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Resilience, Sustainability and Development:

some as yet undefined issues

(For the Woodrow Wilson Conference on Community Resilience)

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I have enjoyed reading the papers of John Paul Lederach and Jill Simone Gross. The concept of resilience as put forward in them, both in dealing with issues related to displacement and violence and related to development, is new to me and as such a bit abstract. Perhaps that is why I have not fully grasped the concept. As such, I can only share some experiences that I feel are of relevance.

John Paul Lederach's Paper:

John Paul Lederach draws his arguments and conclusions from his work with displaced people. In my opinion the most important statement he makes is "by its very nature then, to be displaced forces a journey of discovery". My understanding of this journey is, one, the question and assertion of identity, and two, adapting to change and creating and exploiting opportunities. Very often these two conflict. Being a refugee myself (though I refuse to call myself one) I can give numerous examples of this conflict. However, I will limit the examples to three and due to a lack of space and clarity I will not offer an analysis.

1.   The Lyari Expressway along the Lyari River in Karachi is almost complete. It has displaced more than 25,400 families and 8,000 plus commercial enterprises, in addition to schools, places of worship, and community facilities. It has disrupted the schooling of

26,000 children and 40,000 jobs have been lost as a result of the demolition of the commercial enterprises[1]. The settlements along the Lyari Corridor were of three types. One, more than a century and a half old villages (some still survive) which are now part of urban Karachi. These are ethnically homogenous with a strong sense of identity. Their leadership is traditional and patriarchal; they have comparatively low social indicators as compared to other low income settlements; weak linkages with Karachi's economy and a strong affiliation with regional political parties. But their ancestral graveyards are adjacent to them.

The second type of settlements were created by informal developers and none of them were more than 40 to 45 years old. They expanded slowly over time. These settlements were multi-ethnic, had no traditional leadership, they were politically divided, they had comparatively better social indicators than the first type of settlements and many of their residents worked in Karachi's services sector and ran informal businesses and industry. These settlements had no graveyards of their own.

The third type of settlements were "shanties" the majority of whose population (men, women and children) worked in the garbage recycling industry as scavengers and many women also worked in the neighbouring middle class settlements as domestic help.

The three settlements have reacted differently to displacement. The first type of settlements have been able to resist eviction. Some of them are still in existence in spite of seven years of pressure from the government agencies. Their resistance is holding up the completion of the project. Those in this category that have been evicted have failed to successfully build their homes or acquire infrastructure at the relocation sites to which they have been transferred as compared to other communities. The second type of settlements could not collectively resist eviction. They were demolished within two years. Many of their members went to court individually against the eviction order and failed to win their cases. However, at their relocation sites they have built better homes and acquired better municipal services than other communities. This they have done through a process of involving political parties in their negotiations with government agencies and by catering

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[1].   Arif Hasan; *The Political and Institutional Blockage to Good Governance: The Case of the Lyari Expressway in Karachi*; published in Environment&Urbanization, IIED (UK), October 2005

to the bribe market. The third type of settlements have for the most part relocated to other informal settlements where they and their employers can continue with the garbage recycling business. Many of the affectees have sold the plots that were given to them or have arranged for some family member to live in them till such time that they can fetch a better price. They did not resist eviction.

Here you have three very different reactions to the same violence. Different types of resilience? Maybe this is worth discussing.

2.   In the aftermath of the Pakistan Earthquake in 2006, different communities reacted differently to the rehabilitation process. The economy of Pakistani Kashmir is heavily dependent on remittances from Karachi where most of its migrants work as drivers, cooks, waiters and in working class jobs in the services sector. As a result of the earthquake, extended family and clan relationships weakened (collapsed in certain cases) and a very large number of residents moved out of their villages and used the compensation money for reconstructing their homes on their individual farmlands, something that was not normally done before[2]. The areas of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) affected by the earthquake, also have a remittance economy but the majority of the migrants work as building site and unskilled industrial labour. They and their families had, unlike the Kashmir case, considerable problems in dealing with official procedures for compensation and reconstruction of their homes in spite of stronger community cohesion. However, this cohesion could not be effectively utilised by NGOs and relief agencies because of the complex nature of the rules and regulations developed for accessing compensation and technical support. As a result, development work in Kashmir has been far more effective in spite of less cohesive community organisations.

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[2].   Arif Hasan: *RDPI Kashmir Report: Observations and Recommendations*; unpublished report for the Rural Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, March 2007

3.   Large scale migration to Pakistan from India in 1947[3] as a result of the partition of the Subcontinent has marginalised old communities. This is true of cities like Karachi and Delhi. In both cases, there were other reasons as well since both of them became capitals of newly independent states. A study of two neighbourhoods in Lahore's walled city (one of a pre-1947 community and the other of a neighbourhood of migrants) showed that the migrants were upwardly mobile and economically better-off[4]. A conversation I had with a village elder in the Punjab sums it up. When I asked him about conditions in his village, he responded that there was "*affra-taffri*" (anarchy). When I asked him to elaborate, he said that in his village a few days back a "*dhobi's*" (washerman's) daughter had married an Arain (agriculturist). "What greater anarchy" he added. When I asked him the reason for this anarchy, he responded that it was due to the refugees who with migration had lost the link between profession and caste and as a result social values have collapsed[5]. Many sociologists, like my friend Talat Aslam, editor of the Daily News, are of the opinion that the "*challo*" (upwardly mobile, with it) culture of the areas in which the refugees settled is the result of migration and the cause of the marginalisation of older communities. This view has been supported by my earlier work on social change[6] and my more recent research work on migration and small towns in Pakistan[7]. My question is why could not the local communities resist marginalisation in spite of strong community organisations and institutions?

Jill Simone Gross' Paper:

Jill Simone's paper is a critique of development paradigms and projects. Many of the issues she has raised have been discussed at length over the years but their relationship to

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[3].   In the 1951 Pakistan Population Census 48 per cent of urban Pakistanis said that they had originated in India. The population of a number of Pakistani cities increased by over 100 per cent in a few months in 1947. For details, see Arif Hasan; *Scale and Causes of Urban Change in Pakistan*; Ushba Publishing International, Karachi, 2006

[4].   Khalid Bajwa; *Development Conditions of Androon Shehr, The Walled City of Lahore*; unpublished PhD thesis, Catholic University of Leuven, 2007

[5].   Arif Hasan; *The Unplanned Revolution*; City Press, Karachi, 2002

[6].   Arif Hasan; *The Process of Socio-economic Change in Pakistan and its Repercussions*; paper read at the Pakistan Conference at John Hopkin University School of Advanced Studies, Washington, November 2004

[7].   Arif Hasan; *Migration and Small Towns in Pakistan*; unpublished IIED (UK) study, November 2007

resilience, has to my knowledge, never been raised. The strength communities derive from being organised, community-government relationships, the power of networks, lessons from successful projects etc. have all been documented and so I will not discuss them. But somehow, the changing nature of society and value systems do not figure in this literature nor do they seem to determine the nature of new programmes and projects. It is important to understand what these changes are. What I have observed and documented for Karachi are summarised below.

1.   Akhtar Hameed Khan, the founder of the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) stated in his concept note on the project; "We are all living through a period of social dislocation. Where people have been uprooted from their familiar environment, this dislocation is especially acute. They have to re-establish a sense of belonging, community feeling, and the convention of mutual help and cooperative action. This can be done chiefly through the creation of local level social and economic organisations. Without these organisations, chaos and confusion will prevail. On the other hand, if social and economic organisations grow and become strong, services and material conditions, sanitation, schools, clinics, training, and employment will also begin to improve.[8]" On the basis of this thinking, the OPP's programmes have all been about improving physical and social conditions by supporting the development of community organisations. However, Orangi Town is not the same in social and physical terms as it was in 1980 when Akhtar Hameed Khan established the OPP. Then it was an entirely working class area; the informal businesses were small and at a subsistence level; and social indicators were poor. Its leadership consisted of older men who had helped in establishing the settlement and who for the most part were "uneducated". Women did not out to work. Today, Orangi Township is not a purely working class settlement. Among its residents are college teachers, bank managers, white-collar workers in the IT industry, engineering and medical practitioners and other professionals and qualified technicians. Its new leaderships is young, uses a

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[8].   Akhtar Hameed Khan; *A Note on Welfare Work*; Orangi Pilot Project, February 1980

different vocabulary from its elders, and is formally educated[9]. Women meanwhile go out to work in larger numbers and on special occasions visit beauty parlours run by young Orangi women[10]. Before much of the physical development work was done by community members themselves. Today, it is increasingly done by hiring contractors. In spite of these changes, there have been no changes in the design of government, IFI and donor programmes for Orangi or other low income settlements of Karachi in the last three decades. An important question that emerges from this is how the concept of resilience relates to these changes.

2.   Other major changes that do not figure in Karachi related government, donor and/or NGO programmes are given below.

- In the age group of 15 – 24 years married women in 1981 were 37.92 per cent and married men were 13.39 per cent. Male literacy was 66.7 and female literacy was 62.32 per cent in this age group.[11] Today, married women in this age group are less than 20 per cent and married men less than 7 per cent. Literacy in this age group today is 79 per cent with almost no difference between male and female literacy.[12] For the first time in Karachi's history we have an overwhelming majority of unmarried adolescents. This has created a major change in the use of public space which in parks is now dominated by unmarried couples showing affection to each other in public, something unheard of before. But what is even more important is that no one seems to mind.[13] It has also led to a demand for a better physical environment and for recreation and entertainment facilities[14]. This very important issue does not figure even in the Karachi Strategic Development Plan (KSDP) 2020.

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[9]. See Arif Hasan's contribution to *Proceedings of the Regional Symposium on Urban Poverty in Asia, Fukuoka, Japan, 27 – 29 October 1998*, published by UNCHS

[10]. Arif Hasan's paper on The Changing Nature of the Informal Sector in Karachi in *Urban Informality*; edited by Ananya Roy and Nezar Al-Sayyad, Lexington Books, 2004

[11]. Government of Pakistan Population Census Report 1981

[12]. Extrapolated from Government of Pakistan Population Census Report 1998

[13]. Arif Hasan: *Changes in Values and Lifestyles*; published in Dawn Karachi, September 2007

[14]. Ibid

- The demographic change mentioned above has resulted in the death of the extended family. According to the 1989 survey for the Karachi Development Plan 2000, 47 per cent of Karachi families were nuclear. In the 2006 survey for the KSDP 2020, this figure increased to 89 per cent. The reasons for the change are more than one earning members in the family, working women, marriage outside the clan or extended family, money from remittances abroad and over-crowding.[15]

- Over-crowding, the result of an absence of social housing programme since 1982, has also resulted in greater freedom for both male and female adolescents and young people. Over-crowding means that the father spends most of his time outside of the house and if the siblings stay away the mother heaves a sigh of relief.[16]

- The result of the above is that an increasing number of young people are deciding on their marriage partners themselves and often in violation of parental wishes. Due to this court marriages (whereby protection from family violence against the marriage is assured), and honour killings have increased.[17] Civil society support for the new freedoms and against old traditions is also now openly voiced and is increasing.

- The gender and youth related issues are a major change that go unnoticed in much of social sector programmes. The change in the complexion of university students

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[15]. Arif Hasan; *The Unplanned Revolution*; updated version in the process of being published by the OUP Karachi

[16]. Ibid

[17]. According to newspaper reports and the author's conversations with the legal profession, an average of 800 applications per day for court marriages were registered in Karachi last year. Around one-third of these were from rural couples who had come to the city specifically for this purpose. No figures for honour killings are available over time. However, one village elder stated to the author that an honour killing was rare previously but more common now. According to him this was because people have become "shameless" and as such honour killings were justified. When asked if they will ever come to an end he responded, "yes they will when everyone become shameless. I hope to die before that."

is extremely important. 68 per cent of the students at the University of Karachi, 87 per cent of all medical students, 50 per cent students at the Engineering University and 92 per cent of architecture and planning students are women. This change (except for medical students) has taken place in the last decade.

3.   My work has dealt with supporting communities and promoting their interests in the urban and rural planning process with government and civil society. But the changes I have mentioned above are enormous and are creating a new society which in ten year's time will be in a position to consolidate itself with new societal values if a political revolution to arrest this change does not take place. I increasingly ask myself as to how these changes can support new approaches to development projects and programmes. I do not know how they relate to the issue of resilience. Maybe this too needs to be discussed. But then, in the case of Karachi (and other Asian cities), there is also the new urban development paradigm that one has to relate all this to.

The New Urban Development Paradigm:

Structural adjustment, the WTO regime and the culture of globalisation has created a new urban development paradigm. International capital is also desperately looking for a home. Cities of South and South-East Asia are attractive destinations since they have a weak regulatory framework and have undergone structural adjustment. Here this investment is increasingly determining not only the shape of the city but also social and economic relations[18]. The effect of this agenda on poor communities is not considered in the planning process in the Asian cities I know. However, the ecological and environmental damage it causes is increasingly being challenged by the new "civil society" which does not include the poor. As a result, the space for voicing dissent for the urban poor has shrunk considerably. Without voicing the dissent of the new poor effectively this space will soon be lost to middle class interests.

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[18]. David Satterthwaite; *Understanding Asian Cities*; ACHR, October 2005

I have raised the above issues because I feel that whereas society has changed, our approach to development projects and programmes and our concept of what constitutes a community or should remains wedded in the past. In my part of the world, social movements of the eighties have become well funded projects (some very impressive ones) and outside of them is a whole new world of unaddressed marginalisation and deprivation. We seem to be seeing the world through the eyes of these projects. I do not know where resilience fits into all this – but I do know that there is a conflict in fighting to preserve your identity and in negotiating a new life for yourself. There is also a conflict between the new social realities and the development projects, programmes and paradigms that are seeking to shape our lives.