

## Personal Statement

As I think back on the Haiderabad workshop, it is difficult to focus on just that experience, as the effects of it continue to sprout and grow in me even today. The experience of the workshop was so incredible that it also represents for me one of those treasured points of clarity that so affect the paths we take in life. In fact, I can say without hesitation that, six years later, the seeds that this workshop sowed in me have grown to be more and more a part of my life and work with every passing year. And it is my hope, and indeed my belief, that the others involved, both at MIT and in Pakistan, can say the same, for one of the inherent beauties of the workshop model is that it is not an isolated event or lesson, but a collaborative effort resulting in powerful seeds that branch out in and through all involved. Over the years, I see now in retrospect, the kernels of illumination that stem from my Haiderabad workshop experience have helped me to see more clearly at many points, having a profound and positive impact on what I have chosen to work on and learn from. In fact, as I look back over the work I have done since then, the most meaningful is somehow always a branch on that tree which sprouted in me as a result of this defining point in my education and life.

In my undergraduate years, I 'tested' a number of majors. I knew that I wanted to combine analytical, creative, and social skills to be able to do something that would make a positive difference in people's lives. I started with economics and political science; and, while I truly enjoyed both, they somehow seemed not enough. Then I tried architecture, which I had always loved as well. The creative challenge of integrating environmental, structural, technological, and social parameters into unique solutions that none of these fields alone could accomplish was fascinating to me, and seemed more what I was looking for. After completing my undergraduate studies, working in the field, and then returning to grad school, though, I began to feel a bit of the disillusioning compartmentalization that I realized was what had left me unfulfilled when studying both economics and political science. How could I avoid this; why was I again feeling this?

Then I took the Haiderabad workshop. In this workshop, I finally saw that all of the things I had studied and truly enjoyed until then were just 'compartments' of the whole vehicle that must work as one to truly have an impact on some of the world's most pressing problems. Of course I had felt disillusioned when focusing on solving problems from within compartments, without being able to really integrate them at the root! Focusing on the real socioeconomic and environmental problems of a community in a very extreme situation, and addressing those problems with the community through the vehicle of sustainable social and architectural catalysts, served to illuminate for me the connections between the seemingly independent paths that I had followed in my studies. And I also saw the value, to all parties, of solving social problems with, rather than for people. For the first time, it all came together, and the solutions felt real and whole. They did not pretend to be end product 'solutions,' but were in fact so much more: richly collaborative, comprehensive, and powerful enablers that could empower societies to break through suffocating barriers from the inside. The approach to this, the hands-on and collaborative workshop environment, worked in a beautifully enriching way. Academia,

the local population, and the other groups involved worked together in a symbiotic collaboration that enriched both the people and the project.

Individually, we were all puzzle pieces with a unique wisdom to offer, but with the inevitable missing wedges that puzzle pieces always have. Approaching the problems in the traditional way, any of these groups could have probably found a way of filling isolated wedges, but the isolated solutions would have been restricting in the long run. Working together, we were all able to fill our unique wedges with interlocking resources and wisdom from the other whole puzzle pieces. We were able to complete a much larger puzzle, be enriched with a much larger vision, and reach a much more sustainable and true solution that we could all be proud of and grow from.

The ability to see this first hand through the workshop inspired me to see that, with models like this, people, cultures and disciplines around the world could come together to develop the seeds that could be the basis for a sustainable empowerment and renewal of many parts of the developing world as opposed to isolated groups imposing compartmentalized and often foreign patches on them. All this from one workshop. Well, yes, the seeds of it. The kernels of illumination. And, as I have continued to work on similar projects over the years, mostly in Turkey, and some still with workshops at MIT, I have seen those kernels grow into torches. I thank the workshop for the tools and vision it gave me, and feel with conviction that this model will continue to illuminate people around the world, developing and spreading knowledge and empowerment that are tantamount to addressing the many developmental issues our societies face.

- Barbara Brady