



## ARC•PEACE Mission - the International Image and the Challenging Road to Work with the Poor

We in ARC•PEACE started some retrospection and self searching since we met in Barcelona. Later Stockholm and Copenhagen meetings have successfully consolidated our resolve to promote the ARC•PEACE mission with new vigor and spirit. Though slowly, surely we have started on a new path of fresh confidence and strength. Our membership has grown considerably, erstwhile passive members have come to the forefront with new ideas and agility, eight organization members have become more active and all have contributed in Copenhagen to chalk out an action plan (2012-14) with assigned responsibilities. More integrated ties with ASF-Int, our close collaborator, design of a new brochure, strengthening of the website and start of a fan page on Facebook are all encouraging ventures that lead us on the new path. Participation at the UIA, Tokyo, a fruitful presence of ARC•PEACE International at the WUF 2012 events and a more meaningful involvement at the UN ECOSOC raise our professional image and make our international presence stronger.

### *A new sense to be more meaningful*

While all these factors give ARC•PEACE a new sense of sustainability and confidence; we face more demanding challenges too. The most demanding is to expand our working with the poor especially focusing on human rights, land entitlements to reasonable housing, health care and education and disaster risk reduction. Reorientation of architectural and planning education toward social responsibility has been affront with us and ARC•PEACE has recently issued statements. Alienation of our profession from the needs of ordinary people is a serious issue.

### *Social responsibility and ethics*

More than ever we are urged to act on two fronts, first find effective ways to work with the ordinary citizens and to find design and planning solutions that can make their living conditions better and second, stand up collectively against social injustice in whatever form it may manifest itself. Are we doing enough in reality? Does our training in schools prepare the new generation for it? It is time to reflect and act.

### *New generation in the profession and new expectations*

It is encouraging that a wave for change has started to run through the new generation of architecture and planning students. For example, ARC•PEACE India is just born. Members include 40 energetic and spirited graduate students of the School of Planning & Architecture who want to be the agents of change in the profession.

ARC•PEACE mission motivates them strongly. They pledge to lead the movement to revamp the current curriculum in architecture and planning education in the university and reverse its alienation from common man, social ethics and social responsibilities.

### *Working with poor communities*

Let me share some of my experience from working with some of the most vulnerable communities in Mumbai mega city along with a group of architects and planners over the last five years.

We have worked with the local leaders of the six poor communities (6 800 families) with the view to improve their housing and living conditions focusing on health and sanitation, and creating conditions that would make the poor communities resilient to disaster risks. Focus is on improving their housing condition and access to health care. Our team has the support of graduate students from the School of Planning & Architecture (SPA) in New Delhi, The Tata Institute of Social Sciences and three active local NGOs.



### *Important lessons*

- As architects and planners we must work as the facilitators for the community, not imposers.
- Prepare a scientific data base on situational analysis of the area before start to work with community.
- Develop skills to work with the community leaders/-champions and building trust for participatory actions and active involvement of women.
- Advise on and demonstrate the use of techniques and methods in improving housing structure and use of common spaces that are easily implementable, low cost, resilience to disaster risk and based on use of local resources available.
- Assist the community leaders to prepare the Participatory Action Plan with explicit focus on tasks community is willing to perform voluntarily using their own resources and on those for which it needs external resources.
- Develop skills to make the participatory process sustainable, focusing on enhancing identity of the leaders and their advocacy and bargaining power with the local government.

The Mumbai project has provided new insights on how architects and planners can be catalysts in working with the poor communities and improve their living conditions. I think the lessons point squarely at the deficiencies in the current architecture and planning education contents.

*Bijay Misra, Co-Chair of ARC•PEACE*

# United Nations versus Non-Government Organisations

This text is intended to be a comprehensive list of issues that are important for ARC PEACE. It is based on over 40 years of contact with the UN, both as an expert and as an NGO representative. I hope that those members who now represent ARC PEACE and who are closely connected to the UN consider the questions I'm asking and participate in creating an NGO strategy for or own organization towards the UN.

## **Background**

When the UN was founded after WW II hopes were high that serving as a "world government" it would contribute to peace and development. Small and large countries would share the same rights and responsibilities. A number of secondary organs were created to deal with development, culture, peace and security. The equality was immediately set aside when the Security Council was founded. In the SC the five states holding nuclear weaponry at the time were granted veto powers in regards to every crucial decision.

It soon became clear that the UN had large inherent problems, that the General Assembly held no power over the SC. The organization has been afflicted with abuse of power and lobbying, with weak leadership, corruption and bureaucratization. Today the UN is often, sometimes unfairly so, regarded as a non-transparent organization, which time and time again fails to solve urgent political issues. The design and position of the Security Council is a determining factor. It retains deadlocks dating back to the Cold War. All formal attempts to reform it have failed, as well as Kofi Annan's informal one. The superpowers and their political satellites have prevented any change from taking place.

## **NGOs rise and fall**

One should remember that it was social movements and a few key people who prompted the foundation of the UN. It soon became apparent that the UN would not function if there wasn't pressure "from below". People, who could raise demands, provide solutions to problems and who could serve as contacts between the UN and national and local institutions. A diverse and plenteous array of NGOs emerged all over the world, having played an important part of the global political scene during the 1980s. In an interesting report, "The role of NGOs and civil society in development and poverty reduction" (BWPI Working Paper171, Manchester, June 2012), a description is presented how the NGOs from that point on lost their influence in favor of states and economic interests. The report deals with poverty, but similar tendencies are apparent in the UN treatment of environmental issues and nuclear disarmament. ARC•PEACE, unfortunately, has experience of how marginal the influence of the NGOs has been during the most recent UN conferences dedicated to these matters.

## **Arguments against participation on current terms**

There are reasons to question the benefits of the efforts and resources that NGOs today sacrifice trying to influence the UN. Is it reasonable to put this amount of personal time and money into campaigns that don't have any influence on final decisions? After the UN conferences I've attended as an NGO representative I have encountered resignation and disappointment.

There are sound arguments to reduce NGO efforts as long as conditions don't change to the better. The presence of NGOs have the following disadvantages:

- 1) They give unjustified legitimacy to the conferences and to the UN;
- 2) They give no or few possibilities of actual insight, discussion or influence;
- 3) It is a big waste of competence in relation to the achieved political impact;
- 4) It creates frustration and pessimism in the long run.



## **Arguments for participation on current conditions**

All things considered there are still arguments for continued participation. Some are egoistic while some are necessary in the long-term. To participate as an active NGO in UN conferences brings possibilities:

- 1) to stimulating exchange with other NGOs and competent base organizations;
- 2) to utilize the informal opportunities of influence that do occur;
- 3) to disquiet and spark off domestic opinion leading up to the conference;
- 4) to verify and report the system's weaknesses in one's own community;
- 5) to gather information for distribution and advocacy at home;
- 6) to examine and reveal one's own politicians behavior in the international scene;
- 7) to clarify what positive powers exist within the system.
- 8) and particularly: to maintain NGOs watching eye and critical stance in the long-term.

## **A few strategic points**

If we wish to remain active in the attempts to support NGO as an element of power in the UN-scheme a few strategic points need to be discussed:

- 1) How to better utilize NGO-competence in political efforts before, during and between conferences?
- 2) How to streamline and orientate NGO preparatory work and participation?
- 3) How to exploit the fact that the UN is governed by national political standpoints?
- 4) How to work nationally and long-term?
- 5) How to make UN politics an important issue in national elections?

The last question is also the most difficult one:

- 6) What demands should NGOs make towards reforming the UN, and where and how shall they be presented?

*Sven Thiberg, ex-chair of ARC•PEACE  
12-10-25*

## ARC•PEACE statement well received at Swedish Education Forum

The Education Forum 2012 of The Swedish Association of Architects was devoted to “Social Responsibility in the profession”. All Swedish schools of architecture and planning were represented by teachers and students. A series of projects were presented, intended to illustrate how social responsibility is interpreted and implemented in the training of students in building design and planning. Both problems and success stories were reported. I had the opportunity to present the ARC•PEACE Statement on Education of Architects and Planners, and to follow the outcome of the discussions. It gave me a chance to evaluate the relevance of our approach in a context of real teaching situations both in the perspective of professors and students.

ARC•PEACE defines the market situation like this: “*the mandates we are given.....do not always align with our democratic values*”. The truth of this was recognized by all present. It was also confirmed that there is a need for “*professional schools to develop curricula and train instructors to teach architectural and planning skills to create.... socially sustainable environments....*”

I feel that the six recommendations are relevant. They need to be followed up with a theoretical framework and pedagogical approaches, adapted to local conditions. I made the following reflections after my participation in the Forum:

**Strong commitment:** Open attitudes and clearly declared ambitions to implement social responsibility in teaching/-learning situations is a prerequisite for the credibility of the schools. Not all schools have discovered this, in contrast to traditional elitist approaches.

**Promote participatory design:** Projects and courses must focus on planning situations involving “disadvantaged people” and train students in finding peaceful solutions in cooperation with the inhabitants. Unfortunately schools prefer to go to “developing countries” instead of choosing their own “problem environments” for analyses of un-just and less responsible planning.

**Develop skills:** There is a lack of professional approaches to democratic and sustainable design practice. Human Rights are

said to be a strange an undefined concept, difficult to integrate in design and planning. Teachers have a lesson to learn!

**Interdisciplinary education:** Schools seem often to be isolated from disciplines providing scientific theories and basic knowledge of social, cultural and economic conditions, thereby missing broader perspectives, to the benefit of more narrow-minded design ideals.

**Long term responsibility:** Even if many projects start with high ambitions concerning sustainability and social responsibility those perspectives are often absent in the evaluation stage and are replaced by traditional design critiques.

**Continuous learning:** Few schools seem to have resources for education programs for architects and planners in practice, thereby missing valuable contacts with field conditions.

**I urge ARC•PEACE members to continue the work started in Copenhagen on a strategic platform for social responsible education of architects and planners. There is a strong need for concrete input, built on a combined experience of research, field work and teaching. Some of our members have that experience! I hope they will apply that competence in their national and local environment and come back with new ideas!**

Sven Thiberg

## Appeal to President Obama to stop IBM missile testing

At the proposal of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation many ARC•PEACE members signed an appeal asking President Obama to stop the launching of an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile on November 14<sup>th</sup>. Such missiles are on hair-trigger alert and carry thermonuclear warheads at least eight times more powerful than the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima.



The appeal states that the missile test “*should not be one of the first messages the world receives after the President’s re-election*”.

Read more:

[http://org2.democracyinaction.org/o/6357/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=12082](http://org2.democracyinaction.org/o/6357/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=12082).

## ARC•PEACE members called on European Parliament to eliminate nuclear weapons

At the request of Global Zero, an international movement for the elimination of nuclear weapons, many ARC•PEACE members signed a call on the European Parliament to eliminate nuclear weapons. The call stated: “*These expensive, outdated weapons are relics of another era - they simply can’t address the real post-Cold War challenges we face, like economic and financial crisis. Worse, the unparalleled threats of proliferation and nuclear terrorism are rising every day*”.



Read more at: <http://www.unitedforzero.org/> and at: <http://www.globalzero.org/en/about-campaign>.

Compiled by Dick Urban Vestbro

# Design Actions for the Common Good

## US pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale

“Common Ground” was the main theme of the 13<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Exhibition in Venice 2012. Despite this interesting title almost none of the 50 countries represented made justice to this theme. Instead most of them were characterised by typical abstract conceptual designs without any trace of commonalities. The US pavilion complied well with the theme, however. Its title was “Spontaneous Interventions: Design Actions for the Common Good”.



The US pavilion consisted of screens to be pulled down from the ceiling, thereby exposing dichotomizing proverbs related to the theme. The 124 screens showed various interventions in existing urban landscapes. The examples included community gardens, vertical cultivation, and outdoor living rooms; occupy Wall Street, urban repair squads, pop-up markets and many other interventions by citizens. Through a tricky pattern of arrows and short texts the whole US settlement history was displayed on the floor, almost without reference to any high-style architect. The whole exhibition displayed very interesting alternatives to traditional top-down interventions in which architects usually play a role far from participation and social justice.

One of the exhibition guides, Romana Roske, explained that the main curator had been Cathy Land Ho, an independent architecture critic and editor based in New York, and a Board member of the US Institute for Urban Design, commissioned to make the exhibition. She worked with David van der Leer, curator at the Guggenheim Museum.



Romana Roske

Read more at: <http://www.spontaneousinterventions.org/>

Dick Urban Vestbro

## ARC•PEACE signed appeal on climate and health

At the initiative of Tom Woolley of SGR, UK the Board of ARC•PEACE decided to sign a declaration called “*Health must be central to climate action*” a couple of weeks before the COP 18 meeting in Doha. Our network is concerned with health in the sense that we act to protect the natural environment, promote sustainable development and work for risk reductions. The appeal ends:

*Human health is profoundly threatened by our global failure to halt emissions growth and curb climate change. As representatives of health communities around the world, we argue that strategies to achieve rapid and sustained emissions reductions and protect health must be implemented in a time frame to avert further loss and damage.*

*We recognise that this will require exceptional courage and leadership from our political, business and civil society leaders, including the health sector; acceptance from the global community about the threats to health posed by our current path; and a willingness to act to realise the many benefits of creating low carbon, healthy, sustainable and resilient societies.*

The appeal seems to have had little influence upon the decisions in Doha, but this should not discourage us from insisting on firm action to achieve environmental goals.

Read the full declaration at:

<http://xa.yimg.com/kq/groups/1431304/1679809213/name/DohaHealthDeclaration.pdf>.

## Eyal Weizman: Critical analysis of the 2012 Gaza war

Just after the recent Gaza war Abe Hayeem of Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine (UK) sent us an article written by the prominent Israeli architect Eyal Weizman. His paper analyses Israel’s methodology of destruction and concludes:

*In the course of the eight-day aerial bombardment of Gaza by Israel – using drones, F-16s and Apache helicopters – more than 1350 buildings were hit. They included military depots, which are considered legitimate targets under international humanitarian law. But the police stations, TV stations, a local healthcare centre, ministries, road tunnels and a bridge that were also targeted are legally protected as civilian infrastructure. To justify their destruction, Israel argued that ‘they belong to a terrorist entity.’ This is an argument that would render all public buildings and physical infrastructure in the Strip legitimate targets: it is not accepted by international lawyers outside Israel.*

Read the whole article at:

<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v34/n23/eyal-weizman/short-cuts>



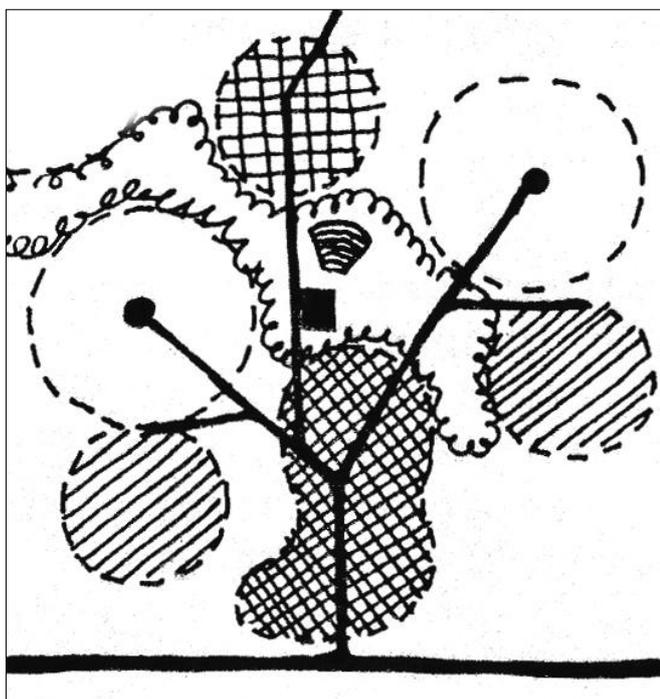
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# The kibbutz – an instrument of oppression

The Israeli kibbutz became famous in the 1960s and 1970s for its communal and egalitarian settlement organisation. It attracted many young Europeans, who came to experience this different type of socialist experiment. The author of this article was one of them. I worked in 1965 for three months and a half in two kibbutzim (plural of kibbutz in Hebrew) belonging to the Meuchad movement. I became so enthusiastic about the communal life that it took me a long time to realise that the kibbutz was in fact a prominent instrument of occupation, and that Palestinians were not allowed to join kibbutzim. Below I have extracted some information, which shows the military and discriminatory role of the kibbutz.

In his book “The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine” (2006) the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé shows how kibbutzim were located as Israeli military outposts on Palestinian land. The Zionist leader Ben-Gurion lived himself in a kibbutz and had a strong influence of the kibbutz organisation Mapai, which played a key role in the Zionist movement.

Pappé describes how members of the kibbutz organisation Mapam, together with the Israeli army, in 1948 persecuted and killed people in the village of Marj Ibn Amir, West of Sirin in order to establish a kibbutz on the evacuated land. Another example was the mosque of Hittin, which was vandalized by kibbutzniks, who then removed each part of the building to provide pastures for their cattle. One of the worst massacres was carried out in the Palestinian village of Sasa, which was erased to the ground to pave the way for a kibbutz.



Land use in kibbutz En Harod, showing residential spaces, economy buildings, small industries, cultural centres and greenery (Sketch: Dick Urban Vestbro 1965).

Often the kibbutzim started to cultivate conquered land before the Jewish National Fund had provided the legal documents, writes Pappé.

Another Israeli author, the architect Eyal Weizman, in his book “Hollow Land. Israel’s Architecture of Occupation”, writes that the Israeli Defence Forces after the June war in 1967 emptied Palestinian villages in the valley of Jordan and

erected a strip of kibbutzim combined with military instalments. These measures were led by Yigal Allon, minister of agriculture and settlements, and chief of the Palmach (troops consisting mainly of kibbutzniks). Weizman furthermore writes that the kibbutzim were planned according to a military concept, giving them privileges compared to other settlement (often on top of hills with a view towards ‘enemy territory’).

The kibbutzim do not allow Palestinians to become members.



Kibbutz Ein Hashofet. Source:

<http://www.davidicke.com/forum/showthread.php?p=1061025083>

According to a recent article in the Guardian the kibbutz movement is today undergoing a revival. The kibbutz population of about 143 000 is the highest in its 102-year history. Changes have taken place, such as selling kibbutz businesses, charging for meals and services, and recruiting agricultural labourers from south-east Asia (who cannot become members). The Guardian writes: *These changes have been painful for a generation of kibbutz pioneers wedded to a socialist-Zionist dream.*

Read more:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jul/23/israel-kibbutz-movement-comeback>.

Pappé, Ilan: *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oxford: Oneworld, 6006.

Weizman, Eyal: *Hollow Land – Israel’s Architecture of Occupation*, London: Verso, 2007.

Dick Urban Vestbro

## Report Presented to the Huairou Commission

This report was presented to the Huairou Commission by Co-Chair Luz Maria Sanchez. The report takes into account the event made in the Chocos District in the framework of the disaster risk reduction management as part of the International Rural Women Day. The main objectives of this event were:

1. To strengthen the capacity of women groups in the Chocos District and share good practices in their communities. This included activities to mitigate risks and reduce the impact on the disadvantaged areas (examples included risk mapping, environmental protection, infrastructure rehabilitation, production of diverse organic food, etc.). The grass root women groups interacted through various training as well as knowledge and information sharing session using interactive methods.
2. Presentations and exhibitions, action research, risk mapping in the communities and, invited speakers to share information with the grassroots women and their families on sources / causes of disasters including severe climatic, unsafe housing conditions that can potentially cause more damage and harm to their inhabitants as well as examples of some simple risk mitigation activities.
3. To facilitate the follow up collaboration between the grass root women groups, government officials and non-government working in the area of strengthening community resilience. Invitees included local authorities, representatives of Disaster Risk Reduction dept. At the ministries of Environment and Agriculture. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed to provide a regulating framework to this partnership between local authorities, NGOs and communities as part of the Cities Resilient Campaign.
4. To create a Grassroots Women Resilience Committee that has the agenda to provide information on the campaign results annually, design key activities for the women groups, determine how partnership funds will be allocated, and how the government and other stakeholder's contributions will be recognised and publicised. This will ensure that the women groups' leadership is well supported and better organised to achieve its objectives.



*Luz Maria Sanchez, Co-Chair*

## Architects guilty of deontological misconduct

This article is written based on following facts:

1. The unjustly prolonged Israeli-Palestinian crisis.
2. The existence of 26 million Internally Displaced Persons.
3. The need to build a balanced approach on human rights violations.

1. ARC•PEACE took an early leadership condemning the misconduct of colleagues who profit from Israeli development of areas inhabited by Palestinian families. Considering the ample media coverage given to this case that directly affects some 8 million people - let alone the enormous political and economical interests involved - this flagrant lack of deontological and moral principles of few colleagues undermines the role of our professions worldwide, and demands immediate intervention of global authorities (e.g. UIA), and other professional bodies.

2. Meantime, little or no press coverage is given to 26 million people euphemistically called IDP by UN (Internally Displaced Persons). They are persons or groups of persons who have been obliged to flee or forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, generalized violence, violations of human rights, and natural or man-made disasters, who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border; e.g.:

**Colombia** is top of the list with more than two million IDPs victims of narco traffic dealers, guerrilla and military confrontation.

Supported by ARC•PEACE for its inclusion in the 2012 ASF Portfolio La Lucha primary school project in Colombia is meant to help a few thousands of IDPs start a new life. This project counts with the active participation of stakeholders, local authorities and the Spanish Fundation Alianza Solidaria. Colombian young architects supported by Barcelona's colleagues are project's designers.

**Argentina**, despite the near 10 million people living under poverty line and 3 million as destitute it's not even mentioned in the UN list. Kirchner pseudodemocratic regime started in 2003 and aims to a fourth mandate by 2015, so they must hide uncomfortable statistics. Kirchner's widow installed a "model of social inclusion" which paradoxically ignores poor and destitute people. A spurious electoral engineering distributes subsidies with no work training and builds a captive clientele.

*Oscar Margenet*



Funds are drained and diverted into politics from welfare programs, which are now in jeopardy.

The cult of personalism and officially drawn statistics backed by an overwhelming mendacious propaganda are followed with curtailment of freedom of speech and press. Meantime public servants swiftly enrich themselves while many legislator wills are purchased with perks from executive agents.

Millions of rural laborers and traditional low middle class families are jobless; first nation's natives and more than three million women and children complete a devastating picture. Official policies allow savage mining activities, wild non-stop deforestation and huge GM crops (Argentina is the world's third largest soybeans producer). Lack of land ownership pushed four million people to migrate from their natural habitat this century alone.

Hundreds of human beings arm their homes with tins and cardboard, lacking drinkable water and sewer on large cities periphery. They become street beggars and garbage seekers. Mostly undocumented they have no access to elementary schooling or health care.

Hundreds of young architects are hired by the regime like indoctrination squads; the Minister for Planning himself is an architect. That way, ghost contractors and consultants become rich overnight, live in sumptuousness with no shame or remorse; they promote the official story and receive in exchange a stake of public works. Most housing and other facilities are built for provincial/ municipal authorities close to the party in office.



Source: [pobreza-e-indigencia.jpg](#)

Direct contracts avoid legal biddings and final budgeting. New facilities rarely go to those who really need them. Legislators and judges are handcuffed; thus, false statistics and authoritarian methodologies pave the way to a second re-election.

3. Despite its scatological nature the Israeli-Palestinian issue shows little progress because economic geopolitics act stronger than human rights; so Middle East affairs send IDP similarly cruel cases to the background. Since they do not deal with IDP problem government policies give no reasons for hope. UN specialists recognize that effective solutions to IDPs are unforeseeable in the near future.

### Conclusions

After 25 years our imagination and capabilities are still being challenged at ARC•PEACE. Thanks to member colleagues committed to social responsibility worldwide, we somehow keep the ability to disclose many cases of professional transgressions; but we fail at making an issue out of them.

I suggest to build stronger links with UN departments; for widening our vision by using our sense of responsibility in taking practical actions on different cases of deontological transgressions, and partnering with others who have what we lack, when it's appropriate.

Please, comment and enrich these few reflections.

*"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."* Confucius.

Oscar Margenet Nadal



Source: [crop580\\_w61107\\_argentina-chabolas.jpg](#)

### Editor's notes:

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This issue has been edited by Treasurer Mewahib Mohamed with assistance from Co-Chair, Bijay Misra. We would welcome volunteers to edit the next issue no. 36, which should be out by March 2013. If you would like to volunteer, have ideas of articles or write something yourself please contact Secretary Dick Urban Vestbro at [dickurba@gmail.com](mailto:dickurba@gmail.com).

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