-hand man Salim Alim Uddin took over as director of OPP, and Anwar Rashid took over as director of the OPP-RTI (though he knows little about sewers!). The work has not stopped. But some work in sensitive areas has been curtailed (like the goths mapping). Students are reluctant to visit OPP now, out of fear. And OPP's partner organizations in Sindh are scared to come for training programs too - so the OPP teams have to visit them instead, and this has had a positive side in boosting these partner organizations in other places.
- **Perween will not be replaced.** Her absence is something we have not stopped feeling. She had incredible charisma, and a certain manner of conversation. She may at times have seemed to people naive, but it was not naivety, but a certain kind of charm. We will also not be able to replace her innovation. She had made a position for herself in Karachi, with stakeholders in many different sectors, who respected her and listened to what she said.
- **Her knowledge was not the kind of knowledge that comes from books**, but knowledge from experience and association. Perween was Arif's student in university, and she joined OPP just one year after completing her architecture studies. During that first year, she worked in a commercial architecture office in Karachi, but quickly became disillusioned by designing only houses and buildings for rich people. So she came to Arif, and he sent her to OPP, where she quickly became active, and began leading surveys and other initiatives very well.
- **Changes in OPP :** The great challenge for OPP is to understand this larger situation in Karachi and Pakistan and respond to it. The OPP's strong anti-elite bias has become an anti-elite prejudice. But the definition of elites has also changed: the old elite came with customs, history, culture, knowledge and clear views. The new elite is just rich. The OPP also feel the state is useless so why should we bother about it - just see how to help people to get by - this is the old bias (which Arif has not agreed with)

Arif : More on the situation in Karachi now.

- **We have lost so many friends in the last three years** - most of them shot dead in a similar way, for not dissimilar reasons. All of them were active in civil society in different ways. Now there is a great deal of fear and anger at what is happening, among all walks of life.
- **Yet at the same time, parts of Pakistani life are booming:** fashion shows, billboards advertising all manner of consumer products by film stars, KFC and MacDonaldis, etc. The Taliban doesn't stop these things!
- **What does the Taliban want?** They are very clear in wanting three things: The USA out of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the end of representative democracy and the institution of a 7th Century version of Islamic sharia law.

Reflections on Perween from others (Maurice, Fr. Jorge, Kirtee, Lalith, Gregor, Hosaka, Lajana and others) (all this has been recorded on video by Sut)

How ACHR can commemorate Perween's work? Some ideas that have been discussed:

- A regional forum on community architecture, perhaps yearly, in Perween's honor
- Internships for promising young community architects to actually work with communities

- Need to raise funds and start right away, announce the new program in the region. *(More on this discussion on day 3 below)*

(from ACHR e-news) It's been eight months since Perween Rahman was murdered in Karachi, in March 2013, on her way home from work. Many of Perween's colleagues fear that her death will be considered as just another of the some 2,500 murders that have taken place in Karachi this year, and will not be investigated or treated as anything special. To counteract this forgetting, and to find ways of celebrating, learning from and remembering the important work Perween did, her friends in Karachi are undertaking several projects:

- **Justice for Perween Campaign:** Perween's sister, Aquila Ismail, and her colleagues have launched a campaign called "*Justice for Perween Rahman*" to ensure that her murder is investigated and that justice is done. As an architect, social scientist and planner, Perween worked for the inalienable rights of the poor to housing, land, water and education. She was killed, they believe, by the extremist elements that have taken over Qasba and the areas adjoining Orangi Town. It is believed that she stepped on powerful toes while documenting informal settlements and the illegal water-supply business in the city - both of which the extremists benefit from immensely. The documentation that Perween was doing - the only of its kind - had the potential to lead to major changes in the manner in which development of water supply, sanitation and housing is perceived and carried out by the state. Many ACHR friends who knew and admired Perween were among the 7,800 people who signed the "*Justice for Perween Rahman*" petition, which was formally submitted to the Supreme Court in late October.
- **A documentary film about Perween and her work :** A documentary film maker - a young woman - who knew and loved Perween, is in the process of producing a film about her life and work. ACHR will be gathering footage of friends in the Asia region reminiscing about Perween and discussing the importance of her work, to add to this film. If you would like to contribute, please contact ACHR or Aquila at the e-mail address below.

Suggestion from Perween's sister Aquila : If the participants could give a personal insight into their individual relationship with her it would be great. Perween taught us all that it was relationships that mattered the most, and that everything was achievable once that was established - between people, with nature, with animals et al.

- **A biography of Perween :** Aquila, who is herself a journalist, is in the process of writing Perween's biography, which will include a glimpse into her childhood, her life in East Pakistan (Bangladesh), her growing up years in Karachi and of course her "complete merger" with OPP. For this last, Aquila will be using, in addition to her own knowledge of her work, the 133 quarterly OPP Progress reports that Perween wrote.
- **A book of essays :** Aquila is also planning to collect and edit a book of essays written by Perween's mentors and peers in Pakistan, in Asia and around the world. If anyone would like to contribute to this book, or has some ideas, please contact Aquila.
- *For more information, please contact Perween's sister Ms. Aquila Ismail at: aquila.ismail@gmail.com*

Tuesday December 10

Somsook : Introduces the meeting. How to make this ACHR regional platform more effective in how it supports the change process in various cities and countries in the Asia region? We'll start the meeting by first trying to deepen our understanding of ourselves and our contexts by reflecting on the work we've done, the changes we've been a part of and how we see things in our own countries and in the region. Then, in the afternoon we can move into the more practical aspects of what ACHR - as a platform where we try to do things and promote change together - has done and can do to support those things happening in the countries. Then tomorrow, we will discuss how to make this regional process more active, more effective, more influential on the change process in different countries, realistically.

What is everybody doing now?

All the people in this room know each other very well by now - some for 20 or 30 years! So we don't need any of those general kinds of introductions we usually do in meetings. But a lot of us are going through transitions in our work and in our lives, and it might be interesting if all of us could tell a little about what's happening in our lives right now, and what we're up to, what we're thinking.

Nad : Tee and I started working with ACHR four years ago, to experiment with the community architects network. But before that, I also took part in some ACHR projects in some countries. The CAN network has now grown into 18 countries - the groups in some of these countries are very new, but others are very senior. Now it's become quite a lot of work coordinating this big network. Our core team of regional coordinators have been discussing lately how the CAN network can better respond to the growing demand for technical know-how to support the people's process - not only in Asia but in the world. And what is the spirit we learned from ACHR - how can we pass that spirit to our new friends in the network? These are things we discuss a lot among us. Apart from that, I've started teaching masters students in one university in Thailand, where we are experimenting with new option for students to work with communities, as part of their education.



I've also been lecturing in two or three other Thai universities. In the past four years, I've been travelling a lot, and the last time I returned to my home town Trang, in southern Thailand, I saw a lot of changes in the local ecology because of bad urban planning. We never had floods there before, but this year, there were big floods. So I have a feeling that I'd like to do more work here in Thailand. And so my challenge is how to work together to carry on the work of the CAN Network, but also find more time to work on projects and work with universities in Thailand.



Tee : I think the way society has formed my generation makes us quite different than the earlier generation. My generation isn't fighting for human rights and against eviction so much, but we are fighting against the capitalism and individualism that are tearing apart our society. The past four years working with ACHR and CAN has given me a chance to be exposed to a lot of different places and to meet and work with a lot of committed people who are moving in the same direction. After the first regional CAN meeting in Chaing Mai, in June 2010, I formed a group in my own city of Chaing Mai, to explore this new way of working with communities. I don't believe it's good to just float around coordinating things without being grounded in work with communities in our own places. In my work in Chaing Mai, I've come to see that the problems are not only in urban poor communities, but also in rural areas. In my region of Thailand, there are 700 sub-districts where villagers have been made

landless, because their land has been taken under the control of the Forestry Department or included in national forest conservation zones drawn by the government. And I've been experimenting with my group, *Kon Jai Baan*, to see how architects and planners can also work with these vulnerable rural communities and support them, in ways that draw on many of the participatory design techniques we have learned in the urban context. And anyway, these days the urban and rural systems are interlinked. In the next phase of CAN's work, I hope we can find ways to help idealistic young people in other places to find their base and root themselves deeply with communities and with issues in their own contexts - not just travel around to attend interesting workshops in other countries. And I would also like to see how the spirit that we have absorbed from ACHR can expand to other issues, like heritage, old towns and rural areas - not just fighting urban eviction with alternative planning. There are many facets which this kind of spirit that we can explore more.

Somsook: Actually, a lot of ACHR's work is now being run by these two very active coordinators: they move around to so many different places, they offer their assistance to so many groups and so many projects, they answer so many e-mails. The older ACHR coordinators are too clumsy. And they are also able to communicate with young people - they have the language, the culture of facebook, etc. And this has helped to spread out the CAN platform a lot.

Lajana : Last July, we celebrated Lumanti's 20th anniversary. When we first started Lumanti, I had my baby daughter in my lap - now she has graduated from university! These have been very satisfying years. I've seen so many people, so many groups come up, in so many cities. At the beginning, we had a small group and we ourselves went door-to-door, talking to people, organizing meetings. But these days, we don't do that kind of work any more, because there are community groups well established now and they do all that themselves. Our role has changed to be more one of facilitating, supporting, advocating, fund-raising. The relationship with government is much better, because the communities are strong now and doing their own advocating. Twenty years ago, most government people wouldn't even hear about slum communities, but now, all the work that we are doing is in partnership with the local governments - everything. But we do still have some problems with the central government. We talk a lot about scaling up the community-driven process in Nepal, but scaling up has not happened as we anticipated - it's going very slowly. We find that only when we have funds, and when we provide constant support, constant follow-up and monitoring do the real changes happen. In the past few weeks, I've been thinking that now is the time for some big new thing to happen, to bring about some big new change - but I haven't been able to figure out what yet!



Father Norberto : When the Homeless People's Federation was first established in 1998, it focussed only on activities within the Philippines. But now the federation has to take care of many regional activities also - like UPCA, ACCA, CLIFF, SDI. Many of the communities in Asia have a high expectation of the Philippines federation, and they come to Ruby and Sonia for many things now. They are always willing and they have a lot of energy, but I think they are being stretched too far. Because they have plenty of local problems to deal with also. How are they going to manage all that? I don't want them to get burned-out. There is part of me that wants to find new ways to support and prepare them for these expanding demands. But there is another part that feels it is time for me to retire - I am 63 years old now! - or to find a new role for myself. But when I talk with the leaders, they are asking me, "*Just be there, just be around - that's enough.*" And that's OK with me.

May : I have not been living solidly in the Philippines. For many years, I have been following my husband around in his work. But his last assignment was in Syria, and that was when the war broke out, we were evacuated to the Philippines and I started to work again with PACSII and the federation in 2012. And up to now, luckily, we are still in the Philippines.

When I came back to the federation, it was a very powerful time of growth for them. But it was also a very challenging time, as we all have been facing a big push from the donors - and the general development environment - to think about the work we do in a very different way than we had done before. *"Institutional sustainability"*, *"program sustainability"* and *"framework of investment"* are the key words at the moment, while *"people's process"* seems to have disappeared from the vocabulary. So at the moment, we are seeing how to face this new challenge internally.

I have learned a lot from the federation leaders, who have now built a big movement of urban poor leaders who are really do the job by themselves. In fact, they are now helping the support professionals - it's the other way around! It's a very good relationship between the federation and PACSII, which we don't want to lose.

I've also been involved in CAN - mostly in the Philippines, trying to help out this new group of young professionals (TAMPEII) who are now working with the federation. We had a big regional workshop in Manila this year, which had a big impact for all of us.



One very exciting and challenging task at the moment is starting this citywide upgrading initiative with the government, because the Social Housing Finance Corporation (SHFC) wants to reform the way they manage the Community Mortgage Program (CMP) and the way they deliver housing to the urban poor: they want to make things faster. So with the help of Somsook, they are looking at new strategies, and they are very open, because Ana Oliveros is now the President of SHFC. They are looking at how this citywide concept of upgrading can be supported by the government. We are involved in this quite actively, with the government, the communities and NGOs all working closely together. We are working on that in some pilot cities in Metro Manila.

There is a lot of government money now to deliver housing, using people's plans. And there is a lot of time pressure to produce these people's plans and start implementing them. But there are still very few community architect groups around the country who are willing to work with poor communities in these new participatory ways, to help them develop their upgrading plans. So many communities are going back to the old system of hiring contractors. So one of our greatest challenges now is to find ways to expand this community architects movement and bring in new groups in the Philippines to meet these fast-growing demands.



Hosaka : Last year I half-retired. Half-retirement means my salary has been reduced by half, but my life has not changed much, unfortunately. I don't have to teach in the classroom any more, but I do still have to deal with the post-graduate program over the internet, still have to correct their dissertations with my red pencil. But since this is an internet-based course, our students are all over Japan - and even overseas - and this has produced many new contacts and links. Some of my students, for example, are living and working in tsunami-affected areas in the north of Japan. And many students are also working for aid agencies or NGOs in various countries. Now some of my students in tsunami-affected areas visit the Buraku communities in Osaka, and vice-versa.

Last year, Yamamoto-san and I were invited to a conference in Seoul, and we spent several days together. During that time, he tried to persuade me that since Uchida-san passed away, I should support them more. So his first request was to approach ACCA for funding for the Asaka Buraku community. Somsook also came to Osaka. The relief to tsunami-affected areas, after March 2011, it was the first time for us to receive ACHR support - in financial terms. Then that was followed by ACHR assistance to revitalize buraku communities in Osaka. These two initiatives have created a momentum and helped to revitalize ACHR Japan. Yamamoto-san has always been saying that we should re-establish ACHR-Japan, and this has been discussed with several others. Two of the Japanese architects, who have been active in ACHR activities over the past few years (Keke and Seiji) have also been talking about taking action from Japan to support the typhoon-affected communities in the Philippines -

perhaps making use of some experiences from tsunami-affected areas in Japan as well.

Maurice : In my first stage of life, I was a teacher in Australia, working refugee kids from Vietnam and Laos and writing curriculum for teachers who didn't know how to teach many of the new topics that became important in the 1970s: social change, multiculturalism, aboriginal education, racism, sexism. After I left teaching and writing, I thought I'd like to live in another culture. So I came to Thailand and worked in the refugee camps, and later met Somsook and joined ACHR. And I couldn't have come to a better organization, with such extraordinary people and knowledge about Asia. After 20 years with ACHR, I've made a lot of friends around the region, and have had lots of opportunities to travel and spend time with people who actually do things. I was quite political in my early days, but I spent a lot of time arguing and talking and saying *the government's no good* - but I never actually did anything. ACHR provides the opportunity to at least *think* you are doing something and making an impact!



I am 63 years old now and have reached the point where it's time to transition to something different - still in ACHR, since that's where my friends are. Of course I still have to survive in Thailand, but what to do and where to go? I have a few ideas. I'm still interested in the new technologies - video, audio and web production. That's a really expanding field. Over the last two or three years, the CAN people have inspired me and given me new things to think about - and sometimes they're even willing to listen to me! But what I can't do anymore is write proposals for Misereor - I have an allergic reaction everytime I hear about it.

Tom: Well I'm not retired, and am continuing to do the same stuff. Period. Same thing, no big change.



Gregor: My life has completely changed over the last few years, since I retired from Misereor. I'm still in contact with a lot of friends in Asia and Africa, via using these newfangled electronic communication systems like skype and internet. But I think the biggest change after I left my official work was that I was able to have a more self-determined life. I'm able to do things I was not able to do before - especially to get a little more involved in cultural aspects of life.

But I am disappointed to see the official development world changing in a completely wrong direction. In the, past, it was always a problem that such a lot of things came out of a deep, western-oriented thinking. But now, some even stranger things are coming up. So many aspects of this high-speed, capitalist, globalizing world we live in are clearly creating huge new problems and affecting not only developing countries but Europe

also. After many years working on the ground with people, I saw the huge potential that was already there, and always looked for ways to develop that potential. But now there is a clear moving away from looking at what is possible on the ground. Out of a purported need for sustainability, there are efforts now to bring market-oriented, commercial issues into development practice, and I think that this will kill the process on the ground.

Lalith : I retired from UN-Habitat a year ago, but was called back for one more year - and I still have six months of that year left to go.

After working in Africa, I came back to Sri Lanka, worked on the Million Houses program, got into political trouble and had to go into exile. But before leaving Sri Lanka, I was able to help Nandasiri get the Women's Bank started. Hosaka brought me to work with UN-Escap in Bangkok, then, and Gregor helped organize visas for us to join the Brooderstrom meeting in South Africa, in 1991, just after Nelson Mandela was released from jail. That meeting was a major turning point, and it introduced me to the Asian coalition - many of whose key people had come to Africa for that meeting. Back in Asia, I was able to do several things. And right now, I am working with UN-Habitat on a citywide upgrading program in Bangladesh and a house-building program in the war-affected north of Sri Lanka. Now that I am semi-retired, I am going back into being an architect - 90 buildings I designed for UN-Habitat's program in Sri Lanka are now coming up there - community centers and a lot of preschools.



In Japan, a small group of architects have been so fascinated by the people's process I've been advocating all these years that they decided to establish a school to teach those concepts. And they have called it the Lalith School of Community Development. The school has been set up in one of Fukuoka's very old neighborhoods, where they want to preserve the traditional architecture. They bought a small wooden house there, renovated it and started the school

there. So far, I have 12 students. The important thing is that the idea of people getting involved in the development of their own cities has become fashionable in Japan now - there is so much interest in this idea.

You many know that I got divorced in 2000, and I got remarried in 2007, and my wife happens to be a former student of Hosaka's.



Fr. Jorge : I began this work in 1976, and it began as an adventure. I wanted to do something for the urban poor, and some friends in the Philippines invited me to come. I tried to help, but the community people said, "But you are not in charge of the project." And that was true - I was not directing the project, but I was trying to learn from the people what they were trying to develop. And that is basically what I have been doing since then - going around, making very good friends - *and learning*. First learning in the Philippines, then learning from amazing projects in India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Namibia, Thailand, Nepal, Japan.

Learning is the most important thing for me. Each of us learn different aspects, different things touch us. What I learned from Perween, for example, is different from what Kirtee or Bebot learned from her. But all of you have continued to bring me to the urban poor. And then after a while, the Selavip Foundation said if you present us some projects that you find on your travels, you could send them to us. That continued for 25 years, until 2005. Then I came back to learn again, passively!

I am anxious to learn. All of you have things which I don't have. There is a tremendous richness in all of your work. Even when I'm teaching, I feel that if I cannot learn something from my students, I'm not a good teacher. For myself, this learning is a life. My hobby is learning from you.

But I'm also interested in the history of man - from the very beginning of *homo erectus* [the first "upright man" who lived between 1.8 million and 143,000 years ago]. The *homo erectus* were very clever people: for more than a million years, they spread around Africa and Asia, they learned to talk, they began to use tools, and they survived much better than we have! We modern humans have been on earth for only 50,000 years, and already we are destroying ourselves, little by little! When I learn about this long history, and study the rise and fall of civilizations, it makes me realize how little my own life is, and how ephemeral. But that makes me want to find something that is a little more permanent in my existence. I don't have any interest in retiring, as long as I can keep moving, because I keep learning, keep being interested in seeing how the very poor people are surviving. If my life is to have some meaning, it has tried to bring a little more peace in this world, tried to find more equity, tried to help the people grow a little more.

Kirtee : First of all, I want to clarify two misconceptions that exist about me in ACHR:

- **That I talk too much.** If you've noticed, in the ACHR meetings over the last five years, I talk the least, not the most.
- **That I don't work at all.** I talk so little about my work that nobody knows what I am doing. Everyone thinks I just come to meetings, talk and go away. That is not the case. I work very hard, and I work on so many things that I don't even know where I start in the morning and where I end at night. I am now 71 years old, and I've never felt younger than I do now. Honestly. I work 16 hours a day, I'm never at home. And what sustains me is the enormous diversity of work I do: I have a very large architecture practice, community work, policy work.



Briefly I'll tell you what I have been doing:.

- Advising the Government of India's project to build 50,000 houses for war victims in northern Sri Lanka, and single-handedly convincing them to let the families build their houses, rather than contractors, with assistance from four agencies. The fact that they accepted this "self-build" option shows that "*systems do sometimes listen.*"
- Reviving the India Habitat Forum (INHAF), which started 12 years ago but then lapsed, and trying now to rebuild it into an important learning and networking platform for the housing and urban platform. This is part of my commitment to renewing the citizen role in the context of the development of India. I believe the citizen sector has a huge corrective role to play in India - it is already doing that, but it can do much more. One project of INHAF is "investment watch", which is monitoring what investment in two cities (Jaipur and Pune) is doing to the poor. We are also doing city hearings on urban poverty and development in 10 cities. And we are also working on ways to improve the government of India's Indira Awas Yojna housing program, under which 28 million houses have been built in the last 25 years.

- I also have a very large architectural practice. On my drafting table at this time, there must be 5 million square feet of housing and other institutional projects. We are doing exceedingly interesting and innovative work. If I was not doing development, I would have become very famous as an architect.
- I have been very deeply involved in Citynet the last 2 or 3 years, and chaired a committee tasked with "redesign and review of Citynet". And part of this was seeing that an Indian colleague of mine, Vijay Jagannathan, has become the Citynet Secretary General. He was with World Bank for 30 years, and we are now in discussion with ACHR about possible collaboration with Citynet on a hundred million dollar fund for urban poor upgrading in Asia.

Arif : God, in his infinite mercy, has given me all the diseases my father had. So in 2009, I had a lot of health problems, which are now reasonably under control now. That restricted my movement quite a lot, for some time.

- **Changes:** When I looked at society around me and the issues that we were facing, I realized that things were not the same as when we had begun working in the 1970s and 80s, and that the world had completely changed. And also that the work the OPP was doing, and the work the other NGOs I had been associated with were doing, they were doing, and would continue to do it, and I personally had no great role in it anymore. It was routine work. Also I looked at the NGO world, and I realized how that had changed. And I looked at the government and realized how that had changed. And so I wrote extensively about these changes - mainly for the newspapers.
- **Studies:** But reflecting on this also made me realize that some new work had to be done. And as a result of that, when I felt better, I initiated a number of studies (2009-now), which have since then been very much a part of the "development debate" in Pakistan. These studies were on land, land contestation, land control, land use changes, density, changing patterns of construction in the katchi abadis. But there were other issues also, which we got involved in.
- **Desert:** Since 1987, I have worked in the Thar desert and set up a number of institutions there. So we went back with some colleagues to see what was happening there. And we developed the Tharparkar (?) Regional Plan, because big changes were taking place in the desert. We did this whole planning of the desert region: the land-use plan, the changes that were taking place. It's something that the communities there now lobby with.
- **Talking:** People started coming to see me - more and more people from many parts of the province, all sorts of people, trade unionists, students, community leaders, etc. And their interests were not in housing and land, but in peace: how do we have peace? How do we resolve the issues of the city? There are big conflicts in the Sindh Province in which I live. And I came to a stage where I did nothing else but meet people. So we reserved the afternoon for meeting people - and even today, that is what happens. And then came invitations to come and speak to us, come and discuss issues. So right now, much of my time is spent that way: one weekend would be in Hyderabad, another would be in Larkana, a third would be in Sakar (?), a fourth would be in Teragarzikhan (?). I would go. I still go. And that has been a major part of my work over the last two years. Now this also leads to organizing of events. Because of the problems, all sectors of Karachi society are worried, are agitated, they hold events, there are discussions, debates. So I try to be a part of that (although I've been asked by the police not to be. I no longer go on television and also write less, so as not to be too much in the public eye.)
- **Website:** Finally, I could not respond to the requests that I started receiving. And then my colleagues suggested that I set up a website. It took about a year, with three people working on it, and the product is before you if you wish to take a look (arifhasan.org). And it's an ongoing project. But that website created even more problems, because demands from that website have increased considerably, and finally I've asked IIED to give me someone who just manages this damned thing! So they provide a small salary to someone who can look after it, answer the queries, etc.
- **Books:** A number of books were produced during this period - some have been popular, others have not sold very much. All four of them were published by the Oxford University Press, in Karachi. And there are two more on the anvil.
- **Teaching:** I continue to teach. But the world has changed, and the teaching profession has changed, it's objectives have changed.
- **Family :** I now have four grand-children. They don't have too much to do with me. But my son Abid does, since he lives with me. My children all complain, they say "You have ruined our lives. We can never be normal human beings. We can't get away from your retrogressive values." Normal complaints - all three of them. So they do things similar to what I did when I was their age, and I wish them better luck than I've had in my life.
- **Evenings:** The evenings are usually spent at home, unlike before. So people visit me then - students, journalists, so-called intellectuals. That's how life goes on.



Somsook : In the past couple of years, we have done a lot of work in the ACCA Program, which has spread out and has involved a lot of learning and supporting and seeing change. The ACCA program has been a change-making mechanism. This work has opened a lot of space, and also a lot of responsibility about what we should do next.

One thing I've been trying to do is to see how the process we have started with ACCA can be broadened, can link with a more structural change and can link with the bigger institutions. So I have done quite a bit more linking with the World

Bank, the UN and with other institutions and attending a lot of meetings. I have found that I'm not happy with that kind of work, because those difficult upper structures are where things get stuck. I'd much rather spend my energy with the people, where I can think a lot, help a lot, learn a lot and get a lot of energy back. I have an almost automatic system to read the politics and the way things are, and to see what is possible. I have immense ability on that people part, but I can't do much of it, because somebody has to do that other work at the upper level that nobody wants to do. But sometimes, like in the Philippines, it has been possible to get these big institutions to open up a little, because there are some more possible people involved over there.

So what kind of role can I play, as the ACHR coordinator, to make this structural change possible, and at the same time to deepen into a system of the country? Working at a large citywide and country-wide scale is different than working on small projects, as we all know. But that large scale requires a new kind of knowledge to manage it, and to deal with the more structural aspects it automatically touches: dealing with resources, dealing with networks, dealing with the politics. All this calls for a different set of management skills, compared to the old project-management skills. Of course many of our Asian country groups are going into that large scale now, but there is still a need for learning and assistance, to lead to possible change. And ACHR has to see how to support that learning and provide assistance. This is a task I have been asking myself about lately - how to do that more systematically and more properly?



I am a person of contradictions. I like to be humble - I don't like to be the big person who shakes hands with the big guy - I don't feel comfortable with that role at all. But at the same time, I tend to think big - I want big change, I want to shake that structure and reform things. My ideas are big, and they go in that direction, but at the same time I don't like to make myself big. I have to find a way to deal with this contradiction.

But during all these 25 years of work with the ACHR, I have experienced a lot of joy and delight in journeying to so many different places and seeing the things that are happening on the ground. But having struggled to bring this regional work up to a certain level, the question for me is always *What next?* To expand it, to sustain it, to make that work a little more structural? All the time, my question is *What is the next stage?* That's been my task, to see how to help on that level - to see how to help open people to learn, to see new possibilities, to get ideas from what their friends in the region are doing, to help them move into that next stage.

I have enough knowledge now to share, to challenge and to show people a better way to do things with little money. But getting that knowledge across to these big development agencies and in these big professional meetings requires a certain language and a certain culture, which I don't have. To make some kind of change, you have to have a part of that culture and understand it - you have to have the password. But I don't have that password, and for me, that culture is something stupid and horrible and no fun at all.

So after living with these contradictions and after playing this role I'm not comfortable with for such a long time, I decided to pause, take two month's leave, and spend some time thinking about how to find a more enjoyable way to manage, to feel and to do.

Because I'm getting older and have been with ACHR for 25 years, I feel the need to slow down and think more - and that is not the role of the coordinator. During the past two years, I've felt the need to be home a little more, playing with my niece, planting things in the garden and planning little projects to improve my house. Before, I just thought about moving forward and never thought about myself. Now it seems to be the time to come back, to refresh myself, to be more relaxed and to think a little clearer. I do a lot of thinking about things, even when I'm not working: when I'm driving, when I'm sleeping. But I produce too little in terms of writing: papers and books about all these things I think about so much. It would be quite interesting to do more writing, and this is something I'd like to do more in the future.

General reflections on the situation and trends nowadays

May: The role of people's movement in the Philippines is getting bigger and bigger. And with that growing role, the people's confidence and capacities are also getting bigger and bigger. That may be why they are sometimes feeling stretched. That is a good thing that is happening.

- **The relationship between the government and the communities is also changing.** The federation now has very strong relations with the local governments and also with the national government. Now many government departments are approaching the federation to be the implementing partner in various policies and programs. For example, the federation has been approached by the Social Housing Finance Corporation to implement the pilots in this new national slum upgrading strategy. (We have so many policies for the urban poor in the Philippines!). This important new opening for the poor has come about as a result of years and years of work by the communities, and the poor can sit now with the government in planning and implementing these new policies.

- **The political situation right now also allows for this**, by specifying that representatives from peoples organizations and NGOs should be in most policy making bodies, at different levels. If there is a big project, now, they have to set up a "local inter-agency committee" and always it has to have representatives from people's organizations sitting on that committee - and HPFP always sits on those kinds of committees. And the HPFP representatives also sit on the local housing boards in many cities.
- **The political atmosphere is more open, there is more room for participation**, and there are good people in many of the key agencies now.

Lalith : People's voice is stronger now: One of the positive things that all of us have been able to achieve over the last 30 years is that the voice of the people is much stronger today than it was before. This is not a political voice of party politics, but the voice of people who are involved in their own development. That voice is very strong today. And as a result of that, they have won lots of rights: in many countries now, evictions are history.

- **We have been able to achieve a lot of internal changes in the UN system**, by being an activist inside the system.
- **The elected governments have also changed**, and they recognize that people should have a say in things and respect their rights today. In the case of Sri Lanka, you cannot evict anybody any more - anywhere. That right is guaranteed, and that is the case in many countries. That is a major achievement when we reflect on the work all of us have been doing for 30 years.
- **How do we establish community governance structures that are not political?** Which can be strong? We need to institutionalize that into a structure that can allow people to govern themselves. That's where peace-building starts. I believe that if we have a very strong community governance structure, then we can deal with conflict. Look at our communities - they are full of different ethnic groups, living side by side, and they don't fight! It is the politicians who create all the fights.
- **Bringing women together:** In organizations like the CDCs in Bangladesh and Women's Bank. Women from different communities have no problem working together. In Afghanistan, where the CDCs are very well organized, the Taliban cannot infiltrate - they keep the Taliban away, they say, *Please don't disturb us, we are getting on with our business.*

Arif : Some of the trends which I have been able to identify:

- **Everyone is searching for peace:** In Pakistan as a whole, and in Karachi specifically, the younger generation searches for peace. And it does all sorts of things in this search. And it is not only the poor, but also the elite areas searching for peace. So there is a coming together of various groups. Recently we organized a conference on the history of the city of Karachi, in which almost every single sector of the population was represented. Building an alternative narrative to that of the Taliban is very much a factor in much of the attempts by younger people to bring peace. What they need is a bigger understanding of history and culture, to make this possible. Because the politics of the politicians is all about the politics of constituency and votes and power, it is not about peace. One has to move away from that.
- **Major change in NGO culture:** Before, the NGOs had altruistic objectives, they were led by non-professionals who were looking for an end to poverty. Today, NGOs are led by professionals, they have donors, and they have a constituency. So the larger aspect of development and justice is made subservient to a particular group or a particular area. I think this is another big change that needs to be discussed.
- **The emergence of a middle class**, a very big middle class. They are obsessed with consumerism and educating their children to earn more money. The political control of this middle class has grown considerably - it has affected education, health-care systems, the whole manner of marketing, etc. This is also a new phenomena, and this middle class is playing an important role in politics.
- **There is globalization**, which has freed the local markets from constraints, which have resulted in enormous price hikes, especially in food, which has made life very expensive for the poor.
- **Katchi abadis are history.** We are dealing with history and the after-effects of history. The old katchi abadis have all acquired middle-class values, they do not participate in anti-poor programs, they are comfortable. The new katchi abadis are the result of forced migration, and they have no hope of regularization in the future, even if they are not bulldozed.
- **The government has surrendered to the neo-liberal agenda, but at the same time it talks to the people.** It doesn't make much of a difference, though, this talking: small victories, magnified out of proportion, satisfy most NGOs and activists. But on the whole, I don't think there has been much change.
- **Environmental impact assessments:** One positive thing from the government side is environmental impact assessments, in which people participate in a big way, and we have had great successes in modifying, changing and even cancelling projects as a result of these EIAs. We were not satisfied with the results of a lot of EIAs, so there was lobbying for the creation of environmental tribunals, so tribunals have been created and now it's up to civil society to make enough cases so that case law can be developed.
- **Government has liberalized loans for housing in a big way**, so the lower middle class and those who own property can benefit from it, as never before. This has been a boon to the developers, and is a very important issue.
- **Corruption is acceptable, at all levels of society.** Which it wasn't before. So for everything you have done, there is an extra fee - well managed, reasonable, so you can get your work done. This is something that has been regularized at almost every single level.
- **In education, the domination of theory and the absence of practice.** And the agitation for free education and free health services - this is all history.

Kirtee : In India, four positive factors I see :

- **The deepening of democracy of the past 60 years** - not only ritualistic, but substantive changes. 75% of the people vote. The conventional tools of money and muscle and region and religion to divide people are becoming less and less important. People are looking at performance, governance, etc.
- **Legislative changes that have happened in the last five years which have poor people at the center:** The food security bill, the access to information bill, the national rural development and employment scheme and the land acquisition bill.
- **The government is beginning to recognize the need for scale**, things have to happen on scale.
- **Greater space for civil society** - like the surprising coming up of the Am Admi party, where a people's movement against corruption has become a political party, and swept to power in Delhi.

Norberto : Public space for the poor also : The UN is preparing now for Habitat-3, and one of the issues they are going to discuss will be public space. Whose public space? The middle class's space of course, like shopping malls and football fields! We are trying to put up an agenda: what about the informal settlements? How can they tackle this agenda and use of public space? For many poor communities, public space is "trading" space - streets for cart vendors, dumsites for trash recyclers. But this kind of use of public space is increasingly forbidden - they put up big flower pots to keep the poor from stopping their vendor carts there!

Gregor : One very positive aspect of the situation is that ACHR still exists, after 25 years! And it not only exists, it is one of the very most vibrant networks which are operating in the urban context. Other international networks like HIC focus on the rights issues, but they are run by only a very few NGO people, and they don't really have any roots in the grassroots. ACHR is a more vibrant one.

- **The achievements that May was talking about in the Philippines were only possible because of the regional network**, which existed and provided a platform of communication, a training platform, a learning platform, and facilitating these exchange programs, bringing people together. And also to find out how it is possible to find loopholes within government, to start really on a local level and influencing policy.
- **There is a big policy change in the Asian context.** When ACHR started 25 years ago, most of the countries were still under dictatorships. And people were evicted. This whole system has changed, and I think the regional network played a very important role in that change.

Hosaka : Contradictions: A year ago, the conservative party came back to power in Japan. And they emphasize economic recovery over other urgent issues like post-tsunami reconstruction or environmental management. The market has become very violent. In almost every Asian city, multinational billboards for Kentucky Fried Chicken, but we also have Islamic fundamentalism attacks on gender equality or universal education. In Japan now, all major cities, there are very strong processions shouting, "We should kill Koreans! Koreans should get out! Koreans should die!" Really! I believe this comes from the widening disparity between the rich and the poor, and from the globalized market.

- **Even in the post tsunami reconstruction**, they are thinking to construct a giant water-break dike that will be 10 to 20 meters high - to keep out the sea - along the whole coast of Japan! Just imagine! Just because the builders wanted that project!
- **Also the customay fishermen's rights**, which really protected the fisheries for local fishermen, and it was instrumental in preserving the marine environment. That is now dissolved, for the open market. Now the big fishing companies can come everywhere and are fast destroying the fisheries.
- **Buraku communities feeling the heat of market forces :** They are feeling the effects of this new market-driven world. In Yamamoto-san's community at Asaka, they have really done community management and developed many community facilities - some on public land rented from the Municipality. But now the mayor of Osaka has decided to sell all those government properties on the market. So in these ways, market forces are eroding these examples of community management. That's why I felt it was important to link Yamamoto-san's efforts to revive that community spirit with the ACCA program, because this issue has commonalities with many other countries in the region. How to revitalize communities and help them cope with this violent marketization.

Lajana : Communities are organized now. After the Maoist pro-democracy movement, the communities are organized - everybody is part of some group: savings groups, domestic maids group, taxi-drivers union, water-sanitation group. Many different kinds of groups. And people have become aware of their rights. This has been the good thing. People are very much aware of the political situation, they now about the key parties and what is happening locally, which party is doing what.

- **So everybody talks about politics, instead of talking about development activities!** Even though the political parties have failed to deliver anything significant to the nation. But the people still hope that the government will do something good. The Maoists have been in government for some time, but they lost the last elections. People thought they would do good, but they failed to deliver, so people no longer believe in them. So they are now the third power. Political uncertainty is still there, but people's awareness is high.
- **Lots of good demonstration projects are happening.** But that has been piecemeal, here and there. Not yet able to scale it up.
- **Local governments are positive and supporting new ideas to be implemented.** For the last few years, the local governments in Nepal have not been led by elected mayors or city councils, but by bureaucrats appointed by the central government. We haven't had local-level elections for ten years now. Since then, the bureaucrats have been running the country's cities, making the key decisions, acting as mayors. But in some cities, it is going well - but it depends on the attitudes of the CEOs in those cities.
- **Push from global agenda on sanitation issue:** The government is struggling to achieve some of the things they have committed to the global agenda. Like the universal sanitation and water supply. They're also giving more

space to community groups to participate in the decision-making level, from central to community level, on sanitation activities. This has not been replicated in other development issues.

Nad : The starting of CODI, in 2000, made quite a big change in Thailand. CODI became an important platform which brought together many networks of people. And since they implemented the Baan Mankong housing program, I feel the community people have totally changed, compared to 12 years ago, when I first started working. The people play an important role on action now. But the situation in Thailand is still serious in two ways:

- **Rural landlessness:** In Thailand's rural areas, small farmers have lost 65% of their agricultural land, because of mono-crop, because of debts, because the government announced their land was inside the national forest, or many other reasons. This has become a big issue now.
- **Mega projects:** After the terrible floods in Thailand two years ago, the government decided to use a huge budget to reorganize the whole country's rivers and water system - the whole country! The plan is all huge engineering construction megaprojects, to be built by Korean companies! And these water projects, which will destroy much of the country's environment, go together with plans for developing new high-speed trains and new industrial zones - especially in the southern part of the country. We cannot see clearly how Thailand will survive this onslaught.

Participation in the larger picture: In Thailand, we have been quite successful in developing the process of urban poor participation in planning, but I think the issue of participatory planning needs to spread to this larger national-level planning sphere. I think the urban poor are now starting to think beyond the boundaries of their own communities and discussing how to make their cities more liveable, how to have more public space for their children, etc. And also, there are some promising projects where rural communities are doing their planning. But these are still very small areas.

- **In Thailand, we have a lot of young people who have started doing things for their society** - not only architects. What conditions are nurturing them? Many businesses are now starting "corporate social responsibility" programs. Many of these businesses don't know what to do with their money, besides planting trees or donating to charities, but some have linked with young people who form a group and go to several companies and get support to start doing some more interesting things.
- **Two years ago, our friend set up a loose network of social entrepreneurs**, for young people, and now 150 groups are linked to this network, working on many issues in Thailand - from urban farms, to garbage recycling, etc. This is a new movement from the young people.

Tee : The rise of the middle class in Thailand is quite obvious to see. I think this is a chance to make a new understanding, and a new link with the urban poor. In the last few months, we have seen this middle class taking a big role in trying to stop the big dam projects that the current government is trying to build around the country, as part of its so-called "flood prevention" scheme. This is the first time that the middle class came out in such numbers to join the demonstrations against those projects. This is the same middle class which has so much enjoyed the perks of capitalism, but now they feel the system is wrong, and they are ready to come out and do something about it, to protest. But I think they don't have a clear idea yet about what is the root of injustice and inequality. This is a good time to engage people.

- **Demonstrations versus looking for solutions:** When I explain what I am doing with helping poor communities to develop alternative solutions, a lot of friends don't really get it. But if you invite them to take part in a protest against a dam or against a corrupt government, they are ready to come out, and they really enjoy it and feel they are part of a bigger thing.
- **This year, many universities asked us to come organize workshops for the students** - about 20 young people have come to intern with my group in Chiang Mai, even though we are ourselves very new! This is a very interesting thing to see. Because for this new young generation, things are quite different. While the earlier generation came out to fight against dictatorship, this generation has a subtler enemy to fight against in capitalism and its effects on our cities and our environment and our governments, but they also want to struggle for their values and their dreams also.
- **I think the people's process can adapt and adopt many different issues - not only housing and land.** Because issues like heritage, rural planning, rural landlessness - even traditional medicine! This process can be expanded. But the core value that we found is how can people be at the center, and how can people live together as a society - not segregated into individual units, the way so much of the world is going.

Arif : The colonial bourgeoisie and the native bourgeoisie : This is very important what you are saying, Tee. Because this new middle class has a very important role to play in politics, subsequently. And it is not only an urban middle class, it's a rural middle class - it's both. And some social scientists in Pakistan use a rather strange for it: they differentiate between the *colonial bourgeoisie* and the *native bourgeoisie*. And the native bourgeoisie is a bourgeoisie of shopkeepers and small contractors which were not a part of the political system before, in any way. It is a very big change in development, which is determining so much of what is happening - politically, though not in the larger economic sense so far. The understanding of these directions that you have pointed out are crucial to it. And the studies that I have made on this - which I have published in my books - point to exactly what you are saying.

- *This is the future, unless it can be contained or directed.*

Somsook : The key points many of you have touched on are challenges we are facing now.

- **There have been a lot of community processes now:** community organizations, community networks, networks with this and that, citywide networks. Communities organizing themselves in different ways and at large scale is no longer something strange. And it is something that is now largely accepted by societies. And these community organizations are dynamic, they're moving forward and they're accomplishing things. And they are increasingly

taking part in the changing politics of their cities and their governments, and taking advantage of the more open, more democratic possibilities in their countries to sit with other stakeholders, to negotiate for the things they need, to make things happen.

- **But the institutions are very slow to change** - much slower than the real pace of change in the world, and much slower than the real pace of demands. I've been talking to so many institutions, and find that they are all getting stuck on how to find people to do the new kind of management: dealing with people, dealing with participation, dealing with new tools, opening up new space. No, the institutions are clumsy, old and very much a problem. People are rising up: they are angry, frustrated, they want to do things, they want to change things. But the system doesn't know how to deal with that, cannot invent the tools or create the space to allow that, cannot put all the conflicting organizations to sit and talk and manage. All this calls for a new kind of management, which is not in any book! And that is a problem, because it means we are not realizing what is possible: the capacity of our society, our institutions are not keeping up with this possibility.
- **Still a big gap:** So despite all these positive steps forward in the region, despite all these community movements and good laws, we still have a very big gap between what our societies are capable of, what what they are actually able to do. If we can understand this great demand properly, and use that demand as a force of change, demand can become a new mechanism to make change by itself, in a big way. But what kind of management is required to allow that to happen? To me, that is the challenge.

Maurice shows a slide-show on ACHR's history and programs

Somsook: Gives a presentation on ACHR's 25 years of work, in 20 countries, using concrete action by people and the "solution approach" to design and move forward. (*with powerpoint slides*)

- **Scale requires a new way of managing things.** If you don't change the system of your management, you will have problems when the process starts scaling up. Scale is bigger, demand is bigger, finance to facilitate that is bigger. To make a proper system to manage and support that growth requires a little more sophistication and a little more knowledge. If groups are not adjusting themselves this way, as they grow, they will have problems. And now we are seeing so many groups in the network struggling with these problems, one way or another!

Nad : Speaks about the work of the Community Architects Network CAN, since 2009, which can be divided into three stages:

1. **Focus on pilot projects as "classrooms" for a new kind of people-driven design process :** The ACCA program supported a large number of housing and upgrading projects which need architects who know how to support a people-driven process and know how to nurture community people's potential, through the design process. So in the first stage of CAN, in the first year, the two of us travelled around like crazy, to visit many groups of community architects around Asia and start to link with them. We spent most of our time that first year in the new countries where this concept was new, and started some pilot projects with the community networks (like Lao PDR, Myanmar, Fiji, Bangladesh, etc.) We created these pilot projects as a learning process in these places, with ACCA support. These pilot projects were like classrooms, and also functioned as platforms for local community architects, students, professors or professionals - whoever we found was interested and wanted to make change, we brought to work with us on these pilots, to learn. This work in new countries was not easy, because we had to be very open and very sensitive to the local context and the ideas of our friends and communities - we could not plan too rigidly what we wanted to do.
2. **Structuring the CAN network by dividing the work into different issues.** After we were able to link with some existing groups of community architects and encourage others to set up new ones, we had more people in the CAN network, and could use these growing numbers of people to divide our work into various tasks: strengthening the citywide process, supporting the community builders, exploring various low-cost building materials, encouraging academic institutions to bring this new knowledge into their curriculum and student practice, etc. In these ways, we tried in this second stage to structure the CAN network by dividing our work into taskforces.
3. **Third stage - putting things together into a citywide process.** When we build up the young community architects, and we also have a strong community network and city development fund, we can start linking with some local governments, we can link with academics and other civil society and NGO organizations to begin working together in the citywide process. This includes creating a platform to look together at how to make their city more human. I think our process can go beyond the physical aspects of building the community.

For us, the process we are trying to support, as architects working with communities, is a kind of democracy. Every time the people come together to develop these housing and upgrading projects, they are searching for their own identity, learning how to make decisions and how to compromise with their neighbors, figuring out what are the important things in their community to retain in their upgrading project. Every step of the design process becomes an exercise of democracy, on the ground.

As architects, we create tools which allow people to develop their own ideas, but our intervention can also add things to their forms and their transformation. We learn from each other - it all gets mixed together in one process. This participatory community design process is a powerful way to unlock people's potential. And I think that if we trust in people, and believe in their goodness, we can't go wrong.

Somsook adds: Most housing projects for the poor are designed by somebody from outside, and the designs invariably have very little to do with the social or physical realities in a community. But when we start with the people and let the existing social groups in the community work together, let them they start thinking about what kind of plan they'd like to have. Many come up with a cluster design, in which a social cluster decides how the physical cluster of houses will be,

so the physical design represents that social value - but in a slightly more systematic way. The architects can help people translate these delicate social relationships into a physical plan.

Arif: ... How buildings and how settlements learn - because they do learn, they change and they adapt. If I look at the settlements where we worked very early on in Karachi, they are not the same settlements today. They were single-story then, and they have become multi story now. Families have multiplied and been accommodated. Renters have emerged where none existed before. The systems of cooperatives have collapsed and no longer function. This process of both the settlements and the buildings "learning" is important.

Building bylaws, zoning regulations and perceptions: If you take Dhaka, for instance, if you look at their building rules and regulations, 50% of the land in a settlement has to be left open for roads and public spaces, and a plan is not passed unless you follow those rules. There are numerous studies on what this really means to settlements. For instance Tasneem Sadiqui's Suda ki Basti program, which we designed, was designed strictly according to the government's bylaws. The bylaws, by the way, are anti-street, they are anti-pedestrian, they are anti-dissolved-space, they are anti-mixed-land-use, they are anti every-damned-thing-that-makes-life-liveable! But that's how they are. And because of those bylaws, that is how the city is as well! And this is the perception of planners of what a city is.

We discovered, through investigations of Suda ki Basti projects that none of the big spaces were used - nobody used them. It was the streets - where no vehicles ever came - that were used by the community, and then subsequently, the open spaces were encroached upon and sold, informally.

Somsook : **This new community architect process is more than planning.** But we use the planning to unlock a lot of stories, a lot of relationships, a lot of things that exist in the community - and then reorganize it in this new planning process. In doing so, we are becoming more like social organizers, through the planning process. You've got to have a good ear for hearing what people are talking about, how they are thinking, what details they bring forward, how their social dynamics play out. All these different elements in the community are the building blocks, but they need to be reorganized into a planning process, so that all these complex issues can be organized into a more proper system, by them - in a proper form. I think the role community architects can play in this process is something quite important. If community architects can understand these stories and political relationships properly, they can actually do the work without activists - no need for the social organizers. Community architects can do that.

Arif : My only fear, with most programs that I have seen evolve - including those that I have worked on myself - is that after a certain stage, they tend to fossilize. They tend to become a method of doing things; the thinking behind it, and the origins of it become secondary in importance. And I think that that is something that has to be avoided. More important than anything else. The objectives also, may remain the same, but they may also change.

- Somsook: When we go along, we forget!
- Arif: This is important. Ultimately, if you do follow certain very rigid principles, and at the same time during the application of those principles you question, you also develop an intuition. I think that after a long period of involvement, intuition becomes extremely important. You are able to pick up very quickly a situation - you don't have to sit down for many days to understand something, you can understand it very quickly. But the intuition will only come if you keep looking at different contexts, from the point of view of those contexts, rather than from a preconceived idea. That's an important issue.

Somsook : If we have the community savings, and it provides the people with a financial source for people to borrow and repay, it's a kind of micro-credit, a fragment of the capitalist system that has stretched down to the poor community level. But how can that finance encourage the growth and build the conscience of the people as a group, as a community? A little more structural change - not just access to finance to individuals who wouldn't otherwise have access to finance. This is the point which is quite important for this change. Of course having finance is better than not having finance, but if it's just finance to individuals ...

Arif: (on donors) They want very concrete results that they can measure and count. They came to the OPP also, and it was all about *What can you deliver?* And we can't deliver anything - as they want us to deliver. So we were not in a position to get anything from them. What they want is that the horse should gallop off with the bit to the destination, without any rider! It was like that!

When you have funds from abroad, you have to keep complex accounts, and you have to keep justifying your existence.

Arif: Five questions:

1. How do people house themselves today? They don't house themselves in the same manner as they used to house themselves in the 1970s and 80s.
2. What has happened to the old settlements in which we worked in the 180s - in physical terms, in social terms, in political terms?
3. Who are the new migrants? Are they different from the older migrants? Are they similar to the older migrants?
4. What has happened to the villages and small towns in these past twenty years?
5. What has decentralization achieved?

When I answer these questions, I find a totally different world. I don't see any similarity between now and the period in which I started working. It's a very big change. And the question is, how do you respond to these changes? This whole new world, I feel is important to us, and perhaps we could discuss some of this, because I'm sure everyone else has observed these changes also - I don't think they are specific to Pakistan.

Gregor: What type of organization is ACHR? Is it really an organization or is it a network? And within the network, we have quite a variety of member organizations who are doing different tasks. The question is, how can these different tasks be brought together and shared, through the platform of the network?

Arif: We carry the burden of our own history with us. We have a network, we have people, we have groups, we have linkages, and they have been following a certain direction. I think that before taking any definite direction, there needs to be an understanding of what exactly we are, in this whole ACHR set-up at present. I think that is very important. Because we might find that we fragment, unless we take this into consideration.

At the same time, there is a need to understand how things have changed - how they are no longer the same. To understand, respond, promote and if necessary re-shape - gently and with understanding and affection for what has happened so far.

As far as the administrative aspects are concerned, I think they will be subservient to an understanding of what exists and what is functioning. We cannot really make a very radical change.

I feel that it is very important to re-state our vision with which we began. What was the objective of this organization? I think that we need to restate that in no uncertain terms. It was essentially to create a network of programs, projects, actions that were taking place, bring them together to create a more poor-friendly world in Asia. But in my understanding of things, I see that the hope of that poor-friendly world has, to a great extent, been transformed into an anti-poor world. How does one respond to that, in terms of jobs, in terms of cost of living, in terms of moving across the city, in terms of rural-urban migration - we live in a very anti-poor world.

So I think there is a need to re-asses why this is an anti-poor world, and how it functions. In my context in Pakistan and Karachi, I've tried to understand that. And when you understand that, you find that there has to be a new way fo doing things. The circumstances may have changed, but the three very important aspects (objectives) remain:

- there has to be a network of poor communities - that is the only way in which you can challenge this world
- there has to be a vision based on an understanding of current realities (example: the vision of Karachi as a "world class city" versus the vision of Karachi as a "pedestrian and commuter-friendly city") The vision is important because it changes the whole inputs that are made into a city, and each city will not have the same vision. It will have a vision according to what is necessary and required.
- Because there is massive investment in infrastructure in our cities, and this is affecting the poor in a very big way. There has to be a network not only of the poor, but a larger city network, based on the vision, that can direct this investment, alter or change this investment. Because projects have replaced planning, and for the foreseeable future, I see projects - I don't see planning.

In Karachi, we've said, all right, have your projects. But we've tried to push for four points:

- the projects should not damage the ecology of the area in which the city is located
- they should cater to the needs of the majority of the population
- they should promote land use on the basis of environment and social considerations, and not on the basis of land value alone (I emphasize alone, because there are other factors also)
- they should not damage the tangible and intangible assets of the communities that live in the city.

Then they can have whatever projects that they like. The reaction to this, from the Asian Development Bank's representative at the meeting was, "Arif, if we take your four points, there won't be any projects!" But we have effectively fought for and had projects cancelled on the basis of these four points.

Gregor: ACHR has created a platform at the regional level, but the platform has also come up on the national level. At the same time, we have professional networks that are sector-based (like climate change), which fight against the people's process (i.e. climate change people fighting against informal settlements, which they say are contributing to urban resilience problems!). So that's why these platforms that ACHR helps set up - at regional and national levels - really need to vision-oriented, not sector-oriented, and why they must be influenced by the community people - they have to be there.

Somsook summarizes lessons from morning :

- **We should support and strengthen the people's process**, the communities, and link people into organizations and networks, so they are able to solve the problems together. This has been our basic direction, from the very beginning of ACHR. And we should continue with that, and strengthen that more.
- **To do that, we should strengthen the community finance systems** - savings and credit and funds. So that people can build their own resource base to support whatever development needs they identify, and strengthen their negotiations.
- **And we should try to link the community organizations and community networks into larger alliances with other stakeholders in their cities**, to deal with broader city issues of ecology, environment, transport, urbanization - and work with these larger alliances to foster a good vision for what their city should be and principals for how to do that - not just "World Class Cities" for the rich! And also look into what happened to our cities?
- **We have to build a stronger capacity to manage the regional network - as a network.** Apart from the secretariat, we may have to organize some kind of regional advisory group to regularly follow-up what we have been doing, give advice, support the ongoing processes more actively, in a more process-oriented way - not just one-off

evaluation visits! This needs to be spelled out - how this will work. We should build a platform of expertise in the region which can support the needs in different countries as they emerge, and match specific knowledge with specific needs. It shouldn't be only the ACHR secretariat doing this! We have a big region and a big group of very capable and experienced people with a lot of ideas and energy to offer the regional process! That's the way to build the ACHR network in a more action-oriented manner.

- ***We need to strengthen the capacity of the ACHR secretariat, to deal with many important issues and processes.*** But still manage the regional process in such a way that it is a network process. It should not be the ACHR secretariat, acting as an organization and thinking of this and that idea and pushing it down. The strength should come from the network, and things should be done by people on the ground and their supporters in the network. So it's a bottom-up process, and the ACHR network is a platform for that bottom-up action. So the culture and the way to strengthen the network would have to be a little different from the normal organizational pattern. That's something we have to consider.

Somsook : *Let's aim high - solve all the slum problems in all Asian cities!* Citywide upgrading is an attempt to achieve what other organizations are calling "slum free" cities. Should it be our agenda to solve all slums in the cities of Asia? Should that be our direction? Poor people should not be left in poor, miserable and insecure conditions, and we should solve these problems, in our own ways, by stimulating others, or whatever. We should solve the slum problems in all the cities in Asia, because it's doable! We should aim high! It's possible now, with all this knowledge - so then the next part is what is this knowledge? What are the possibilities. We make our agenda clear to the others. And we should find a way that this should become a strong agenda of the government, national institutions and cities in the Asia region.

Some Discussion Points :

1. (from May) How to match with donors' demands for efficient and cost-recovery demands?
2. (from Laliith) How to support the Typhoon Haiyan victims in the Philippines?
3. How to organize the Perween Rahman memorial internship program?
4. MOU between ACHR and UN-Habitat
5. New migrants in the city - how people live today and what happened to the old settlers?
6. How to organize a more participatory ACHR network management system? Advisory committee?